

“Let a woman not develop her reason, for that would be a terrible thing.”

- Democritus (Holland 21)

In the 1990s, shifts of masculinity in the romance genre to help shape the female protagonist's identity, especially the paranormal romance subgenre. As the romance genre evolved away from aggressive, dominating males who overpowered the female's motivations, wants, and desires, the romantic pairing dynamics became more of a partnership (Geary, Vigil, and Byrd-Craven 7). Rape, coercion, and forced compliance were no longer the quiet fantasy of many of the female readers, who were starting to stand on their own merit within their everyday lives. Instead, female readers began looking for strong women who maintained control of their own lives without apology. Women wanted to feel in control when real life felt uncertain or spiraling out of control due to social and cultural redefinitions of rights and expectations (Wendall and Tan 25).

Out of the paradigm shift and desire for more actively aggressive women, female characters such as Laurell K. Hamilton's Anita Blake started to emerge. Within the paranormal romance and urban fantasy genres, Anita Blake is considered to be one of the founding female alpha heroines. Why? Chronologically, Blake was one of the first women to gain the upper hand among male counterparts with supernatural abilities. She certainly is not the last. Alpha heroines boosted in the past decade after 9/11, when United States women and men both felt the need for someone that may defend against an oncoming evil. According to Monique Patterson, women in particular wanted and desired a role model with the internal strength to change the world after the veil of internal discrimination was revealed (Singer). Psychologically, the impact and change focuses on three central themes: the long-term effects of feminism and the warrior archetype reemerging in response, combating sexism and misogyny within the political sectors to maintain autonomy, and women looking beyond traditional relationship roles.

The rise of feminism is not a sudden advent or choice. Women in the United States have been advocating for a voice in all areas of their lives for centuries, most notably during the women's movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and women's liberation in the late Sixties. Other times include the political sway and power of Prohibition, where women pulled for and against the use of alcohol in society, as a participant of the speakeasies or as a member of the Christian Temperance League ("Women of Prohibition"). Women had a great deal influence and wielded it well during Prohibition. Twenty years later during the Second World War, women worked in factories when men were called to war, maintaining both the household and the financial burden with little contemporary male support. These same women did not willingly give up the independence earned afterwards. The taste of freedom had whetted the appetite for being more than a Mrs. Somebody. For those in Generation X and Y, these women blazed an amazing trail so that we were able to be more than a possession.

During the 1960s, women finally started to openly display defiance of the social mores that cast them as unequal. Women's liberation set the stage for future politicians such as Hillary Clinton, characters such as Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, magazines like *Ms.*, and the social overturning of cases such as *Roe vs. Wade*. Powerful women like Gloria Steinem built reputations upon being an unending activist for equality, even forty years later, and stood against violence towards women. And these women allowed alpha heroines the opportunity to rise and become the next Rosie the Riveter of the current generation – a call to arms to not forget that women matter.

Beyond Heaving Bosoms defines a kick-ass heroine as "a heroine who allegedly knows how to handle herself in a dangerous situation," such as a physical altercation with an imposing opponent, "yet still shows the occasional distressing proclivity toward throwing her gun at the villain instead of shooting it" because no character is perfect or has the perfect reaction every single time (Wendell and Tan 26). Mythological and supernatural explanations have pervaded modern society, creating a culture that believes women are depravity (Gilmore 43) of nature itself because man must

fight against nature's impending decline of physically superior prowess (Holland 20). So man, the very gender itself, must dominate the female form to dominate nature and death. Many of the common heroines of current science fiction, fantasy, romance or any combination of the genres are kick-ass, brutal equivalents of the male heroes with their own individual stories. These are women who do not apologize for owning their sexuality or sexual pleasure, an idea that many of the female audience do not feel comfortable accepting due to media's constraints on sexuality as depraved or only for male titillation (Wendall and Tan 60). Female characters that are aware of limitations and strengths are important because it helps set up the conflict and resolution of the character arc. Women who have the ability to handle themselves in a variety of situations provide a more complex and diverse counterpart population. Susan Douglas calls these characters "warrior women in thongs" because the women must be extremely competent but also be beautiful enough to entice the feminine ideal but maintain androgynous ambiguous on names so men also feel comfortable enough to watch without feeling weak (77).

Buffy, the vampire slayer, is a very deceiving blonde who looks frail but has a power that the military fears. In 1996, she dominated the television screen and became a cornerstone of the WB's programming for five years. Her creator, Joss Whedon, is an unapologetic feminist who wrote the character as a way to subvert the unexpected by making a beautiful co-ed victim the thing all monsters feared because it was time the usual victim "had the chance to take back the night" (Douglas 79). 'Take back the night' references a movement, and now annual event, when women claim back independence and self-autonomy after sexual and physical assault. *Buffy* led the call to more warrior women characters throughout the public conscience because she allowed women the opportunity to say "what if" and answer with a resounding "I would win" without being overly harsh and masculine. Female leaders of their own destiny means allows the female audience to step into characters and break molds that trap in daily lives (Singer). In the February 2012 issue of the season nine comics Buffy decides to have an abortion – a key touchstone to what is happening in America

right now (Chambliss). Twenty years ago, there would not have been an option for a female character to willingly admit to abortion concerns aloud without great social derision.

Cat Crawfield, the heroine in *Halfway to the Grave*, is a by-product of rape between a religiously conservative human female and a newly made vampire. Due to genetics, Cat has many of the abilities of her vampire father but the shame built in by the patriarchal society that dominates her mother. The dichotomy between the two issues leads to a very physically strong woman with familial esteem issues based on her ability to kill vampires in retaliation for her mother. And when she fails by falling in love with a male vampire, her mother utilizes guilt to punish her daughter for sins of the father. Punishment based on emotional response is not unusual in modern society for women of rape or sexual assault, making Buffy's decision of the abortion very honest and aboveboard in a society where women are being stripped of basic reproductive rights.

"Year of the woman" defined 1992 when four women entered Senate seats, setting records and visibly demonstrating that women deserve to be in such powerful numbers as their male counterparts. Additionally, Hillary Rodham Clinton became first lady in 1993 and set out to make changes to many of the political and social spheres. 2001 would see her become a Senator of New York, the first time a former First Lady began her own political career outside spousal duties (Marsh 17). During the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, Clinton debated Barack Obama, who would later become president, and other male candidates that pushed back hard and sometimes used dirty tactics. As a woman, she refused to allow any social boundaries to dissuade her course of independent desires and dreams. In fact, President Obama would swear her in as Secretary of State during his first term. Clinton would not allow failure on the platform of her 1995 speech in Beijing, "human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights" (Marsh 17). Clinton's basic tenant of human rights call back to Mary Wollstonecraft's overall message in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, a book instrumental in establishing late 18th century feminism (Holland 179). An out-and-proud feminist, Hillary Clinton kept human rights in the public eye from the moment she

became First Lady and still internationally maintains the same demands for equality as Secretary of State.

As a woman, Hillary Rodham Clinton faced many limitations and personal attacks for her beliefs. In 2008, Democratic primary coverage contained sexist and misogynistic remarks about her person, fashion choices, and age but rarely about her policies while her male counterparts' policies and debate responses were covered extensively (Marsh 16). Issues surrounding social and cultural limitations helped in shaping the arguments against Clinton, mirroring what many women faced in the workforce with enlightened sexism and misogyny harder to fight against in non-literary worlds. Clinton became a clear case of what was wrong for women in the United States. Later in the 2008 presidential election and 2010 congressional election, female candidates faced similar commentary based on attractiveness and humanizing empathy versus policies and campaign rhetoric (Marsh 37). Traditional values conveyed by media and society sub sects forced an uneven campaign trail as women found it harder to balance what the country needed and what was expected of a female politician. Sexism clearly displayed but unnamed throughout majority of the media, though feminist blogs and news outlets noted the behavior. In 2007, Kathleen Hall Jameison used an interview opportunity to denounce the treatment of Clinton as "negative effect," where "an emotionally distasteful concept is used to associate with a person, situation, or movement in order to produce the reaction wanted by detractors" (Marsh 64). Similarly, the tactic has been used by candidates in smear campaigns and advertisements, which Clinton faced and later 2008 Republican vice president nominee Sarah Palin would face. Ingrained rhetoric may be difficult to overcome when women allies also align and repeat the same negative effect cycles.

Socially, women are psychologically considered to be the weaker gender, those that must be protected due to emotional and hormonal differences. Within the urban fantasy and paranormal romance genres, women are more apt to use emotions as strength, such as Lily Yu's childhood kidnapping and witnessing of a friend's murder. Yu takes these emotions and focuses them as a line

of connecting to victims and finding the perpetrator in a way that follows the legal requirements that come with her criminal investigation career. Yu's supernatural powers and gifts do not alter physical form. Instead, her Gift is to simply be immune to magic in a world full of reemerging magic after the Turning when magic reappears after centuries. This was a conscience effort on the part of Eileen Wilks, the author of The World of Lupi series, because Wilks did not want to go the route of the *Buffy the Vampire* after effects: a petite, extremely physically capable heroine. Her alpha heroine centers on the fact she has the knowledge and methodology of understanding both sides of the situation while being able to handle some hand-to-hand combat and weaponry equally (Wilks).

Influenced by *Buffy*, Wilks took the opportunity to use Yu's experiences to offer a different perspective to Wilks all-male alpha lupine shifters. Rule Turner, Yu's mate and slowly accepted confidante, has a very deeply ingrained set of rules on how to treat women and those under protection or care of his clans. Involuntary mating does not mean that Lily must jump directly into his bed and life, and often she resists at first while he calmly waits. Yu has her own independence and importance set aside from her romantic role. As a whole, the werewolf clans love their goddess, the Lady, in an abstracted form because she gave them life, which pulls from many mythologies throughout the world. The males put her on a higher level of reverence and so to counter that, Wilks created the Rhejes, women who remember and keep the memories of history alive in the collective conscience. One clan, Leidolf, is poor and has been cut off from the social and cultural construction of other clans and is noted by Rule, "Leidolf tended to cherish women in the abstract while devaluing them as individuals" (Wilks). Rhejes are used as a balance for young male lupi to understand "that male authority was not absolute, or their ideas about the Lady would become too fuzzy and abstract to have any bearing on their real interactions with women" and that empowerment begins with positive reinforcements of what should be (Wilks). Why is this important? In the modern age, women have vocally expressed the need to be counted and to matter because there has been no "real

transfer of resources” within the female empowerment movement nationally or internationally (Desai 465).

Murphy Brown created a media blitz against television unwed motherhood that then Vice President Dan Quayle proclaimed “a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman — mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone and calling it just another 'lifestyle choice,” which turned the impact of Murphy’s decision into a male issues only (Tucker). It later came out that Quayle had never seen the episode and just used the issue to light a media firestorm. It does not take a lot of imagination to visually create the issues a willingly approved abortion would have formed in 1992. Politically, *Murphy Brown* had unwittingly highlighted an issue that was still a controversial problem, especially for highly educated and prominent women. Stripping of reproductive rights is a not a new issue women face, but for the current generation it is the first time that we have faced the issue ourselves. Many of us were too young to understand the personal impacts of such demeaning rhetoric put out by running politicians in 1992. With Hillary Clinton’s entrance into the political circle and the churning of the waters, we young women were gifted an ally but could not realize the impact until now.

Paradigm shifts help in identifying the role of alpha heroines and how they interact among alpha males within a professional and personal relationship. Alpha heroes are often imposing figures of dominance and stature to attract the best mate possible; men that are handsome, often described as rugged, and have the ability to protect a mate (Singer). Formerly, the alpha mate would have been a shy, maternal figure that blossoms into a strong character that tames the beast. However, that has changed and the alpha female is almost as strong as the male, has fighting capabilities, maternal desire to take care of whoever is in her charge, beautiful, and extremely dominant (Marko). This new heroine doesn’t run or scream when a tragic event occurs. She defends at all costs, sometimes up to her life, with little to no apology. She is the worthy mate to an alpha male (Singer). Jeaniene Frost sums up the entire rise of alpha couples to “if readers can’t respect the heroine, it’s

harder for them to be invested in the hero/heroine's relationship, which then affects the balance of the entire story" and will disconnect readers from understanding any nuances on solving the disrupting exigency within the story (Frost).

Female dynamic shift has caused the male to shift as well. Now he must be more emotionally available and willing to share responsibilities instead of dictating orders. As female authors become more prominent, so too does their feminist's ideal of equality. Cat and Bones' relationship begins with a moment of his attempt to dominate until he realizes that she is independent on her own (Frost 26), earning her a level of respect as one hunter to another (Frost). When Cat is almost raped by two young club goers (Frost 130), Bones takes care of her injuries and the psychological rift once realization of what happened when the club kids drugged her and how it almost led to her murder occurred. In the 1970s, or even early 1980s, this would have led to a rape in order to heal a psychological wound. In fact, Frost says, "highlighting the hero's strengths, I don't think that should come at the expense of diminishing the heroine" (Frost). That is why Cat and Bones are an alpha couple: the appreciation and trust are some of the central points. Frost goes on to say, "a male that doesn't feel intimidated or emasculated by an equally tough female character shows his inner confidence as well as his external strengths" (Frost). Bones's inner confidence allows him to freely share his life with Cat. Bones does not feel threatened by her, which partially explains his reaction to the treatment of her by the would-be rapists. A woman that will fight for those less fortunate, those of less power, should be treasured.

I must note that there have been detractors in the face of the romance plots in many of the paranormal and urban fantasy books being produced currently. In part, the idea of instant love and attraction being intermixed has led many readers to prefer more established, connected couples. Being an alpha is a bonus, but being in love for the right reason is even more important (Wendall and Tan). The need for more emotional depth within a relationship, more of an establishment, is not limited to the literature, however. Fans of media-based productions, like television and movies, have

been calling for the same connection. Generally, women prefer to have a connected feeling to the characters, to invest and understand – to empathize. With the publishing industry following the paranormal heroine trend, oftentimes quality control may be limited, especially with the advent of self-publishing. Even publishers are prone to saturate a market once a new genre or subgenre is created.

While J.R. Ward's Brotherhood of the Black Dagger series maintains *New York Times* bestselling status, some readers would like more of an attraction build up and emotional understanding between the hero and heroine. I am one of those readers. In *Dark Lover*, Beth and Wrath meet, have sex, fall in love and marry within a month. There is no flirtation, banter or self-realization. Beth seems to be an empty character with little development throughout the book yet the brotherhood all fall instantly in love with her, along with everyone but the villains. She has limited development, becoming little more than a stand-in for the reader. Analogously, Wrath is the overbearing, self-flagellating male character that seems to be more of a throwback to the 1970s hero with impulse control problems and a deep, dark secret of angst.

Beth is almost raped by Billy Riddle (Ward 8), a psychopathic minor villain with high political connections, and within a day she has sex with Wrath while high from a drug the vampire brought to relax her into understanding that she's half-vampire. Using modern consent requirements, Wrath essentially rapes her as she goes from unmitigated fear of Wrath's appearance in her apartment to willingness to have sex based on a drug's effects in a matter of moments. Her devolution from an independent journalist with friends on the police force to over sexualized queen in a few weeks is the anti-alpha heroine.

Comparatively, Patricia Brigg's Mercedes Thompson's drugged rape in *Iron Kissed* is treated more carefully. Briggs took several books to establish the relationship between Mercy and Adam, the local alpha werewolf who is there after the attack to help to care for her. In love, Adam takes on all

her physical reactionary battlements of sexual assaults onto his conscience when post-traumatic stress disorder is triggered, and inducts her into the pack during that time. The two characters knew each other pre-series but the mating rituals occur through a lot of time and small steps over three books, especially in *Iron Kissed*. Very carefully, Mercy is allowed to heal physically and psychologically at a slow pace with the support of those who love and care about her. Her biggest champion is Ben, an English werewolf that was taken out of the European pack system due to possibly raping women, explains to Adam, “You feel dirty, violated, and guilty. Most of all guilty because you should have fought. Especially if you’re Mercy and you fight everything” (Briggs 163). Mercy’s independence, her strength outside the relationship, makes her feel dirty because she should have asked for help but didn’t. Induction facilitates acceptance of her alpha status within pack because the werewolves are willing to follow Mercy based on the fact she is a friend and ally – and the Marrok, leader of the entire North American pack, is a surrogate father figure for all werewolves under his care but most especially with Mercy because she conducts the wolves in her care with the right amount of respect in order to keep the peace.

Beth and Wrath’s relationship is the antithesis of Mercy and Adam’s – highlighting the differences of a weakly constructed female character and a strong alpha heroine. Mercy’s courage and independence out of the relationship demonstrates both flaw and strength because it leaves her vulnerable to physical harm but it allows the opportunity to fortify resolve and purpose. Beth’s trauma is essentially wiped away in an effort to make way for a union with Wrath. The shock, traumatic response of the incident with Riddle disappears the moment her latent sexuality blossoms the moment Wrath enters her doorway (Ward 62). Beth’s latent sexuality plays on the double standard trope as the Brotherhood frequently have sex with non-mates and often the female protagonists are virginal, like Marissa (Ward 239), or very little experience in sexual acts, like Beth, are left to remain so until the one true mate arrives to make her feel. By making the female’s feelings tied solely to a male’s, she is stripped of what makes a woman an alpha because an alpha may make decisions based on the benefits to oneself for another person.

In response to the political subverting of women's rights, reproductive rights most egregiously, authors have decided to write about this turn of events. As post-feminism continues, at least one feminist author, Eileen Wilks, feels that the strong, kick-ass heroine will not disappear. Instead, she feels that due to the inequality given to women for centuries, the female warrior archetype has started to become part of the Western civilization again. Characters like Xena, the Warrior Princess, helped in changing the television executives minds on what women would watch based on increased ratings, almost 36% increase in under a year (Douglas 81), and the acceptance of many social fringe groups (82). Mistreatment by society has helped the rise of feminism and the idea of women taking care of themselves, of independence and some form of political and professional representation is important in maintaining the social and cultural identity of modern woman. The warrior archetype allows for feminine freedom in ways most male audiences take for granted.

Female audiences helped to shape this genre based on the rise of feminism and post-feminism, sexism and misogyny in the political society, and the shift in romantic relationships. Women saw change was possible in the 1950s, after World War II when all aspects of home life and financial constraints fell on their shoulders, and did not want to give up that freedom. Living out the slowly emerging independence as vital cases such as Roe vs. Wade allowed for more vocal feminists to have their voices heard against the male oppressors of society. The 1960s helped to shape later famous feminists such as Hillary Rodham Clinton, who broke many of the political rules by being an educated, politically feminist activist First Lady when the previous incarnations had been more muted and didn't create chaos. She burst through that glass ceiling further than any woman, leading to her eventual Senate seat in government and run for president in the 2008 Democratic primaries. As a former First Lady, she gained a lot of information and contacts, using that to go further in her career and activist pursuits of equality for women and women's rights. Fighting against the media and peer's sexism and misogyny took strength of character – becoming a manifestation of the feminist movement in her own right. Making history wasn't the intent but was a good message for

all the young women who want to be more than society gives them. And, like her relationship with former President Clinton, she made her own rules on what was acceptable.

Women readers in romantic relationships began looking for gaps in those relationships and wanted to be strong enough to fix or move on. And single women wanted a man that would balance and respect the relationship for all the right reasons. Character women became unapologetic alpha females that dominated in ways that helped her story, and not necessarily the male's. The world responded and called for women like Xena and Buffy; on screen and off, role models were needed to help my generation take charge and become motivated. Paranormal females were able to be strong, defiant, more than capable of what may come, loving, and intelligent without losing their voice. The evolution from healing damsel in distress to kickass-heroine arrived because women called for it through purchasing books, products, and merchandise which made the shift viable in free market. Women started the shift by using money and have continued the evolution on by not making the books a trend, but a staple. After all this is done, the question of the alpha heroines maintaining market share increases. One wonders what will the next part of evolution for the strong woman may come from this. What will be the next issue to address and how will writers shape characters to be better in leveling the field away from gender requirements? And how the audience will react. Will the audience stand up, and use the motivation that Buffy and Xena commandeered or will the audience stay silent? Personally, my odds are being involved.

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HEURISTICS

1. **What is your tentative answer to the question you set forth in your Research Proposal? If you did not actually ask a question there, what is the question that you thought you were asking, and what is your answer to it?**

What allows paranormal romance and urban fantasy alpha females to maintain personal freedom while many other genres dismiss and/or disparage alpha female characters in an effort to highlight a male character's strengths? The question is a hard one to answer in a short manner. For the answer I had to look deep into the subject and determined that feminism and the rise of women's self-reliance within first world nations played a major part on the advent of more alpha heroines. Readers, especially women readers, were looking for more of a woman able to rely on equal footing in a fight for self-autonomy.

2. **What is it in the novels that raise the question(s)/issue(s) for you? Can you tease out the relevant details that shape that issue?**

Within the novels read in class, there is a deep divide in the alpha female role. For the book *Slave to Sensation*, Sascha's dominance is very muted, except in cases where there is a necessary connection for a plot point. She is much softer, quieter in speech, and unraveled outside her own mind. This is in deep contrast to Cat Crawfield's domineering, unapologetic use of sexuality and aggression in *Halfway to the Grave* to create her personal boundaries. Cat Crawfield's reactions are the norms for paranormal or supernatural creatures, though Karrin Murphy presents a similar framework while being wholly human. These two women, as opposed to Sascha, are aware of their status and the need to be seen as dominant in a male field.

Sascha's vulnerability creates a more protective alpha male partner while she is not herself a traditional character. However, Cat and Bones acknowledge strengths and weaknesses in a way of cherishing without debasing observations. There are problems within the relationship, because Cat does not immerse herself completely in the relationship – maintaining a sense of self-autonomy.

3. **What is/was the historical context for the issue that you are discussing? What was significant about the moment in time when the issue appeared/became significant? Are there significant event(s) connected to the issue that shape our understanding of it? How does the moment in time help use better understand why the issue was/is/became important to Americans?**

The significance historical context started in World War II when women started working outside the home, which lead to looking for a personal sense of accomplishment. Before that, the women's movement in the late 1800s and early 1920s, the pressure to vote was a leading contender. Both of these momentous events lead to the 1960s embrace of the right of women to allowed independence. While not an easy road, it was in fact a very difficult one, the historical progression for more self-control on all aspects of their lives helped to lead the social revolution during 1960s progressive movement for equality in all aspects and not giving up the right to fight for this fact.

4. **What is/was the social and political (in the sense of power) situation of the time? How does an understanding of its context affect our understanding of its meaning?**

Socially and culturally, the United States women's liberation movement, or the rise of feminism, really set the stage for the leading of these alpha heroines we see now in the industry. Noted by Frost and Wilks, these women helped in establishing credibility within the female community and allowed for writers learning their voice at the time to connect with the audience writing for. As women slowly became more prominent in the business and political world, more opportunities to incorporate these facts into strong, dominant women appeared. In short, the 1960s and cases such as Roe vs. Wade, ushered in the 1980s strong women on screen (Claire Huxtable, Melanie Griffith in *Working Girl*, blue collar Roseanne Connor, and all those between) to create an accurate view to smash the glass ceiling above every woman's head. Ceiling hasn't been broken but it's getting better.

When Hillary Clinton became a very tangible touchstone of not staying with simple limitations set out by the patriarchal demands, when she broke molds, it helped to lead in character for women like Buffy, the vampire slayer, to suddenly appear on the heels of Xena, the warrior princess. These women were able to do whatever the women off-screen were not. They had the rights and limitations lifted, physically able to battle those caging women into a specific job. This is especially important now that women are facing a stripping of reproductive rights as the political sphere has shifted to a more radical and unequal proportions to male counterparts.

5. Who or what caused the issue? How long has it been going on? Who does it affect and in what way(s)? Why has it become important to the people it affects?

Most of these questions were answered in Question 4, but the overall destructive force has been a need to limit and regulate women to a predefined role, which feminism fights against. Inequality has been around for thousands of years and was a foundation in writing the United States' Bill of Rights and Constitution by only allowing free white men the ability to make changes until women demanded, and kept demanding, more rights in equality. Being able to hold control over one's self means that one may decide what is felt is right. This is commonly something women are not allowed to benefit from. The addition of Clinton into the political arena, forcing a viewing (though often negatively filled with sexism and misogyny, many times coming from women).

After 9/11, security was stripped away and seemed to cause an almost rebound effect of women noticing and detailing what had and hadn't changed in post-feminism and the third wave's acceptance and denial.

6. Why does this issue deserve discussing *right now*? That is, what is the exigence of the situation?

This issue deserves prominence now because the constant look into the male psyche and why alpha males are suddenly so important but there has been little on the impact and importance of female characters that many women may look up to. The exigence is the sudden influx of female counterparts in the past 5-6 years within the paranormal romance and urban fantasy genre. Is part of this reason feminist writers looking for characters young women may look up to or gain strength from? What does this start from? These are the situations found in the younger generations (late Generation X and most of Generation Y).

7. What are the key examples, illustrations (or other forms of evidence) that demonstrate each point you are making? (Go through this point-by-point and in detail.)

- a. Visual media and sexuality
 - i. Catwoman (*Batman Begins*), Xena (warrior princess), Buffy (vampire slayer) all become strong women, though Catwoman has a few mental breaks. Not an example in my paper, but a comic ally to Buffy and Xena. Beginning in 1990s, these women dominated the market by defying expectations. Catwoman owned her sexuality, like Xena, and Buffy fall into the misogynistic trap of regrettable sex with several partners but managed to reign it in easily. Catwoman is a known quantity outside the genre due to Michelle Pfeiffer's strong influence in creating the character, something that was extended in *Wolf*, where her character does not apologize for owning her attraction to Jack Nicholson's character.
- b. Hillary Clinton and sexism
 - i. During her 2008 presidential primary run, she was treated with derision by the mostly male media. Concerns of her body shape/look, clothing, and aging face were used against her and most policies ignored.
 - ii. Her relationship with President Clinton, including staying within the marriage with the known a known philander, and any controversial decisions he made. The onus was on her to prove that she was different without the ability given by the press, or debate moderators like Tim Russet, who hated her.
 - iii. Females did not take to her in 1992 and used that opportunity to attack her in family media, like the *Washington Post*, which also fueled Russet's hatred since he was friends with the owners. Social circles are very crucial for making pacts and staying in alliances in Washington, DC, and by accidentally snubbing one woman, lies for White Water, a politically made up but socially accepted scandal, were listed and still hound the Clinton to this day – even though they've been debunked.
 - iv. Cat benefitted from this. She found it easier to lead troops in later books.
- c. Relationships shift during post-feminism
 - i. As women gained freedom in workplace and self-autonomy, relationship dynamics changed. Women took control of who they were, including finding better matches and not staying because that's what good little girls do.
 - 1. Bones and Cat: strong, respectful between the two members. She is accepted and appreciated by Bones for her genetic heritage and her vicious behavior.
 - 2. Mercy and Adam: Strong, slowly evolved relationship, rape of Mercy doesn't ruin the relationship – only strengthens, love is gradual and not instantaneous.
 - 3. Beth and Wrath: counter the other two, shallow love, instant love match, empty development on Beth, mostly focused on Wrath's wants and little for Beth's; unequal.

8. What are the key points that you want to make about your answer to the question? List them.

- a. That women are in charge of developing these characters.
- b. That feminism has helped in shaping filling the representation gap.
- c. Feminism has allowed for women authors to define what was felt to be missing and allowed the invention of more similar characters.

9. **What is the purpose of your argument: what does it want the audience to think, know, feel, or do?**

To provide the observation that women have created this phenomenon, not the men. Buying DVDs/VHS tapes, buying the books, buying merchandise drive the male executives to understand the monetary benefit while females know the psychological impact of being counted as important. Women created this by being an active participant in the invention and sustainability of the project. And out of that comes more options and more ideas of role models and characters that women feel represent them.

10. **Where do we go from here? What does the future look like? Does an encounter with urban fantasy and/or paranormal romances in any way help us better understand where we are?**

The future is bright according to Eileen Wilks. This phenomenon won't go away quietly. As avatars to women who read the books, the real world women are able to see the best way we have benefited and how we may benefit more when battling political oppression again. More strong women characters will establish themselves and own their part of the book universes. These are new Nancy Drews of the now and of the future.

Strategic Questions

1. **Who is the audience for your piece? Why should it care about the issue? What do you have to say to it that is worth its time?**

Audience: Female readers of the genres.

Why care: Because this is a reaction to what women may accomplish when ignoring society's rules.

Relevance: Why we are finally going back to the warrior woman archetype and how it has been a cultural staple since humans created society.

2. **Who are the key authorities/sources on your issue? Why are they worth listening to more than other authorities?**

Key authorities: authors, pop cultural feminists, political writers, publishing insiders.

Relevance: Because they are the ones in the industry, those who know and see what is happening.

3. **How does your analysis enable a more complex, sophisticated understanding of the issue than the audience would otherwise have?**

Understanding of issue: there are not a lot of composite and researched papers on the idea that women started to create their own environment by using unintentionally placed ways by the male patriarchy.