for language to mean, based on reveling in an illegitimate, homosexual state of desire.

This adolescent phase in the construction of my social identity is still marked in the word "queer" for me, with its plenitude and pain, its silence and poetry, and its cross-gender identification. For I became queer through my readerly identification with a male homosexual author. The collusion of the patriarchy and the canon made Rimbaud more available to me than the few lesbian authors who had managed to make it into print. Later, a multitude of other experiences and discourses continued to enhance my queer thinking. Most prominent among them was the subcultural discourse of camp which I learned primarily from old dykes and gay male friends I knew in San Francisco, when I lived in the ghetto of bars—before the rise of feminism. Then there was feminism, both the social movement and the critique, which became my social and theoretical milieu—after the bars. And finally, my young lesbian students and friends who have taught me how, in many ways, my life and my writing reflect a lesbian “of a certain age.” My construction of the following queer theory, then, is historically and materially specific to my personal, social, and educational experience, and hopefully to others who have likewise suffered the scours of dominant discourse and enjoyed these same strategies of resistance. It is in no way offered as a general truth or a generative model.

My adolescent experience still resonates through the following discursive strategies: the pain I felt upon encountering heterosexual discourse here becomes a critique of heterosexism within feminist theory—a way of deconstructing my own milieu to ease the pain of exclusion as well as to confront what we have long, on the street, called "the recreational use of the lesbian"; the identification with the inside, the taking of on of the transgressive, and the consequent flight into invisibility are inscribed in the figure of the vampire; the discovery of Rimbaud and camp enables a theory that reaches across lines of gender oppression to gay men and, along with feminist theory, prompts the writing itself—ironically distanced and flaunting through metaphor. By imploding this particular confluence of strategies, this queer theory strikes the blissful wound into ontology itself, to bleed the fast line between living and dead.

But I am rushing headlong into the pleasure of this wound, an acceleration instigated by the figure that haunts this introduction, the figure that appears and disappears—the vampire. Like the actor pecking out at the audience from the wings before the curtain rises, she rustles plodding, descriptive

prose into metaphors whose veiled nature prompts her entrance. Her discursive retinue whets my desire to flaunt, to camp it up a bit, to trans-invest the tropes. But first, the necessary warm-up act of exposition.

The Relationship Between Queer Theory and Lesbian Theory: or, "Breaking Up's So Very Hard To Do"

Queer theory, unlike lesbian theory or gay male theory, is not gender specific. In fact, like the term "homosexual," queer foregrounds same-sex desire without designating which sex is desiring. As a feminist, I am aware of the problems that congregate at this site. These problems are both historical and theoretical. Gay male theory is inscribed with patriarchal privilege, which it sometimes deconstructs and sometimes does not. Lesbian theory is often more narrowly lesbian feminist theory, or lesbian theory arising, historically, from various alignments with feminist theory. Through its alliance with feminism, lesbian theory often proceeds from theories inscribed with heterosexism. I will deal at length with this problem later. But for now, I would contend that both gay male and lesbian theory reinscribe sexual difference, to some extent, in their gender-specific construction. In her article "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation," Teresa de Lauretis has already elucidated some of the problematic ways that sexual difference is marked within lesbian representation. For, while gender is an important site of struggle for women, the very notion reinscribes sexual difference in a way that makes it problematic for the lesbian, as de Lauretis configures it, "to be seen." This gender base also leads to problems for lesbians when a certain feminist theory defines the gaze itself, as will be illustrated later.

In contrast to the gender-based construction of the lesbian in representation, queer theory, as I will construct it here, works not at the site of gender, but at the site of ontology, to shift the ground of being itself, thus challenging the Platonic parameters of Being—the borders of life and death. Queer desire is constituted as a transgression of these boundaries and of the organismic which defines the living as the good. The Platonic construction of a life/death binary opposition is subverted by a queer desire which seeks the living dead, producing a slippage at the ontological base and seducing through a gender inversion above. Rephrasing that well-known exchange between Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein at Gertrude's death bed, Alice might here ask: "Now that you're dying, tell me Gertrude, what's the answer?" And Gertrude might reply: "What's the query?" Gertrude, the lesbian on the border of life/death, locked in language with her lover, exits through a campy inversion.

The lethal offshoot of Plato's organismic has been its association with the natural. Life/death becomes the binary of the "natural" limits of Being: the organic is the natural. In contrast, the queer has been historically constituted as unnatural. Queer desire, as unnatural, breaks with this life/death binary of Being through same-sex desire. The articulation of queer desire also breaks with the discourse that claims mimetically to represent that "natural" world, by subverting its tropes. In queer discourse, as Oscar Wilde illustrated, "the importance of being earnest" is a comedy. Employing the subversive power of the unnatural to unset the Platonic world view, the queer, unlike the rather polite categories of gay and lesbian, revels in the discourse of the loathsome, the outcast, the idiomatically proscribed position of same-sex desire. Unlike petitions for civil rights, queer revels constitute a kind of activism that attacks the dominant notion of the natural. The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny. Like the Phantom of the Opera, the queer dwells underground, below the operatic overtones of the dominant; frightening to look at, desiring, as it plays its own organ, producing its own music.

This un-natural sense of the queer was, of course, first constituted as a negative category by dominant social practices, which homosexuals later embraced as a form of activism. Historically, the category of the unnatural was one of an aggregate of notions aimed at securing the right to life for a small minority of the world's population. This right to life was formulated through a legal, literary, and scientific discourse on blood, which stabilized privilege by affirming the right to life for those who could claim blood and further, pure blood, and the consequent death sentence, either metaphorically or literally, for those who could not. Against the homosexual, this right was formulated as the seeming contradiction between sterile homosexual sex and fertile heterosexual practice; that is, before recent technological "advances," heterosexuals may have babies because of their sexual practice and queers may not. From the heterosexist perspective, the sexual practice that produced babies was associated with giving life, or practicing a life-giving sexuality, and the living was established as the category of the natural. Thus, the right to life was a slogan not only for the unborn, but for those whose sexual practices could produce them. In contrast, homosexual sex was mandated as sterile—an unlive practice that was consequently unnatural, or queer, and, as that which was unlive, without the right to life.
Queer sexual practice, then, impels one out of the generational production of what has been called “life” and history, and ultimately out of the category of the living. The equation of hetero = sex = life and homo = sex = unhappy generated a queer discourse that revealed in proscribed desiring by imagining sexual objects and sexual practices within the realm of the other-than-natural, and the consequent other-than-living. In this discourse, new forms of being, or beings, are imagined through desire. And desire is that which wounds—a desire that breaks through the sheath of being as it has been imagined within a heterosexist society. Striking at its very core, queer desire punctures the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexist notion of being.

"Was It the Taste of Blood? Nay . . . the Taste of Love"

Although, as a queer theorist, I eschew generational models of history, I would like to perform the reading of certain texts, not as precursors, fathers, or mothers of a youthful time, but as traces of she-who-would-not-be-seen, whose movement is discernible within certain discursive equations. The compound of wounding desire, gender inversion, and ontological shift is early configured in mystic writings. The mystic women authors, such as Hrotsvitha von Gandersheim, Teresa of Avila, or Hildegard von Bingen write of reveling in the wounding, ontological desire. Yet their precision in marking the social oppression in the feminine position of such desire makes the gendering of that desire mimetic—stable in its historical resonances. Gender slippage, performed through the ontological break, may be found in the writings of an early male mystic—marking both oppression in the feminine and liberation in the adoption of it.

The works of John of the Cross, although not literally queer, begin a tradition that will be taken up later as literal by Rimbaud, Wilde, and more recently Alexis DeVeaux. John’s wounding desire is articulated in several ways, but often as a fire, as in his treatise, the Living Flame of Love: “had not God granted a favor to [the] flesh, and covered it with his right hand . . . it would have died at each touch of this flame, and its natural being would have been corrupted” (49); or, “the healing of love is to hurt and wound once more that which has been hurt and wounded already, until the soul comes to be wholly dissolved in the wound of love” (61). The flame of this desire not only corrupts natural beings, but sears into a world where being is reconfigured. John, the mystic lover, desires a being of a different order—one who does not live or die as we know it. In order to “know” this being, the senses and thus epistemology must be reconfigured. In his poem “The Dark Night of the Soul,” John lyricizes this reconfiguring of the senses necessary for his tryst (Poems). Then, in “The Spiritual Canticle,” where his love finds full expression in the trope of marriage, John inverts his gender, writing his desire as if he were the bride with the other being as the bridegroom. John, the bride, languishes for her lover, seeks him everywhere, finally reaching him: “Our bed: in roses laid/patrols of lions ranging all around. . . . There I gave all of me; put chariness aside: there I promised to become his bride” (Poems 7–9). And the bridegroom says to John: “I took you tenderly hurt virgined, made you well (13).” The wound of love liberates the lover from the boundaries of being—the living, dying envelope of the organic. Ontology shifts through gender inversion and is expressed as same-sex desire. This is queer, indeed.

Historically, John’s queer break-through from “life” also signaled a break with a dominant discourse that legislated the right to life through pure blood. His works were written in Spain during the so-called Golden Age, with its literature and social practice of honor and pure blood: the dominant discourse was spattered with the blood of women and their illicit lovers, but ultimately aimed, in the subtext, against the impure blood of Jews and Moors (the figure for illicit lovers a cover for conversos). The Golden Age tragedies set the scene of desire in the context of the generational model, the family and the potential family, in a verse that conflates racial purity with sexual honor; and spilt blood with the protection of pure blood. Writing his poems in a cramped prison cell designed to torture, John defied the generational, heterosexorial mandate by a counterdiscourse that set desire in gender inversion: he countered the conflation of race/life and love/life in a discourse that imagined and origiastically embraced the un-dead. Blood, in the dominant discourse which was writing racial laws along with such tragedies, is genealogy, the blood right to money; and blood/money is the realm of racial purity and pure heterosexuality. Looking forward several centuries, one can see the actual tragic performance of this dominant equation in Hitler’s death camps, where, among others, both Jews and homosexuals were put to death. More recently, one can see such tropes operating in the anti-AIDS discourse that conflates male homosexual desire with the contamination of blood.

I would like to read from this dominant discourse of blood, death, purity, and heterosexual generation in its most obscene form: Hitler’s Mein Kampf. I apologize for quoting such a text, for, on the one hand, I can understand the
"Reclining at her feet, elated yet calm, Delphine stared up at her with shining eyes; the way a lioness watches her prey/once her fangs marked it for her own" (304). After their love-making, Baudelaire sends them down to hell, out of this life, desiccated by their desire. As he called it, the "stérilité de votre jouissance (307)." At least, in Baudelaire, jouissance belongs to the lesbian couple. Nevertheless, once again the fangs, the death, the other world of the living dead. But what was the metaphorical bride of inverted gender is represented here as lesbian desire—the gender trope of the double-feminized.

I read lesbian here, the two "she's" together, as a trope. The term does not mimetically refer to a gender in the world. In queer discourse, "she" is the wounding, desiring, transgressive position that weds, through sex, an unnatural being. "She" is that bride. "She" is the fanged lover who breaks the ontological sac—the pronounal Gomorrah of the queer. When two "she's" are constructed, it is a double trope—a double masquerade. To read that desire as lesbian is not to reinscribe it with dominant, heterosexist categories of gender, for lesbian, in queer theory, is a particular dynamic in the system of representation: the doubled trope of "she's," constructed in the dominant discourse as the doubly inferior, the doubly impure, and recast in the queer as Wrigley chewing gum celebrates it: "double your pleasure, double your fun."

I realize that this seems to be a move away from the material, historical condition of lesbians. Yet the entry point of this theory rests upon my entrance, as an adolescent, into the speaking and hearing, reading and writing about my sexuality. Insofar as I am queer, or lesbian, this identity is in consonance with the discursive strategies that those words represent historically: my desire and my sexual practice are inscribed in these words and, conversely, these words—the historical practice of a discourse—are inscribed in my sexual practice. Take, for instance, my years of furtive pleasure between the sheets, or my years of promiscuous (tweaking and twaddling). Both eras were performances of the double trope of the "she," either as the doubly inferior, marked by oppression, or as double pleasure, reveling in transgression. To ask "will the real lesbian please stand up," when she is embedded in the dominant discursive mandate to disappear, or in the sub-cultural subversion to flaunt her distance from the "real," is like asking the vampire to appear in the mirror. (She made me write that. For now is the time of her entrance on screen.) The double "she," in combination with the queer fanged creature, produces the vampire. The vampire is the queer in its lesbian mode.

Tracking the Vampire

The En-tranced Take: The Lesbian and the Vampire

So finally, now, the vampire can make her appearance. But how does she appear? How can she appear, when the visible is not in the domain of the queer, when the apparatus of representation still belongs to the un-queer? Thus far, we've had the fun, fun, fun of imagining the liberating, creative powers of the queer in representation. Unfortunately, daddy always takes the T-Bird away and the vampire, those two "she's" in the driver's seat, is left standing at the cross-roads of queer theory and dominant discourse. Although the "she" is not mimetic of gender, "she" is shaped, in part, by her pronounal history—that is, how "she" is constructed elsewhere and previously in language. Along the metaphorical axis, "she" is somehow the queer relative of the other girls. What this "she" vampire flaunts is the cross—the crossing out of the seductive pleasure, the plenitude of proximity and the break. Thus, the dominant gaze constructs a vampire that serves only as a prescription—is perceived only as a transgression: interpolated between the viewer and the vampire is the cross—the crossing out of her image. Dominant representation is made of the vampire a horror story.

But this site/sight of prescription lingers in the theoretical construction of the gaze in feminist theory as well—specifically in theories of the gaze proceeding from psychoanalytic presumptions. There, the vampire is subjected to the familiar mode of "seduced and abandoned," or "the recreational use of the lesbian," for while such heterosexist feminist discourse flirts with her, it ultimately double-crosses her with the hegemonic notion of "woman," reinscribing "her" in the generational model and making horrible what must not be seductive. The vampire as the site or sight of the undead leads such feminist discourse back to the mother's right to life, where fruition becomes the counterdiscourse of exclusion. For example, taking Kristeva's cue that the birthing mother is transgressive, flowing with the milk of semiosis, the cover photo on Jane Gallop's Thinking Through the Body fixes the gaze at the birthing vaginal canal of the author, suggesting that her head may be found inside the book. In other words, Mother Gallop's site of fruition counters discursive exclusion. But does not the feminist political privileging of this sight, designed to empower "women," re-enliven, as the shadowy "other" of this fertile, feminist mother, the earlier categories of the "unnatural" and "sterile" queer, transposed here from dominant discourse to feminist troping on the body? Further, the melding of mother and desire into the hegemonic category of "woman's" plenitude also masks the transgression at the very site of fruition by both the "racially inferior" and the
"sexually sterile." Because my desire is for the vampire to appear/disappear, guided by the pain of exclusion, I must now critically read the feminist theory of the gaze and of "woman" in order to reclaim her (the vampire's) role in representation.

Popular lore tells us that if we look at the vampire without the proscriptions that expel her, our gaze will be hypnotically locked into her and we will become her victims. The feminist theorists, aware of the seductive quality of the vampire's look, excavate the proscription to discover the desire below. For example, Linda Williams's ground-breaking article "When the Woman Looks" constructs a certain dynamic of women looking at monsters. Williams notes that when the woman sees the monster, she falls into a trance-like fascination that "fails to maintain the distance between observer and observed so essential to the 'pleasure' of the voyeur." As the woman looks at the monster, her "look of horror paralyzes her in such a way that distance is overcome (86)." Hers is an en-tranced look, and the fascination in it could be read as a response to lesbian desire.

However, Williams's notion of proximity in the look proceeds from the hegemonic notion of "woman." As Mary Ann Doane phrases it, woman is "too close to herself, entangled in her own enigma, she could not step back, could not achieve the necessary distance of a second look (75-76). Thus, Williams's reading of woman's trance-like lock into the gaze with the monster is an extension of "woman's" condition in the gaze. How this "woman" is locked in the gaze, or what constitutes her pleasurable proximity, figures Williams, in her identification with the monster—a shared identification between monster and woman in representation: since they both share the status of object, they have a special empathy between them. In other words, this entranced seeing and proximity in the vision, consonant with psychoanalytic theory, rests upon the special status of "woman" as object of the viewer's scopophilia—and hence the shared identification of woman and monster. I want to come back to this premise later, but let us continue for a moment to see how Williams situates sexuality within this monstrous looking.

Within the horror genre, she observes, it is in the monster's body that the sexual interest resides, and not in the bland hero's. The monster's power is one of sexual difference from the normal male; thus, the monster functions like woman in representing the threat of castration. So, as Williams would have it, when the woman looks at the monster and when the cross is removed from before her gaze, they are totally proximate and contiguous, alike in sexual difference from the male and transfixed, outside of scopophilia, in the pleasures of shared sexual transgression. Desire is aroused in this gaze, but Williams quickly defers it to identification. In relegating the proximity and desire in the trance between woman and monster to (female) identification, Williams has securely locked any promise of lesbian sexuality into an Oedipal, heterosexual context.

This "woman," then, in Doane, Williams, and others, is really heterosexual woman. Though her desire is aroused vis-à-vis another woman (a monstrosous occasion), and they are totally proximate, they identify with rather than desire one another. Their desire is still locked in the phallocratic order, and the same-sex taboo is still safely in place. What melds monster to woman is not lesbian desire—trance is not entranced—but finally daughter emulating mother in the Oedipal triangle with the absent male still at the apex. By inscribing in this configuration of looking a sexuality that is shared and not male, Williams both raises the possibility of the site of lesbian looking and simultaneously cancels it out. Like the image of the vampire in the currency of dominant discourse, this heterosexist configuration of the gaze seems to derive some power for its formulation by careening dangerously close to the abyss of same-sex desire, both invoking and revoking it. The critical pleasure resides in configuring the look by what it refuses to see. Thus, the revels of transgression enjoyed by the queer remain outside the boundaries of heterosexist proscription. You can hear the music, but you can't go to the party. Nevertheless, the site/sight of the monstrous is invoked and, though horrible, is sometimes negatively accurate and often quite seductive.

The hegemonic spread of the psychoanalytic does not allow for an imaginary of the queer. It simply reconfigures queer desire back into the heterosexual by deploying sexual difference through metaphors. For example, Raja Silverman's "Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look, and Image" reconstructs the Lacanian "gaze/look" formation through the homosexual films of Fassbinder. For some of us queers, Fassbinder has pioneered a same-sex desiring cinematic apparatus—not only in his narratives, but in his camera. The queer spectator's pleasure in the films is constructed partially through the subcultural signs upon which the camera lovingly lingers (and/or ironizes), partially through the sense of camp and its distance from the real, which he employs for his political critique, and partially through the way he situates homosexual desire within national narratives. In fact, it is the dense overlay of these techniques that makes the films so homosexual in their signification.

For example, in Querelle (1982), the remake of Genet's novel, Fassbinder uses painted backdrops for the outdoor scenery. The two-dimensional, highly-saturated-color, painterly drops of the seaport mark the distance of
this sexual site from “real” water and “real” boats. Fassbinder visually refers to the camp discourse of sailors, rather than to the reality of the sea. In the foreground, the camera lovingly follows the ass of the muscular seaman, who will later be seen, pants down, bent over the table. The relation of the camera to the ass certainly refigures forms of desire untouched by the Lacanian preoccupation with the penis. The anus is not itself a signifier of lack, and only comes to represent lack when tropes of sexual difference are reinserted into the discourse, feminizing it, while the penis is retained as signifier of the “masculine.” This is the move Silverman makes in deploying the heterosexist psychoanalytic model to read a homosexual text:

Whereas classic cinema equates the exemplary male subject with the gaze, and locates the male eye on the side of authority and the law even when it is also a carrier of desire, *Beware a Holy Whore* [1970] not only extends desire and the look which expresses it to the female subject, but makes the male desiring look synonymous with loss of control. . . . It might be said doubly to “feminize” erotic spectatorship. (62)

Even though Silverman has placed “feminize” within quotation marks, she must retain the category and the bipolar stability of the phallic male to configure the gaze. At worst, this is the kind of thinking that, in street discourse, produces the male homosexual as effeminate.

This model, if one can read the subcultural signs, is also disrupted by Fassbinder’s *Petra von Kant*, a truly queer creature who flickers somewhere between haute couture butch lesbian and male drag queen, making sexual difference a double drag. In amazonian strength (camped up through her gown with metal Walkyrie-like breastplates) and bondage before the young femme (camped up by the roped fall of the same gown, which forces her to walk, on the make, with bounded steps), Petra performs melodramatic tirades before yet another painted backdrop. The drag show, so emphatically marked, and the lesbian designs of Petra, in sex and fashion, delight the homosexual with codes that seem incongruous with the Lacanian conclusions Silverman draws: “Fassbinder’s films refuse simply to resituate the terms of phallic reference. Instead, [they] seek to induce in the viewer a recognition of him or herself as ‘annihilated in the form . . . of castration’” [77]. It seems to me, instead, that Petra’s embellished, elegant discourse, flowing before volumetrically rendered, corpulent, half-clothed bodies on the backdrop, suggests a surfeit of subcultural signs of queer desire, glimmering with the ghetto and distanced from both the real and the law of the traditional phallic world.

Tracking the Vampire

My point here is not to disallow the heterosexual feminist perspective in theories of representation, but to point out that, when it creates the unmarked category of “woman” as a general one that includes queers, or when it displaces queer desire by retaining, in the gaze/look compound, sexual difference and its phallic/lack polarity, that perspective remains caught in a heterosexist reading of queer discourse. Moreover, I suggest, the pleasure in theorizing the look that such a perspective affords appears dependent on disavowing or displacing what should not be seen.

But now I must once again register the vampire’s perturbations in this discourse. She is perturbed by this lengthy encounter with heterosexism and is agitating for her return to the discourse. As far as she is concerned, the heterosexual overlay of the queer is just another version of *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*. So allow me to return to the site where the vampire appears/disappears, that is, in the configuration of proximity. In vampire lore, proximity is a central organizing principle—not only in the look, but also in the mise en scène.

In his work on the supernatural, Tzvetan Todorov maintains that the central diegetic force in these tales is their atmosphere—an atmosphere of proximity. Settings in fog and gloom connect the disparate elements of the structure through a palpable, atmospheric “touching.” Judith Mayne, writing on *Nosferatu* (1922), agrees, describing the twilight as a “dangerous territory where opposing terms are not so easily distinguishable” (27). From the entramed look, through the mise en scène, to the narrative structure, proximity pervades the vampire lore. But why is this proximate potential represented as horror by the dominant culture? There is a supernatural tale that unlocks the code of the prohibition against this proximity—Freud’s paper on the Uncanny. Freud’s entry, so to speak, into the uncanny is through the notion of the double and of doubling processes, such as the feeling that we have been somewhere before. Thus, the uncanny for Freud is a kind of haunting proximity. In fact, Freud’s endpoint is in a haunted house.

To many people the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psycho-analysis has taught us that this terrifying fantasy originally had nothing terrifying about it at all, but was filled with a certain lustful pleasure—the fantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence. (397)

For in German *unheimlich* (uncanny) implies, on one level, un-homely. So, Freud continues, “this unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the for-
mer. *Heim* [home] of all human beings [and] the prefix ‘un’ is the token of repression" (399).

So this proscribed proximity, the very world of vampires and of the "entranced" women who view them, is the desire for what Freud calls intrauterine existence. More than the fog, the gloom, the cobwebs, and the twilight, Freud's article serves as an exact description of the vampire's sleep in her coffin: toward the end of every night, she races back there, to her native soil, and enjoys the lustful pleasure of being buried alive and dead—her intrauterine recreation. However, while Freud unlocks one repressive code to liberate a certain pleasure, his notion of intrauterine pleasure further defers the actual pleasure proscribed here. And the feminist psychoanalytic theorists carry on his tradition: his intrauterine pleasure, this *jouissance*, can only be enjoyed as a pre-Oedipal *jouissance* with the mother.

If, for Lacan, sexuality is dominated by the phallus in a trench coat, for Kristeva and her ilk, it is the masked mother. The feminist allocation of this lascivious pleasure of proximity with the mother is simply a bad hangover from too much Freud—it shares his anxieties and proclivities. When Freud imagined this lustful recreation, he imagined the mise en scène as dirty and musty, with the sense of an old vampire who's about to exhibit her true wrinkled self. That's Freud's sexist anxiety about the wrinkled, musty vagina displaced onto an ageist fantasy of the old mother. Moreover, the idea of this pre-Oedipal *jouissance* with the mother reinscribes Freud's patriarchal obsession with genealogy and sexuality as generative—part of the nineteenth-century proscription against homosexuality. Locating *jouissance* in a mother keeps heterosexuality at the center of the picture—the son can insert himself into the site of *jouissance*. As Hamlet gleefully puts it in Müller's "Hamletmaschine," "the mother's womb is not a one-way street."

Yet the history of anti-Semitism is also marked in Freud's preoccupation with "home" here; the founder of what the Nazis termed the "Jewish science" locates a so-called primal desire in returning to the home—a desire that became painfully identifiable for the Jews in the following years, forced into exile, as even Freud himself.9 Similarly, the vampires, often from Eastern Europe as well, who sought their lustful sleep in dirt from their *Heimat* are marked as the wandering tribe and the despised. Thus, Freud's is both a dominant discourse and a counterdiscourse: while interpolating the heterosexual into the lesbian vampire, it is also haunted by the outsider position of a myth of "race" that violently denied the pleasure of "home." This intersection of racism and notions of *Heim* or more dangerously *Heimat* seems crucial once again, as the term and the danger reappear in this time of Germany's reunification.

On the brighter (or the darker) side of things, in tracking the vampire, we can here re-imagine her various strengths: celebrating the fact that she cannot see herself in the mirror and remains outside that door into the symbolic, her proximate vanishing appears as a political strategy; her bite pierces platoic metaphysics and subject/object positions; and her fanged kiss brings her the chosen one, trembling with ontological, orgasmic shifts, into the state of the undead. What the dominant discourse represents as an emptying out, a draining away, in contrast to the impregnating kiss of the heterosexual, becomes an activism in representation.

Now, if you watch some recent vampire films, it may seem that things are getting better. Surely, you offer, the confining nineteenth century codes are liberalized in the late twentieth century. For example, if you watch some recent vampire films, you may note that the vampire is actually portrayed as a lesbian. But this move only reflects a kind of post-Watergate strategy of representation; that is, don't keep any secrets because they can be revealed, just reveal the repression and that will serve to confirm it. So the vampire is portrayed as lesbian, but costumed in all the same conventions, simply making the proscription literal. The strategic shift here is in revelation, not representation. Whether she is the upper-class, decadent, cruel Baroness in *Daughters of Darkness* (1971; played by the late Delphine Seyrig, who was marked in the subculture as a lesbian actor), whose coercive lesbian sex act is practiced behind closed doors and whose languorous body proscribes the lesbian as an oozing, French dessert cheese; or whether she is the rough-trade, breast-biting Austrian lesbian vampire in *Vampire Lovers* (1970), or even the late-capitalist, media-assimilated lesbian vampire in the independent film *Because the Dawn* (1988), her attraction is (in) her proscription. Only the proscription of the lesbian is literally portrayed—the occult becomes cult in the repression.

While the lesbian has become literalized in contemporary vampire films, the proscription against same-sex desire has also been reconfigured in a trope more consonant with late-twentieth century conditions. For one thing, nature isn't what it used to be, and likewise, the undead have altered with it. In the nineteenth century, the stable notion of nature as natural and of the natural as good made it possible to configure same-sex desire as unnatural—thus monster—thus vampire. Beginning with horror films in the fifties, the binarism of natural/unnatural gives way. Nature is contaminated—it is a site of the unnatural. Metaphors of Romantic organism fall where technology has transformed. The agrarian dream gives way to the nuclear nightmare. The representation of nature, contaminated by nuclear testing in the desert, is a site for the production of monsters that transgress what was considered natural.
Hollywood produced *Them* (1954), *Tarantula* (1955), *Crab Monsters* (1956), *Giant Grasshoppers* (1957), and *Killer Shrews* (1959). The urban replaces the agrarian as a haven. The humanist scientist such as van Helsing, warring against the perverse isolated vampire given way to the military-industrial complex warring against its own creations. The giant tarantula created by nuclear reaction is destroyed by napalm; another monster is killed by a shift in the ozone layer.

After the 50s, the lone vampire, or the family of vampires that threatened the human community, is replaced by a proliferation of the undead. Romero’s trilogy illustrates the progression: in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), a score of the undead threatens a family-unit-type group in a house; in the second film, *Dawn of the Dead* (1977), thousands of undead threaten a smaller, less-affiliated group in a shopping mall, one of the few places remaining; and in *Day of the Dead* (1985), the undead have successfully taken over the continent, finally threatening what dwindles down to the basic heterosexual-couple-unit in a military-industrial complex.  

Successively, the undead have eliminated the family unit, claimed commodity reification for their own in the shopping mall, and defeated the military-industrial complex. One hope remains in a kind of Adam and Eve ending of the final film, although it seems unlikely. The undead overrun things, proliferate wildly, are like contamination, pollution, a virus, disease—AIDS. Not AIDS as just any disease, but AIDS as it is used socially as a metaphor for same-sex desire among men, AIDS as a construction that signifies the plague of their sexuality. But why is the taboo now lodged in proliferation? This is Freud’s double gone wild, the square root of proximity. The continual displacements in the system have become like a cancer, spreading, devouring, and reproducing themselves. The oppressive politics of representation have cathexed to displacement, settling their sites/sights there again and again and again. The taboo against same sex becomes like the Stepford wives when they break down, pouring coffee over and over and over again.

These neo-undead doubly configure away the lesbian position, since same-sex desire appears as gay male. The lesbian position is only the motor for multiple displacements. Where does this all leave the lesbian vampire, then? Outside of the mirror, collapsing subject/object relations into the proximate, double occupancy of the sign, abandoning the category of woman as heterosexist, and entering representation only in a guise that proscribes her. You still can only see her, in horror and fear, when you don’t.

Finally, in tracking the vampire in representation in order to perceive how she counters blood myths of race and proper sexuality, I would like to turn to a text through which she moves—a lesbian choreopoem. This form particularly suits the vampire for several reasons, but specifically in its performance structures. The choreopoem is a theatrical form created by Chicanas and black women. These are performance pieces composed of loosely related poems and performed by ensembles. In this collection of poems, the performer is not a character, though she may, for a short time, suggest one. As the lyric voice moves among the several performers in the ensemble, they collectively enact the agency, or the lyric dynamic. Sometimes the performer inhabits the subjective “I” of the poet, sometimes she is the story itself, sometimes the storyteller.

In the choreopoem “No” by Alexis DeVeaux, the subject position is that of the desiring lesbian who is also active in black revolutionary politics. The title “No” itself functions to proscribe what the dominant discourse can articulate, while at the same time tracing a counterdiscourse. “No” consists of thirty poems: several are lesbian love poems to other black women, one is about a revolutionary woman who breaks away from the sexism of her male partner in the black movement, one is about the murder of children in Selma. The ground, then, the mise en scène is the historical, social, economic, and emotional field of the black lesbian revolutionary subject. The agency, or subject position, is the iteration of that field through a collective of women, with its possibilities and impossibilities made dynamic by the lyric. In other words, the lesbian subject position is composed of this movement among performers and through the lyric “I” of the poet herself, whose desire flows through their mouths and their gestures and whose playing space is the historical and social borders of the possible and impossible for such a subject. She is both visible and invisible—visible in her lyric, collective movement and in the proximity of her politics and homosexual desire, and invisible as character or content. The poem celebrates the ethnic fashion of dreadlocks (the vampire’s dread-lock) as seductive while also specifically coded as revolutionary, in proximity to a celebration of clitoral love-making between two women within their antiracist struggle; proximity/distance is marked as one. DeVeaux closes the space between women’s economic and political struggles and lesbian desire. Finally, here, the vampire can enter.

And do you love me, in
this flight of poems
between
one train station &
another
do you: going home
after dinner
separate ways: love me
like this:
spilled
in your hand
an underground movement
of sentences
a calypso of rivers
the marrow of fear
And if the Russians do it
and the Cubans
and the Americans do it
if the Chinese do it too
if the women go baby
how do we name the war
And
this love
I need you: I say
trade in these train tracks
for a howl at the moon
this poem is not progressive
but long distance
and close
between the archives
of your dreams
between the hip of Montego Bay
your shameless step
I measure: how you do these things: and
each dread
is the revolution of another. 11

NOTES

1. I am indebted to Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano for this analysis of sexual/racial honor, which appears in Feminism and the Honor Plays of Lope de Vega (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1994).

Tracking the Vampire

2. For a fuller discussion of this point, see the chapter on Spain in Aryan by Poliakov and the chapter on "Mystic Speech" in Heterologies by de Certeau, especially pp. 81–86.

3. The prejudice was so convincing that a fashion arose among middle-class women to visit the slaughterhouse and drink the blood of an ox to strengthen themselves. See Dijkstra, "Metamorphoses of the Vampire: Dracula and His Daughters," in Idols, particularly pp. 337–38.

4. Gallop suggested this in a discussion of the cover photo at the University of California, Riverside, on January 18, 1991.

5. Gallop, however, is one of the few authors to articulate issues between lesbians and heterosexual feminists within this kind of debate (107–108). Her discussion here, clearly written in solidarity with lesbians, is important and could be pursued at length.

6. I am indebted for this point to the work in progress of my colleagues George Haggerty and Gregory Bredbeck; to Bredbeck for his work on sodomy and the anus, and to Haggerty for his reconfiguration of the effeminate in the eighteenth century. See also Miller's reading of Hitchcock in "Anal Rape."

7. Both Silverman's and my positions are too complex to work out in this reduced form. A more complete development of them will appear in my book, The Domain-Matrix: Performing Lesbian at the End of Print Culture (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), of which this essay is a fragment.

8. "Der Mutterschuss ist keine Einbahnstrasse" (Müller 91); translation mine.

9. Marjorie Garber suggested this in conversation at the 1990 Queer Theory conference in Santa Cruz, California.

10. I am indebted to Steve Shaviro for our discussions of the trilogy.

11. From an unpublished manuscript of the choreopoem "No," provided to me by Glenda Dickerson—the only director to bring this piece onto the stage. This paper should have ended with a discussion of Gomez's Guida Stories, which has just appeared in print as my manuscript goes to press. But I discuss it in the longer version of this paper, included in my Domain-Matrix.

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AN ESSAY IN PHENOMENOLOGY AND FEMINIST THEORY

Judith Butler

Philosophers rarely think about acting in the theatrical sense, but they do have a discourse of "acts" that maintains associative semantic meanings with theories of performance and acting. For example, John Searle's "speech acts," those verbal assurances and promises which seem not only to refer to a speaking relationship, but to constitute a moral bond between speakers, illustrate one of the illocutionary gestures that constitutes the stage of the analytic philosophy of language. Further, "action theory," a domain of moral philosophy, seeks to understand what it is "to do" prior to any claim of what one ought to do. Finally, the phenomenological theory of "acts," espoused by Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and George Herbert Mead, among others, seeks to explain the mundane way in which social agents constitute social reality through