

PRECOCIOUS GIRLS AND AMBIGUOUS BOYS: VAMPIRES AND SEXUAL
IDENTITY IN LAURELL K. HAMILTON'S *ANITA BLAKE: VAMPIRE HUNTER* AND
NANCY A. COLLINS'S *MIDNIGHT BLUE*

by

Danielle R. Fletcher

B.A., The University of Northern British Columbia, 1998

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

August 2001

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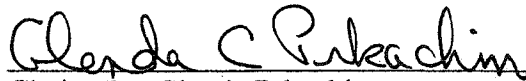
APPROVAL

Name: Danielle Fletcher

Degree: Master of Arts

Thesis Title: PRECOCIOUS GIRLS AND AMBIGUOUS BOYS:
VAMPIRES AND SEXUAL IDENTITY IN LAURELL
K. HAMILTON'S *ANITA BLAKE: VAMPIRE HUNTER*
AND NANCY A. COLLINS'S *MIDNIGHT BLUE*

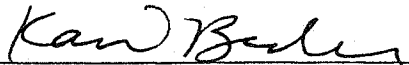
Examining Committee:



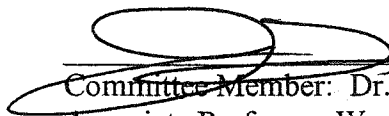
Chair: Dr. Glenda Prkachin
Associate Professor, Psychology Program
UNBC



Supervisor: Dr. Stan Beeler
Associate Professor, English Program
UNBC



Committee Member: Dr. Karin Beeler
Associate Professor, English Program
UNBC



Committee Member: Dr. Jo-Anne Fiske
Associate Professor, Women's Studies Program
UNBC



External Examiner: Dr. Donald Precosky
Dean, Arts and Social Services
College of New Caledonia

Date Approved:

Oct 5, 2001

Abstract

Vampires have represented a continuous narrative in Western culture over the last three centuries. They have gathered complex meanings as they made their way from folklore, through literature, and into mass culture. Always dwelling outside of the community, they are an excellent metaphor for outcast and marginalized members of society. No longer a figure of absolute evil, the vampire is capable of generating sympathy on the part of an audience that is no longer satisfied with the explanations that a simple binary opposition of good and evil can offer. The vampire in fiction offers an identification for alienated individuals, and a way to give voice to dissatisfactions with contemporary society. They invade culture and threaten cultural cohesiveness with their presence. Exiled to discredited genres of popular fiction that have until recently been ignored by critical examinations, they reveal how the mainstream is constructed to understand itself through binary oppositions. The sympathy they generate challenges an understanding of absolutes.

In the past, the vampire has been a subject most frequently taken up by men. Recently, female authors have begun to alter it, using the defamiliarization techniques of fantasy to uncover hegemonic values that underwrite culture. Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* and Nancy A. Collins's *Midnight Blue* feature active female protagonists who defy the traditional place of women in vampire narratives. Anita Blake hunts vampires, rather than playing the role of the victim, as women have in the past. Far from being the seductive vampire bride familiar from Stoker's *Dracula*, Collins's Sonja is a vengeful daughter who spends the duration of the novel seeking revenge upon the entire race of vampires,

including the one who raped her and recreated her as a vampire. Both characters are defining their sexual identity through the narrative of the vampire while resisting attempts to frame them using traditional terms. They resist the male characters' stereotyping because accepting them will also disempower them.

Mixing vampires and fantasy is a potent combination. However, notions of binaries still hinder writing in this genre. Anita Blake's independence is hindered by a gendered inversion that still privileges masculine traits and devalues the feminine. The narrative projects weakness onto the male characters and masculinizes Anita, thus maintaining a binary, rather than exploding it. *Midnight Blue* resists the possibility of women being of equal or greater power in a female/male relationship. The cost of Sonja's independence and cohesive identity is her relationship with men. Yet both narratives reveal the structures of power in vampire narratives that have reproduced rape and incest as seduction in order to perpetrate masculine prerogatives. The texts resist unquestioning acceptance of the vampire's seduction and try to write the story of women into the ongoing vampire narrative.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Stan Beeler, and my committee members, Dr. Karin Beeler and Dr. Jo-Anne Fiske, for their invaluable help and patience during the preparation of this thesis. I would also like to thank Lee Atchison and Jennifer Payson for their clear, thoughtful critiques and editing suggestions under less than ideal circumstances.

To my friends, Jen Bomford and the Bomford family, Holly Jessome, Jennifer Contino, Shauna Ratliff, and the staff of Sequential Tart, and especially to my family, I owe a tremendous debt. Without the support and encouragement of these people I could not have completed this work.

Introduction

Of all the monsters emerging from the human imagination, the vampire occupies a unique position, particularly in Western culture. In its folkloric beginnings it was blamed for sickness, disease, death, and general bad luck, like witches, devils and other supernatural creatures. It has since mutated, differentiating itself to take a prominent place in the popular imagination. It is a chameleon figure, haunting the edges of culture, refusing definition: "The vampire is a nightmarish creature that defies scientific understanding by embodying several irrational contradictions: alive yet dead, seductive yet repulsive, human yet beastly, possessing supernatural strengths along with extraordinary weaknesses" (Jordan 8). With its thirst for blood and its association with death, the corpse, and the waste of the body, the vampire embodies Kristeva's abject; it is the outside, the rejection and that which is expelled from life and society.¹ The vampire is a fantastic object whose alien nature allows its use as a metaphor with which to explore social boundaries without the complications involved in using a "real" other. Particularly in recent texts, it has been "humanized" to represent not the monstrosity of the marginal, but rather the difference that makes it all too human. The vampire's face shifts to represent something always alien, always other, and at the same time, always inside; the vampire constantly threatens a rupture inside culture, arousing desires and discontents that are present beneath the surface of civilization. It represents that which a culture would project onto the other, but which resides inside.

By projecting taboos onto the other, a culture can explain the inexplicable, and discuss subjects without having to confront them openly. In this covert

discussion lies the possibility of subversion. Having passed from myth and folklore, into Romantic literature, and through pulp literature, the vampire's travels through class and culture have developed in it the ability to intersect with a number of social boundaries and taboos. As Dresser points out, "[i]n Romanian villages beliefs in vampires can serve as a bond uniting and stabilizing the community. Signs of the vampire's presence mean that villagers have not been following the code for social behaviour" (50). This early function of defining social norms and representing social transgression remains a fundamental part of the myth. The vampire is a mask for all that challenges social norms.

I have selected two popular vampire series in order to examine how women have made unique alterations to vampire narratives. In Laurell K. Hamilton's novels, *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter*, the protagonist is our entry into an unfamiliar world.² Anita both raises the dead and is a legalized vampire hunter and executioner. She is also human in a community of vampires and lycanthropes. It combines elements of a number of genres, including murder/mystery, romance, and horror. The acceptance of magic and the undead as part of the logic of this universe make it primarily a fantasy. Vampires and lycanthropes have always existed here, but have only recently gained some basic human rights in some states.³ This has created a new sub-population of infected people who are technically legitimate but not respectable. To the society in the text they are an exciting novelty, but they are not accepted. The metaphorical structures that this urban fantasy has generated suggests that neither vampire nor lycanthrope communities are free from relationships with contemporary social issues. The vampire figure in particular

bears complex significance framed to highlight the attractiveness and the powerlessness of cultural outcasts. The novels borrow jargon from AIDS narratives and sexual fringe cultures and they emphasize the heavily sexualized nature of this relationship.

The second series is the Sonja Blue novels by Nancy A. Collins, including *Sunglasses After Dark*, *In the Blood*, and *Paint It Black*, collectively known as *Midnight Blue*.⁴ The books are a narrative of revenge. Having been turned into a human/vampire hybrid, Sonja spends the duration of the series seeking a way to destroy the vampire who made her. Vampires are part of what they term Pretender society. Pretenders are supernatural creatures who live among human society, disguising what they are while they leech from the human population. The term seems to cover a wide variety of supernatural creatures, including vampires, lycanthropes, trolls, demons, and other species that are a part of human legend. Normal human beings cannot see Pretender society, though "sensitives," humans who have psychic abilities, can sometimes see and communicate with the Pretender races. Pretenders are most closely associated with a corrupt and decadent technological culture; sexual subcultures, crime, and drug cultures are all associated with Pretenders. The hybrid Sonja, who hates what she has become, devotes herself to destroying her sire and all his race.

I selected these series for a number of reasons. They are both written by women. Until quite recently most vampire narratives were written by men. Both also feature female protagonists. More importantly, the female protagonists resist the romantic storyline that posits a passive female waiting for an active male to

solve her problems. Neither Anita Blake nor Sonja Blue are naive. They are frequently the most knowledgeable experts on hand in a given situation. Both characters resist narratives that contemporary culture usually imposes on active female characters by acting contrary to them, but still logically within the worlds they live in. They break down taboos around female characters. I chose to work with texts that are less well-known and established as part of the canon of vampire fiction primarily because they raise intriguing questions about how popular fiction adapts and manipulates culture in the general absence of critical values.

Fantasies that use vampires often appear to reestablish a status quo at the end. However, for the duration of the text the narrative provides a dialogue which leaves open the possibilities of rebellious reading. At the very least it provides a forum to examine the creation of social boundaries and who and what is implicated in their formation and maintenance. Consequently, readers and writers may 'rewrite' the text in such a way as to reflect their dissatisfactions with the reestablished social boundaries, in turn pushing them outward, moving the acceptable limits of social behaviour beyond what has gone before. The figure of the vampire represents a continuous text, a figure that can be taken up and rewritten to reflect current dissatisfactions. Both readers and writers have been seen to do this, whether through the illegitimate but flourishing Internet fan subcultures or through the choosing of subtext in canonical text by publishing authors who then use it as the subject and text of subsequent vampire novels. The vampire is a pop icon of subversion.

Chapter One

Fluid Faces: The Survival of the Vampire Through History

The vampire of folklore was more or less a literal walking corpse, an animated decomposing body that resembled the modern notion of a zombie. It had a ruddy complexion, protruding teeth, long fingernails and hair. It was accompanied by the smell of decomposition, including bad breath. It rose from the grave to feed upon the local population bringing with it bad luck. This creature was part of a tradition of undead revenants, whose deaths tended to occur suddenly under unusual circumstances. The evidence of vampirism that Barber cites from eyewitness accounts is explained by a modern understanding of the natural process of decomposition; folkloric evidence of the undead included cries of pain, "fresh" blood, ruddy, gorged complexion, flexible limbs, and new tissue growth. The proper disposal of these exhumed "revenant" corpses was necessary to ensure that this time they would not rise to prey on their family, friends and neighbours. The wooden stake that has become an integral part of the vampire survives from the tradition of exhumation, slaying, and reburial. While the apparently hysterical exhumations and stakings of "vampires" seem outrageous in retrospect, Barber points out that "[t]hey were afraid of nothing less than death itself. This is hard for us to understand, for, though death is as inescapable today as it was then, epidemics do not usually rage out of control, at least in industrialized countries. Moreover, we have well-established methods to control them. We are no longer obligated to mythologize them in the same way" (121). Our explanations for epidemics hinge on faith in science that is its own twentieth century religion.

The folkloric vampires were summoned to explain rashes of unexplained deaths. Stories of vampires emerge out of “a problem that arises naturally in any preliterate culture. Lacking a proper grounding in physiology, pathology, and immunology, how are people to account for disease and death? The common course . . . is to blame death on the dead” (Barber 3). The dead returned to take the lives of others in an epidemic of equally sudden deaths. Vampires served a social function as well. Those who were accused of vampirism after death were frequently unpopular or in some way deviant while alive. Sickness was visited upon a community whose members had failed in some way to conform to social norms. Exhuming, killing, and reburying the dead addressed this moral failure by enacting social and mystical rituals to make up for those the “vampire” had violated. As the breaking of social norms caused the epidemics, so properly following social rules should stop them. Vampirism and contamination were thus seen to be the result of a moral failure, a trend that continues in vampire texts today.

The shift in physical appearance of the vampire from folkloric version to literature follows close to the transition of the vampire from the superstitions of the agricultural populace to the highly literate creations of the Romantic poets and, later, Victorian writers. The walking corpses that exuded unpleasant smells and wore the clothes in which they were buried in are exchanged in this transition period for aristocrats of intellectual bearing. Unlike folkloric predecessors, they exhibit a rapacity that escapes the bounds of their own family and place of origin to become strangers, insinuating themselves in the lives of others. Vampires escape limited, familiar areas, such as farming communities, into a world where transportation and

communication are fast and easy. This traveling figure becomes both the threat of the anonymous stranger and a symbol of alienation. The vampire creations of writers like Byron and Polidori are in search of an intellectual bond with other men, and necessities of life, such as feeding, become "an annoying distraction from their political or metaphysical concerns. Vampire hunger is incidental to men who have their most complex identities as friends" (Auerbach 18). Women are victims upon whom to feed, while the homosocial friendship of men are what these vampires truly seek. From folklore to literature the vampire undergoes a radical transition from mindlessness to intellectually stimulating abstract discussion. These more modern vampires, while still not the vampire of contemporary society, could pass as human with little difficulty.

As quickly as the theatrical adaptations of Romantic vampires appeared, the figure began to alter once again. By mid-century, vampires had a sort of transcendental connection with the moon, associated much more closely with werewolves today. "Like the moon, they live cyclically, dying and renewing themselves with ritual, predictable regularity" which "licenses an enchanted eroticism" (Auerbach 25) but deviates, not for the last time, from immediate predecessors and even namesakes. When the moon moves from the vampire completely to the werewolf it becomes a coercive element; rather than liberating the vampire it coerces the werewolf into monthly abandonment of humanity.

The date at which the vampire changes from a mindless revenant, confused with other nocturnal figures of bad luck into something capable of passing as human is a point of dispute. The creations of Coleridge, Byron, and Polidori rank among

the earliest representations of human-seeming vampires in English literature. Byron and Polidori both use the figure to represent the companionship of "singular friends" (13), as Nina Auerbach terms it, meaning the close homosocial bonds formed between male companions, while Sheridan Le Fanu produces one of the first, and one of only a handful of, female vampires in *Carmilla*. The use of the figure by Romantics predates Stoker's most famous vampire text, *Dracula*, though their vampires are without many of the spectacular trappings that are familiar accoutrements of the vampire today, including the legendary ties to the animal world, and much of the spectacular preying on blood, which Stoker in particular added to the myth. Stoker's *Dracula* is also the foreign other; unlike earlier vampires who posed a threat from outside the family unit and small community, *Dracula* was a threat to an entire nation.

Auerbach's "enchanted eroticism" lays the groundwork for one of the most pervasive symbolic relationships in vampire fiction: the connection between vampires and sexuality. Sexual decadence begins to make itself felt as the preoccupations of the upper classes begin to mark the traditions borrowed from Europe's peasants. Auerbach points out that the Romantics writing their vampire tales, while they may instill their vampires with eroticism, do not direct their predations towards other men. Their male friends provide intellectual stimulation, rather than the physical: "[O]nly when vampires are women do their friends become literal prey . . . leap[ing] from homoerotic friendship to homosexual love, but male vampires refuse to love their food" (18). Nonetheless, the seductiveness of vampires, whether intellectually or physically, is one of the first traits established in

the modern, non-folkloric vampire.

While an undercurrent of sexuality permeates and colours all vampire fiction through the weight of long and spectacular association, the vampire has come to stand for more than illegitimate sexuality. Senf dates the true flowering of the vampire's multiple meanings to Stoker's *Dracula*: "Whereas Coleridge, Polidori, and Le Fanu transformed a folklore belief into a literary icon, Stoker emphasized the multiple natures of the vampire and also placed the vampire squarely in the modern world. Furthermore, he was the first writer to use the vampire to suggest the intersection of myth and science, past and present" (7). The importance of Stoker's innovations can be seen in *Dracula*'s longevity. *Dracula* is frequently designated the first modern vampire, and he is also one of the earliest vampires to survive intact into the contemporary imagination. Modern writers of vampire fiction owe an unusually large debt to the multiplicity that *Dracula* introduced. Gordon and Hollinger call the vampire "[a]n ambiguously coded figure, a source of both erotic anxiety and corrupt desire" (1). Such a position makes the vampire uniquely situated to represent the fears of a changing, uncertain social state. The vampire rises in the midst of change; Bram Stoker capitalized most eloquently on *fin de siècle* anxieties, and inscribed such fears and excitement as change inspires onto his vampire, bequeathing subsequent vampires with the same powers. Stoker wrote a novel that spoke to the popular imagination of his time, engaging the anxieties of his audience. Contemporary writers continue to react within traditions that Stoker created, and they continue to retell, react to, and rewrite many of the themes and tensions that Stoker wrote into his text. These rewrites update the vampire myth in order to

respond to its audience.

The *fin de siècle* anxieties that surface in *Dracula*, Senf argues, are a mixture that include colonialism, imperialism, early feminism and the public anxieties surrounding male homosexuality and decadence. If *Dracula*, born in this stew of conflict and tension, is also the starting point of the modern vampire, those fictional figures that follow Stoker's vision remain eminently suitable for discussing such tensions. Writers select those that speak closely to the audience for whom they write and understate those which do not have relevance at the time. *Dracula* is essentially a figure of perceived contamination, from without and within, and a contamination that is not solely biological, but also social. Part of the luxury of tradition is that writers pick and choose which of these tensions their own vampiric figures will represent. It is the multiple personality of *Dracula*, upon which the chameleon-like survival of the vampire depends.

In her discussion of American fan culture, Norine Dresser writes "I had overlooked the fact that vampires are a significant phenomenon in contemporary American culture, I came to see that the old, scary, sometimes campy movie images set in Transylvania had been transplanted, translated, and transformed. The vampire symbol had begun to take on a new meaning and interpretation - evolving into something one could call the American vampire" (Dresser 12). Hollywood's version of vampires have dominated the public imagination for most of the twentieth century, born of Bela Lugosi's portrayal:

Lon Chaney apparently set the scene for sharp-toothed elegance . . . but no print of that film is known to have survived, leaving Bela Lugosi to establish cinematic vampire's dress, intonation, seductive foreign

style, and *modus operandi*. Hamilton Dean's stage play and John L. Balderston's adaptation of it had already moved the image of Dracula from that of a feral predator searching for fresh blood to one of a suave seducer charming his way into the upper ranks of London society. (Heldreth 2)

Later film presentations of the monster were also responsible for attaching a spectacularly overt sexuality to the monster: "The sexual implications of the vampire became more overt in these films as [Christopher] Lee's animalistic strength and magnetism overwhelmed his female victims" (Heldreth 3). As well, they pushed to the foreground "the idea of the Other that many scholars have seen in Dracula" (Heldreth 3) by presenting variations such as Jewish and gay vampires, even if such presentations were cloaked in humour.⁵

This is the tradition in which Anne Rice, Nancy Collins and Laurell K. Hamilton write and, as significantly, the tradition of which fans are most aware. Modern writers have not limited their pillaging of the vampire myth to any one medium or time, but move freely from early mythology to modern media in order to tell the stories of the vampires of today, who are rarely so naive that they are not aware of the icon that vampires have become, especially in film. From myths to literature to plays, to film, writers draw upon the figure, not the medium; they transcend any one medium. Even *Dracula's* many incarnations are so numerous as to create their own internal comparisons, regardless of any external vampiric tradition.

Writers maintain the vampire through reinscribing it with the relevant tensions of their contemporary society. As Gelder points out, "[t]he vampire's *nature* is fundamentally conservative - it never stops doing what it does; but *culturally*, this

creature may be highly adaptable. Thus it can be made to appeal to or generate fundamental urges located somehow 'beyond' culture (desire, anxiety, fear), while simultaneously, it can stand for a range of meanings and positions *in* culture" (141). So the vampire, with its heavily inscribed sexuality, becomes the perfect point of intersection to discuss AIDS and the connection between blood, sexual transgression, AIDS and vampirism. The dialogue surrounding AIDS is also an example of a more or less conscious conflation between points of biological and (sexually) moral contagion. Kruger points out that "the homophobically imagined "disease" of gayness [is] literalized in the disease process of HIV illness and AIDS" (42). Both Hamilton and Collins confront the idea of disease, especially as a result of morally questionable sexuality. Hamilton explicitly marks both vampirism and lycanthropy as identifiable diseases; lycanthropy even has a vaccine. As characters, especially the female characters, in both series discover, contamination is still the inevitable risk of sexual pleasure, freedom, and even modernization. Vampires never represent one transgression alone.

However, women have been able to turn what was fundamental evil and other into a fluid symbol that questions the borders of acceptability. Dresser, in her examination of vampire fan culture, points out that "this symbol seems to function as a source of creativity, as an object of pleasure, as a toy for their play, and as a common ground for communication" (142). As their toy, fans manipulate its meanings to conform to a worldview that frequently differs from mainstream concerns. As female sexuality is often subversive in the first place, the figure of the vampire is in an excellent position to help explicate silenced desire. Barber claims

that “[f]or all the intensity of his two passions, blood and power, the vampire of fiction is otherwise ascetic; in modern times he has become something of an intellectual as well” (83-84) and goes on to cite Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* as a particular example. Contemporary writers are working with both intellectual and sensual traditions, molding them to their own potentially subversive needs. Anne Rice’s vampires came sharply on the heels of the gay liberation movement, placing homosexual relationships into the center of popular vampire texts. At the same time she created a visible tradition of women writing gay male sexuality and women reading and taking pleasure from it. While the issues surrounding this project are extremely complex, the popularity of Rice’s characters suggest a desire on the part of the audience for her particular brand of ascetic sensuality.

As the modern vampire takes shape, it moves from a figure of mystery to an active, fully developed character. Its deeper characterization, motives, feelings, thoughts, and nobility suggests a complication in the self/other dichotomies that plague the metanarratives of imperialism, class, gender and sexuality that Stoker’s vampire introduced. The monster’s heroism, or at least its very complex and desirable villainy, loosens the firm social boundaries and humanizes and normalizes sub-cultures that have been marginalized and vilified. A vampire is the ultimate anti-hero, bound to threaten life but still desirable.⁶ The sympathy that vampires such as Rice’s Louis and Lestat generate suggests the sympathy and understanding that could be put forth on behalf of the groups with which the vampire characters are associated. Dresser’s survey of self-identified fans include respondents who

"identified with the vampire as someone different, as an outsider persecuted for that difference" (160). Even older versions of vampires from film are subject to fan's rewriting of their villainy from the position of outsiders themselves. Alienated fans recreate the monster in ways that they can identify with, against social norms: "According to fans, the vampire does occupy a special place. Yet most fans today seem to downplay his evil aspects when they describe him. The meaning of his symbol seems to be changing. He is perceived as less a villain and more a tragic hero. They feel sorry for him" (Dresser 163).

Carter suggests that this change came about particularly after the 1976 introduction of Anne Rice's first person vampire narrative in *Interview with the Vampire*. Louis, the tortured main character, epitomizes, for the most part, the findings that "[f]ans excuse his actions because he is forced to behave this way in order to survive. They are sympathetic to his plight as a loner. Delighting in his beauty, elegance, and Old World charm, some fans revealed that they enjoyed being dominated by him, that they liked the idea of being in his power - being his victim. They relished his eroticism — and as the one person commented, his 'foreplay'" (Dresser 163-4). Louis is heavily coded as gay, but while his narrative describes monstrous acts, it presents him in the most sympathetic light possible. The narrative acts as an existential journey into the nature of very human evil. "Certainly, the journey into the dark and hidden reaches of the self is more difficult when the shadow/guide assumes the form, not of someone youthful and attractive - however murderous - but of a repulsive and unrepentant elder with bad breath" (Rowen 239). This narrative serves as a prototype of what was to come; the series

of vampire texts to follow presented the vampire monster at their heart in a sympathetic light. They would "pass," if they chose, as human. Indeed, as Carter goes on to say: "the vampire often appears as an attractive figure precisely *because* he or she is a vampire . . . This shift in fictional characterization reflects a change in cultural attitudes toward the outsider, the alien other" (Carter 27).

From its earliest incarnations in literature the most popular vampires have tended to be male. Coleridge's *Christabel*, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, and the female vampires from the book and novel versions of *The Hunger* stand as three significant deviations from the overwhelmingly male tradition, and even these figures are of dubious fame. While the vampire is generally a sort of "everyman" outsider, capable of appealing to both female and male outsiders, it remains to be seen whether female vampires can stand as a similarly universal figure. Women tend to remain victims, erased out of existence in homoerotic tales of Anne Rice or sexualized into objectification as in such films as *Bordello of Blood* (1996). In a more cultish fashion, the ostensibly powerful female vampires of *Vamp* are strippers, there to be watched by the male eyes of the patron/victim characters and the audience. Since they are evil, they are justly killed off in the end.

The vain woman also plays a role in the traditionally misogynistic vampire tales that include women. The notion that women are vain and fixated on attaining and maintaining their looks entered into the vampire narrative through the historical figure of Elizabeth Bathory. Bathory was a seventeenth century Hungarian countess who bathed in the blood of virgins to maintain her beauty. Traces of this story can be seen in films like *Once Bitten* (1985), where a centuries old female vampire must

drink the blood of virgins in order to maintain herself. The Countess even has a group of young male vampires as well as females to counter the traditional male vampire and his harem. The film neatly outlines the risks involved in promiscuity, as the protagonist's goal when he met the Countess was to finally lose his virginity. His long-time girlfriend even explains vampirism as a sort of sexually transmitted disease. While she is at first a high status conquest for him this changes as he discovers that what she wants is to drain him of his vitality in order to enhance her appearance. The Countess herself is obsessed with appearance, fretting about her looks and working out. Rather than dying when she fails to drink three times from a virgin, she instead ages into an old woman. Her aging is punishment not only for her vampirism but also, and perhaps more importantly, for her vanity. After she ages, her vampire harem disappears, leaving her with only her gay male assistant. Sexual attractiveness is paramount, if self-serving for the male audience, and once it is gone the character generates no sympathy or respect, unlike Dracula, particularly in recent incarnations like Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* who, no matter how monstrous he appears in the end, still generates sympathy on Mina's part. The Bathory legend plays on cultural misogyny that feeds on the assumption that women are vain enough, and desperate enough, to do anything to maintain their looks, and the Countess is portrayed as far too shallow to deserve sympathy. Her campy assistant, himself an object of amusement in a casually homophobic comedy, is the only one who remains loyal. In any case, it is difficult to form a strong identification with one-dimensional creations like the victim, the stripper, or the vain, aging woman. Well-drawn, powerful vampires tend to be males, while

females tend to come in harems as an extension of Dracula's three wives.

In vampire stories where the female vampires are developed more fully, the implications of lesbian homosexuality can present an obstacle to identification as well as a route to empowerment. In *Between Men* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick refers to a homosocial continuum that she suggests is continuous in female relationships and interrupted in male relationships, and that in turn implicates female relationship with sexuality while attempting to eliminate the sexual implications from male forms of bonding: "[T]he . . . opposition between the 'homosocial' and the 'homosexual' seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for men. At this particular historical moment, an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions and valuations links lesbianism with the other forms of women's attention to women. . . . Thus the adjective 'homosocial' as applied to women's bonds . . . need not be pointedly dichotomized as against 'homosexual'" (2). At the same time, writing about male relationships "suggests that 'obligatory heterosexuality' is built into male-dominated kinship systems, or that homophobia is a *necessary* consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage" that breaks up the continuum between "men-loving-men" and "men-promoting-the-interests-of-men" (3). Certainly since Rice drew the homosexual implications found in conflating the biting and drawing of blood with sexual intercourse male vampires have also been 'queered.' However, it should be noted that within the tradition the male vampire has always maintained a more powerful position than his female counterparts, as patriarchs of "harems" or as intellectually powerful aristocratic travelers in the tradition of Polidori. The few female vampires who have made a

significant appearance in the literature have rarely challenged this hierarchy. At the same time, lesbianism has commonly been co-opted and objectified for the benefit of straight men in pornography, for instance. Thus lesbianism must combat a tradition of objectification that gay male sexuality does not have.

Female vampires are also inevitably sexualized to a greater degree than their masculine counterparts, and their sexualization does not usually come with an increase in power. If they are not portrayed as victims then they are dangerous and sadistic women, and their danger is aimed specifically at the heterosexual male.

The danger they represent becomes evident when coupled with basic, high-risk sexual behaviour, as in the films *Vamp* and *Bordello of Blood*.⁷ They represent the dangers of the female in form and deed, as the dark and unknowable female object.

Such figures are not dangerous for their own benefit. Rather, their threat is a titillation for a male heterosexual audience. They represent a risk that is erotic.

While Dresser finds that fans like the notion of being dominated, she does not indicate whether these fans are only women or whether both genders find this feeling of domination in relation to the powerful male vampire erotic. From such presentations as *Vamp*, it seems clear that the dangerous woman presents an erotic thrill. The female vampires die to restore male activity, subjectivity, and power.

Their deaths are usually brutal and pathetic, failing to generate the sympathy and regret that Mina Harker displayed in Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Unless the female vampire is strongly coded as queer, as with the bisexual female vampire in *The Hunger*, vampire literature tends to make very clear that regardless of its potent symbolic meaning, vampires are there for the opposite sex, preying on and "bringing

over" heterosexual partners. There is no casual homosexuality.

Set against vampires are the forces of "good." Vampire hunters take on a variety of forms, though professional vampire hunters are a relatively recent development in the history of the vampire story. Vampires are usually defeated in the end by ad hoc groups of humans who band together in order to destroy that which threatens them. Abraham Van Helsing is certainly the most famous expert on vampires to be called in, and is a prototype for those learned men who follow. It is important to note that Van Helsing is valuable particularly for his arcane knowledge. The idea of arcane knowledge, of secrets and mysteries that are necessary in order to understand and defeat the evil other, is essential to most vampire texts until quite recently, when knowledge of mass media and pulp replaced academic study. A ready understanding of old horror films and a willingness to believe in the monsters they portray is more important than conservative, and therefore close-minded, education. In *The Lost Boys* (Schumacher, 1987) the desperate group of teens set traps to slay the vampires using the pop culture beliefs peddled in film, comics, and novels. This is at odds with the "understanding" that vampires did not exist that hinders the mother from believing that her family is in danger. In recent texts arcane academic knowledge surfaces with rogue or discredited scholars or underground organizations such as Anne Rice's Talamasca or the Watchers of *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*.⁸

If vampire hunters are not educated purveyors of arcane knowledge, then they accomplish the slaying with firepower. Members of The Initiative in the television series *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* lack a firm grounding in the old texts and

books of magic that Buffy has available to her through the Watchers, and use military techniques and high power weaponry in order to hunt vampires. Fire and electrocution are other popular and more or less readily available methods for destroying vampires, both recalling the notion of cleansing apocalyptic flames.⁹

Female vampire hunters have had an even shorter career in vampire literature than the female monster. The figure of the woman is long associated with monstrosity; she has rarely been the avenger. From Medusa of Greek myth to the alien queens of *Star Trek's* Borg or the *Alien* films females have represented an unknowable archaic force. Because of the naturalization of the woman-as-monster, the saviour of the human race is naturally positioned as male. In most vampire fiction women exist as potential victims who must be saved by men; the hero is usually the father or the boyfriend/lover. Again *Dracula* offers a prototype of the vampire hunt. Mina Harker is the sole female in the group of six who hunt Dracula. As a victim of his attack already, she requires salvation by her husband and the other men. She even exhibits sympathy for him, even if it is only in death: "I shall be glad as long as I live that even in that moment of final dissolution, there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there" (Stoker 363). For women to hunt vampires for the sake of destroying evil radically disrupts the conservative romanticism that underwrites vampire narratives. As vampire hunter, a woman breaks the stereotypes of passivity and feminine coding. Until recently women in literature and film came by vampire hunting incidentally, generally through the men in their lives.

The most famous exception to this rule is the movie *Buffy: The Vampire*

Slayer (Kuzui 1992) and its television series spin-off. In the film version, cheerleader and generally superficial teen Buffy discovers that she is the Slayer, the person born with enhanced strength and skills that allow her kill vampires. In this sense she comes by both her powers and her quest through birthright, rather than seeking out a career as monster killer through an act of will. Stories detailing some unknown birthright are frequent regardless of the gender of the main character, and indeed messiah figures are more frequently men. However proactive female characters, especially if they are in a masculine genre, require a birthright plot in order to somehow justify the violations of social order that their actions perpetrate.¹⁰

Anita Blake, from Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series is another of the few exceptions to the rule of male vampire hunters. While she does have traits that make her a natural at hunting vampires, for instance, she draws power from the dead, it is her choice to hunt vampires. The cost of this choice is a rejection of her sexuality. She has projected negative meanings onto vampires and all that they represent, and rejects these traits in herself, including their sexual nature. As though to recover flagging femininity, she overcompensates in other areas.

That vampires have changed radically over time is not in dispute. The modern vampire emerges from a stew of occasionally conflicting meanings that the figure has collected in its long life. In his discussion of *Dracula* Paul O'Flinn says that "we need to begin with that sense of people constantly remaking the meanings by which they live, taking hold of the stories they inherit and boldly hacking them into new shapes to articulate new realities. And yet that remaking is always more or less

constrained by the circumstances in which it occurs, the openings and the barriers of the contexts in which it happens" (67-68). As society, armed with the tools of analysis, turns its attention to its monsters, its attitude and its approaches towards the "outsider" changes.

Not all critics respond positively to the "new" vampire and see its "domestication" through such processes as "writing from the inside out" (Gordon and Hollinger 2) as rendering its threat somehow impotent. Zanger bemoans the vampire's move from metaphor to metonym: "[T]he construction and popularity of the "new" vampire represent a demoticizing of the metaphoric vampire from Anti-Christ, from magical, metaphysical "other," toward the metonymic vampire as social deviant" that erodes the qualities that he sees as being central to the original draw of the vampire (17). However, the movement from unknown, unknowable, overwhelming force of evil to the prosaic, humanized postmodern version suggests an effective secularization of the vampire that is capable of addressing contemporary fears and the complexity of evil as it is seen today. A spook that will survive must, in a secular, urban society, leave off its themes of religious damnation and enter an alienated, urban world. This is a world in which the enemy and the other are no longer as easily identified. They can come from within and just as easily be a friend as a stranger. Bartholomew points out:

The moral landscape of a society is far more complex than the simple two-dimensional consideration of normal vs. deviant behavior. Rather, it focuses upon the interplay of competing conceptions of normality, morality, and, hence, deviance. Arguably, the more two-dimensional the moral landscape, the more widely accepted is the elite's definition of normal and deviant. It is when the moral boundary shifts, becomes less clear or, perhaps most important, is challenged by a seemingly

significant social group that the landscape becomes multidimensional and the machinery for the mass production of deviance is fired up. Demonologists appear. Repression begins (in Oplinger, 11).

Zanger's mythologized vampire is a function of a simplistic moral landscape, while vampires have begun to respond to a more complex discussion, with more challenges to an elite dictatorship of moral normalcy.

It seems more accurate to say that vampires have been remythologized to speak to contemporary society, whose myths have shifted. As they take on internal complexity, they come to represent an increasingly complex social matrix. Fear can be said to have moved from metaphysical afterlives to very human atrocities, from a spiritual to a spiritual and physical concern, which modern vampires carry metaphorically, rather than metonymically. Zanger suggests that the loss of some of the vampire's "magical," ephemeral traits, such as shapeshifting are the result of a conscious move away from mysticism. However it seems more accurate to say that they represent a trend towards the modern fantastic idea of world logic. The selection of vampiric qualities, which in any case does not always exclude shapeshifting, tends to follow from the need to explain within the logic of a given universe how the vampire came to be. The nature of the vampire, like the nature of evil, requires an origin to be understood, and origins will only be accepted if they are an extension of a logical creature. In an increasingly technological society, logic is of greater importance even in fantasy, and mystical unknowns are a jarring removal from a logically generated universe. But the postmodern selection of vampiric powers is well suited to the needs of contemporary society. Instead of being

demythologized, vampires have survived yet another stage, and their mythology has been reinvented once more.

Chapter Two

Cultural Dreams: Theorizing Fantasy

The fantastic expands our metaphors, extends our points of view, and gives us a fresh way to think of ourselves and the rules of society that bind us together by making us believe in the unbelievable. Writers create alternative worlds, parallel to our own, in which alternate stories can be played out, history and myth altered and taken to a different, internally logical conclusions. They offer alien possibilities in what is a seemingly familiar world. For any author whose work is involved in expressing the interests of a marginalized social group, the fantastic offers a unique and effective way of playing out social alternatives, imagining worlds in which they do not occupy the fringe, or in which another, fictional group takes on their position in order to defamiliarize the social oppression with which they live.

Women have long taken up the genre of the fantastic to express the inexpressible elements of their lives. Joanna Russ comments that “many fine writers who are women have discovered that fantasy, fantastic elements and methods, or simply even the tone of fantasy, give them the method to handle the specifically female elements of their experience in a way that our literary tradition of realism was designed not to do” (xiii-xiv). Fantasy and horror borrow the tropes of the gothic, including those that express the domestic horror of entrapment and estrangement. One of the most taboo subjects for women has surrounded the public expression of their sexual experiences. Playing within a realm that is both unreal and real at once, women covertly discuss their sexuality and the experiences to which they are subjected. The fantasies that emerge subvert the power

structures that buttress the social boundaries and seek to silence female sexuality.

Definitions of science fiction, fantasy and horror are difficult to give, being either so general as to be useless or a temporary classification contingent upon the contexts and principal themes of a given work. But as the "fiction" of science fiction means that it is a fantasy of technology, and horror is a fantasy of fear, alternate universes are a fantasy of society. They are always removed from but intimately related to the real as we know it: "Fantasy puts worlds under erasure, turns the universe into a pluriverse, and deliberately rouses anxieties" though Hume goes on to suggest that "popular forms show us alternative worlds, but rarely use them to unsettle us" (179). Weedman suggests, to the contrary, that "[i]nasmuch as desires and dreams exceed even the wide range of what society may plausibly become, fantasy takes up where science fiction ends, allowing the readers to explore, in imaginary realms new gender roles and experiences they honestly cannot believe they will encounter in the real world" (6). Weedman's definition is non-elitist, inclusive of pulp fiction, as a contrast to traditional Todorovian definitions.

Rabkin situates science fiction as a subcategory of the fantastic and refers to the fantastic's tendency to reversal as a one of its primary features: "The story concerns alienation, whether through the presence of an alien or the simple isolation of the human: humanity made strange in the world or the world made strange for humanity. The story is fantastic, reversing rules to gain attention" (3). Such defamiliarization is one of the most effective techniques for subverting expectations and presenting alternative points of view. It is easier to create an identification with the fantastic other, whose threats are themselves fantastic, than there could be with

the social groups it is meant to represent. While the fantastic other occasionally represents a threatening other, that threat is generally compromised by a cursory understanding of the conservative political ideology that underwrites them. It is identification across the boundary, *with* the other, that carries the subversive potential, and the threat to conventional social order.

The strange realities that Rabkin describes are not by-product of stories about people; they are the reason in and of themselves for the genre. The focus of these stories is the logic, or the difference, of the world itself, which offers up a potential, an alternative to conventional thinking. A fantasy novel is a success or failure based upon the author's success at creating and then consistently and logically negotiating the world-specific laws that they have set up. As Turkle writes, "[y]ou can postulate anything, but once the rules of the system have been defined they must be adhered to scrupulously" (81). In many fantasy texts the characters and plots may be neither deep nor original, and yet the novel itself will be a popular success. Fantasy bestows upon its subgenres a tendency towards complex worlds and simple characters and plots: "Science fiction gets its complexity from the invention of worlds rather than the definition of character. While most traditional fiction takes everyday reality as its backdrop and develops its interest in the complexity of its human characters, science fiction characters tend to be more one-dimensional" (Turkle 222).

A novel is a success based on the author's ability to create a successful world, one which operates with its own coherent logic, from which the author does not deviate. Role-playing games, a huge industry within fantasy and science fiction,

establish a logic that governs everything from food intake to complex spell-casting to the relative strength of monsters. One of the oldest, *Dungeons and Dragons*, has spawned a number of highly successful fantasy novel series, including *Dragonlance* and *Forgotten Realms*. Any deviations from the game's logic are noted by the audience. *Star Trek* is another universe whose internal continuity problems and external physical inconsistencies are enthusiastically examined by the hard-core fans who are themselves routinely disparaged in mainstream media. The logic of these worlds challenges our reality, and provides for complex and engaging metaphorical relationships to our world. These relationships are a defamiliarization technique that expose the artificiality of the social controls that we take for granted. They are neither more nor less logical than those created by the author. Meanwhile the difference of such worlds offers a unique standpoint from which to perceive possible solutions to social control, however utopian or dystopian they may be.

The focus on world-logic rather than complex characterization and plot, dependent upon the talents and interests of the author, does not exclude these genre novels from addressing concerns within our own culture. The metaphor that fantasy employs is an effective way of making our world seem unfamiliar, a safe way of approaching socially sensitive issues. Yet according to prevailing literary criteria, popular fiction genres are simplistic, formulaic texts designed for the uneducated audience. "The kind of polarity . . . which privileges high culture (complex) over popular culture (simple) - divides its readers along similar lines. Most commonly the high cultural reader is imagined as contemplative; by contrast, the reader of popular fiction, the fan, is distracted [and]. . . easily bored, experiencing either dubious or

unproductive pleasures" (Gelder 119). This cannot be based on the objective analysis of the literature itself. The feminist analysis of literary canon effectively disrupted the notion of unbiased analysis of literature by revealing how the canon was compromised by the interests of gender, class, race, and other social factors. Even a cursory analysis of the origins of pulp fiction shows how the exclusion of pulp genres is motivated by the interests of class, and the use to which vampires are put are dismissed and ignored at the same time.

Pulp and notions of popular culture rose out of a moment in time in which the upper classes began to lose their hegemonic control over education and literacy: "As our society, primarily through technology, became better able to educate the population and simultaneously more in need of literate workers, a publishing industry grew up to supply those workers' aesthetic wants cheaply, printing fiction intended to be ephemeral on the ephemeral paper used by newspapers, pulp" (Rabkin 219). Pulp was a threat to the powerful elite, because it implied a medium through which knowledge could be passed over which they had no control.¹¹ It was a way of knowing that excluded elite and time-honoured traditions of education, such as the universities, where legitimate knowledge was rigidly policed. Pulp bypassed the class structure that maintained the elite, and its very presence was a destabilizing influence. The value judgements placed on pulp texts are dependent upon the needs of the class which is authorized to make them, specifically, the academic elite. The traits of "literature," deep characterization, realistic plots, or experimental writing, are valued over those of "genre," which tend to be world-logic and spectacle. The slippery figure of the vampire has always been popular in these

fictions, where its presence can add hidden meanings that speak to audiences who know the genre. B-film vampires built their own language that turned eventually into self-parody that only an audience familiar with the conventions of the films could fully appreciate, because only they could spot the breaks in the narrative, giving rise to films such as *Love at First Bite* (1979) and *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995) among others.

The lack of respect with which popular culture is regarded can also be its strength. Discredited popular "trash" develops its own aesthetic that in reality is highly literate. On some level it is always commenting upon the world around it, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. There are numerous examples of fans subverting normalized media, such as queering straight characters on television or film. The act of forming a cult around a product is itself a subversive quality, as the secret knowledge of phenomena such as *Star Trek* or the cult embrace of *Rocky Horror Picture Show* illustrate:

Pulp is the illicit dressed up as the respectably, but it is not disguised, nor does it hide its true nature from the consumer. Thus it becomes a type of coded play: a seduction agreed in advance by both sides but *unspoken* by either. Pulp pleasure is illicit pleasure. Such pleasure comes from reading for the *wrong* reasons and knowing it. Pulp does not want to be respectable, it wants to pretend to be respectable - it is, to use a pulp-generated metaphor, transvestite in its enjoyments. (Bloom 133)

The defamiliarization techniques employed by fantasy writers are complex, and they are as important as any function of "respectable" literature. If the function fantasy performs is at odds with conservative ideology, devaluing its techniques is a natural way to discredit its message. Its dismissal as trash allows it the freedom to

carry subversive critiques of culture to a wide audience in the guise of harmless or worthless entertainment. Not that it is always subversive. Bloom points out that "it is always illicit, rarely controllable, maybe actually illegal but only sometimes subversive" (134) while Jackson's structural analysis warns that "To attempt to defend fantasy as inherently transgressive would be a vast, over-simplifying and mistaken gesture" (175). Even if it is "only sometimes subversive," its origins and the broad range of styles and attributes that loosely fall under this categorization suggest that it is an ideal position from which to produce subversive texts. While it is "allied to the commercial" (132) and can carry conservative messages, it is impossible to calculate the impact of the "illicit pleasure" that it generates, or the uses to which it will ultimately be put. The attachment to "pulp" phenomenon on the Internet, to short-lived television programs and novels that were critical failures, suggests the power of this "illicit pleasure" to arouse its audience. The Internet in its current state may be the one medium that is as fluid and as free from its alliance to the commercial as it needs to be in order to flourish.

Pulp and popular fiction may not always be subversive, but by its nature fan culture's manipulation of culture is. Its very presence implies consumer control of a product. Frequently fan culture exploits the products it adopts and deploys those products to purposes contrary to the intended purpose. Tasker's reading of action movies frames the spectacular musculature of action movies as a grotesque caricature of masculinity that is built to offset the inherently feminizing qualities of having the male actors' bodies on display. Fans are not distracted from the queer implications, as witnessed through the public acknowledgment of Van Damme's gay

male following.¹² The subgenre of fanfiction known as slash takes reading against the intent of the producers as its very essence, and repositions straight characters as homosexual.

How effective audiences are at subverting multimedia conglomerates who produce film and television remains to be seen. Fan culture is extremely popular on the internet, but the quasi-legal and the plainly illegal fan operated sites on the Internet are perpetually in danger of being shut down. The Internet is far more visible than the hard copy versions of fanzines that preceded them, easier to find by fans and also by corporations, who are increasingly aware of fan interests.

Regarding Jean-Claude Van Damme's following, for instance, Tasker notes: "Given the knowing homoeroticism of recent Van Damme films . . . the production team at work seems well aware of the star's appeal" (8). In some cases corporations appear to manipulate Internet fan culture. Some corporations have shown a canny awareness of fan culture, using the Internet to generate interest in a program, then shutting down fan sites to regain some measure of control over the images and sounds from the programs once the program has achieved a stable audience (Kendzior np). Fan sites have next to no legal grounds upon which to protest, and the disclaimers on fan sites stretch American fair use laws to the breaking point. Since many of these sites are dealing with sexually explicit and sometimes illegal activities, public support is difficult to generate.¹³ Lack of understanding of the medium itself and the personal involvement of the project of fan culture make it difficult to express the importance of subversive fandom.

The definitions of pulp, popular culture, cult and kitsch are difficult to

establish. As Rabkin points out, with its origins in the working class, "[p]ulp culture was mass culture and, by its very breadth, not susceptible to simple characterization" (219). Bloom claims that "[p]ulp may be popular (as the academic uses the term popular culture) but often it is not; it may deal in the commonplaces and stereotypes of everyday life, but again often it may not. Always pulp will be allied to the commercial but not necessarily determined purely by it" (132). In its simplest form, pulp is disposable literature, designed to be cheap enough for a newly literate mass audience to buy. Because it was not written for the elite upper-class it took on the stigma of being essentially worthless, allied with mass culture, and even potentially damaging. Over time popular culture, of which pulp is a part, began to imply a resistance to the upper-class and academic evaluations, raiding the mainstream for cultural artefacts and twisting them. The diversity of cultural appropriation that popular culture or "pulp" has undertaken defies categorization, but it essentially implies a position against the mainstream, or what culture values as significant.

These genres and their categorizations are not created in a vacuum. What they view as conventions of genre and how these conventions are approached and challenged changes over time. This indicates that these genres are responsive to social changes, reflecting the changing needs of the societies that produce them. The influence of culture over literature and literature over culture must be seen as a constant movement, particularly within the fluid, rapidly changing popular genres. What pulp fantasy offers is the freedom to break out of the rules of reality that exist and to imagine a world where not only the physical but also social rules can be

remade, and through their difference examine inequalities in our own world. This is the project that women writing about vampires take up. Like fan sites, fan fiction, and the fan culture that keeps placing a high value on the standards and qualities of pulp, authors who write within the vampire tradition are taking a devalued cultural icon and infusing it with new meaning of their own.

The project of taking up society's cast off monsters is part of the process of questioning what society values and, more importantly, why. Because of this need to challenge acceptability:

[a]cademic respect kills pulp with kindness. Pulp does not wish to be part of the canon - what does it care for the canon except to plunder and pastiche it (as the contemporary 'serious' artist now plunders and pastiches pulp). Here pulp has its own language and rhythm which only becomes pidgin when assimilated into or compared with 'respectable' language. It is essential for pulp to remain pulp and for it to retain its *unassimilable* nature, thereby preserving the *frisson* of its secret passion enacted among fans, coteries, cults and followings - the secret handshakes of the initiated. (Bloom 134)

Vampire fiction thrives in such an environment. This secret and sometimes not so secret cult is familiar with the conventions not of a particular medium, such as monster films, but of the vampire itself, in all its forms. While it would be difficult to find someone unfamiliar with generic vampire traits, readers and those who live within the culture of vampires, are privy to a more specialized language surrounding the myth. These readers are far more capable of picking up the nuances of a particular portrayal of vampirism and have a vested interest in maintaining its position just outside the culture at large. Their own sense of community requires a sense of distance from respectable mainstream, and mainstream culture is dependent upon fringe cultures to mark its own borders. Because it must remain

outside, vampire culture is always commenting on the mainstream. As Dresser's survey of vampire fans suggest, the vampire has become a sort of outcast hero, a romantic banished from society because of fear of what s/he knows. What s/he knows is how to live as an outsider, which threatens the rules that order the mainstream.

Aligning oneself with the outsider can be a source of empowerment to audiences. Not only do they find a hero in a figure that has been maligned by the same social forces that pressure individuals to conform, they also find a community of like-minded individuals who reinforce their own non-conformist values: "What difference is there here between academic and amateur? Literature lived as lifestyle is pulp. Pulp needs no defence, indeed it has no defence in its refusal to be determined by cultural rules" (Bloom 134). Fans lay claim to the depth of knowledge surrounding their particular popular icon, take it for their own, and live within its rules as opposed to those of mainstream culture, receiving support and reinforcement from other fans. Rowan noted that one of the major attractions of vampires for her students was their status as an outsider, whose private self is always hidden from humanity. This socio-cultural connection with vampires is particularly attractive to people in a marginalized position, and gives them a source of identification. Not all fans live pulp as a lifestyle, and not all popular fiction inspires a cult lifestyle.¹⁴

When vampire fiction does inspire such intense loyalty it tends to take on the more negative connotations of cult. Socially it is aligned with the worst and most extreme of goth and satanic cults, whether this association is accurate or not, as society seeks to denigrate and discredit those outside the mainstream in their patrols of the

boundaries of normality.

In the realm of literature, these patrols maintain a distance from genres such as science fiction and fantasy, absorbing exceptional works into the mainstream. When it can, mainstream absorbs creative work by granting it qualities that would normally be attributed to literature that has entered the canon. Thus a dystopic science fiction story such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is never shelved next to other, equally speculative fictions of alternate universes, like Jacqueline Harpman's *I Who Have Never Known Men*, that find themselves in the science fiction sections, nor is it marketed as such. The author's respectable, academic reputation allows this work to be absorbed into mainstream literature.

In Bloom's discussion of the pulp obscenity trials he points out that "[p]erhaps what pulp highlighted was an unspoken fragility in the system in which collectivism, either of the right or of the left was now under threat from a protean literature at once individualistic, erotic, violent, consumerist, and youthful — like the urban environment in which it flourished" (148). The continued desire to segregate pulp fiction suggests the unease with which conservative power structures view media over which they have little control, an unease that stems from the potentially subversive qualities that such media represent. As the manipulations of fan culture by corporations suggest, what they can not banish, they will attempt to control by establishing their ownership over the original product.

Recognition and respect may be inimical to the vibrancy of pulp cultures and their fringe movements and to the critiques posed by such work, but certain aspects of it eventually make their way into mainstream and become normalized. Whether

normalization is positive or negative is a matter of debate. Lesbian chic and the vogue of homosexual characters in movies and television imply a liberalization and a tokenism that leaves the actual benefits of such movements in doubt.

Normalization restricts the freedom of fringe cultures to define themselves and work against the mainstream, an urgent project for cultures that are engaged in real life and death struggles. Rather than accepting the notion of difference, the tokenism inherent in normalization allows the mainstream to let its prejudices and exclusion go unchallenged.

Hume argues for a fantastic that interrogates generic forms, assumptions and formulaic "shorthand." She argues for a mingling of postmodern elements in fantasy and science fiction: "[W]hy ask for any change at all? Let the two modes go in their separate directions. The reason I hesitate to laud that obvious possibility is simply that I find the political conservatism and naivete of the popular forms increasingly distasteful" (181). She believes that the opportunity for subversion that fantasy and science fiction can offer is hemmed in by generic constructions that are considered essential components and are rarely interrogated. If subversive method is not woven into conservative structures, they will maintain the status quo and reinscribe conservative ideology.

Hume's call for fantasy that interrogates traditionally conservative structures and narratives is being answered, particularly in the area of gender and fantasy. This has not just been a function of highly experimental postmodern fantasies that Hume examines; it extends from high fantasy, with its origins in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, to cyberpunk and urban fantasy. Tanya Huff's high fantasy

Quarters series reverses gender roles with a disorienting randomness that forces the reader to question their assumptions about gender and behaviour in a traditional fantasy setting.¹⁵ Further, Huff's play with roles refuses to let a "traditional" or "historical" setting excuse roles that reflect conservative roles. On the other side of the spectrum, cyberpunk has produced writers like Melissa Scott, who take up the dystopian, urban elements and introduce female protagonists into a primarily masculine genre. They use the transcendentalism in cyberpunk to explore gender and femininity.¹⁶ Writers like Huff and Scott who work within popular forms nonetheless manage to offer alternatives to conservatism without dismissing the genre.

In the structural definitions of the fantastic generated by Todorov and expanded by Rosemary Jackson most popular fantasy texts are not "fantastic" at all. The essential requirement of Todorovian fantastic, hesitation, is usually absent. To the characters there is no doubt about the 'reality' of events. Hesitation between the real or imaginary nature of the events does not exist in Hamilton's universe. To claim hesitation within Collins's text is stretching the evidence provided. While there are unreliable narrators, no other explanation is presented. In modern fantasy elements of the supernatural, like the "magic" of advanced technology, are accepted parts of the universe, in which case Rabkin's theory, where science fiction is subsumed under the umbrella of fantasy, is an accurate one. Modern fantasy most closely follows the definitions of the Todorovian Marvellous: "Movement into a *marvellous* realm transports the reader or viewer into an absolutely different, alternative world, a 'secondary' universe, as Auden and Tolkien term it. This

secondary, duplicated cosmos, is relatively autonomous, relating to the 'real' only through metaphorical reflection and never, or rarely, intruding into our own or interrogating it" (Jackson 42). Within such a universe, vampires exist, the mythic and folkloric traits work, with or without the benefit of magic, and the only quality that matters is the interior coherence, the world logic, of the text itself. However, Jackson underestimates the variety of uses to which metaphorical reflection is put, and its potential as a source of identification for its audiences.

There are reasonable grounds to conclude that horror and fantasy provide a safe space for the mere venting of anti-social behaviours: "Perhaps the vampire is the personification of an evil force - taking something from another against their will. Maybe in this role of the empowered he provides a voyeuristic experience which then reduces the necessity for others to commit such acts" (Dresser 168). Theories of catharsis suggest that once the text is over, social boundaries are reestablished. Here catharsis is a function of conservative values. However, the tradition of vampire fiction is a continuous text. Brummett discusses the notion of discrete and diffuse texts, where parts of originally discrete texts make up a larger, diffuse texts which "deconstruct and reconstruct them as different symbolic unities" (148). Diffuse texts are made up of fragments that "began life as the discrete texts of film, television shows, short stories or novels, and magazine articles, among others" and which "encompass all at once many different texts, context, media, and even historical periods" (148). The strong tradition of self-consciously borrowing from earlier texts is a standard point of vampire texts. It is a rare text that does not acknowledge the fictional vampire predecessors. This is usually done by comparing

famous fictional vampires with those in the current text. It is difficult to justify naivete when human characters are confronted by a creature found so regularly in culture. Each text is commenting upon an ongoing fictional tradition. Therefore, even the most cathartic of texts is going to shift boundaries.

Because vampire texts are based upon the character found within them, the genres in which they are found vary widely. While all are fantasy, in that a mythical creature is seen to be interacting with humans, texts can be anything from horror to romance, or any combination between.¹⁷ The ease with which the vampire moves between genres and media is a testament to its adaptability. The vampires present in texts stretch the generic rules under which they are written:

Yarbro, Elrod and Rice[']s] . . . chronicles share a number of characteristics usually associated with women's romance - notably, the tracing out of the vampire's search for fulfilment, for a 'complete' love relationship. But, under the umbrella of the vampire genre, romance themes may be dispersed or channelled through other topics or interests - an involvement with criminality, for instance . . . or a detailed recreation of historical events . . . or a kind of macro-presentation of occult or mythological activity which is shown to control the narrative in certain ways . . . That is, these novels are not *just* romances. (Gelder 109)

Ostensibly a figure of horror, vampires bring a complex cluster of meanings to a text which stretches the boundaries of genres.

The challenge of theory is explaining a genre that questions rules of order in society by divorcing itself from reality and drawing metaphorical traces of its material parent society into a new logic. But theory must also explain what the vampire, a nearly inexhaustible figure of the other, means in a specific text in a single moment in time. Perhaps anachronistically, theorists project upon Dracula and his kin the

anxieties of a modern age, finding within historical vampires the feminist, the marxist, the queer impulses that are central to their own concerns. In these particular texts, the vampire is the locus of sexual terror. She or he represents unstable, changing sexual impulses. She is the conflicting impulses of female sexuality in Collins's work, and the forbidden desire for a *male* object in Hamilton's. At issue is the ever increasing presence of active female desire.

One of the central criticisms of fiction in the fantastic genre is its lack of realistic character development. Writers in this field build elaborate metaphorical structures apparently at the expense of complex characterization. Focus on the metaphors and world logic of the fantastic universe, however, is a purposeful stylistic choice that reflects the desires of its writer and audience. The function of fantastic worlds is to provide a microcosm where specialized knowledge and values take the place of those governing the realistic world. Pulp fantasy's audience is itself outside of the literary canon; its essence is a mass appeal that rejects and is rejected by the mainstream. The genre is not constrained by the dictates of canon as it applies to English literature, and is free to appeal to and interact with its audience on the level that they choose. Pulp sets forth its own standards that its canon must reflect.

The insular world of pulp fantasy is criticised for conservative, commercial compromises and the poor quality of its characters, plot, themes, and craftsmanship that pander to the broadest market possible. Yet the qualities that define pulp fantasy as a genre offer a unique challenge to literary canon and the standards of social behaviour reflected in realist fiction. Quality in pulp fiction is found in its world

logic; that is, the world that the author imagines must be inherently logical as it relates to the rules that they have generated. A fantasy is of poor quality if authors break the logic they have established in order to facilitate the plot. This logic poses an inherent challenge to realist fiction and literary canon. The societies of fantasy work. Through metaphor they present a legitimate framework through which to view society that stands at odds with reigning cultural interpretations. The substructure of pulp fantasy is one of the multiple voices silenced by the notion of canonical literature, and it serves to interrogate the rules that are considered a matter of nature in mainstream society. Fantasy such as Tanya Huff's *Valor's Choice*, for instance, challenges contemporary cultural assumptions about women in the military by naturalizing the phenomenon.

The act of vampirism itself (that is, the parasitical leeching of something essential to the life of the host) serves as a metaphor that allows fantasy writers to warp their worlds to reflect their own values. In its literary form, vampirism was established by the Romantics, refined by Stoker, and re-established by Rice.¹⁸ Collins's and Hamilton's vampires are created in the shadow of their literary forebears, reflecting a cat's cradle of myths, folklore, and literary genres that have become centered around the category of popular fiction. In this area of discredited culture, writers carve out a metaphor for sexual identity that challenges that which is inscribed for them. This identity has changed over time to become more sympathetic to the vampire's outsider status. Theorists are undecided as to whether Dracula was inherently evil or not, but certainly in the twentieth century writers have increasingly presented a humanized, ambiguous face to the vampire. Most vampire

narratives demand a rationalization for the monster that Dracula (or the vampire of the text) has become. Coppola's Dracula turned against the church out of grief and rage at the death of his beloved. In the film *Dracula 2000* (2000) the vampire is Judas, condemned to unlife and furious over what he was made to do, while in *The Lost Boys* (1987) the central vampire is a patriarch in search of a mother for his children. Narratives base a sense of moral good and evil on the way in which characters become vampires, which varies from the conservatively religious to the scientific, and also generates guilt or innocence.

Postmodern theories stand at odds with the fantastic as it has been formulated in the past. Most theoreticians, including Todorov, Jackson, Rabkin, and so forth, have concerned themselves with framing the genre, categorizing its works, and separating them from the real. In itself, the structuralist project is not wrong. However, even a cursory examination of Todorov's work reveals a limited set of definitions that fail to accommodate the broad range of fantastic literature. Nor does structuralism address the complex relationships involving fans, fantasy texts, the real, and the constructed values of the real. Structural definitions can provide a rough basis from which to identify works of the fantastic, for instance, in the notion of constructing and abiding by world logic, but the value of the fantastic is its fluid ability to interrogate the real and prove its own relative nature.

The rationalization of the vampire's origins makes her/his definition as a monster, and even as an other, a more relative judgement that leaves open the possibility of the vampire as a figure of liberation and empowerment.

Metanarratives, Christianity, for instance, construct the vampire as absolute evil.

But postmodern theory denies the possibility of absolute truth and, therefore, absolute evil. Truth is plural, and contingent upon power structures that exist in a very specific time and place, and that are always interested in controlling the discourses that produce truth. As such, any essentialist argument (good versus evil, truth versus fiction) is undermined by the postmodern suggestions of coexisting multiple realities.

Patriarchy, for instance, emerges as a falsely absolute truth. Any feminism placed opposite the monolithic principle of patriarchy with create a system of repression and oppression. To counter an absolute, repressive patriarchy, feminism initially posited a "transhistorical female body" that was its own absolute truth. Postmodernism breaks down both the essentialist patriarchal argument and its feminist counter. "There will not be a transhistorical female body left as a reference for these arguments; instead, what is called 'the body' will be a site and expression of different, interested power relations in various times and places" (Bailey 106). Instead of instituting another repressive and monolithic entity, a multiplicity represented by appropriating the vampire narrative offers diverse points of identification. The situational intervention necessitated by such a theory has the potential to be far more sensitive to difference than any single theory of gender evolution. Fantasy, and the figure of the vampire, offer an effective way to express such a situational intervention.

The control of sex and sexuality does not lie in its repression. Control is generated at the level of discourse. Foucault recounts how the bourgeois society did not end discussion of sexuality, thus dividing the discourse into discreet

categories of licit and illicit. Instead, society controlled who talked about sexuality, where, and for what purpose. There was “[a] control over enunciations . . . where and when it was not possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships” (Foucault 17-18). Different social circumstances require different levels of communication regarding sexuality. Hamilton and Collins take up the sexualized vampire, a figure that few women have written about. In the centuries-old vampire narrative, female voices have been routinely silenced for the sake of patriarchal interests. Writers like Hamilton and Collins reveal elements of the narrative, like the sexualized violence of the vampire’s attack, that describe female experience.

If these authors are able to produce their own texts to explode metanarratives, then they have opened up space to explore diverse sexualities. Foucault links mastery over discourse with mastery over sexuality. In his example, bourgeois society absorbed the religious dictum to “seek to transform . . . every desire, into discourse” (Foucault 21). In the process of transforming desire into text “a whole rhetoric of allusion and metaphor was codified” (Foucault 17). Even those discourses that are not coded metaphor but are simply denigrated and devalued offer a launching point from which to form an identity that stands at least partially at odds with the social powers that write them. Postmodern theory reveals relations of power that deny any simple binary of sexual oppression and repression. Foucault’s analysis of sex and sexuality, then, can be used to gain an understanding of how the fantastic interrogates the real. Hamilton’s *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* and Collins’s

Midnight Blue are simply two of a multitude of voices that express such a challenge.

Vampires offer a metaphor for sexual experience that has shown itself to be almost infinitely flexible in its ability to challenge social convention.

The postmodern attack on the metanarrative generates multiple ways of talking about sex, and from that, multiple sexual identities. Bailey writes that Foucault's formulation of power, the body, and identity:

is not a restrictive, prohibitive, unidirectional relationship which manifests itself as the repression of subjects by an authority. . . . Foucault understands power as a generative force, as well as a restrictive opportunity. It can create pleasures and dimensions to existence which had not previously existed. For example, there is a pleasure Foucault recounts in finding a name for one's 'self' - for example, 'homosexual' - and embracing the identity which is socially attached to this name. This is the pleasure of uncovering the 'truth' of self. (109)

The pleasure of learning one's identity, and of recognizing others who share that identity, rests in willfully taking on a role that is created deviant by discourse, controlled, written about, and defined from the culturally dominant perspective. Vampires and the fantastic offer an opportunity to identify with a figure in a culturally marginalized time and place, to lay claim to it and to grant it its own, specific legitimacy. In turn, this positioning offers the same multiplicity to the identifying reader.

Vampire narratives may be complicated by their relationship to conservative commercial forces, but they are still responsive to change through the desires of their audience. They offer room to reimagine identities, and the freedom to break out of the rules of reality that exist here. They imagine a world where not only the

physical but also social rules can be remade. Through this difference, contemporary inequalities can be addressed. This is the project that women writing vampires engage in when they write fantasy. Like fan sites, fan fiction, and the fan culture that keeps placing a high value on the standards and qualities of popular genres, authors who write within the vampire tradition are taking a devalued cultural icon and infusing it with new meaning of their own.

The continued segregation and denigration of popular culture by academics suggests the unease with which conservative power structures view media where the rules of ownership and presentation are not solid. What is socially correct requires something that is *not* in order to define it:

So from the earliest times, the stranger from another tribe, the 'barbarian' who speaks an incomprehensible language and follows 'outlandish' customs, but also the woman, whose biological difference stimulates the fantasies of castration and devoration, or in our own time, the avenger of accumulated resentments from some oppressed class or race, or else that alien being, Jew or Communist, behind whose apparently human features a malignant and preternatural intelligence is thought to lurk: these are some of the archtypal figures of the Other, about whom the essential point to be made is not so much that he is feared because he is evil; rather he is evil *because* he is Other, alien, different, strange, unclean, and unfamiliar. (Jameson 115)

The other must remain outside. It is written as sick, abnormal, evil to build health, normalcy, and good. Identification with the other and writing from that position without the negative connotations threatens to disrupt the fiction of a smooth self/other, repressor/repressed binary. The vampire narrative incorporates all of these elements at one time or another, and bears the weight of all of them for modern audiences. Altering power structures means entering and controlling

discourse. In vampire fiction the body, frequently the female body, is the site of contamination, over which good and evil do battle. Power is contested in the literal possession of the body. Women have always been written as the victims in this text. They do not necessarily write themselves as victims. They use the fantastic to provide a source of identification that resists being written as a victim. Its mechanism of defamiliarization reframes issues to resist reading women as victims by revealing the structures that write her so.

Especially at this point in its history, the potential for the vampire to represent many anxieties at the same time makes it a valuable figure for representing the fragmented, partial, and contradictory identities and struggles that postmodernism proposes and marginalized people and cultures require. This is how the vampire gains its ambiguity. It also means that if the vampire is the villain, her or his villainy is usually more complicated than a simple good/evil dichotomy. The eternal and myriad struggles represented in vampire texts correspond to an analysis of the body in history that "refuses the possibility of absolute and final cultural transformation" but rather "allow[s] us to win and lose battles without having an absolute war" (Bailey 107). The vampire's endless return in sequels and remakes suggests that there is always a need to revisit the battles fought in the past, and provide a different, and differently satisfactory ending, to reflect different needs.

The fantastic expands our metaphors and points of view, and gives us a fresh way to think of ourselves in relation to the discourses that are used to describe us. The fantastic alternative worlds play out alternative stories, histories and myths to take them to different, but internally logical, conclusion, offering up alien possibilities

in what is almost a familiar world. The fantastic can change what it means to be marginal. The distinct categorization of good and evil in traditional fantasy and horror appear to support the silence of female identity, but monsters are not monsters to every reader. Identification across cultural barriers carries subversive potential, and disrupts conservative discourse that writes the other as evil. This subversion may not be quantifiable but there is still value in marking its presence and its functions; it is altering a cultural myth of otherness for all time. If it is not possible, as the Foucauldian theories suggest, to escape, avoid, or to be outside of cultural constructions of identity, and if these constructions are so embedded in our culture as to be naturalized and invisible to us, then the project of engaging constructions in battle requires a process of denaturalization, of defamiliarization, in order to highlight the process that is taking place. It is defamiliarization which is at the heart of literature of the fantastic.

Chapter Three

Regarding Men: Redefining the Male Role in Vampire Narratives

Granting subjecthood to the female characters in texts by placing them in the center of their own stories allows them to have their own feelings, emotions, and desires. When discussing sexual identity, one of the effects of woman as subject is the ability to look at and desire men without being cast in the traditional role of whore while doing so. Traditional stereotypes impose passivity upon female characters, naturalizing constructed gender binaries that serve conservative social values. This has meant equating active with men and masculinity, and passive with women and femininity. The challenge of these fantasy texts is to break free of these artificial binaries, imagining a world that is not based upon the denigration of one for the benefit of the other. Hamilton and Collins resist the notion that any actively desiring woman must be unnatural, a monster, a slut. Hamilton presents a confident character who has the strength of purpose to define what she wants. Collins presents a character who learns as the narrative unfolds that while she can desire men, she does not require one in order to be a whole person. This project requires defamiliarization of stereotypes while reimagining both the female and the male characters in positive roles.

Vampires have traditionally been powerful male figures who threaten an established order by contaminating and converting humans. Published in 1897, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* formalized the structure of the vampire narrative for the next century. In it, a foreign vampire arrives at the center of the British empire and begins to spread his contamination to the British population, primarily through

attacking women. He is thwarted by a makeshift group of male vampire hunters, led by a patriarchal figure. First he is chased out of England, and then he is killed. The conflict is between the male characters in the novel, but it is performed over the bodies of the female characters, who are more or less passive ineffective combatants.

Recent vampire fiction questions the passivity and the absence of women in the vampire narrative. In her series of novels, Nancy Collins proposes a female vampire whose sole purpose is to hunt the vampire who created her, and destroy him. The protagonist of Hamilton's series is a rare vampire hunter who is, rarer still, also a woman. She rejects entirely notions of female passivity, hunting monsters with an almost religious fervour. The project of both texts is constructing an active female identity.

Yet in both Hamilton's *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* and Collins's *Midnight Blue* the strength of the protagonists is undermined by the treatment of the male characters. By repeating a false binary of active/passive, the texts suggest that strong female characters can only be found in relation to sick men. In Hamilton's text passive males are the victims of a literal sickness in the form of transmittable diseases that are framed within a discourse of sexually transmitted diseases and especially HIV/AIDS. In comparison, Anita is a healthy, heterosexual female who appears impervious to lycanthropy and vampirism and whose most prominent trait is slaying vampires. Narratives of chemical and sexual addiction frame the criminal underground Sonja Blue inhabits. The relationship between a powerful female and weaker male is portrayed in terms of helpless dependency and resists

normalization.

Fantasy offers the opportunity to radically challenge cultural stereotypes, even within genres whose structures appear rigidly conservative. Female hero quests are more and more frequent, while other stories deny the notion that adventure ends at marriage, and take wives and mothers as the central adventuring characters.¹⁹ Alternate universes create defamiliarization that points out how heavily "natural" values are invested with hegemonic meanings of power and ideology. Introducing an alien into a human culture reveals the artificiality of social standards. This technique is a standard of fantasy. In addition to introducing the audience to the rules governing the universe, it introduces the truth of culture that the text is interrogating.

While the novels attempt to erode traditional vampire narratives that place women as victims, its reliance on conservative readings of the monster as other undermines the potentially liberating functions. Organized vampire hunting is a relatively recent phenomenon in fiction, one that has undergone a radical increase in popularity with *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*.²⁰ Knowledgeable vampire hunters in earlier texts were patriarchal, formed in the image of Abraham Van Helsing. In opposition to Van Helsing's fatherly European masculinity, both Buffy and Anita Blake are young, American, and female. However, unlike Buffy, Anita shares with her patriarchal forerunners their conservative values. Though Anita is an active woman with significant power, she views her power as a corruption. Conservatism depends upon excusing and punishing such power.

Anita's success hinges on innate talents in the preternatural field. These

inborn talents make her one of the most powerful figures in the book, and draw members of the vampire and lycanthrope communities to her. The narrative generates a framework of pathological deviance to reconcile her power with mistrust of difference that her conservatism breeds. She reads her desire for the male characters in the text as a product of seduction that they initiate. Interaction with them results in a conversion through infection by the preternatural creatures. As her association with them grows, she sees herself changing into a monster. This is her punishment for her power and her desire. The pleasure of watching in the text is undermined by the stereotypes of disease that the text uses.

The monster community is primarily male, cast in the long shadow of Anne Rice's queered characters in the *Vampire Chronicles* series. Johnson describes Rice's work as "homoerotic fantasies of sexual and artificial paradises" (np). The homoerotic subtext present in vampire fiction since its appearance in literature is inherent in the threat of sexualized exchange when the vampire's survival became fixed on the sado-masochistic biting and feeding. Rice fully textualized this aspect of the narrative, and it is fully recognized by her audience, many of whom were introduced to vampires through her work (Carter 193 note). One of the central themes of Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* is a search for identity that is eventually found in a queered family. It is only when her vampires form a community that they are safe. The community offers her vampires identity, recognition and some degree of safety. With a master or alpha to protect them, weaker vampires and lycanthropes know that they do have an environment to escape into. In Hamilton's text the vampire community is moving into the public sphere. Their attempts to legalize their

way of life are modeled after those of the women's and gay rights movements; they are moving for political change, and legislation that will recognize their right to live.

A collective movement also offers them the opportunity to take control of the narratives placed upon them. From such now canonical feminist texts as Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* to recent experimentations in cable television like the North American remake of the British original series *Queer As Folk*, marginalized groups have struggled to define themselves and their own narratives against the reigning discourses.

The casting of vampires as a recognizably marginalized group like homosexuals is problematic, but cast as it is here in the framework of contemporary politics it reframes contemporary issues in a more sympathetic light. In this series we are offered a view of vampires and lycanthropes who are attempting to live human lives while battling prejudice. The implications are clear: not all vampires are monsters. But Hamilton's work in this area fails to break from sexual and homosexual stereotypes. In order to present an active female character she juxtaposes Anita against a community of passive men. Power remains a gendered binary. The passive male community is also highly sexualized, which makes sexuality and sexual power suspect and contaminated rather than liberating. Sexuality is also predatory, which is at its most damaging when it intersects with the queer vampire community and plays on the vicious notion of gay man as child molester. The vampire and lycanthrope communities are populated with a number of young men who were victims of older vampires when they were young and vulnerable. They have been "turned" by the experience and contaminated with the

same urges as their attacker.

Hamilton attempts to negotiate narratives of homosexuality and non-mainstream sexual practises in order to produce foils for Anita's behaviours. She reproduces narratives that posit effeminate gay men. They are passive where Anita is active and penetrable and morally suspect where Anita remains rigid and uncompromising. By emphasizing the effeminate and thus deviant characteristics of the queered monster community, Hamilton produces a masculinised heroine, one who refutes even the positive characteristics of her own personality if she feels they make her in some way "soft." Anita remains the hero(ine) perhaps because, as Clover points out, "masculinizing a women is a far more acceptable project than feminizing a man" (107). The queered men are projected as villains for the same reason. Anita is engaged in masculine power struggles, and those characteristics are most often refuted that are presented as in some way feminine. Her willingness to engage in power struggles that lend themselves to a disavowal of her sex and her sexuality foreclose the project of revaluing different ways of knowing.

Fictional vampires are frequently urbane seducers of women. They lure women away from the safety of their families by offering escape from worldly concerns. This is a movement away from Twitchell's Romantic vampire narratives, where "the male vampire story was a tale of domination, the female version was one of seduction" (*LD* 39). The implications of gendered behaviour remain, however. Seduction is the tool of a woman and the man who uses it is effeminate, an accusation leveled against men who refuse overt power and domination. Escape from the class, gender, sexual and racial bounds that tie the object of seduction are

suspect when filtered through the screen of sexuality: "The powerful social position of the typical vampire is no accident. It tells us that part of the inherent metaphorical material in society's dreams of vampire narratives is social, and involves questions of social justice, power, exploitation, race, and class, as well as the more obvious gender conflict" (Johnson np). They offer a fantasy of individual identity that defies imposed narratives.

The central antagonist, who becomes less antagonistic as the books continue, is an example of the seductive vampire. Jean-Claude was selected to become a vampire for his physical beauty, and he uses his appearance to his advantage. As there is no ambiguity about the equation of feeding with sexuality, Anita's repudiation of Jean-Claude is a repudiation of the freedom to redefine herself. Anita fears the vulnerability of emotional attachment. As a child she watched her father remarry after her mother's death and build a family life that excluded her. Later, her fiancé abandons her rather than face the disapproval of his family. These rejections haunt her current relationships. She also suspects the strength that sexuality and emotional connection generate. She is extremely reluctant to enter into the triumvirate relationship with Richard and Jean-Claude partly because she does not trust the vampire, but partly because what will happen is an unknown quantity. She ends up raising not only zombies, but vampires as well, a fact that bothers her greatly, as some of them are her friends (*The Killing Dance*). Later she cries when one of the same vampires she raises calls her master (*Burnt Offerings* 107), regretting the power that she has gained. While she has no compunctions about practising with her guns or exercising her physical power, she

balks at practising the power that she shares with Jean Claude, the vampire, and Richard, a lycanthrope, because it is generated through a sensual, if not sexual process. Power rooted in sexuality is illegitimate; sexuality is objecthood. Her preference for physical shows of aggression and power, centered around gun and knife play, acts as a rejection of what is constructed as feminine and suspect. Anita's rejection of Jean Claude's advances, while ostensibly a repudiation of passive female receptivity to seduction, is rooted in fear of a sexual identity.

Her power and the levels of violence increase as she becomes more sexualized. She claims that she is becoming more like the monsters she hunts, which she defies and denigrates at every opportunity. She associates sexuality with violence and deviance, an association generated by the religious conservatism she grew up with in a Roman Catholic environment. It also reflects social devaluation of sex as a form of power. She has no respect for those who participate in the vampire tourist trade, which centers around mingling sexuality and high risk behaviour, even when the community that they form protects them physically and emotionally. Events surrounding the monster community are repeatedly staged at a strip club and the sex trade is emphasized throughout the series, though particularly in later books like *Burnt Offerings*. These games that the vampire leadership play revolve around sexual possession, and Anita clearly associates the monster community primarily with sexuality. Her continued participation in the monster community also forces her to become more sexualized.

However, her nature as an animator "queers" her straight character, and ensures that she will continue to become entangled with the preternatural

community. As an animator in Hamilton's alternate universe, Anita can raise the dead as zombies. As her power increases and she uses it more and more she discovers that she can also raise sleeping vampires and control them (*The Killing Dance*). Her protests over her involvement conflict with apparent unwillingness to leave the city. Her initial refusal to work with the supernatural community turns into a strained defense of some of their kind, and a sympathy for the difficulties of, especially, lycanthropes. She becomes the highest ranking female in the werewolf pack, and is the defender of the wereleopards of St. Louis, championing the weaker members of the preternatural community. What this describes is her ambiguity towards the nature that the preternatural community brings out in her. Her power places her at odds with images of moral womanhood. While she takes pleasure in the power and freedom she has, she also feels guilt. Naomi Wolf draws a strong comparison between the feelings that women and gay men have been made to share over their sexuality:

Gay men have written about how many suffer guilt about the possibility of infection because they have internalized the message that gay sex is decadent and transgressive. I think many straight women have a set of feelings about sexual pleasure in the age of AIDS that is closer on the spectrum to gay men's guilt than it is to straight men's fear, because sexually active straight women too have internalized some suspicion that their sexuality is decadent and transgressive. (207)

Guilt over her sexuality drives Anita to project herself into the monstrous.

The structure, terminology, and language used to build Hamilton's preternatural community borrow heavily from the dialogue surrounding homosexual subcultures. This in itself is not inherently wrong: "What has been imagined

through the vampire image is of a piece with how people have thought and felt about lesbians and gay men - how others have thought and felt about us, and how we have thought and felt about ourselves" (*Children* 57). But while the vampire could be the point from which a more positive narrative is established, Hamilton reproduces and conflates narratives of sexual deviancy, illness, homophobia and 'feminine' passivity in order to explain Anita's strength in absence of a construction of power other than that of a gendered binary. Anita's observations of the male characters concentrate on their physical appearance, clothing, and perhaps most importantly, her perception of their weaknesses. As she is one of the most powerful characters, they are subordinate to her, submissive, and look to her for protection. As a collection of ex-street kids, drug addicts and hustlers turned strippers, they are young and weak compared to Anita's independence, knowledge, strength and dominant personality. Her justification for protecting monsters stems from their position as victims within their culture. Kruger points out that within the narratives surrounding HIV/AIDS guilt and innocence are established through the means by which the disease has been contracted. The dichotomy of sickness and health is transferred to a moral sickness and a moral health, in which moral decadence is cause for the biological sickness, as a progression from, and punishment for it. Thus, while Jason or Nathaniel, two St. Louis lycanthropes that Anita forms relationships with, are worthy of sympathy and protection, Jean Claude, at least until he reveals the circumstances surrounding his conversion, is irredeemable.

Not all of the preternatural community are part of the culture of dancers and hustlers that are the main focus of the texts. Anita describes incidents of violence

against people who are otherwise “normal:” teachers, health care workers, students. Nonetheless they are all ‘tainted’ by association because they share the infection of the sexual fringe. Every interaction with the preternatural community carries implications of sexualized threat. Anita is always watching, and she is always watching with a heightened awareness of sexual desire. She is also witness to the performed sexuality of the monster communities, which she generalizes to all of her interactions with the preternatural.

Health and morality depend upon sickness and depravity in order to define what they are. The idea of an insidious virus, or a disease such as cancer which can remain undetected for years shares similarities with the dialogue surrounding threats of communist or other radical social movements that “grow” in absence of proper diligence and care of the social body, and vice versa. Kruger’s research into the confluences of moral and biological illness surrounding AIDS offers an examination of the metaphors of biology, warfare, and cultural stereotyping that come together in discussions of the disease:

Presenting an alternative masculinity - a different and dangerous set of coded “ideas” that will disable the cell’s normal functions, disrupting its expressive processes and turning the cellular machinery to a foreign and ultimately fatal agenda of production - the viral genome undermines, through a kind of homosexual rape, the gender hierarchy between nucleus and cytoplasm, DNA and the processes of expression and production, imagined at the cellular level. And just as anxieties about homosexual “recruitment” of ostensibly “straight” boys and men express a real uncertainty about the stability of “normal” male sexuality, its capacity for resisting “perverse” takeover such a model of disease implies that sickness emerges out of some preexisting weakness of moral fortitude. (39)

So, in the case of homosexuality, “[t]he imagined “natural” passivity and weakness

of gay men is transferred to the once-healthy cell and the homophobically imagined "disease" of gayness literalized in the disease process of HIV illness and AIDS" (Kruger 42). In narratives of AIDS, blame can be attributed to carriers of a neutral disease. Catching AIDS implies moral deficiency. "Diseases often, perhaps always, take on social and cultural meanings that make it possible for them to be seen not just as random events, but as part of some plan or meaningful pattern" (23) and HIV/AIDS has been a particularly obvious and straightforward example; society continues to conflate HIV/AIDS and homosexuality.

The *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series mingles science with religion. Explanations for the supernatural are scientific in that vampirism and lycanthropy are caused by a definite viral agent. At the same time religious and magical methods of killing vampires still work. Faith in a crucifix or cross can ward off vampires, and Anita can sense Jean-Claude's soul leaving the body at dawn. Allergies to silver are a scientific explanation, but Hamilton provides no scientific explanation for the power of holy items over vampires. The mingling of religion and science suggests anxiety around a world whose technological sophistication has vastly outstripped the ability of the general public to understand it. Technology has advanced to the point where Arthur C. Clarke's Third Law, "[a]ny sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" is applicable even in technologically literate societies (2). While individuals may not understand the scientific basis for computers, they expect them to work. Understanding is unnecessary. Hamilton uses faith to mingle religion and science in her series. What cannot be explained by technology is left as a matter of faith. The texts

reconcile the efficacy of religious icons at warding off vampires with rules of science that are as rigorous as those of contemporary reality by leaving it as a matter of faith, with the expectation that a scientific explanation exists that characters are as yet ignorant of.

As she sees herself as moral, Anita tries not to judge people on the basis of disease, but a moral/religious basis provides a grounding for her biases. Vampirism can be passed on to unborn children in the form of a virus (*The Killing Dance*). As well, the method of becoming a vampire suggests a sexually transmitted disease. But vampirism is portrayed as more of a lifestyle choice, and this is where the dialogue of guilt and innocence enters the narrative. Given that animators have also been excommunicated, Anita's religious grounds for protest are dubious. However, her religious objections to vampires are underscored by her obvious dislike of the vampire church, the Church of Eternal Life, which actively recruits humans to become members. It is very much a conscious choice to become a vampire, rather than an accident of infection. As Brummett points out, "[w]ithin a scene of decay and chaos, vampiring depicts humans as weak, inefficient, ignorant, or foolish creatures who bring their misfortunes on themselves" (160). The church justifies the fears of recruitment so familiar to narratives surrounding homosexuality and presents the conflict between science and faith common to vampire texts. Science itself is neutral but the meanings attached to it are not. A church will place guilt where science will find innocent victimization. Since vampires are explained primarily in a religious framework, they are culpable. The vampire church is an attempt to humanize vampires.

Vampires and lycanthropes suffer the guilt-by-association familiar to HIV/AIDS narratives. The distinction is repeatedly made between innocent victims who have contracted the viruses accidentally, through botched inoculations or attacks, and those who engage in risky behaviour or even willingly court vampirism and lycanthropy. Victims just want to live a normal life but are persecuted by the perceptions of infection and corruption surrounding the disease itself. Strangely, despite high risk sexual situations HIV/AIDS makes no appearance in the books, outside of an offhand reference. Though many of the characters are part of the sex trade, no one has, or had, HIV/AIDS, nor mentions any acquaintances who do: "It is a disease, and it's illegal to discriminate against lycanthropes, just like people with AIDS, but people do it anyway" (*The Laughing Corpse* 312).²¹ It is easier to generate sympathy for lycanthropes because lycanthropy does not carry the religious stigma that vampirism does. They are the undead, and beyond most definitions of natural even with a viral explanation. Both preternatural groups depend upon a scientific explanation to create an image of victimization and expunge the notion of a moral flaw surrounding disease. This is a part of the vampire narrative inserted through cultural faith in science to explain natural phenomena:

Since it first gained social legitimization in the seventeenth century, "modern science" has been involved in a continuing quest to assert itself as the primary sense-making apparatus for Western culture; it has been largely successful in its endeavor to equate its explanations with fact. Along the way, science not only concerned itself with the explanation of natural phenomena but also worked to dispel the "myths" of previous, nonscientific explanations of natural phenomena. In place of myth, science claimed to provide Truth. (Jordan 6)

Not all members of the preternatural community are victims, but with a scientific

explanation they can be reconstructed in that way.

Hamilton contrasts her victims, people like Richard who contracted the disease by accident, with “guilty” carriers.²² In her urban landscape they tend to come from the high risk groups that Kruger and others have described. They are primarily engaging in high-risk behaviour as sex trade workers and/or drug users.²³ “The cell, the gay man, the IV-drug user, ‘high-risk’ communities show their true -- ‘unbalanced,’ ‘perverse’ -- colors in being unable to separate themselves from the pathogenic” (Kruger 40). Characters like Raina, Gabriel and Jason who accept or exult in their disease are guilty. If they are to be humanized they must be repositioned as innocent and distanced from dangerous behaviour. Jason’s conversion started while he was a college student. What began as an innocent fling ended with him near death and infected with lycanthropy. The double standard to which Anita holds Jean-Claude as opposed to Richard as they compete for her affections arises from the same evaluation of guilt and innocence that is based on the social manufacture of disease narratives.

In the first three texts in the series, *Guilty Pleasures*, *The Laughing Corpse*, and *Circus of the Damned*, Jean-Claude appears unrepentantly monstrous. He is heavily coded as queer and criminalizes it by “preying” as readily on the young male dancers from his strip club as he does on women. This suggests the reactionary fears of homosexual conversion of heterosexuals that Brummett describes. “This myth is the popular conviction that gay men perpetuate their ranks by the seduction of those who are anatomic copies of them, thus rendering young males into copies in terms of motive or sexual preference as well” (165). Vampirism carries

implications not only of seduction but also of addictions. Several characters draw parallels between vampires and drug addiction. Like any self-destructive behaviour, the individual gets a deep pleasure out of what is essentially an unhealthy act. "Trustworthy? Hell, Anita, he's a junkie. Don't matter what he's strung out on, drugs, liquor, sex, vampires, no diff. No junkie is trustworthy" (*Guilty Pleasures* 110). Some of these vampire junkies try to kick their habit, as is the case with Phillip, a human who allows himself to be fed upon on stage. The act combines sex and drug cultures, as, while it is a sexual thrill, Phillip seeks it out with the need of a drug addict. Cognizant of his addiction and its destructiveness, he consciously tries to change. Monica, another human who seeks out vampire partners, is portrayed as a traitor to her race when she helps trap Anita into aiding the vampire community. Nathaniel, already an addictive personality as a heroin addicted street hustler, fits well into a role of submissive meal for vampires. The implications of conversion are also present: "Valentine claims he jumped the boy when he was small, did him good. Claims ol' Philip liked it so much that's why he's a [vampire] junkie" (*Guilty Pleasures* 111).

Jason's case also reveals ambiguous feelings about his current status, and the subtext of addiction is present with less overt rhetoric of drug addiction. While he was infected with the lycanthropy virus by a woman, he is currently a pet for vampires, most of whom are male:

'Oh, no, I like women. But, Anita, almost none of the vampires in Jean-Claude's inner circle are women. I've been acting as a *pomme de sang* for two years. That's a lot of fangs sinking into your body.'

'Is it really that close to sex?' I asked.

The humor left his face and he just looked at me. 'You've really

never been rolled completely by a vamp, have you? I mean, I knew you had partial immunity even before the marks, but I thought someone somewhere would have gotten to you.'

'Nope,' I said.

'Sometimes I'm not sure, but it may be better than sex, and almost everyone who's been doing me has been a guy.'

'So you're bisexual?'

'If what they're doing now counts as sex, yeah. If it doesn't then . . .' he laughed, and the sound was so abrupt in the silence that I saw Zane and Jamil jump. 'If this doesn't count as sex, let's just say that 'where no man has gone before' no longer applies.' (*Blue Moon* 398)

Jean-Claude's monstrosity does not extend to outward appearances. He lives extravagantly, dressing and acting in a highly romanticized fashion.

He wasn't that tall, maybe five-eleven. His shirt was so white, it gleamed. The shirt was loose, long, full sleeves made tight at the wrist by three-buttoned cuffs. The front of the shirt had only a string to close the threat. He'd left it untied, and the white cloth framed the pale smoothness of his chest. The shirt was tucked into tight black jeans, and only that kept it from billowing around him like a cape . . . His hair was perfectly black, curling softly around his face. The eyes, if you dared to look into them, were a blue so dark it was almost black. Glittering, dark jewels. (*The Laughing Corpse* 326)

The extensive focus on elaborate clothing and physical appearance borrows from the detailed descriptions found in romance novels, and the comparisons suggest the hero before the heroine "converts" him into a suitably domestic husband. However, while Jean-Claude may be induced to monogamy and faithful love for Anita, he can never be "converted" from a vampire to a human.

He is a celebrity who has played the games of vampires for centuries in order to secure a position of power. His aristocratic French background recalls Anne Rice's vampires, Lestat and Louis, combining with that the entrepreneurial mentality of successful capitalism to suggest a manipulative and self-serving personality. His

personal corporation insulates him from some of the weaknesses of vampirism. He holds sway over a large number of vampires and controls werewolves, and he is able to represent many of the narrative threads that vampires can signify in a text, as a foreign other, a capitalist vampire preying on the decadence of North American culture. But the multiple strands of meaning that he can represent are subordinate to his position as a sexual figure.

Jean-Claude uses sex as power. Anita's distrust of him is partly based in religious difference, but it is also based on his manipulation of sexuality. As opposed to predecessors like *Vamp* or *Bordello of Blood*, which trade exclusively in female sexuality, Jean-Claude provides a spectacle of male bodies as dancers and trades in bodies in order to consolidate his power. Vampires or werewolves who disobey are punished by performing in pornographic films. Everyone is on display, particularly if such a display generates more power, which he uses to protect himself. Anita's lack of trust in sexuality extends to Jean-Claude's use of it. Since he is using a technique traditionally associated with women, she has even less respect for him. She suspects his encouragement to use her own sexuality. Jean-Claude shows every willingness to play games of power and sexuality in order to, as it were, stay alive. It is this willingness that implies his culpability and guilt.

It is not until he reveals the story of his youth that structures him as a victim of physical and sexual abuse that Anita feels true sympathy for him. In the democratizing "classless" society of the United States, the revelation that he was not born into the aristocracy is a more acceptable birthright than the dashing and decadent aristocrat. The context in which he became a vampire makes him

sympathetic. Rather than becoming a vampire because he is a privileged and spoiled son of an aristocrat who is seeking more power, he is placed in the role of a victim whose only chance to escape the abuse he suffers is to embrace the power of vampirism. With little choice open to him he elected to survive. Most importantly he is not innately evil. He was *created* and therefore he could be redeemed. His desire for power is motivated out of a desire for safety, not wealth alone. Only after the circumstances of his becoming a vampire are revealed does she choose to sleep with him. Anita is capable of forming an emotional bond with him only when he is presented as a victim who wanted only to protect himself.

Because Jean-Claude is the romantic hero Hamilton also plays with his sexuality. He is bisexual, not gay, and his behaviour borders the "normal" in that he does not appear to seek out or revel in the high risk sexual behaviours, or the kink, such as bondage, that the rest of the vampire and lycanthrope communities do.

This careful bisexuality is introduced along with the character:

He looked like a vampire was supposed to look. Softly curling hair tangled with the high white lace of an antique shirt. Lace spilled over pale, long-fingered hands. The shirt hung open, giving a glimpse of lean bare chest framed by more frothy lace. Most men couldn't have worn a shirt like that. The vampire made it seem utterly masculine.
(*Guilty Pleasures* 17)

Unlike other vampires, Jean-Claude can navigate a border and step over it in order to shape the nature of his monstrosity, but he is still a spectacle. He is defined primarily by his appearance, whether it is through the pageantry of his displays of power in the vampire community or through the clothes he wears.

Contrasting with the drama of Jean-Claude's lifestyle, Richard, Anita's

lycanthrope boyfriend, is the quintessential "closeted" monster, attempting to live a normal life while hiding his lycanthrope-positive state. Given the paranoid atmosphere of the text he has good reasons to want to hide his nature. Richard is a junior high school teacher. Because of the prejudice surrounding lycanthropy, he would lose his position if his employers knew what he was. Other lycanthropes had been summarily dismissed from their positions in health care, for fear of infection. These patterns echo the paranoia surrounding persons with AIDS. He even manages to shield his own family from the knowledge of his disease, fearing a negative reaction.²⁴ Outside of the social ramifications of coming out, it also means that he must accept the social behaviours and lifestyle that have grown up around the transformations.

All of the pack structures intermingle illicit sexuality and power. Some of the traditions are actually illegal. To become the dominant, or alpha, of a pack lycanthropes are required to participate in a fight of succession that can be to the death. Richard challenges his alpha wolf for leadership of the pack and his opponent, Marcus, chooses a fight to the death. The pack gathers in a remote forest clearing and they fight. When Marcus falls, the pack devours his body. Other pack behaviour lies in the moral grey area of sado-masochism. Sought out by its practitioners but dismissed as deviant by the mainstream, sado-masochism depends upon the notion of consent on the part of all participants in order to be legitimized. As consent exists within the community, it is normalized. Disease and sexuality are naturalized. Further, the real world equivalent to the power/sexuality relationships are sado-masochist and bondage subcultures. The lycanthropes are

in high demand with sadists because of their increased healing and endurance. To live as a lycanthrope requires participation in fetishistic power plays. Having contracted the disease, Richard is implicated in these social patterns.

His reluctance to engage in these activities make him an innocent. As in the AIDS narratives, he was not doing anything "morally questionable" before contracting the virus, and so he must initially be categorized separately from those like Raina or Jason who know the risks but run them anyway. Richard's earnest desire not to engage in a lifestyle considered deviant makes him a victim of his situation, and worthy of sympathy. Anita eventually insists that he must take his place among the pack, but she does so primarily because his refusal places others in jeopardy. Once he has begun to take part in lycanthrope culture she is highly critical of him. But from the start Anita is much more receptive to Richard as a partner than Jean-Claude.

All of the preternatural narratives in the text involve writing homosexual and bisexual men. While women writing male homosexuality raises issues of appropriation, it is not an intrinsically negative development. Critics have pointed out the potentially positive aspects of women's involvement in the creation of male homosexual characters: "By and large, the homosexual characters in men's novels were tragic loners, outcast in their own land, bewildered at being denied their birthright of patriarchal power. One has to turn to the non-Modernist women writers for a substantial development of the idea of solidarity between oppressed groups" (Woods 204). Women are able to imagine a narrative in which sexuality is an organizing principle of resistance, and in which a community can be formed in which

to struggle for acceptance of difference. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick suggests that lessons learned by women during the feminist struggles were significant in organizing the gay liberation movement, though there is ultimately a point at which the two movements are no longer continuous, and following feminist models is no longer effective. Hamilton creates a community that organizes its belonging along lines of (sexual) difference. The preternatural communities offers its individuals a sense of identity and safety from discrimination within the alternate universe Hamilton creates. The leader of a community has to show the ability to protect the weaker members, and there is almost nothing that they will not accept in another vampire or lycanthrope.

The danger of homosexual metaphors is the appeal of such creations for women. The reversal of gender roles within the text limits the usefulness of defamiliarization to interrogate gender differences. While seeing male characters in stereotypically feminine roles, with Anita taking an active, dominant position is a novel source of pleasure, the danger here is the same objectification faced by women. The initial scene in the vampire strip club, for instance, places homosexuality on blatant display. Anita is there because it is a stag party for her friend, a last thrill before marriage. A vampire first strips, then feeds on Phillip, the vampire-addicted human, for the benefit of the strip club's female audience. The hunt and the consummation via feeding is reduced to a vignette for the voracious female audience. "The crowd went wild, applauding and screaming. Catherine was applauding along with everyone else. Apparently she was impressed" (*Guilty Pleasures* 23). Once again sexuality and monstrosity are mingled, and Anita must

disavow one that gives her strength in order to distance herself from the other. In this instance she must also disavow the potential benefits of the preternatural community.

Collins takes a different approach to the question of female power and sexuality. She presents a rare, independently powerful female vampire. Sonja is not part of a harem belonging to a dominant male vampire. The central conflict of the series arises from her refusal to play that role. In another break with vampiric tradition she has neither been seduced, nor voluntarily become a vampire. Her creation as a vampire-like monster was clearly a rape, and she spends the series seeking vengeance for it. Her vampiric traits make her more powerful than any of the human males in the alternate universe. She is not a dhampire,²⁵ as described in other vampire novels, but she has many of the beneficial hybrid traits, such as greater tolerance for sunlight and an immunity to silver. This means she poses a very real threat to pure vampires like the one who raped her, who are limited by the traditional weapons used against them by humans.

As a result of her power and versatility, the men of the text face a threat of subordination. Problems arise from Sonja's powerful position in relationships that are formed from a heteronormative template in which one partner is dominant and the other submissive. Palmer realizes that Sonja can crush any resistance he can muster. With a limited active/passive paradigm to follow, negotiating issues of power between the abnormally powerful Sonja and the much weaker human, Palmer, appears impossible. Her self-loathing and longing to be "normal" leads her to believe that what she has become is unnatural and evil, and Sonja attempts to

eliminate the parts of her that give her power. The only solution to her unhealthy relationships is integrating her disparate parts into a whole. Sonja must accept the sexual identity that has been thrust upon her in order to prevent completely crushing the people around her.

The three fragments, or aspects of her personality that splintered apart when she was made a vampire are constantly at war with each other, united only at the end of the trilogy, when they form a feminine trinity of Maiden, Mother, and Crone that is found in mythical figures such as the Fates. The unification of her personality is what poses the risk to patriarchal power structures, particularly when she accepts her Other, the primal destroyer. Her demon personality, that personality that came to inhabit her body when she was made a vampire, is the ruthless, survival instinct that seeks to dominate all around. A "kill or be killed" philosophy drives this "Other" and circumscribes Sonja's desire for humanity and human contact. It is an id-like personality, driven to serve itself. It surfaces more significantly at the end of the text as an archaic destroyer, reframed much more positively as a Crone figure. This is the aspect that wants Sonja to accept herself and her new nature. Her superego wears the face of Denise Thorne, the young woman who turned into a vampire after Morgan raped her. In the final battle between Sonja and Morgan she is also the Maiden. Sonja is the personality that struggles to balance these two aspects. Of the two, the wild desire of the Other to control everything around her is the most difficult battle. The Other's savagery and alien nature make it extremely difficult for Sonja to accept, because it means accepting the deviancies of the very creature who raped her.

Yet the Other is also a tremendous source of power. Setting it loose allows Sonja to tap into a primal power, or a monstrous-feminine, distinct from a female monster: "I have used the term 'monstrous-feminine' as the term 'female monster' implies a simple reversal of 'male monster'. The reasons why the monstrous-feminine horrifies her audience are quite different from the reasons why the male monster horrifies his audience" (Creed 3). Only by accepting the strength of this form is she able to escape the traps set for her by humans and vampires both. Accepting the impulses and the sexuality of the Other means permanently accepting the alterations that took her away from her mortal life and family, permanently becoming an adult. Like Anita, Sonja must choose either to suppress an essential and potentially powerful aspect of her personality and conform to social convention, or to accept that part of herself, the positive and the negative, and empower herself with it. When she does she will be able to prevent herself from dominating her relationships.

Through the series, much less emphasis is placed on the role of Denise, the girlish aspect of Sonja's personality, yet the integration of this personality is just as important to Sonja's personality. As her moral center, Sonja's acceptance of Denise is an acknowledgment of her continued humanity. While part of her died when she was reborn as a vampire, Sonja does not have to relinquish the basic morality that Denise represents. The emphasis on the Other obscures the importance of Sonja's acceptance of Denise and the humanity she believed she had to leave behind. When her disparate personalities finally fuse, she understands that she was torturing herself needlessly.

Her relationship with Lethe is the only significant female/female relationship in the text. Lethe is the artificially bred vampire child of two of Morgan's creations.

Sonja takes on a protector role, as a surrogate or adopted aunt. While she finds the relationship fulfilling, she does not act as protector without restrictions on her power.

Lethe is under the protection of the angel-like Seraphim, who are far more powerful than Sonja or the demon Other inside her, who monitor Sonja's behaviour. If

Sonja's relationship with Lethe is free of complications it is not because of an essentialist fantasy of motherhood in which Sonja instantly bonds with and mothers Lethe; Sonja is not instinctively a good mother, and taking care of Lethe does not render her maternal. The Seraphim enforce the control that she needs to ensure that she will not harm the infant. Just as with other people in her life, she needs to exert extreme control in order to maintain relationships. By the time she finally unifies her psyche and controls the Other, it is too late to save her previous human contacts.

The decidedly unromantic ending of her relationships, especially with Palmer, highlights the patriarchal double standard in which a woman is led expect an unequal power share. Traditionally vampire/human relationships have been male/female, and the balance of power has always remained with the male figure, maintaining a patriarchal form. When vampires are female, they have still tended to prey upon females more often than males, fulfilling a spectacle of lesbian homoeroticism for the male audience. This also suggests an underlying fear that despite their enhanced powers human males still pose a threat to their safety. Indeed, texts such as *Carmilla* and *Dracula* establish the threat of human males to

"unprotected" female vampires. The vampire hunters in *Dracula* easily hunt and kill Dracula's brides while Dracula is engaged in his own affairs. Collins is not altering the structure of heteronormative relationships. Like Hamilton, she is reversing them to reveal double standards. The texts suggest that relationships cannot equitably exist with drastically unequal distributions of power. The final book of Collins's trilogy points out how inflexible traditional relationships are, and how difficult it would be for them to accommodate female power.

Throughout the series, Sonja is much more a traditional portrayal of the castrating woman who appears in horror films than Anita, and her desire is constructed in the sado-masochistic terms that Anita attempts to avoid. Her focus as a sexual being is entirely on men, and she lacks the homosexual subtext of most of her female predecessors. The significant male figures in her life, Claude, Morgan, Judd, and Palmer, are both attracted to and repelled by her raw nature. Vampires in this text are capable of turning unwilling humans into slaves who take genuine pleasure in their submission; the demons turn humans into masochists. The either/or that the male characters see in their relationships reveal their fears of being the weaker partner.

Sonja's relationships repeat a pattern of illusion versus reality. Partners project an image of Sonja that she does not live up to because it is not real. When the illusion fails the relationships end, usually badly. Chaz, an occasional friend and lover, committed a betrayal that resulted in her incarceration in an asylum. He was unable to compel himself to escape her, letting himself be caught and killed by her. He later shows up as a ghost, warning others away from her. Claude is present only

in the first text. From the beginning he is attracted to the story of Denise Thorne. He sees Sonja's vulnerability as a sign of Denise's presence. It is also a sign of weakness that allows him to feel as though he has power over her. He is compelled to follow Sonja as she is. Claude dies at the hands of an incubus pretending to be the harmless and helpless Denise. When, mid-act, she changes to resemble Sonja he is horrified to find that he is still excited:

The darkness was already staining her hair the color of bibles. She smiled, revealing her fangs, but that didn't scare him. What scared him was the fact that he was still hard. He should have lost his erection the moment he realized what was under him; it should have deflated like a toy balloon, but it was still stiff. He tried to push himself off her, but Sonja pulled him back down.

'This is what you wanted all along, wasn't it?' she leered. She moved her hips against his. They were Siamese twins, joined at the groin by a traitorous piece of meat. (*Midnight Blue* 167-168)

Soon after he tries to strangle the incubus, thinking she is Sonja attempting to turn him into a "renfield," a powerless human servant/slave.²⁶ When Claude felt that he was the powerful figure the sexual experience was normal. It became unnatural when he found that he was still attracted to her when she took control.

Throughout his appearance through the last two texts, *In the Blood* and *Paint It Black* Palmer shows a similar fear of being possessed by Sonja. Like Claude he understands what it means to become a human servant, a "renfield." His paranoia has a grounding in a self-destructive tendency to fall in love with women who manipulate his normalized desire to protect them. He went to prison after having been framed by a woman with whom he was having an affair. His fear makes the possibility of trusting Sonja impossible: "It had been a trap from the beginning,

baited with honey and hot meat . . . 'You're doing this! You're making this happen! It's not me, it's *you!*'" (*Midnight Blue* 270). It is easier for him to believe that he is being controlled than to assume that he is attracted to her.

Her threat is real. When the Other escapes Sonja's control it attacks. It is loose long enough to find and attack Judd. By the time the Other is finished, Judd is convinced that the rape he had undergone at its hands was pleasurable, and had been turned into a renfield, willing to follow and obey Sonja without question:

Judd leans closer, his eyes reflecting a hunger I know all too well. 'Why you did those things to me, at first I was scared. Then, after awhile, I realized I wasn't frightened anymore. I was actually getting into it. It was like the barriers between pain and pleasure, animal and human, ecstasy and horror, had been removed! I've never known anything like it before! I love you, Sonja! *All of you!*' . . .

A renfield. The Other turn him into a renfield. And he doesn't even know it, the poor sap. In the space of just a few hours he was transformed into a junkie, and now I'm his fix. (423)

Instead of allowing Judd to live as a renfield Sonja kills him.

The experience leaves Sonja guilty over the power that she possesses but has not learned to control. When she returns to Palmer their sexual relationship degenerates into scenarios of sado-masochistic punishment. Sonja's need for Palmer is a responsibility that he cannot face: "Palmer knew that if he succumbed to the vortex, he would be lost . . . He told himself it wasn't cruelty. It was self-preservation. The gray pain had retreated from his mind. In its place was a red-hot coal of anger, betrayal - arousal" (*Midnight Blue* 436). Later, after they have moved to South America, Sonja asks him to beat her, a ritualistic and hollow attempt to restore a normalized structure to the relationship. In the end he leaves, unable to

deal with the threat she poses or the false power relationship. Palmer retreats into the primitive, patriarchal culture of the local Paraguayan tribes, taking an adolescent wife and a powerful position in the tribe.²⁷

Of all her relationships Morgan has the most to lose. As a powerful Noble of the Pretender society he makes a drastic mistake in creating Sonja. He is aware that she has the power to defeat him, and yet he finds himself reluctant to kill her: "Her very existence is a threat to my continuance. Yet I can not help but stand in awe of her - worship her" (359). After she takes his eye with her knife he realizes the power she has over him: "Lord Morgan, late of the Inquisition and the Gestapo, lay on the floor of his car and contemplated the dreadful sickness that humans called Love" (*Midnight Blue* 373).

To finally defeat Morgan Sonja must accept the Other, and Denise Thorne, as parts of herself, which means that she must accept that the deviant strengths and desires of the Other stem from her own desires. In the final battle with Morgan he nearly succeeds in killing her by pitting the aspects of her personality against each other. After he shoots her she joins with the Other: "*We can never be safe until he who Made us is destroyed. So long as he exists, we will be weak, Join us, sister. Join us so that we might be reborn yet again*" (546). When she pretends to weaken, Morgan again contemplates his attraction to her: "If he could actually break her to his will, her death could still be avoided. But if the fire in her belly was extinguished, if she became just another of his adoring brides, then there would be no reason to love her. What provoked his passion was her deadliness, her ferocity, her *threat*" (547-548). When he appears to kill her she is reborn as a unified whole. Before

she kills him Sonja demands and receives an admission of his love, then refuses his final request for forgiveness.

Hamilton's protagonist Anita from the *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series and Collins's Sonja from *Midnight Blue* struggle against the parameters of the supernatural worlds that seek to absorb them. The cornerstone of their individual power, however, rests in the very supernatural communities they resist. It is in accepting those aspects of their personality, deemed monstrous by society, that they begin to control their own lives. The conflict centers on their acceptance of their own power. The conflict is played out in their control of and threat to the male characters. Heterosexual paradigms demand an active/passive binary, therefore the active female pressures male characters into the passive role. The texts struggle to present a female that does not depend upon a passive male to define her.

Chapter Four

The Femme Fatale: Women and the Vampire Myth

Female characters in the vampire narrative have traditionally been passive. They waited to be saved from the seductive evil of the vampire by male vampire hunters. In Nancy A. Collins's *Midnight Blue* and Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series the authors present alternatives to the paradigm of female passivity in vampire fiction. One of the problems central to their representations is the simple reversal of active versus passive gender roles, which offers no sustained challenge to the devaluation of female characters. However, the two series protagonists, Sonja and Anita, engage in struggles to control their image that produce positive images of the long devalued femme fatale character. The punk/goth²⁸ vigilantism of Sonja Blue is liberating to some readers and horrifying and destructive to others. As well, Anita's conservatism is both self-defeating and an affirmation of her independence and freedom of choice. The fight to control their own power is played out in control over their images. They seek to define themselves, while the characters around them seek to force them to conform to images that are contained by patriarchal traditions. Characters like Sonja and Anita are traditionally portrayed as seductive but negative, destructive elements in the form of the femme fatale. The two characters resist being used as sexualized objects, or fetishes for the male characters. In doing so, they lay claim to their sexuality.

In both fantasy series, empowerment lies in accepting and integrating the sexuality that they fear because it is presented as deviant. In Nancy A. Collins's

Midnight Blue, Sonja's sexuality is the product of the men around her, who turn her into a fetishized object by controlling her image. The image and identity that she creates for herself is a threat to the Pretender society of supernatural creatures that she has sworn to destroy. Morgan, the vampire who turned Sonja into a Pretender, nearly succeeds in altering her image and rendering harmless her power; only by accepting her "deviant" sexuality can she maintain control over her image and identity. The same struggle over power underwrites the plot of Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter*. Anita's conservative values mark sexuality as a negative, and she denies the power that comes from it. Her anxieties over the combination of sexuality and power surfaces in, among other things, the image that she presents. Her ongoing argument over her dress is an issue of power; she does not want to be controlled. Sexuality itself, however, has the potential to give her the control that she wants.

In Hamilton's *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* Anita is paid to raise zombies. Because of her unique talents in the field of the preternatural she is also a legal vampire hunter, who executes vampires found guilty of feeding from non-consenting humans. This makes her both a deadly threat and a fascinating attraction to some of the preternatural creatures of the city, including Jean-Claude, a vampire rising rapidly in the city's hierarchy. Sonja, of Collins's *Midnight Blue* is a vampire/human hybrid, a dhampire, who has vowed to destroy Morgan, the vampire who "killed" her. As the series progresses Morgan is more and more attracted to Sonja, and the risk she poses to him. The combination of attraction and danger links Anita and Sonja to the figure of the femme fatale, the deadly woman. Both characters resist

attempts to mitigate their danger through control of their image.

The issue of control is central to both texts. Anita and Sonja resist a discourse that pathologizes the powerful woman and then enacts its own desires upon her body. As the highly sexualized, dangerous woman, both characters risk masochistic eroticization by a masculine narrative that includes desire, consummation, and inevitable destruction. The dangerous woman's destruction is accomplished either through domestication under heteropatriarchal rule, or by her death. Anita and Sonja refuse to be seduced, controlled, or destroyed.

Sexuality is central to both Hamilton's and Collins's series. Power is contingent upon negotiating a sexual identity binding independence to the social structures of morality. In the texts they are described through the vampire narratives of master and servant/slave, of submission and domination. In the tradition of *Dracula* the renfields and brides in *Midnight Blue* lose their souls along with their will. In *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* the human servants are religiously fanatical slaves to their vampire masters, sharing some of the powers of the undead, but also sharing their fate. Preternatural servants are only slightly better off; within the social context of vampirism in the text they fit within a highly structured hierarchy of power that occasionally moves into an overt reflection of submission and domination through sado-masochistic play.

The conflation of female power and sexuality reflects social anxiety over constructed genders: "In crude terms, if images of men have often needed to compensate for the sexual presentation of the hero's body through emphasising his activity, then images of women seem to need to compensate for the figure of the

active heroine by emphasising her sexuality, her availability, within traditional feminine terms" (Tasker 19). Sexuality is a mark of femininity, which is in turn devalued in order to contain female activity. Anita Blake attempts to deal with the question of power by repressing the sexual side of her power and, when that fails, by segregating herself as a contaminated person. Sonja also attempts to deny the raw and uncivilized nature of her power, only to accept in the climax of the series what seemed to be alien as an integral part of her mature whole. Within the worlds of the texts, acknowledging and controlling sexuality is imperative to prevent becoming a fetishistic object controlled by the male characters. Only by integrating the fragmented parts of their being through violence, sexuality, and the exercise of power can they become active in the creation of their own images, rather than being labeled and controlled by society.

In her discussion of the female in action film, Tasker suggests that the figure of the femme fatale, a woman who derives power from her sexuality, is distinct from the action heroine, though her behaviour is still clearly defined. The active woman, the femme fatale, disrupts thinking about female sexuality, disturbing its containment. The threat of the characters is embodied in the play of ritual, symbol, and fetish that make up the monster communities in the texts. It is a controlled threat, where power is rigidly defined. Anita and Sonja both struggle to rise out of the expectations of those around them. One way they do this is by controlling their own image, altering it to suit themselves. They destroy the illusions of characters like Collins's Morgan and Hamilton's Jean Claude, who want to define them according to a patriarchal norm.

Another aspect of the femme fatale is the criminalization of her character.

Anita and Sonja share this characteristic with the femme fatale. It might be argued that their behaviour is a heroic vigilantism. Of the action heroine Tasker writes "[t]heir behaviour - going against the rules, going out on a limb - operates as a variant on that of the populist action hero, who must break the law in order to secure some kind of justice in the world" (147). Certainly the justice systems in the texts are ill-equipped to deal reasonably with the demands of the supernatural communities. In *Midnight Blue* the supernatural world, called the Real World, is invisible to most humans, while in the Anita Blake series human officials are slow to understand and deal with the unique demands of the preternatural communities. In the absence of a justice system that can deal with supernatural crimes the potential for justified vigilantism is unlimited, and in these particular instances, the heroic vigilantes are women. The tension between a femme fatale male fantasy and a self-defining female hero suggests that it is through controlling the highly sexualized, almost fetish images that are imposed on them that Anita and Sonja can draw power for themselves.

Fetish is a symbolic replacement of a person with an object as the focus of sexual pleasure. The fetish is invested with meaning and power. Over time certain objects have taken on specific sexual meanings, and become common sexual objects. Shoes are a common, widely recognized fetish object. Other objects and materials have moved from sexual subculture to culture while retaining some level of its subcultural value. Leather bears fetishistic meaning, and still marks a certain level of rebelliousness, depending upon its wear. Leather coats are reasonably

common, whereas corsets remain heavily charged with sexual meaning. Clothes are a costume, and specific costumes are invested with meaning and power. In the case of both Collins's *Midnight Blue* and Hamilton's *Anita Blake*, the manipulation of clothing focuses the battle over personal power. In her discussion of fetish and fashion, Valerie Steele points out that "[t]he image of a woman who is both strong and sexy obviously appeals to many women (as well as men). Whatever the style means, it is not just something being foisted on women by male designers" (34). This underscores the question of control over sexuality within the series, and control over image becomes an attempt to control the fetishistic images that Sonja and Anita present.

In both texts, the subcultures of fringe sexuality come into play in which clothing becomes a representation of supernatural power. Steele calls clothing "a symbolic system linked to the expression of sexuality — both sexual behavior (including erotic attraction) and gender identity" (4). Clothes are an extension of personality and personal power. The attention that Hamilton and Collins focus on clothing suggests the role that it plays in the relationships in the novels in representing power, while the highly stylized nature of the "costuming" points to its importance as symbolic meaning.

In *Midnight Blue* aspects of fetish center around the dichotomy of the real and the "Real World," or the world of the supernatural. True power lies exclusively with those who see, accept, and move within the Real World. Events in the mortal world are impotent imitations and reflections of Real life, especially to the minds of the Pretender (supernatural) Nobles. "Nothing happens in the Real World that is not

mirrored in the half-life of human existence" (Collins 172). In the Real World demons siphon human energy from dreams, and tobacco demons are a very real "monkey" on the backs of smokers.

Pretenders, the vampires and other supernatural races, live by the games of dominance and submission that humans only play at. The metaphorical relationship is continued in relationships of power and sexuality. The games that humans participate in, whether it is a committed lifestyle or a temporarily fashionable style of dress, are impressions of the relationships in the Real World, where dominance and submission have absolute consequences that are built into the culture. When Morgan is seeking some respite from his unsatisfied desire for Sonja Blue, he seeks out a club that caters to the human sado-masochistic subculture. He picks up a leather couple dressed in bondage gear and has them perform for him. When the man challenges him over his lack of reaction he shows disdain: "I want the Real Thing, not this candy-coated pretense!" (Collins 389). After drawing blood the man challenges Morgan again:

'Is *this* real enough for you, you one-eyed bastard?' he snarls, slapping his partner's blood-smeared flank with the flat of his hand. 'You're not even close,' I smile. 'Here: allow me to show you how it's done.' (389)

Morgan takes control of the man and has him murder the woman, then suffocate himself in his own bondage mask. Morgan's participation in the mortal world brings very real consequences to the humans involved in plays of bondage. The same real consequences result when Denise Thorne visits the Apple Cart Discotheque in London and meets Morgan. She deludes herself into believing her fantasy are real;

"She imagined herself the Poor Little Rich Girl with Morgan as her Prince Charming" (60). When he separates her from her friends and suggests a romantic ride through London she confronts the supernatural, and her charming aristocratic date becomes a Noble of the Real World.

Noble society has very specific requirements for its people. The Nobles are vampire elite, who play games against each other to occupy their time and avoid Ennui, the only natural death their kind can suffer. They create broods of offspring to fight wars and treat humans like cattle. If they do become bored and succumb to Ennui, they no longer feed. When they die they are reborn as one of the Seraphim, angelic creatures who pose as homeless people. Transcendence is a literal experience. Sonja is expected to take up a place in this society in keeping with women in the vampire narrative at large. In discussing female vampires Carter points out that the "supposedly powerful and manipulative female parasite is almost invariably a fraud, as her supposed power is actually anchored in the real world dominance of a male partner or sponsor" (63). Patriarchal vampire narratives have no model for female power, and female vampires are supposed to draw power from their male counterparts. Sonja progresses quickly, and she discovers that her role is as one of Morgan's offspring. Regardless of her personal feelings, she is supposed to conform to the behaviours of vampire Nobles. Pangloss and Morgan, Morgan somewhat facetiously, offer to take Sonja in and teach her how to behave as a Noble. They seek to remake her in their image, as the offspring of vampires always take on the values of their sires: "I blame myself, in part, for your madness - after all, if I had been there for you, schooling you in the nuances of Noble society,

you wouldn't be as confused as you are now" (538). What she has done since her rebirth as a vampire, her destruction of others of her kind, is deemed a sickness by Morgan because it deviates from his laws. "Because "woman" cannot control herself [by believing the patriarchal myth of her inherent sinfulness], she must be lead by, dominated if need be, by men" (Manlowe 70). If she is "uncontrollable" she must be destroyed. Abandoned for dead by both her human father and Morgan, Sonja has developed an independence from both the human and the Noble world, one that her mortal father finds revolting and Morgan eventually finds threatening and attractive.

For Morgan, Sonja evolves into a fetish to which he attaches meaning. Unlike the almost iconic older Nobles, who exude an air of old world wealth, Sonja's is a street aesthetic made up of t-shirts from punk bands, jeans, boots and a black leather coat. In her, Morgan sees the exotic face of the power that he wants, but cannot have. She has the capacity to control what she is, to change, as opposed to the Nobles, who are confined by their rules. The Ennui that Nobles suffer is their greatest enemy; unable to adapt to a new world, as they discover that their games are hollow they die. Sonja, by contrast, while she has fashioned an iconic image, is still a real threat because she does not play their game. While he desires her power, he understands that what she brings is very real death to Nobles, while she herself can go on.

Sonja generates her image herself, and resists attempts to coopt it, to change its meaning into what Morgan needs. For her, control over her image, to which her identity is tied, is a matter of life and death. When Sonja awakes after

being remade a vampire, a sleep that lasted nine months, she was devoid of personality. The first strong personality she meets is Joe Lent, a pimp: "Joe became my man. Not just any man. He was *the* Man. He was my father, brother, lover, boss, and personal terror . . . I was desperate for an identity. Any identity. Joe Lent was more than happy to define my world" (Collins 65). When the Other wakes up it takes over Sonja's body and murders Lent, but Sonja retains what she learns, and remains a prostitute until she is taken in by a wealthy patron who is more interested in her as a specimen of the supernatural community than as the object of sex. After her patron dies her personal image solidifies into a perpetually youthful punk aesthetic, taking its inspiration from the street, not the upper class and aristocracy that frames the vampire culture. Her previous identities were images to which she was tied by others, always defined by her appearance. The only image that she developed for herself is the one that Morgan desires to possess and to kill. If Morgan can control the identity Sonja created for herself he can limit the power that her fetishized image has over him.

The unique combination of uncouth street aesthetic and sexuality is a compelling mix for Morgan. Sonja represents what is different. She is comfortable in the late-Twentieth century milieu, while Morgan has difficulty trusting modern technology. His plans for breeding a race of hybrid vampires through medical intervention fail, in part because he must rely upon others to do the work; he does not understand the technology himself. Later he believes that a mechanical failure in his weapon leaves Sonja alive. She also represents an attraction that he does not understand and is reluctant to acknowledge; he is attracted to a creature whose

autonomy is a threat to him: "She arouses a fear of castration and death while simultaneously playing on a masochistic desire for death, pleasure and oblivion" (Creed 130). He plays out his conflicting desires in scenarios he arranges with prostitutes. He finds a woman who can pass as Sonja and has her dress in imitations of Sonja's clothes and mirrored sunglasses. He then forces the look-alike to stab him, while he strangles her. Once Sonja has maimed him and proven that the threat she represents is real, he becomes obsessed with her. His fantasies invariably involve the silver knife she used to take his eye. The repetition of the scene of attack and his defense is his attempt to contain the threat of impotence that she presents.

Morgan fetishizes Sonja's costume through a desire for and fear of the real person and the dangers she represents to patriarchal order: "I close my eyes in order to savor the illusion that it is not she, but my beloved who is ramming the knife into my heart again and again . . . [W]hat she lusts after is not my touch, my kiss, my seed. No, what she desires is my death . . . I love her. And that is why I must destroy her. Again. And again. And again. Until I am certain I can bring myself to do the deed for real" (393-394). By rehearsing Sonja's destruction at his hands, he attempts to control the image and the fear and danger that she represents. If, as Creed argues, "woman . . . terrifies because man endows her with imaginary powers of castration" then Morgan believes that by imagining himself destroying her he can make that a reality. As a figure for men, as a femme fatale, Sonja is containable. Morgan's rehearsal of her death and his attempts to mold her into the image he wanted, that of one of his adoring brides, is equivalent to the containment of the

femme fatale by conventional law. When Sonja joins with the other parts of her personality, she defies the laws of her father and forms a new whole that no longer needs another person to complete it. The true victory for Sonja is when she draws together her shattered psyche, not when she kills Morgan.

Sonja is uneasy with the power that she controls. While she completes constructing her identity in the final scenes of the series, throughout the narrative she maintained an difficult relationship with the Other, who provided her with her supernatural power. Collins avoids the heavy homoeroticism and more importantly the heavy feminization that Hamilton engages in when dealing with her male characters. However, one of the central themes of *Midnight Blue* is the relationship between women and men, and in Sonja's case the power of the relationships she engages in are strongly balanced in her favour. Sonja fears her own power rather than accepting it because, culturally, she has been taught to fear it. What she wants, and thinks she needs, is a normal relationship, defined by a patriarchal society as a man with a less powerful woman. Her denial of the Other, her compulsive, id-like personality, leads to many of the problems she has in her quest to kill Morgan. Instead of accepting her own power and developing control she attempts to contain it, initially by feeding it with her vigilante hunting of predators, both human and supernatural: "I talked myself into believing it was a safety valve that allowed me to keep the Other in check, that I was performing a public service" (87-88). Her quest for normality is doomed, as no human male, even one with psychic powers, can compete with her. Instead, when she does meet the powerful Morgan, his lure of being stronger than her, and able to take care of her, nearly

convinces her to give up. Socialization that makes her doubt her ability to function independently and seeks to mold her into a specific image is the strongest weapon that Morgan has.

Her fear of her power is reasonable in some regards. The Other is amoral, driven to indulge its pleasures without regard for reason and human morality. It kills when it likes, usually but not always in order to preserve itself. Since power and survival depend upon control of its corporeal self, its attacks on Judd and Palmer are justified. It is removing temptations for Sonja to act more human. It is a violent, insulting, and essentially different feminine. As she grew up in a patriarchal culture this destructive side is even alien to Sonja: "She was Shiva. She was Kali. She was all that is dark and terrible in nature, adored and scorned, worshipped and reviled" though the source of her evil "was mortal, not diabolic" (Collins 171). The Other denies patriarchal logic and the images of woman inside patriarchy as the all-forgiving mother or the eroticized femme fatale.

Sexuality was built into her immediate post-rebirth identity by the pimp who found her. Sexuality is not a matter of choice or pleasure; it is something she uses to survive. The only time that she feels pleasure is when she is absorbing the negative emotions of the customers. After five years of prostitution her first orgasm comes when she feeds on human blood at the coaxing of the Other. Only the Other is aggressive in its pursuit of sexuality, but the sexuality it desires fulfills its needs. Sonja "assumes the mantle of dominatrix without complaint" at her customer's behest (74), fulfilling their desires, not hers. Sexuality becomes something of a punishment for her. Her illusions about having a normal relationship are shattered

when the Other takes over the mind of one lover and attacks another. In order to force their relationship into a patriarchal mold, sex eventually involves her partner beating and whipping her unconscious. She has internalized a structure that will mark a woman as sexual, and then punish her for it.

In effect, Sonja's identities are imposed upon her. She rebels from Jacob Thorne's image of his daughter, then from Joe Lent and Morgan, Claude, Judd and Palmer, who have very specific images of her. Their impressions of Sonja are of single aspects, not dynamic, multifaceted identities that the fragments of Sonja's personality represent. They are stereotypes: the innocent daughter, the whore, the victimized girl. What she fails to understand until the end of the trilogy is that she must unify these identities as she sees fit in order to be a whole person. In the final battle with Morgan at the end of the series she is drawn into a conflict with the Other for dominance, allowing Morgan to attack her body. The internal squabbling of her aspects and the mistrust and fear of her archaic feminine self nearly leads to her destruction. However, she eventually manages to unify her psyche and regain control over the images others have of her, refusing the object position that Morgan attempted to place her in.

In the Anita Blake series the rituals surrounding preternatural power plays involve "dressing the part." In the Hamilton texts, dress is a literal play, in the sense that the vampires believe in posturing and theatrics in order to buttress their social position. Jean-Claude's theatrical clothing, like that of other Master vampires, suggests the historical period in which he was born as a human; the older the vampire is, the more powerful s/he is, tying together the notion of power and

appearance that generates fetish in the same way Collins did. Clothing is particularly relevant when they are preparing to go into battle. While it might have morale-building potential, such special effects are hardly necessary in the context of the series, as preternatural creatures can frequently sense the amount of power others have. What it does, however, is mark out players as possessions, and fetishizes power in costume.

Jean-Claude is placing himself on display, drawing attention to his difference, and to his central position as a Master vampire. He allows himself to be used as a symbol to which his audience attaches what meaning it wants. He can compel others to dress as he wishes, and places them on display, itself a sign of power. The werewolves who are his to call are his weapons, and they dress to indicate their role. Leather figures prominently in these theatrical wardrobes, tying together sexuality and risk. The ultimate form of dress is the change that he can compel in lycanthropes. Central to any show of power is the ability to frame others without regard for their will.

As Anita begins to participate in the rituals of the preternatural community she is dressed by Jean-Claude in "appropriate" clothes that emphasize both her sexuality and her danger. To make a "show of it" she dresses the part.

'We all had a running bet that he'd never get you to wear it.'

'Who's we?'

'His flunkies.' Stephen stood up, stepped back, and nodded. 'You look amazing.'

'I look like a biker slut from hell meets soldier of fortune pinup.'

'That, too,' Stephen said.

I turned to Cassandra. "Be honest.'

'You look dangerous, Anita. Like somebody's weapon.'

I stared in the mirror, shaking my head. 'Somebody's sex toy, you

mean.'

'A dominatrix maybe, but nobody's toy,' Cassandra said. (*The Killing Dance* 769)

The distinction is a small but significant difference in perception, and one that Anita constantly refuses to acknowledge. Mistrust of sexuality leads her to disown the power that she wields, along with the clothing. In this instance she is, indeed, "somebody's weapon"; she is acting on behalf of a newly formed "triumvirate" which is designed to protect herself, her lycanthrope boyfriend Richard, and Jean-Claude. The amount of energy she puts into arguing over the clothes she wears and the clothes that Jean-Claude wants her to wear suggests its importance to her as a sign of identity. While she might wear the clothes he chooses for her, not even he believes she is the subordinate partner. The sexualized uniform is a show meant to obscure her dominance from opponents, and appears to have no impact upon the actual dynamics within the relationship. At the same time she is objecting to the notion of putting herself on display as an eroticized figure. That in itself is laudable. However as sexuality and power are bound together, to fear sexuality is to fear power.

Her dislike for sexuality is reflected in a consistent mistrust of characters who are overtly sexual. This becomes a general mistrust of preternatural communities since they are all deeply sexualized. She comes to see all forms of contact as suspect. In particular, representations of sexualized women are negative in the text. Raina, one of the lycanthropes of the city, is the only other truly consistent female character, and she is represented as an entirely sexual, completely negative

character. She is heavily involved in sadism, prostitution and the production of hardcore and snuff pornography. Raina is the ultimate negative portrayal of the femme fatale, with added emphasis on criminalization in her characterization. This becomes a homophobia centered on women. In a practical sense, if she fears sexuality, she has little to fear from gay men. They are suitable to look at, but Anita's rejection of lesbian sexuality borders on panic:

They were trying to circle like sharks. Philip was staring at me, hard. Right; I was supposed to be enjoying myself, not acting like they all had communicable diseases.

Which was the lesser evil? A sixty-four-thousand dollar question if ever I heard one. Madge licked her lips, slowly, suggestively. Her eyes said she was thinking naughty things about me, and her. No way. Rochelle swished her skirt, exposing far too much thigh. I had been right. She was naked under the skirt. I'd die first. (*Club Vampyre* 126)

Her reactions to sexualized women are always more extreme than they are with men. Her comments about them and their lifestyle are extremely disparaging, far more so than are comments about men. The reversal of gender roles that Hamilton utilizes, discussed in greater length below, extends to the standard acceptance of homosexuality. Anita is not threatened by male homosexuality around her, because it removes the possibility of her own involvement in sexual activity. However, lesbianism reintroduces that threat.

Anita's power is complicated by the representations of other women in the text. Already coded as other as a werewolf, Sylvie's sexuality indicates that for a woman to have the strength to out-power males in their own game is also deviant. The forthright strength and honesty that is laudable in men is presented as a threat

here, as she seeks to usurp Richard's power. Raina, on the other hand, is a stereotype of female ambition. She manipulates others to secure her position and to do her fighting for her. Anita, who wants to be neither a venomous stereotype of female duplicity nor deviant, as Sylvie is presented, must find a middle ground. This means rigidly controlling and repressing her sexuality.

Anita is determinedly heterosexual, and still very aggressive. In relationships she conflicts with the expectations of her partners. While constrained by conservative values, she maintains control over her own identity. Anita's fear of relinquishing power in a sexual relationship surfaces repeatedly, in reference to both Jean-Claude and Richard. She berates Richard for failing to protect the werewolves, taking on the job herself while insisting that they can never be an "Ozzy and Harriet" type couple. At the same time she admits that "Richard was bringing out my feminine side" (*The Killing Dance* 680), a side she is obviously afraid of showing. She takes charge of the pack when he refuses to do so, posing a threat to his leadership and to fantasies of normality. He has difficulty reconciling his attraction to her with the threat that she poses. In turn, they both fear the perverse, monstrous parts of their personalities. He is afraid of being part of the preternatural community, while she is afraid that "[b]eing able to embrace his beast would make [her] . . . perverse" (*The Killing Dance* 705). Anita desires a stereotype and fears it, desires the deviant and fears it. Her desire to be normal conflicts with the reality of the universe.

Already perverse, Jean-Claude is more open to the possibilities of the power found in sexuality, manipulating the relationships around him to enhance his ability

to protect himself. His particular line of vampires draw power from sex as an incubus does. He has also been a part of the monster community so long that the idea of "normal" relationships as Anita and Richard see them is alien. He has a similar reaction to Anita that Morgan has with Sonja. Jean-Claude is attracted to and fears her threat. Anita, however, repeatedly refuses to draw on the power she has to secure a safe position, and berates herself when she does:

'You can't hold me with your eyes anymore. Even if I let you, I can still break the hold at any time.'

'Yes, *ma petite*.'

'Does this bother you?'

...

'Let us say it does not bother me as much as it might have a few hours ago.'

I raised up on one elbow so I could see his face. 'Meaning what? That now that I've had sex with you, I'm not dangerous?'

He stared up at me. I couldn't read his eyes. 'You will always be dangerous . . . Come, *ma petite*, enjoy your conquest.'

I held my face back, avoiding a kiss. 'You aren't conquered,' I said.

'Nor, *ma petite*, are you . . . 'I am beginning to realize that you will never be conquered, and that is the greatest aphrodisiac of all. (*The Killing Dance* 793).

Ultimately, it is the danger she poses to him, as a vampire, that draws Jean-Claude to Anita. Unlike Morgan, Jean-Claude is aware of the balance of power involved in his relationship with Anita, and has no real desire to destroy her. He is without the fear that compels Morgan in *Midnight Blue* to control Sonja, kill her, or both .

The increases in Anita's power are predicated upon engaging her sexuality. While she is not power hungry, her fear has always been about losing control. Joining with Jean-Claude and Richard grant her immunity from the control of the monsters she fights. Unlike the first time Jean-Claude "marked" her, granting her

some powers in return for service as a human servant, by the sixth book both Anita and Richard are irreversibly bound together with him. Having made this decision, learning how to live with her sexuality and control it is the only way for Anita to maintain the independence that she craves.

Because of the innate inequality built into vampire narratives, relationships involving vampires are always about power. Within the context of the two series, relations of power are played out in the struggle to control the sexualized, fetish images of the female characters. In *Midnight Blue*, as a female vampire Sonja is placed in a position of power, reversing the social norm of patriarchal relationships. The human males she encounters have the most difficulty dealing with the power imbalance. Claude slips into fantasies of rescuing Sonja because in her he sees Denise Thorne, the young, victimized daughter of a good family. Palmer, unable to help work through Sonja's insatiable need to punish herself for her own power or deal with her demands on him, escapes into a rigidly structured, patriarchal fantasy in the wild. Only Morgan competes with Sonja, attracted by her power but incapable of living with the threat that she poses. He sees her as his own beautiful creation, a monster that he must reluctantly destroy. Before he can do so, Sonja integrates the parts of her psyche fractured by her rape, accepting and taking control of the monstrous sexuality thrust upon her. She refuses to fit the image that Morgan has prepared for her. In the *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series, Anita is born with supernatural power, but her conservative views on life and sexuality and her fears of being absorbed into a monstrous subculture lead to her try to repress and deny her talents, rather than accepting and learning to control them. Within the milieu of the

text, she has become embroiled in a triumvirate in which she must learn to confront her sexuality. Other characters try to invest her image with meaning, but by confronting and controlling her sexuality she controls her own meaning. She learns that she does not necessarily lose power to her male partners, but finally gains control over her own gifts.

Chapter Five

The Romance of Violence: Naming Coercion in the Vampire Narrative

The play of gender in Hamilton's series *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* and Collins's *Midnight Blue* shakes the narratives that underwrite them. Reversals of active/male and passive/female and the challenge of making a powerful female character disrupts the course of storylines. In the process they uncover some of the discourses in vampire texts that support patriarchy. One of the most significant of these is the romantic seduction that obscures the dialogue of sexual assault. Few vampire/human relationships can entirely eliminate issues of freedom and consent. In the continuing narrative, whatever the medium, vampires come to these relationships with the greater power, experience and knowledge that comes with centuries of living. They are physically stronger and have paranormal abilities that allow them to influence their potential victim. Within vampire narratives, men held physical, emotional, and economic privilege over their female partner. In order to erode the similarities between the monstrous attack of the vampire and the normalized power distribution of male/female relationships, vampire narratives and the actors in them are constructed in specific ways. In the vampire narrative, the power relationships are often written in a discourse of seduction. While it frequently makes the male seducer a villain, it also presents specific constructions of the female character. At best they reduce her role, removing her voice. At worst it implicates her in her own seduction and then eliminate her in order to erase the male prerogative that allows the "seduction" to take place. The woman is an innocent victim on the one hand or a seductress on the other. Either way, the story

that she would tell about her seduction is erased.

The degree of concentration and the concept of seduction varies over time. In order to ensure its continued survival while granting it intelligence, authors are required to justify its predations and to in some way soften the crime itself. True sympathy for a heartless predator is difficult, and creating sympathy for it requires humanization. Romantics gave their singular friends a healthy intellectual life, distancing them from the gory necessity of killing. In film, Dracula's attacks are redefined in terms of romance. "Dracula's overpowering of the weak at their invitation is thus expressed as his seduction of women" (Brummett 165). More recently, sympathetic vampires have tended to be seductive and rather than draining a single human each time it feeds, it has become convenient for the vampire to "snack," surviving on smaller amounts of blood. This reduces the body count and also allows for a sustained and intimate relationship with the 'donor.' This sustained relationship and the intimacy involved erodes the boundaries between seduction and coercion. Romance offers a thin cover for the narratives of vampire reproduction involve rape and carry incestuous connotations.

The supernatural aspects of vampire narratives highlight the power disparities in relationships. They do so to the point of gendering the victim merely through the process of being bitten. Even male victims are in some way feminized by the penetrability of the body, and the sexual nature of the attack. To maintain gender differences in vampire victims the method of attack, the location, and the atmosphere must be different, and aspects of seduction removed from same sex pairings: "[H]is attacks usually have a pronounced sexual component: he is

magnetic, irresistible, and deliberate in his movements, as though he knows that the lady really wants it this way. This implicit sexuality is suggested by the fact that, while he attacks men as well, he seldom does so in close-up, and both location and pace are apt to differ: women are attacked in their boudoir, in a leisurely manner, men in some dark place where they know better than to be, and quickly" (Barber 83). Until quite recently the homosexual component of male vampires attacking male victims remained firmly subtextual. Anne Rice is the most famous of the writers who have brought forth this subtext for the consumption of her audience through her *Vampire Chronicles*.

The power of the vampire's seduction places her/ him in the dominant position. The female vampire creates even more unease than her male counterparts. Her seductions run contrary to gender norms. She is the monstrous nature of female sexuality and also the masochistic urge to submission in male victims. Most vampires are destroyed in the course of narratives with varying degrees of sympathy, from Carmilla and Dracula, to the teenaged vampires in *The Lost Boys* and Miriam from *The Hunger*. Since females are usually part of a harem and not the central antagonist the threat of female sexuality and the guilt of desire is rather easily neutralized by the violent deaths dealt to the female fiends. Of course, when it is a male vampire seeking to "convert" a human male, the implications of homosexuality are quite clear.

The powers vampires have are varied. In the Hamilton texts the powers that vampires have depend upon the line of vampires they are descended from. This emphasizes the difference of the vampires and their primarily European heritage,

recalling aristocratic lineages. Jean-Claude's powers center around seduction, and he can feed from sexual energy. When he is weakened in an attack by another vampire he engages in sexual contact with Anita, and draws power from her without taking blood (*Burnt Offerings* 89-91). Combined with the preternatural ability to influence humans, this places Jean-Claude in an extremely powerful position relative to his potential human partners.

Even without mental powers, or when the relationship is more equal in power, as it is with Morgan and Sonja in Collins's series, the age and experience of vampires gives them a great advantage. Their dependence upon seduction in order to survive means that they have learned how to manipulate sexual desire. Morgan's initial seduction of Denise is calculated to take advantage of her naivete. Once away from the other people, there is no seduction left. The attack that follows is graphically violent, exposing the immense power difference between vampire and human. By stripping away the romantic trappings that have been injected into the vampire myth Collins reveals the inequalities in such relationships: "In this myth a rape scene is played out through the gauze of fantasy" (Twitchell *FP* 70). The romantic storyline is stripped of the social illusions, like the fantasy of a rescue by a Prince Charming, that sustain it. These social illusions maintain the investment by the female in the potentially coercive and disempowering patriarchal relationship has been removed from this particular story, revealing the relations of power and the social imperatives that motivate such fantasies.

The male vampire/female human binary is a replica of the traditional patriarchal power structures in relationships. This is not to say that these structures

are natural in an essentialist manner, nor even that they describe all relationships. Within the romantic storyline that vampire narratives follow regarding the vampire's attack, however, attack is the most accurate description, and there is no doubting the unequal power distribution here. The vampire, like romantic heroes, are physically dominant, experienced in the world as compared to the generally innocent female, with access to special knowledge, knowledge that is forbidden the human/woman. Even when she enters into the world of vampirism the female exists in an unequal relationship. As Dresser points out, "once Dracula 'sexualizes' a relationship with a virgin, she immediately takes on the role of daughter and he takes from her no more, thus preserving the incest taboo" (161). The woman enters the supernatural as a daughter, though in many modern texts the vampire continues to desire the victim, breaking the incest taboo. As bride or daughter, the new vampire is exactly that, new to a different life in which they look to their maker for direction.

The human female is at a disadvantage, then, and the realities that she faces are fundamental in shaping her as her maker requires. Whether it is the straightforward rape of Denise Thorne or the more subtle seduction of which Anita accuses Jean-Claude, the vampires seek to contain, limit, and control the newly made daughters. Resistance to the romantic paradigm is a resistance to the narratives that limit female independence. It is expedient to prey on the weakest and most gullible of targets who will believe the romantic narrative. Denise Thorne is easy to hunt: "Denise was a teenage girl and, therefore, susceptible to romance and fantasy. . . . A girl with savvy would have pegged Morgan for an upper-class

rake with a taste for squab. She would have been wrong, but that was closer to the truth than the romantic sap sluicing through Denise's overheated imagination" (*Midnight Blue* 60). As she comes into her power and breaks away from the romantic narrative catching her is more difficult, and Morgan's later attempts at seduction are more complex. As the final confrontation approaches Sonja questions why she failed to kill Morgan when she had a chance, and why it is the Other who is so determined to destroy him. Her hatred for the Other and her exhaustion are the only things that allow Morgan to draw close. Morgan's seductions play on desires that go beyond a simple hunt. "Tell me the truth, Sonja — don't you grow weary of constantly battling with yourself? Don't you long to surrender the burden of conscience? Don't you grow weary of forever being on guard against losing control?" (*Midnight Blue* 538). Her failure to kill Morgan is presented as a sign of perverse, self-destructive desire.

The seduction is predicated on social myths. One is that the woman does not know her own mind, and by extension that the male knows what she wants better than she could. Her desire, or lack thereof, is an obstacle to overpower or overcome. Anita's continued refusal to give in to Jean-Claude's seduction flies in the face of these assumptions, as Jean-Claude repeatedly fails to convince her to give in to her desire or to overpower her wish to remain independent. When Anita sleeps with him it is at a moment of emotional vulnerability, a common technique of romantic storylines. However, Anita continues to set the parameters of the relationship.

Collins's *Midnight Blue* exposes the utilitarian function of seduction and

romance by playing out a literal predator/prey scenario. It reveals the way patriarchal structures vampirize women, and all non-heterosexual male participants, in order to secure its continuance. Morgan needs prey like Denise in order to feed and to live. He depends on the cultural myths of seduction and his power as a father/male in order to feed. Once he makes her a vampire, Morgan needs Sonja to continue believing in seduction in order to contain her. She must not only believe in his desire for her and the honesty of his seduction which is true up to a point. She must also believe in the conspiracy he builds between the two of them which singles them out as unique, as holders of a secret, the secret of their union. In the world of vampires this is the seduction of the daughter, the terrible secret of incestuous desire. Her refusal to participate in the conspiracy marks Sonja out in the father's vampire community as a rogue.

The reproduction of vampires involves first attacking a human, and then making that (usually) adult human a "child." "Whenever vampires attack humans, they infect them with a kind of virus. The virus generates drastic mutations in the human's biochemistry and physical structure. It reshapes half of the hosts's chromosomes so they resemble the vampire's. It's not unlike human conception, except that the fetus is an adult corpse" (Collins 296). The attack is highly sexualized, and the natural extension of its sexualization is a sustained attraction to the human-made-vampire. However, because this adult is reborn as a child, the attraction is recast as unnatural, incestuous, and perverse. At the very least it is an immoral predation on a vulnerable, more or less innocent person who requires instruction in a new life. Perhaps, as Twitchell points out, this incestuous urge takes

its origins from the folkloric vampire who "must first attack members of his own family" (FP 70). Romantic and Victorian vampires also tended to hunt from a fairly intimate group of people. Their narrative would focus on a single family, though they themselves came from outside.

Because writers have access to a broad range of interpretations in their texts modern vampire narratives vary in how they deal with post-conversion relationships. In some, the parent/child relationship is erased as much as possible. Tanya Huff's vampires follow the idea of a mentoring relationship, and their territorial nature means that within a year of the conversion the new vampire will be forced to separate from the vampire parent, or fight to the death, meaning that vampires in this universe tend to be solitary souls.²⁹ This also means that the sexual relationship does not have same level of disturbing parent/child implications that other texts do. Meanwhile, writers like Nancy Baker and Nancy Collins more or less acknowledge the parent/child relationship, Baker merely by the parent vampire making reference to his "dark daughter" (307). Master and servant or parent and child, the vampire relationship frames the newly made vampire as the child/servant to the older vampire, and muddies notions of consent.

The already perverse nature of vampires makes it rich ground to break the taboo against talking about incest. As Twitchell points out, "[w]hat is perplexing about incest, especially the father-daughter dyad, in contemporary popular culture is that it has little direct appeal if it is presented openly as such" (FP 26). Incest has masqueraded in vampire stories in popular culture for some time. Though it can be argued that the threat of incest is eliminated in narratives like *Dracula* by the

cessation of sexualized contact, the implications of a father/daughter relationship remains present in the narrative itself. Authors since then have made the suggestions of incest more overt without distorting the narrative. Collins exposes incestuous desire as a continuing act of violence against the daughter/victim, rather than as a salacious and exploitive fantasy. She uncovers narratives that are obscured by a system that refuses to acknowledge them. Her work underscores the fact that "fictions' are not lies . . . they are narrative recastings of events unrecognized by history" (Champagne 3). Collins's text examines the metaphor built around incest, expressing the narrative of the victim that usually goes unrecognized by dismantling the romance that tries to disguise it.

Like sexual assaults, vampire assaults involve the imposition of the attacker's need upon the victim. This is usually an attack by the male upon the female. Patriarchal culture arranges social structures to underwrite an interpretation of events that favours maintaining established order. The incest taboo "is the simultaneous transgression of the taboo and denial of the crime that forms the foundation of patriarchal culture. By declaring perpetrators of abuse the keepers of culture, their transgressions cannot be marked as transgressions because those who symbolize law are not judged by their actions but rather are privileged for their role" (Champagne 34). There is no doubt in Collins's text that the assault upon Denise Thorne is the crudest and most blatant of attacks. Outside of the brute survival of Morgan as a predator there is no defense of his actions. Yet Sonja's behaviour in the wake of that attack is the ambiguous survivor mentality.

The patriarchal order rests on male privilege and its access and control over

women. If incest is a taboo, the victim who speaks is a threat to the male privilege and the patriarchal order.³⁰ The culture around survivors constructs them in a variety of ways in order to discredit them:

The victim or survivor . . . is constructed under the aegis of the incest taboo. She supposedly has full, conscious memory of the incest experience, which she triumphantly discloses to an authority figure who believes her and solves "her" problem by stopping the abuse. Furthermore, under the taboo, she hates and despises her perpetrator and knows, as the rest of the society does just by looking at him, that he is an evil person. Above all, she feels no ambivalence about the experience or the perpetrator; at the very least, she certainly feels no love or compassion for him. Even if the experience happened when she was preverbal, she knows that what she experienced was incest. Finally, she is able to put the whole experience "behind" her because the past does not converge into the present in unexplainable or confusing ways - that is, in the acting out and embodying of aftereffects - unless, of course, she is crazy.

If the victim has any memory loss regarding the experience, society knows how to dispense with her: the taboo declares that she is lying, or that she liked it, or that she falsely believes the experience was incest because of suggestions made by a therapist or friend or the media. (Champagne 36)

By failing to conform to the constraints that patriarchal society frames around the incest victim, Sonja draws the guilt surrounding the survivor to herself. This is a guilt that is enhanced by the ongoing, incestuous relationship and ambiguous feelings toward Morgan as a father-figure, which society has deemed impossible in someone who is truly victimized.

Sonja's hunting of Morgan is a violation of unofficial patriarchal rules against speaking. As a vampire, the worst Morgan is guilty of is failing to control his offspring. The creation and control of their brood is up to the individual vampire. Humans are cattle to be preyed upon, and it is routine to kill their victims as a matter

of population control. "Every human we drain will rise again . . . And since it wouldn't do to have too many undead running loose, we take matters into our own hands.' He pantomimed wringing the neck of a chicken. 'Most of us take birth control very seriously' (Collins 100). Pangloss goes on to suggest that like any predator, vampires choose the weak as their prey. Morgan's mistake was choosing someone with a strong will. "[W]hen Morgan took your blood he left some of himself behind - remaking you in his own image . . . However, it is the strength of *your* will that decides if you will become a Noble. And we are usually very careful in our choice of prey. It wouldn't do to pick a victim who possesses a powerful will" (101). This offers an opening to for Sonja to be a victim or a survivor; it depends entirely upon her will. While initially Sonja's resistance is a personal matter for Morgan her continued challenge to Pretender society and threatens the structure and rules that support all of them.

In order to contain Sonja, Pangloss offers an alliance that would benefit her. While he would gain her promise not to kill his own brood he would in return teach her everything about the Real World. All she must do is "put aside this irrational hatred of [her] species" (102). To learn the rules that will make her life easier, she must agree to be silent about the crimes committed against her. This offer comes from the vampire who is in effect her grandfather. It remains in the interests of the family to have Sonja set aside her own interests. They are made to seem paltry in comparison to the interests of the long tradition of Pretender society. After Morgan discarded her after her rape and her human father turned her away upon discovering what she had become in the wake of her attack Sonja's search for a

nurturing and protective father figure is doomed to failure. The closest she comes to such a figure is an elderly researcher named Ghilardi, who cares for her primarily because she is a research subject who can restore his good name. She can be the recipient of material wealth from fathers, but never an emotional connection.

Sonja's disgust for the part of her born when Morgan raped her is evident in her repression of her appetite, the central reality to her vampire existence. Feeding is a control, a measure of the pre-rape morality that she values. Manlowe briefly describes the relationship of the incest survivor to food:

They bond with food (an inanimate but readily available object to animate in the imagination) as a result of having no one else whom they could trust. What they do or do not do with food is supposed to produce positive feelings of being loved, good, disciplined, valued, comforted, or protected. Their food behavior can also arouse negative feelings for the survivor, such as feelings of being bad, voracious, monstrous, disgusting, repulsive, destined for failure, greedy, and lazy.
(91)

Feeding is central to the vampire myth and its place outside of nature. For Sonja it is a concrete reality; she needs to feed, but she does not want to be a monster. She controls her appetite because she wants to feel human, and be accepted by humans. Because of the nature of vampirism the link between food and sexual appetite is enhanced. Sonja literally gorges herself as a prostitute, even if she does not feed on humans. Her repudiation of blood/sex is her repudiation of the life/sexuality that Morgan has imposed upon her with his attack. It is a repudiation of a pleasure that she should not feel, but also of the rules that Morgan's kind seek to impose.

Sonja begins her vampire life as an abandoned daughter and forms an

identity as a rogue, determined to destroy the beings who marked her as monstrous.

The close of the text is not a romantic ending but it is a remarkably positive one.

She has defeated her nemesis, unified her shattered psyche and is free to write her own narrative. It is clear that she will continue to fight the patriarchal Pretender society, this time without the self-destructive tendencies that marred her unlif thus far.

Hamilton avoids as much as possible suggestions of incest in the relationships between vampires. Like Anne Rice and many other modern writers, vampire relationships which the author depicts are defined in terms of lovers and partners, masters and servant, and not family.³¹ The inequality of power between vampires and humans is still present and issues of coercion still exist even in the more egalitarian company of adults. The master/servant description, the various factions and the structure of the vampire society is a hierarchical structure. Sexual availability, who can demand sexual favours and who must submit, underwrites the relationships in the text.

In *Guilty Pleasures*, before her introduction to vampire society, Anita proves resistant to Jean-Claude's attraction and his efforts to seduce her. The introduction of the character in the first text establishes her distrust of vampires, as she adamantly refuses to work for vampires who want to hire her. Immediately following this she finds herself at a strip club in the quarter of the city given over to vampires. From there she becomes entangled in the vampire community, who force her to take the job of discovering who is murdering them. Jean-Claude, who acts as her contact, is an overt play on the romantic hero. Anita is expected to react in a

feminine way to seduction, be it from vampires or humans. She refuses to cooperate with this seduction. She objects, for instance, to *ma petite*, his term of endearment for her. Diminutive pet names are common in romantic narratives and her objections reject those narratives.

The stages of development of human servants are the strongest illustration of fundamental inequality of vampire/human relationships. They blur the issues of consent. While Jean-Claude uses his talents to cloud the mind of the strip club's audience, Anita disapproves, but is not alarmed because it is "[t]hat peculiar terror that you get on roller coasters and at horror movies. Safe terror" (*Guilty Pleasures* 20). Later she believes her friend to be safe from the vampires because the "mass hypnosis was not personal, and not permanent" (*Guilty Pleasures* 22). However, she discovers not only that she is wrong about her friend's safety, but that she cannot control who is in her mind as easily as she believes. The first stage of being made a human servant is not consensual. The stage is forced upon her, overwhelming and unstoppable. Even as a necromancer she has no immunity to becoming a servant of a vampire. Human servants in later stages may not remember that consent was ever an issue. The vampire's ability to impose her/his will onto another, to change how her or his potential servant/victim thinks, and to naturalize the master/servant relationship to the point where the servant believes that it is right parallels the cycles of violent relationships where the victim, apparently inexplicably, voluntarily remains with the dominant abuser.

All relationships within the vampire community are described in terms of masters and servants. The vampire community is hierarchical, ruled by a European

Council that organizes territories for Masters to rule in order to limit bloodshed between vampires. People, human and vampire alike, are traded amongst master vampires as a commodity, a sign of generosity and personal power. When he was still a new vampire Jean-Claude was thus traded, though he eventually breaks free after learning that he had talent enough to be a master vampire. When representatives of the council arrive, they demand hospitality in the form of slave-like servants. Autonomy is traded for identity and the safety of other preternatural creatures.

When Anita takes on the marks of the human servant she gains a measure of control over vampires that she did not have before. It grants her a certain immunity, though it means that she is obligated to participate in the posturing that the structure of the vampire community depends upon. Such posturing generally involves the possession of the body, sexually or otherwise. One of the vampire council members known as the Traveler most fully embodies this trait. He literally inhabits the body. When Jean-Claude refuses to take a seat on the council, it is threat of bodily invasion, something he had experience before, that the Traveler uses to attempt to force the issue: "If he takes the council seat, you'll still try and force yourself on him, because if you can force him, then he's not powerful enough to be council? But if he doesn't take the seat, you'll do it anyway" (*Burnt Offerings* 81). The council's presence in St. Louis underscores the anxiety in the text, particularly Anita's, over bodily integrity and control that begins with the taking of blood but is quickly expanded to include coercive sex. No relationship is devoid of sexual implications, and the hierarchy is expressed as a matter of course in violence, especially sexual

violence.

Ransoming of the weaker members of the preternatural community who the council members have claimed requires Anita to voluntarily surrender herself in their place, along with Jean-Claude and Richard. They are all challenged to individual combat, which in the case of Jean-Claude and Richard involved tests of physical power. In Anita's case, the battle is over feeding. The rules established for the battle stipulate that they cannot be tortured or raped, but does not limit feeding, which Anita has always refused on principle: "He will try to make it rape . . . Not actual rape, but the effect is surprisingly similar. Make it a seduction, if you can. Turn necessity into a pleasure. It will be the last thing he expects, and it will unnerve him" (*Burnt Offerings* 272). Control over this aspect of her relationship with Jean-Claude has been an absolute for her, ostensibly because she dislikes the idea of being fed upon, but Richard's criticism is a valid one: "Still holding back? Don't you know how to give yourself completely to anyone?" (*Burnt Offerings* 272). Anita's control over Jean-Claude's feeding from her is a control over the last, monstrous translation of feeding into sex. She refuses to allow him to feed because she needs some way to distinguish herself from preternatural monsters. The council's attempt to break her resolve is an attempt to force her to live within their structure. Their attempt fails, as Anita refuses to bow to pressure.

The narratives of sexual assault and incest that Collins and Hamilton choose to highlight are obscured by a romantic storyline built into the vampire narrative. The purpose of this storyline is to fold female expressions of desire into a form that is supportive of prevailing patriarchal culture, where power lies in the demand and

control of sexuality. The vampires in Hamilton's text illustrate their power by the demands they can place upon others involved with the preternatural community. Collins expands upon the subtext of incest, revealing the ways in which the father and the patriarchal culture he supports imposes his will upon Sonja, first upon her body and later by attempting to silence her story and erase the signs of her rebellion. In both cases the vampire communities contain repressive aspects of patriarchal culture. Only through personal strength and willpower are the individual efforts of the heroines successful at overcoming the repressions and the violence contained within the vampire cultures.

Both series take up the task of deconstructing rape/incest narratives that are buried beneath romantic constructions of the vampire. Anita refuses to be swayed by Jean-Claude's attempts at seduction because she is unable to be certain that her agreement is consensual. Having fought for independence, she is paranoid about relinquishing it. She is also fully cognizant of the drug-like aspects of vampirism/sex in her universe. She wants to be neither passive, nor helplessly addicted. *Midnight Blue* illustrates the incestuous urges underwriting the vampire myth in graphic detail. Sonja's is the narrative of a survivor of rape or incest. When she fully integrates her personalities and accepts what was done to her, she is able to free herself from the patriarchal powers that have violated her and seek to silence her telling of her own story.

Anita and Sonja's narratives are still circumvented by tenacious patriarchal control. They are still limited by stereotypes that pathologize their aggression and recreate them as monsters. Embracing that aspect of themselves and redefining it

in positive terms that they control is the only way that they will escape from patriarchal devaluation. Infinitely flexible, the vampire narrative offers women the opportunity to play with notions of monstrosity and alter its meanings. There are hazards to this project. Writers need to use the fluid borders of fantasy to imagine paradigms beyond the vastly oversimplified male/active, female/passive binary. Reproducing the binary negatively affects the group that takes the culturally devalued passive and undermines the active by reducing that group's achievements.

Conclusion

Vampires have been a part of the popular imagination for hundreds of years. Only recently have female authors written widely in the vampire narrative, and they have begun to leave their mark. They have begun altering the myth to explain the role of women as they relate to vampires. They have rejected the passive role of victim that had long been the lot of female characters in vampire stories, replacing it with active women who look to control their own lives, images, and sexualities. The active protagonists that Laurell K. Hamilton and Nancy A. Collins portray provide an innate challenge to narratives of female passivity. These narratives raise questions about how women who deviate from cultural norms are framed as sick, abnormal, and monstrous. Both characters attempt to control their own identities. While disturbing, Sonja's story ends positively by presenting her as a strong and independent female character, while Anita's story offers an ambiguous challenge to what is found in traditional vampire narratives. Sonja leaves the narrative having healed the psyche shattered by her rape. In the end she understands that she can define herself, without the patriarchal figures that she as sought direction from throughout the texts. She accepts her sexuality, desire, and her adult identity. She does so by refusing the desires projected onto her by Morgan and others.

Hamilton and Collins use the traits of fantasy to leave readers with a potentially powerful message about contemporary society. The position of fantasy texts, slightly removed from the mainstream, gives them the freedom to distort select aspects of culture into an unfamiliar formation, presenting a unique perspective. This process can be particularly useful in uncovering the hidden control of

hegemonic discourses. Hegemony works because it operates below the surface, at a level of belief that goes unquestioned. Defamiliarization can clarify the role of hegemony within narratives.

Anita's narrative is an ongoing series, but to date her independence has been less complete than Sonja's. While the men in Sonja's life may attempt to control her by projecting their needs onto her, they resisted the feminizing project demanded by a simple masculine/feminine binary. The cost of this resistance was the intimacy they shared with Sonja. However, Hamilton's inversion of gender expectations limits the efficacy of forming a strong female character, because the dominance Anita achieves is predicated upon men who take on the devalued feminine position. Still, Anita struggles with conservative values that link her independence and sexuality with monstrosity. Her narrative is complicated by the seductive aspects of the vampire myth. Her values help her to see through and resist a romantic narrative of seduction that would again posit the female as passive.

The greatest flaw with the project of generating active female characters is the ease with which the genders can be reversed without challenging the basic assumption of active-masculine/passive-feminine roles. Chapter three dealt with the inversion that Hamilton employs, and the threat of passivity in Collins's series, and revealed how these techniques are problematic in that they maintain a devaluation of the feminine. While inversion is an effective way to expose the standards that cultures impose on gender, it retains the hierarchy of an either/or situation. The reversal does, however, open up the possibility of active female desire, directed at male characters. Anita's crumbling conservative values and her fear of emotional

commitment leave her more and more able to explore her own sexuality, and admit to sexual interest and desire. From the moment of her rebirth as a Pretender, Sonja has had an active sexuality. For the greater part of the series this sexuality is crippled by her guilt over her change. Eventually these feelings lead to the destruction of her significant relationships.

The greatest problem with inversion for both genders is that it maintains the impossibility of equality in relationships. Anita and Jean-Claude play games of dominance and power in which it seems clear that one or the other will be in control. Anita's fear is that she will lose control of her autonomy, while Jean-Claude, despite Anita's suspicions, has much the same fear. An early life at the hands of powerful vampires ensures that Jean-Claude never wants to be subordinate to anyone. Even Anita's relationship with Richard is framed within a power structure, particularly through the pack structure of Alpha wolf and mate. In Collins's series, Sonja's lover Palmer disappears into a primitive, patriarchal culture, unable to accept the possibility of becoming Sonja's subordinate. Neither series suggests the possibility of equality with a powerful female figure.

However, taken out of the context of an inverted binary, the powerful figures that emerge from these series do present opportunities for readers to identify with characters that are active in their own lives. In chapter four I showed how both Anita and Sonja resist being controlled by the images that other characters have created for them. Specifically, they resist being turned into fetish objects that are controlled, contained, used, and ultimately destroyed in order to maintain a patriarchal narrative of power. Anita and Sonja learn how to draw and control power from sexualities that

they initially denied. They learn that the sexualized femme fatale can be a source of strength, and that it is the strength of the figure that is the reason for its devalued position in society.

Finally, in explicating the female role within the myth of the vampire, both series take up the task of deconstructing rape/incest narratives that are buried beneath romantic constructions of the vampire. In chapter five I showed how the romantic storylines underwriting what is essentially a story of domination and rape are challenged by Hamilton and Collins, and how the two series clarify the female experience within the vampire narrative. Anita refuses to be swayed by Jean-Claude's attempts at seduction because she is unable to be certain that her agreement is consensual. Having fought for independence, she is paranoid about relinquishing it. She is also fully cognizant of the drug-like aspects of vampirism/sex in her universe. She wants to be neither passive, nor helplessly addicted. *Midnight Blue* illustrates the incestuous urges underwriting the vampire myth in graphic detail. Sonja's is the narrative of a survivor of rape or incest. When she fully integrates her personalities and accepts what was done to her, she is able to free herself from the patriarchal powers that have violated her and seek to silence her telling of her own story.

Literature of the fantastic can go even further in redefining characterizations of women in cultural narratives. Because of the longevity of the vampire in culture and the many roles that it can play, it can serve as a flexible metaphor for examining the world as we have defined it through our myths. To use the vampire to its fullest potential, fantasy authors must move beyond overly-simplistic binary understandings

of gender and culture. They are waging a guerilla war on the fringes of mainstream culture, and the interventions that they can make are nearly limitless. Fantasy writers can offer new ways of thinking about contemporary culture only by moving out of romantic storylines and by exploring the possibilities of their genre.

Notes

1. Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Transl. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.
2. Hamilton, Laurell K. *Bloody Bones*. New York: Ace, 1996.
 - . *Blue Moon*. New York: Ace, 1996.
 - . *Burnt Offerings*. New York: Ace, 1998.
 - . *Circus of the Damned*. New York: Ace, 1995.
 - . *Guilty Pleasures*. New York: Ace, 1993.
 - . *The Killing Dance*. New York: Ace, 1997.
 - . *The Laughing Corpse*. New York: Ace, 1994.
 - . *The Lunatic Cafe*. New York: Ace, 1996.
3. According to the novel, lycanthropes still carry a bounty in some Western states. There is little information about how other countries deal with their sentient monsters. The state-by-state legal status of vampires and lycanthropes is reminiscent of the current, spotty legal status of homosexual acts in the United States (World Policy Institute).
4. Collins, Nancy A. *In the Blood*. ROC: 1992.
 - . *Paint it Black*. 1996.
 - . *Sunglasses After Dark*. New York: New American Library, 1989.
5. While neither gay nor Jewish stereotypes are considered amusing by most contemporary audiences, both did exist, and still retain a place in popular media, however tasteless they may seem. The "Jewish Princess" stereotype in *The Big Hit* (1998), for instance, was ostensibly a source of amusement. Within the context of vampire films, anti-Semitic humour was analogous to racial stereotypes that were played for humour in other genres, such as the racist portrayal of Asians in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). Whatever the intent, humour based on negative stereotypes is ineffectual at best. While it might serve to soften the presentation of vampire (Other) as a threat, it still plays on negative stereotype. There is also the risk of audiences accepting the negative representation at face value, thereby erasing any ironic elements of such a portrayal.
6. The concept of the anti-hero is itself complex. I define it broadly as a character that defies certain social strictures but nonetheless behaves heroically, willing to act in support of a socially acceptable moral code.
7. Characterization of female vampires also tends to be less developed and individualized than that of their male counterparts. Dracula has three nameless brides, the Hammer horror films had harems of indistinguishable female vampires, etc.. This makes empathy with them difficult, if not impossible.

8. The most famous example of the rogue scholar is Fox Mulder, of Chris Carter's *X-Files*, who has an apparently inexhaustible capacity to believe in the supernatural. The knowledge he gleans from socially illegitimate, underground resources and discredited folklore is always essential to the narrative, and usually results in solving the case.
9. It is unlikely that a desperate frat boy, surrounded by suddenly threatening vampire strippers he was recently watching, was thinking of the religious significance of fire when he started flammable alcohol on the bar in order to destroy them. The association of cleansing fire was an early development in vampire fiction and persists, perhaps as a throwback to religious explanations for vampirism.
10. Women appear most frequently as the mothers of messiah or antichrist figures, following a Judeo-Christian pattern, in which case any defense they launch is set within a maternal protective framework, rather than defense or revenge. Active and proactive, non-feminine behaviour is thus justified within a socially acceptable, and quite common framework. Linda Hamilton, who played Sarah Connor in the *Terminator* films is an excellent example of this action type.
11. The recent development of the Internet shares certain anxieties with the discussion surrounding pulp. Concerns center around the inability to control not only the quality of its content, but who can say what, where, and to whom.
12. "In a recent interview Jean-Claude Van Damme, asked about his gay male following, muses that perhaps 'they miss affection and that's why they like to have a father figure'. He adds that his gay fans may also 'like the physique I have', at which point interviewer Jim McClellan notes in an aside to the reader, 'it's a possibility' (Tasker 7-8).
13. Since homosexual acts are still illegal even in some U.S. states, even basic Slash stories are potentially troublesome for fan fiction archivists and webpage owners (World Policy Institute).
14. Many fans move through fandoms, and fandoms themselves rise and fall in popularity. The longevity of vampires is unique, and the constancy of production means that at any time there is something new for fans to integrate.
15. Huff, Tanya. *Sing the Four Quarters*. New York: Daw, 1994.
---. *Fifth Quarter*. New York: Daw, 1995.
---. *No Quarter*. New York: Daw, 1996.
---. *The Quartered Sea*. New York: Daw, 1999.
16. Scott, Melissa. *Trouble and her Friends*. New York: Tor, 1994.
17. The vampire has long been associated with horror, and is usually used in genre fiction. Instances of vampires in canonical literature are rare, though notions of psychic or emotional vampirism perpetrated by humans are quite common.

18. Carter notes that "*Dracula* maintained its definitive status until the publication of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* in 1976. Among present-day vampire fans and writers, many were first introduced to the literary vampire by Rice, rather than Stoker, and consider her their principal influence" (193).

19. Frequently with a practical sense of humour that is missing in many earnest feminist dystopian projects. *Chicks in Chainmail*, *Did You Say Chick?*, *Chicks 'N Chained Males*, and *The Chick is in the Mail*, a series fantasy anthologies edited by Esther Friesner, provide a refreshingly lighthearted parody of the fantasy genres.

20. Analysis of Whedon's *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* titles exceeds the scope of this work. There are a number of points of similarity between Buffy and Anita in terms of who they are and what they do. In particular, both characters fall in love with one of the monsters they are supposed to be fighting. If homoeroticism and sexual master/servant/slave relationships central to Hamilton's work are present in Whedon's texts, they lack the heavily structured ritual that Hamilton employs.

21. The refusal to mention HIV/AIDS or indeed any terminal disease may stem from the difficulty the author may face in attempting to explain why more people are not volunteering to become lycanthropes, given the phenomenal, if not entirely explained, curative effects of lycanthropy. As it seems that lycanthrope bodies can cure almost any injury, for instance, amputees can become lycanthropes, have their limbs severed again, and regrow the limb. If so, why does lycanthropy remain such a taboo state in the novel? At any rate, Hamilton does not go so far as to say whether or not it is possible for a lycanthrope to have HIV/AIDS.

22. The Vlad virus is particularly charged with implications of guilt and innocence. While vampirism has been proposed as a viral infection before, this is a rare example of a vampire being able to reproduce biologically in the same manner as humans. Vampires are rarely "born." The only comparable instance is in the case of the "dhampire," a human/vampire hybrid created when a pregnant woman is bitten by a vampire, as in the film *Blade* for instance. In the case of the Vlad virus, death is a transmittable disease and, like HIV/AIDS, can be passed on to unborn children. Thus the sin(s) of the parents are visited on the child.

23. Given the ironically positive traits of vampirism and lycanthropy in film and fiction, there is no drug abuse in preternatural communities. Prostitution is regulated by the hierarchy of the community and if members continue as prostitutes they are handled and protected by the more powerful members of the community. Gabriel, the pack leader for the were-leopards, regularly pimped for less powerful members of the community but was strong enough to be a protector. In fictional vampire and lycanthrope communities, trade in sex appears to be a regular occurrence and being offered (or being able to demand) vampires or lycanthropes as a sign of hospitality is a another measure of personal power.

24. Ironically, lycanthropy is nearly the opposite of HIV/AIDS. It grants superhuman strength, speed, and endurance, enhanced senses, and a stronger immune system that allows lycanthropes to heal at an accelerated rate. Their only physical weakness is silver, drawn from the mythology surrounding werewolves.

25. A dhampire, a relatively new creature in the vampire narrative, is a hybrid of human and vampire. It is usually created when a pregnant human female is bitten by a vampire. The vampirism is transmitted, in a mutated form, to the unborn baby who carries some vampire and some human characteristics, depending upon the whim of the author. Collins uses the figure in her texts. Blade, from the movie of the same name, is also a type of dhampire.

26. The term used for human servants, "renfield," is taken from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In that text, Dracula forms a telepathic link with a human named Renfield, promising immortality in exchange for the human's agency in daylight, and in other situations in which the vampire cannot act himself. Dracula abandons Renfield and eventually destroys him.

27. Palmer, Sonja's human lover, is also raped by Lethe, the hybrid Pretender child that he and Sonja take care of. Sonja erases his memory of the event. It is difficult to judge the impact that this event could have on his subsequent actions.

28. Goth is a subculture that is marked by a fascination with horror, death and the occult, including vampires.

29. Huff, Tanya. *Blood Debt*. New York: Daw, 1997.

---. *Blood Lines*. New York: Daw, 1993.

---. *Blood Pact*. New York: Daw, 1993.

---. *Blood Price*. New York: Daw, 1991.

---. *Blood Trail*. New York: Daw, 1992.

In the final book of the series to date the two vampires discover that after they hunt together the territorial instinct is shut down, replaced by passion, and that both parent and child can be driven into vengeful bloodlust by the other's blood being spilled. The cost of their relations, however, is so high that neither can justify the body count.

30. Patriarchal power resides in being able to violate taboo and get away with it.

31. Rice's "queer" family of Louis, Lestat, and Claudia is a notable exception. However, because the relationship that carried the bulk of the sexual tension was between Louis and Lestat, rather than either elder vampire and Claudia, it overshadows and dissolves much of the sexuality of her presence. Outside of her rebirth as a vampire, neither of the male vampires appear attracted to her. Her creation was a gambit on Lestat's part in his game with Louis. In fact, the tragedy of Claudia's character was that no one would see her sexually, despite the fact that emotionally and mentally she was an adult.

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