

# **The New Face of the Vampire: Autobiographical Fiction in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles***

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis studies how particular events in Anne Rice's life have had impact in the context of her written work and how she as a writer manages to influence her works with these experiences from a twice-removed perspective. It presents how from these events in her life Rice was able to create a respectable verisimilitude by writing a series of vampire mock autobiographies she called *The Vampire Chronicles*. As an author, she revolutionized the genre of Literary Horror and Vampire Fiction and made an impact in how later works in the genre were portrayed. This impact being such, that it can be used to show how the mock narratives in Rice's *Chronicles* can be used as metaphors to represent social minorities struggling to find an identity, solace and redemption in larger social strata.

## Resumen

Esta tesis estudia de qué manera eventos particulares en la vida de Anne Rice han tenido alguna influencia en el contexto de su obra literaria y de qué manera ella, como autora, ha logrado incluirlos en sus escritos desde una perspectiva apartada. La tesis presenta cómo desde estos eventos Rice proyecta una veracidad respetable a través de una serie de autobiografías que tituló "*Crónicas de Vampiros*." La autora ha revolucionado el género del horror literario y de la ficción y ha producido un impacto en la forma en que se han presentado trabajos posteriores en el mismo género literario. El impacto ha sido tal que demuestra cómo la narrativa en las "*Crónicas*" de Rice puede usarse como metáfora para representar a las minorías sociales que luchan por encontrar una identidad, solaz y redención en una estrata social más amplia.

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To my mother Neysa and Ricardo, my father:

Thank you for your constant support and every opportunity you have ever given me. I love you both very much!

And to all of my dear friends who stuck by me, believed in me and cheered me on when I felt like giving up.  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Resumen .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction: Relevance of Autobiography to an Understanding of <i>The Vampire Chronicles</i>.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Chapter Introduction.....	9
1.2 The Reader-Writer Connection .....	11
1.3 Characters and Mock Biography .....	18
1.4 Rice's Style and Literary Devices.....	20
1.5 Thesis Subject Matter and Methodology .....	27
<b>Chapter II Review of the Literature.....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 Chapter Introduction.....	31
2.2 Review of the Literature .....	32
2.3 Chapter Overview .....	51
<b>Chapter III The Rice Legacy .....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1 Chapter Introduction.....	53
3.2 The Re-birth of Popular Vampire Fiction: Rice's Influence in Contemporary Literature .....	54
3.3. New Orleans' Influence on Anne Rice's Fiction .....	59
3.4. Autobiographical Influence .....	66
3.5 Religion and Morality.....	76
3.6 Vampire Types: Breaking the Stereotype of the Old-School Vampire .....	83
3.7 The World Seen Through Vampire Eyes .....	90
3.8 Academic Appreciation: Literary Impact in Rice's Works.....	93
3.9 Literary Inspiration for Rice's Vampire Fiction and Style.....	97
3.10 Chapter Overview .....	105
<b>Chapter IV Rules, Secrets, Lies and the Quest for Truth in Anne Rice's <i>Vampire Chronicles</i>.....</b>	<b>108</b>
4.1 Chapter Introduction.....	108
4.2 Vampires: Origin and Adaptation to an Alternate Lifestyle.....	110
4.3 The Laws of the Lawless: Unwritten Rules and Codes of Conduct in <i>The Vampire Chronicles</i> .....	117
4.4 Relationships, Maturity, Submission and Psychological Change.....	123
4.5 The Urgency of Secrecy.....	128
4.6 Mentoring and Life Lessons: Guidelines for Vampires in a Struggling Subculture .....	131
4.7 The Vampire's Kiss: Link to Knowledge and the Vampire Legacy.....	139
4.8 Importance of the Storytelling Outlaw Vampire in the Development of <i>The Vampire Chronicles</i> .....	143
4.9 Chapter Overview .....	150
<b>Chapter V Conclusion: The Vampire as a Metaphor.....</b>	<b>152</b>
5.1 Chapter Introduction.....	152
5.2 The Vampire Metaphor .....	154

5.3 Current Events: Minorities, Illness and the Connections to Anne Rice's Vampires.	156
5.4 Vampires: Metaphor for Identity and Fitting in a Diverse World .....	165
5.5 Vampires: Metaphor for a Minority Struggling with Assimilation .....	168
5.6 Chapter Overview: Final Thoughts.....	173
5.5 Final Thoughts .....	174
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>181</b>



## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### Relevance of Autobiography to an Understanding of *The Vampire Chronicles*

Don't seek to link the past events of my life in one coherent chain like Rosary beads. I have not done so. The scenes come forth in bursts and disorder, as beads tossed helter-skelter to the light. And where they strung together, to make a Rosary—and my years are the very same as the beads in the Rosary... my past would not make a set of mysteries, not the Sorrowful, nor the Joyful or the Glorious. No crucifix at the end redeems those ... years. So I give you the flashing moments that matter here.

Anne Rice, Violin

### 1.1 Chapter Introduction

One of Anne Rice's most recognized works of fiction is her collection of vampire novels entitled *The Vampire Chronicles*. These novels are mock autobiographical narratives about a series of vampires. In order to understand the process and motivations needed to create them, it is first necessary to have a better understanding on what it takes to write an autobiographical work, even if it is to create a mock autobiography.

An autobiographical work, as described by Triana, the main character of Rice's Violin, resembles a rosary. Even though the events in the author's life are randomly chosen to become part of a narrative, the writer handpicks them to be connected in a specific sequence. Only the author can decide which will be

written about and which in particular are worthy of disclosing. These events become a window for the audience to peer into the otherwise mysterious side of the author's life and the truth is that they cannot be changed once they have occurred. The autobiography becomes a confessing chronicle of the author's life with the possibility of a lesson for future generations that read it. There are also mock biographies. These are a "counterfeit or imitative life, using biographical methods or techniques, but actually fiction. Many novels are make-believe biographies or autobiographies, as were most early novels" (Winslow)<sup>1</sup>.

Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* is a collection consisting of eleven novels that interrelate and narrate the life stories of a series of vampires. These narratives are the main literary focus of this thesis. In them, Rice as an author utilizes literary devices, such as framing devices and characters using the author's name as a pen name in order to get their narratives across.

To be able to have a better understanding of character development, books such as The Art of Fiction by Ayn Rand and Ernest Hemingway on Writing, edited by Larry W. Philips, become useful as guides to decipher the methodology of creating believable, mock autobiographical narratives for these fictional characters and storylines. At the same time, these books clarify how an author's autobiographical influence can impact their work without making the books specifically about their lives. Most of Rice's *Chronicles* will commonly have a main character, who is usually male, that begins narrating a retrospective of his life.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of early novels that constitute mock biographies are Robinson Crusoe, Tom Jones and Virginia Woolfe's Orlando.

In the *Chronicles*, the narratives usually begin at a point in the character's life before he became a vampire, and will narrate through the transition culminating at a point in present time that reflects how his life unfolded through the centuries.

## 1.2 The Reader-Writer Connection

The element of mystery in the life of a realistic character is one of the allures that draw people to Rice's *Chronicles*. The vampire humanlike characteristics help audiences connect with their own repressed violent desires one step removed from actions that would be otherwise rejected by society. The characters' actions become more acceptable to the audience that reads her novels. Violent actions by supernatural characters somehow become morally acceptable. These actions appear to be fitting and expected from them, thus allowing the audience to overcome them and admire, even look for spiritual guidance from characters once considered evil and who live by killing human beings as part of their everyday life.

Autobiographical works have a way of transcending. Even centuries after someone's life has been written, audiences continue to read these works, not only to celebrate the life of those who are being written about, but also to learn from their lives and the universal impact their lives have had. This is because "as autobiographical narrators write their stories, they assign meaning to events, behaviors, and psychological processes that differ widely over time, place, belief system, and social position" (Smith and Watson 183). Writing a life narrative becomes an instrument for authors to reach out to an unspecified audience. Part

of the writing process becomes a pathway for the authors to either find meaning or acceptance for themselves as they reach out to their audience. In return, their work becomes a way for the audience to come together and connect with the author and other audience members that identify with the subject matter being discussed. This creates a sense of community between the audience that seeks and identifies with the author's life and message:

The use of memory, indispensable to autobiography, is a recycling of memories, both conscious and subconscious aspects of living, by means in which a life story may be transformed into a personal myth. Images persistently return in these recycling and typical scenes or episodes return. These images and patterns reveal the identity of the writer, to himself first then to a reader (Fowlie 276).

There is also the role and importance of autobiographical narrators:

As subjects of historically and culturally specific understandings of memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency they...reproduce the various ways in which they have been culturally read and critique the limits of those cultural modes of self narrating (Smith and Watson 183).

As a result, in the future, these works will still be adaptable years after they were written despite the social situations taking place. The audience will connect to the authors "through reading their lives within and against the terms of

life narrative...shift those terms<sup>2</sup> and invite different ways of being read” (Smith and Watson 183).

In other words, for the audience reading the work the:

Autobiographical subjects register, consciously and unconsciously their complicity with and resistance to the terms of cultural self-locating they inherit. In the context of those tensions, they give shape to alternative modes of address, each with its own defining characteristics. Established generic modes mutate and new generic possibilities emerge (Smith and Watson 185).

Therefore, in the future, as different audiences read the autobiographical work, they will not only adapt the autobiographical subjects to the categories of autobiography that exist, but will also accommodate these subjects into new categories that have emerged since the work was written. The author’s work will also become adaptable to different situations related to the universal qualities possessed by the subjects he chose to include in his work. This is what makes a work ageless even if the author lived centuries before.

In the article “On Writing Autobiography” Wallace Fowlie looks back upon his own experience of writing memoirs. He describes his writing process as:

Becoming familiar with an emotion that seems to takeover when ... writing of an episode in my life, or a portrait of an eminent person I may have encountered, or the portrait of an obscured person who I know and like (273-274).

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<sup>2</sup> The terms are the historically and culturally specific understandings of memory, experience, identity and embodiment.

Many people find a need to search for guidance in their lives and they find ways to do so by reading other people's memoirs or life narratives. Wallace Fowlie makes a point of this need in his article. He analyzed the impulse he felt to write his memoirs and wondered what it was that drove him to do so while contemplating what drove people in general to write about their lives and to read about other people's. He came to a conclusion:

Every life is mysterious. No one can really see anyone else's life unless perhaps it is written about. But when it is being written about and then possibly read later, it turns into allegory, into some form of figurative plausibility. It is not quite fiction, but it is not very far from fiction (275).

He considers that the structure of autobiography, even if its not fiction it becomes similar to it because: "As the events in autobiography form a pattern, it may appear to be prose fiction. At least it uses all the devices a novel does: characters and the chronicle of a family, maxims and lyric passages, confessions and narrative" (Fowlie 276). To further establish these characteristics of literary fiction in an autobiography's non-fiction format, he points out how "in trying to trace its history, critics claim that St. Augustine invented the form, and Rousseau made it into a modern type of literary expression" (Fowlie 276).

As a writer, Rice opens a small window into the life of characters that have intrigued people over the years. This window allows a view into the vulnerable side of a once horrific monster. Even if vampires are fictional characters, Rice's way of depicting them makes them feel real to the reader. The audience not only

wants to learn about who they are, but at the same time wants to learn from them. They find ways to identify with them in order to hopefully find some type of life lesson that will give their own lives more meaning.

Fowlie gives insight into this argument as he further expands his analysis of autobiography:

Through my life I have been attached deeply to very few people. But I have been interested in and attracted to many because of whom and through whom I have tried to understand my own feelings, hopes, and motivations. In my meetings with famous people or almost famous people, I have learned very little. I have learned a great deal from their work—but that is something else. In their role of human beings they tend to be (and perhaps have to be) masks... The use of memory, indispensable to autobiography, is a recycling of memories ...by means of which a life story may be transformed into a personal myth. Images persistently return...and typical senses or episodes return. These images and patterns reveal the identity of the writer, to himself first, and then to a reader (275-276).

He acknowledges that having to interact with people has not taught him the life lessons he wanted to know because person-to-person interaction can sometimes mean very little towards obtaining these lessons. The relevance of an autobiography is that an autobiography records some of the mysteries that go inside the author's minds and usually brings to light details that his audience

might otherwise never get to see. Those mysteries, the memories and feelings that other people can relate to, hold the key to enlightenment.

Then there is also the problem of acceptance and acknowledgment of the credibility of works written by women such as Anne Rice, even if they are legitimate works of fiction or mock biographies narrated by a male voice, as is the case of the vampires she writes about.

Germaine Brée, in the article “Autogynography” addresses the subject of autobiography written by a female author. She approaches the subject by discussing her confusion when asked to write about women’s autobiography. Her partial concern was “Did the title imply that autobiographies written by women constituted a sub-genre?” (Bree 223). She writes from a feminist point of view describing how women’s autobiography has been sentenced in the past as falling all within a similar category; a struggle that Anne Rice as an author had to face because she was writing the life narrative of a specific male character and also, because the majority of her characters are male.

Brée also writes of how the autobiographies written by women have been considered as lacking elements that will make them equal to those works written by male authors. Because some writers are female, their works, fiction or non-fiction, are set aside into a whole subcategory; sometimes subtracting importance from the work itself based on the author’s gender and not on the quality of it in part because women’s works are considered to be “fragmented and circular” (Brée 224).



She includes in her essay observations on the essay “Women’s Autobiographical Selves, Theory and Practice” written by Susan Friedman, a critic from the University of Wisconsin. Friedman’s work: “scrutinizes the predominant generic models of autobiography in relation to a corpus of autobiographical works by women” (Brée 224). The essay notes how:

Both Freud and Lacan...though differently, think of the process of individualization as story. For them self-realization takes place within an internalized nexus of family relations developing in *stages* and in terms of conflict, power, separation, dominance. Friedman argues that these structures of the developing self are “male” and not applicable to women’s autobiographical writings. Thence the absence of these from the critical corpus (Brée 225).

This relates to Rice because as a female author, some critics may question the credibility and seriousness of her work. Nonetheless, as a female author she manages to create a credible male narrative voice as her characters unravel their mock autobiographies. What makes these critical observations more debatable when applied to Rice’s work is how even with the strong male narrative voice she uses as her characters narrate their lives, Rice’s characters still manage to embrace some of Rice’s autobiographical elements and make them their own even if the story she is writing does not reflect her life. How her feelings permeate her characters’ state of mind allow a female perspective to come forth in a believable manner through the voice of a fictional male character.

### 1.3 Characters and Mock Biography

One thing that authors and critics seem to particularly focus on is the development of the characters that tell their stories when narrating their autobiographies. Whether they are fictional characters or real people; verisimilitude is crucial when writing a convincing storyline. Ernest Hemingway once wrote:

You know that fiction, prose rather is possibly the roughest trade of all in writing...You have to take what is not palpable and make it completely palpable and also have it seem normal and so that it can become a part of the experience of the person who reads it (Hemingway 16).

Hemingway is not the only one who focuses on the importance of the construction of plot in a narrative. Leonard Peikoff in The Art of Fiction suggests that “the extent to which abstract issues—such as the mind body question or the free will determinism controversy or the advocacy of reason vs. faith—actually influence a writer of fiction shaping his selection of events<sup>3</sup>, his method of characterization and even his way of combining words into a sentence” (Rand ix).

These aspects discussed by Rand in her lectures are clearly seen in Ramsland’s Prism of the Night, Rice’s biography proves to be a clear reflection of Rand’s observations on philosophical detection. The reason for this is that it

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<sup>3</sup> Events such as Anne Rice’s strict Roman Catholic upbringing, her falling in love with Stan Rice, the death of her daughter Michele and her moving from New Orleans to San Francisco and back are some of the examples that create the framework to her *Vampire Chronicles*. The emotions that are linked to these events create the framework for the creation of many vampires that are presented in her tales. Each character has the influence of Rice’s personal life and the different emotions she felt throughout her life as she wrote her books.

described the life of Anne Rice and her writing process, thus discussing how her vampires within the *Chronicles* deal with their struggles with faith when they realize they will never go through the transition from life to death that mortals go through.

As the names *The Vampire Chronicles* and *The New Tales of the Vampires* would suggest, each book is a tale or chronicle narrated by the characters themselves. Some of the narratives are almost complete autobiographies of the characters starting before their transformation and tracing the story of the two lives each character has before and after they became vampires. The characters consider their transformation as a rebirth. And after this entrance into the world of *The Children of the Night* or *The Children of Darkness* they will cross paths with each other, in some cases with *The Children of the Millennia*, which are the oldest vampires; therefore, each book will have storylines intertwined with each other because every character in these *Chronicles* is connected in one way or another.

Even when new characters are introduced to Rice's storylines, she manages to find a connection for them with someone else in her chain of characters and the events in those characters' lives. If not, she as a writer sets a series of events that justify the reasons why it is inevitable for these characters to meet. Her writing evokes the philosophy of Determinism, which states that every event, including human cognition and human behavior are determined by connected series of events that have happened before. According to Determinism, everything happens for a reason and no action is random,

spontaneous, mysterious or a miracle. This philosophy can be directly applied to the series of events that led to the meeting of Louis and the vampire Lestat.

The way that Louis's mortal life is described in the novel demonstrates how Rice as a writer utilizes a deterministic approach as she connects a series of tragic events that would lead to the intense feelings of despair. These feelings drew Lestat directly to Louis. Because of Louis's indifferent attitude towards life and death during the time of the encounter with Lestat, added to his attraction to Lestat's personality, he accepted Lestat's offering of eternal life through death, thus delivering his own fate of becoming a vampire.

#### **1.4 Rice's Style and Literary Devices**

Authors have their own particular style when writing. Through the use of an autobiographical device Rice as an author created a series of characters and then made those characters write their own autobiographies. As part of the personal influence to her writing process, Rice added some elements of her own life, included as feelings that her characters experienced thus reflecting her own life through from a twice-removed perspective. *The Chronicles* are in no way the story of her life, although some of the dramatic elements that are portrayed are linked to emotional situations that Rice lived through.

Anne Rice wrote two groups of vampire novels. One is *The Vampire Chronicles* and it is the most extensive one. Although the first *Chronicle* narrates the life of Louis the vampire, *The Chronicles* in general centralize around the character of Lestat de Lioncourt and his life. In this collection, he becomes the main narrative voice on most of the books. New characters that become crucial

to the crossover between the *Mayfair Witches Trilogy* and Rice's vampire tales are also introduced in the latter *Chronicles* novels and given their own narrative voices to allow the merging between witches and vampires and create the conclusion of this collection of vampire tales. The other group of novels is *The New Tales of the Vampires*, which were written by Rice as she wrote the *Vampire Chronicles*. It consists of two novels. Pandora and Vittorio the Vampire. Each book on the series has its own style and particular framing devices to create an acceptable verisimilitude between the characters and the real world.

Sometimes the same author can use several framing devices<sup>4</sup> in their books to help their narratives. In Rice's *Chronicles*, some characters, such as the vampire Armand, refer to themselves in third person. They do this before they inform the reader that the voice they are being subjected to is, in fact, the narrative voice of the main character. As he begins to narrate his story, Armand does not introduce himself, he narrates using a first person point of view what surrounds him and discloses the setting of the opening scene presented in the novel, while at the same time giving a brief introduction of his life and his past. Finally, upon his encounter with his Master, they interact and Marius his master replies: "I have them, Armand" ("Armand" 6). Here, the audience finally knows the identity of the narrator.

Rice is not the only writer who used more than one literary device in her novels, writers of earlier vampire novels that precede her, such as Bram Stoker, for example, utilized an epistolary format consisting of letters, a diary and journal

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<sup>4</sup> This is traditional in Gothic Literature. Also Gothic is a story of the inner self.

entries as part of the narrative of his novel Dracula. The reason why these are used is to present the reader with the background necessary to help the plotline develop and the characters evolve into real people within the context of the writing. Anne Rice uses this technique when writing *The Vampire Chronicles* and *The New Tales of the Vampires*. In her novels, she develops the use of several types of framing devices, some of which have been used in other literary works of years past, works that now belong to the literary canon.

Each novel of the old and new series of the *Chronicles* has a specific framing device that sets the groundwork for the narrative. Some of the framing devices include the handing over of manuscripts from the main character to the author, the allegation that the main character utilized Rice's name as a pen name in order to be published, and the use of narrative through letters.

An example of a first person narrative as a framing device can be used by observing the literary style in some of the books that portray the vampire Lestat as a primary character. These usually include an introduction in which Lestat himself addresses the audience in first person. Another example of a framing device is the novel Pandora where the main character of the same name begins writing a letter to David Talbot. Talbot is a fictional character with a crucial role in several of Rice's novels. David's "quest is to crack the secrets of the universe" ("Vampire Companion" 448) as part of a secret society known as The Talamasca. The purpose of this society was to document paranormal beings and activity. These included the lives of witches, ghosts, spirits, psychics, werewolves and vampires, to name a few.

In the first chapter of Pandora, Pandora writes her acceptance of David's request:

Now here I am with your notebook open using one of the sharp, pointed, eternal ink pens you left me...Yes I will tell you the story of my mortal life in Ancient Rome, how I came to love Marius and how we came to be together and then to part ("Pandora" 3,8).

All of these strategies and use of detailed description are used to persuade the readers into feeling that the manuscripts containing the life narratives and autobiographies of these characters in fact, did exist, and were personally handed to Rice by the characters themselves. Rice's depiction of the framing device displays the details of the exchange of written history between character and the author, which adds to the effect of veracity and persuasion, making the story about the realistic exchange and realistic story plausible to the reader.

Through the use of detailed descriptions and recollections that jump from the past to the present and the use of adjectives that appeal to the audience's senses, Rice is able to seduce the reader's curiosity into visualizing the opening scene of her main character's life. The narration is of David's request for Pandora to write about her life and evolves into the introduction of the novel as well as the preface to the autobiography of this fictional character: "And now it has begun, David. And now you see, David, I have made our meeting the introduction to the story you asked me to tell" ("Pandora" 35).

Other than Rice's descriptions, there is one characteristic that makes her work as a writer a memorable one. She has a way of capturing the character's humanity and inner struggle with morality in order to maintain the spiritual human qualities they have lost after they have crossed over to a life of darkness. Being able to include this in her novels helps Rice's audience connect to the characters even more.

In the novel Vittorio the Vampire, Rice's approach to character introduction is different from her other books. Vittorio's fictional autobiography belongs to *The New Tales of the Vampires*. Rice's approach to make him real differs from the *Vampire Chronicles* because unlike her other books, where the characters had contact with David Talbot in connection to the documentation of their lives, Vittorio di Raniari is portrayed as having handed Rice the manuscript that is to become this novel. At the end of the novel in the "Selected and Annotated Bibliography" there is a note from Rice that reads: "I went to Florence to receive this manuscript directly from Vittorio di Raniari. It was my fourth visit to the city and it was with Vittorio that I decided to list here a few books for those of you who might want to know about the Age of Gold in Florence and about Florence itself" ("Vittorio" 289).

The dedication of the book is a strategy that gives life to the character outside of the written context. This is important because it makes the character better well-rounded and leads the audience to believe that perhaps this fictional character could have perhaps been real and lived during the historical time presented in the novel.



The book has a double dedication. One is by Rice where she addresses her late husband Stan Rice, her deceased daughter Michele and her son Christopher Rice. This part of the dedication connects the audience with the real author of the novel. The second dedication is right before the title page and the message reads: "This novel is dedicated by Vittorio to the people of Florence, Italy" ("Vittorio"). This message gives the illusion that Rice, as an editor chosen by Vittorio, is forwarding and delivering the main character's wishes as if he were the real author to the audience that he intended this autobiography for.

Also, through the framing devices, Rice develops her characters' personalities so that they are very complex and multi-layered. Through their introductions she presents them as vulnerable, showing emotions such as loneliness and fear, even if they become immortal, *especially* if they become immortal. These methods become crucial in order to make the characters three-dimensional and well rounded. Their well-developed personalities make it hard for the audience not to react to them, and in some cases, to identify with them.

Roger Herald Moore discusses three fictions that Rice as a writer needed to keep in mind as she created the vampire mock autobiographies. He considers these three fictions: "support Lejuene's strictest definition of autobiography: (1) The author is a real person capable of writing his own autobiography; (2) The author is the protagonist; (3) The author-protagonist writes (in prose) a true story, that of his own life" (Moore 9). Furthermore, this argument connects directly with the case of Vittorio the Vampire: A Novel because he addresses the role of the manuscript tradition as part of the development of fictional autobiography and

autobiographical fiction; a strategy that Rice has used on several occasions, but that is most clearly seen in Vittorio the Vampire: A Novel. In the case of Moore's article, which is about the role of the *pícaro*<sup>5</sup>, he considers that: "The manuscript tradition with its emphasis on the first person singular which links writer and character seeks to establish and maintain the fiction of the genuine autobiography of the real *pícaro* written *by that pícaro/buscón*" (Moore 9).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph Rice's novel portrays the character of Vittorio as having handed Rice the autobiographical manuscript. This action, therefore, bringing to life the manuscript tradition previously used by writers such as Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra once more.

Her novel The Vampire Armand is another style of autobiographical fiction. This falls into the collection of *The Vampire Chronicles* but follows a different format. The framing device is a full circle turned into a spiral transition between present and past and future narrated by the main character of the book, Armand.

This book in particular is the life narrative of Armand. In it, he just writes down his memories about his life, from the time when he was mortal and kidnapped from his family, to the point when he first meets his master and lover Marius, to his transformation into *Child of Darkness*. His story ends in the present where the book began then continues from that point on, leading to the resolution of the book.

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<sup>5</sup> Rice's vampires can be considered pícaros because, just like the pícaros in the Spanish novels, they are rogues involved in a series of adventures that usually take place as part of a journey. They are also similar to the pícaro because as vampires they are characters that are constantly hungry and searching for food, they are known to be thieves, as they steal from their victims to accommodate to their needs and they live under the tutelage of a master with whom they have a love hate relationship.

Unlike Pandora who reluctantly wrote her story because of a request from fledgling vampire David Talbot and Vittorio who documented the tragedy of his family and his seduction by Ursula, Armand does not write his story for a specific reason. He does not have a person to give his manuscript to, or someone who requested the manuscript from him; or is he persuaded into writing what he has lived. He just does, thus presenting the lead character of the novel playing the role of the writer, role that Rice bestows convincingly upon her fictional characters.

Human or not, the character retrieval of their human qualities through their narrative is gained through self-acceptance. Their struggle to finally find redemption requires a great deal of mental and personal strength that will guide and push them towards reaching that goal of finding a place where they belong. The struggle is hard and they will face many trivial moments that will cause them to question their identity and purpose as living beings. They have their own free will to either battle the obstacles they have encountered or give up. When they are finally free of their existential burden they will feel they found their goal through forgiveness or enlightenment.

## **1.5 Chapter Overview: Thesis Subject Matter and Methodology**

There are three main objectives that the research that this thesis proposes to determine. First, the thesis will attempt to establish how the topic of autobiography plays a relevant role to understanding Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. Second, the thesis will focus on how Rice creates a mock autobiography reflecting elements of her life using a twice removed perspective

and whether she is successful at it or not. Third and last, the thesis will focus on determining how autobiography and *The Vampire Chronicles* can be connected to minorities and the vampire as a metaphor.

Chapter one is the introduction of the thesis but it also focuses on the discussion of autobiography as well as its connection to the *Chronicles'* characters. It focuses on autobiographical narrative and how it is reflected on Anne Rice's style, including her literary devices. The chapter concludes with a description of the framework of the thesis itself, demonstrating the objectives of the research as well as the thematic content of each chapter.

Chapter two is the review of the literature. It provides an overview of the books, essays, and novels that inform the main topics to be discussed in the thesis to have a better understanding of. The works used as reference include essays, critical essays, books, and novels that have relevant information on autobiography, race and identity, ethnicity, vampire fiction, the vampire metaphor, minorities, Anne Rice's life its connection with her work.

Chapter three of the thesis is an outlook into the Rice legacy. It includes an overview of her influence into contemporary literature as well as the role of New Orleans in her work. It further discusses the autobiographical influence that she has poured into her *oeuvre*, especially her life's experiences are reflected into her characters without becoming part of the fictional storyline that takes place in her novels. It continues the discussion including the role of religion and morality in Rice's personal life and the life of her vampires and extends into a discussion of the Academic appreciation of Rice's works. It concludes with a review of the

literary inspiration that influences her into creating her novels, as well as the way that these other works may mark their place in the pages of the Rice novels.

The information in this chapter will help resolve the second objective of the thesis. It will help by not only determining which factors of Rice's life can be linked to her work, but also what inspired her to write mock autobiographies. This discussion is relevant to understanding how she allows herself to create a fiction based on a twice removed perspective of her life so that this work can stand by itself as a mock autobiographical narrative, while at the same time reflecting traits that are directly linked to her personal life.

Chapter four is a discussion of the vampire's quest for an identity. Its purpose is to define the character of the vampire in Rice's fiction and transition into some of the elements that will help answer the third objective of the thesis; how the *Vampire Chronicles* and the topic of autobiography can help explain the use of the vampire as a metaphor for minorities. It documents and reflects upon the struggles the vampires in Rice's novel suffer as they go on a quest for acceptance of their lifetime away from the sun and the repercussions that this way of life imposes on them, while hinting at the connection these may have when compared to different type of minorities that not only include race and ethnicity, but sex, illness and coming to terms with mortality.

Chapter four also discusses the code of conduct and laws that the vampires in the *Vampire Chronicles* must abide by, which is not only a reflection of the religious influence in Rice's life, but also a connection to the codes of

society. These codes become a segregating factor that creates more rules towards the creation of new minorities.

This chapter reflects role of the relationships between vampires; the importance of keeping the secrecy of the vampire ways in order to survive and how this creates a dilemma in the search for identity (an indirect reflection of the struggles of minorities) thus creating the desire and need for mentors and life lessons that will help the characters survive as part of the vampire subculture.

Chapter five is the conclusion. It will present the closing argument of the thesis and discuss how the topics of Rice's *Chronicles* and autobiography play an important role in the creation of the vampire metaphor for minorities.

By discussing why particular audiences such as part of the gay community and people who are ill with the AIDS virus are drawn to Rice's fiction, the reasons why they are considered a dystopian minority will be disclosed. The chapter will focus on the use of the vampire as a metaphor in literature and how it represents subculture and a Dystopian minority struggling to find an identity as well as redemption, as they are ostracized from society. It will conclude presenting the results of the objectives proposed in the introduction, show how the elements discussed throughout the thesis come together to create a literature that is sought by many and conclude with how Rice's novels indirectly reflect her, but are not a parallel narrative of her life.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

#### 2.1 Chapter Introduction

Reliable texts and sources are necessary to develop the proper research necessary to resolve the main objectives proposed for the thesis. Books and materials covering topics of autobiography, race, identity and ethnicity become resourceful when attempting to gain a better understanding on how and why it is necessary to have a familiarity of the subject of autobiography when reading Rice's *Chronicles*. The texts that focus on autobiographical content instruct the audience into a clearer perspective of the reasons why people not only read, but also write autobiographical works. They present a more comprehensible perspective on how such sources are capable of being linked to other works relating to identity struggles and representation as well as their relationship to race, minorities and ethnicity.

Books on vampire fiction, the vampire metaphor, minorities, and vampire criticism also help create a better understanding of Anne Rice's life, her work and the way she developed a twice removed connection of her life from her fiction. These particular works become necessary to intricately unravel the distant connections between vampires and Rice's personal life, as well as the possibilities to connect elements of vampire fiction to issues such as race and

identity. These sources also allow an exploration of Rice's role and influence on the new developments within the vampire genre, thus giving a preview of the areas in which the new works about vampires might branch out into.

In *The Vampire Chronicles*, Anne Rice chose to use vampires as a way to portray through them from a twice removed perspective her personal feelings about a somber moment in her life. She created a series of mock autobiographies that reflected a great verisimilitude to everyday life, and characters whose struggles extend from Rice's personal suffering, and may have very well been the same as minorities living in the United States. But the truth is that Rice just used a fictional figure that had been used before in literature, and that attracted people's interest even centuries before Rice wrote her first story.

## **2.2 Review of the Literature**

The figure of the vampire is one that has fascinated people for centuries. Works such as Polidori's The Vampyr, which was the first vampire work in English fiction and Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla became predecessors to what was to become a growing increase of the narratives and storylines of vampire tales. These works of vampire fiction have served as a cornerstone to influence writers like Anne Rice. Rice as a writer not only incorporated in her works the sensuality of these works, but managed to make them evolve into mock biographies, and allowed the audience to see the story from the vampire's point of view for the first time. Her characters manage to capture the essence of the past generations, while at the same time delivering through a twice-removed



perspective Rice's knowledge, emotions, interests and even her experiences as an author.

The adaptations and variations from old style vampires to modern times is such that novels like Mario Acevedo's The Nymphs of Rocky Flats have been written using the current events surrounding politics that flood the media. This novel shows how far the range of vampire literature has reached as it presents the audience with the character of Felix Gomez, a Hispanic American soldier who participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom. His life took an unexpected turn when he returned from the war a vampire. "I don't like what Operation Iraqi Freedom has done to me. I went to the war a soldier; I came back a vampire" (Acevedo1) is the opening line of the novel.

Although this novel has a never before seen approach to the figure of the vampire in current times, it still does not depart from the figure of a character struggling to find an identity and meaning of his lifetime because of his lifestyle. He struggles to find redemption and forgiveness from the murders he had to commit in order to survive as a soldier. As a vampire he must also struggle with the decision of whether to hunt live victims to feed from them and whether he should kill them or not while feeding on their blood. This moral dilemma is also presented in Rice's *Chronicles*. Her vampires live under a code that requires from them to never kill a victim as they feed. Usually when they kill a victim after feeding from them it is because they chose to take their life. In most cases vampires feed until the victims are on the brink of death. The victim is left so that

it can either survive or die on its own because it lost the will to live, but not because the vampire took their life.

Rice's influence over works like these is easily perceived because she, as a writer of vampire fiction, broke the rules of creating a stereotypical vampire. In his novel, Acevedo, just like Rice, incorporates a subjective first person narrative of a character that shares similar qualities with him. He writes a vampire tale that presents a verisimilitude to current issues. Nonetheless, although he as a writer transmits some of his views and opinions through his subject matter, the storyline is not about him or his life as a soldier and is strictly a fictional tale.

Even though vampires have existed in folklore and literature for centuries, no vampire ever became as famous as that created by Bram Stoker in his novel Dracula: "When published, Dracula became one of the many contemporary titles that pitted humans against monsters. Robert Lewis Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling and H.G. Wells, among others all published in the same genre at about the same time. Yet it is Dracula that readers cannot forget" (Stoker back cover).

Bram's Stoker's Dracula becomes a relevant source for comparison between what is considered the main classical depiction of the Old World Vampire and the New World Vampire that is presented in Rice's fiction. Rice, just like Stoker found her literary success through her vampire novels and since they were first published, they have not fallen out of print.

Because people seem to have found a great fascination for the supernatural and fantastic, many books have been written in order to document and capture a better understanding of these fantastic creatures. The Fantastic in

Literature by Eric S. Rabkin is a book that analyzes the elements of the use of the fantastic in literature and deconstructs the fantastic itself to get a better understanding of it.

The book also give reasons why people such as Rice become fascinated with supernatural elements, thus choosing to add that element to their works as metaphors for other situations or issues of the real world. When creating characters and settings as works of fiction which have fantastic elements, writers like Rice are allowed a creative freedom and flexibility that might otherwise be condemned by ordinary social standards because of the way they target taboos and controversial material as would be murder, incest, homosexuality and adoptions<sup>6</sup> by gay parents. As Rabkin concludes: "Boredom is one of the prisons of the mind. The fantastic offers escape from this prison" (42).

Just as Rabkin analyses the fantastic in fiction, Noël Carroll wrote The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart. This book studies the reasons why people choose to write stories of horror and add elements of horror to literary works. The book proposes in its chapter about horror today that:

The argument is that if horror is, in large measure, identified with the manifestation of categorically imposed beings, works of horror, all things being equal, will command our attention, curiosity and fascination, and that that curiosity, as well, can be further

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<sup>6</sup> In Rice's Interview with the Vampire the relationship between Lestat and Louis has homosexual connotations. They also become a "family" when Lestat decides to incorporate Claudia, a child vampire as part of the household that he shared with Louis. Claudia becomes a bond between them because Louis finds Claudia, but Lestat not only turns her into a vampire, but he "gives" her to Louis as both a daughter and companion in hopes that they will become closer.

stimulated and orchestrated by the kind of narrative structures that appear so frequently in the genre. Moreover, that fascination with the impossible being outweighs the distress it engenders can be rendered intelligible by ... the thought theory of our emotional response to fiction, which maintains that the audiences know horrific beings are not in their presence, and, indeed, that they do not exist, and, therefore, their description or depiction in horror fictions may be a cause for interest rather than either flight or other prophylactic enterprise (Carroll 206).

Again, this book becomes relevant to understanding Rice's use of fantastic elements because she as a writer expressed that when she began writing Interview with the Vampire and consecutively, the other *Vampire Chronicles*, that fantastic element and the essence of a horror novel would better manifest the feelings provoked by the somber moment in her life she was going through. Somehow, a vampire would become a better medium to portray feelings of despair, existential angst, religious uncertainty and spiritual loss she was going through when her daughter died, as well as the other dark moments from her past that fueled her storylines while not necessarily having to write her autobiography.

Essays such as Carol A. Senf's "Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror" gives audiences new approaches to analyzing the character of Dracula and his connection towards good by exploring the duality of the character's nature. Senf does this by going through "Stoker's narrative technique in general and

specifically on his choice of unreliable narrators” (Senf 421). This duality about a vampires’ goodness was hardly considered before because of the characters’ associations with evil and it was not until Rice’s *Chronicles* were written, that a new door was opened towards the exploration of a previously evil character’s possibility of having a good nature.

After Rice’s novels were published, there has been a growing interest for the vampire as a creature with a mind and even a soul. Senf’s essay targets a study on the approach to how Dracula is portrayed in Stoker’s novel. She analyzes whether taking the same approach as other writers have taken beforehand determines this character’s evil qualities. She discusses how they are deemed to the author’s literary style, which guides his readers to an incomplete and easily questionable personal profiling of the vampire.

The creation of Dracula himself, to this day has sprung such interest that people not only have portrayed his likeness in movies as old as F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) and as recent as Francis Ford Coppola’s *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) and as E. Elias Merhige’s *Shadow of the Vampire* (2000), but have also studied his historical and cultural background and the impact this very well known figure has had on the media.

Books such as In Search of Dracula: The History of Dracula and Vampires by Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu have been reprinted out of growing interest by readers of the genre and popular demand even after they were out of print due to the renewed interest in the figure of the vampire in both

literature and film. McNally and Florescu's book in particular focuses on horror, history and film and the impact that Dracula has had on all three genres.

In the book's introduction McNally states the desire that drove him to research and document the idea of Dracula and the vampire theme in general. He declares:

As a fan of Dracula horror films, I began to wonder whether there might be some historical basis for the vampire hero...At first, like many Americans, I assumed that [Transylvania] was some imaginary place.... I found out, however, that Transylvania is a province...of western Romania, bounded by the Carpathian Mountains, that had been independent for almost a thousand years but under Hungarian and Turkish influence... I had an intuition that if all the geographical data were genuine, why not Dracula himself? Most people had never asked this question, being generally thrown off by the vampire storyline. Since Vampires do not exist, Dracula—so goes the popular wisdom—must have been the product of a wild and wonderful imagination (McNally & Florescu 1-2).

What makes this book important is that it not only demonstrates the similarities that both Stoker and Rice have as authors of vampire fiction, but it also manages to study the connection between both works. McNally and Florescu's research incorporate Rice as part of their investigations and as an example of the modern depiction of the vampire's history and its impact in vampire film and literary genres.

Books such as the Vampire Film: From *Nosferatu* to *Interview with the Vampire* have focused more on how the figure of the vampire has left a memorable mark in the cinematic world. This particular book focuses on the constant reinvention process that the vampire has endured through the years and the deconstruction of how vampires have been portrayed in movies during different decades. In general, it displays and categorizes how films continue to mold the vampire to represent the essence of the times in which they were created while at the same time holding on to the classic allure that draws its audience. It also discusses the adaptation to film of Rice's Interview with the Vampire as well as its relevance to the vampire film industry and its importance of why a novel like hers would have the elements necessary to make it to the silver screen.

There have also been popular publications such as The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead by J. Gordon Metton. This book in particular not only documents the vampire's role in film and history, but also discusses the literary movements that promoted this legendary figure to appear in the pages of books produced during those times. It includes a historical synopsis of the vampire origins and moves to discuss such topics as the different representations of the vampire have emerged since it became a literary character taken out of folkloric lore.

Despite it being written for popular audiences such as fans, thus making this book a non-scholarly publication, this book becomes relevant to this research because it discusses the cultural and social diversity that has suddenly become

part of the vampire trend. It includes a discussion on African-American Vampires and Gay and Lesbian vampire representations in literature such as Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, thus making the study of the subject of vampires as metaphors for minorities and marginalized subcultures more approachable from an academic perspective.

Ken Gelder's Reading the Vampire, although also focusing on the figure of the vampire, does not make particular emphasis on the figure of Dracula alone. It consists of a series of critical essays that discuss thematic contents in some of the most popular vampire related literary works. The book's content includes a range from Polidori's Vampyre, to including more modern works such as those of Anne Rice and her very famous *Vampire Chronicles*. The topic of Rice's vampires and their voyages through the centuries is covered in an essay entitled "Vampires in the (Old) New World: Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*". The role of Rice's *Chronicles* becomes particularly important. They have proven to be the most popular vampire work written to date since Stoker's literary success with Dracula. They have even inspired a couple of movies based on two of the novels: *Interview with the Vampire* (1994) directed by Neil Jordan and *Queen of the Damned* (2002) directed by Michael Rymer.

Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* consist of eleven novels. The first one, Interview with the Vampire becomes important because it is from this novel that the whole series sparked from. This novel in particular reflects more Rice's personal emotions from a twice removed perspective. It also is, just as Bram Stoker's Dracula, one of the most popular vampire works ever written.



Although there are female characters in the series, only two novels Pandora and Merrick are narrated by a female character and focus mainly on a female character. Along with Vittorio the Vampire, Pandora is the only other book belonging to *The New Tales of the Vampires*.

What makes Rice's vampires different is that, added to her departure from Classical horror vampire fiction, she adds an element of 'queerness' to her characters. This element has become a great source of discussion between scholars. This topic is discussed in books such as Our Vampires, Ourselves by Nina Auerbach, where it slightly focuses in Rice's use of a seemingly gay vampire as a reflection of the late 70's and 80's taboos about the subject. It also discusses how Rice has applied to the genre (along with other authors during the 1980's) the role that illnesses such as AIDS and cancer have partaken in the creation of new vampire fiction. Rice's literary style and her portrayal of death and how to approach it and embrace it is one of the reasons why so many people suffering from these potentially deadly diseases have identified with her works.

Interview with the Vampire, the first novel of Rice's *Chronicles*, becomes a key to understanding the autobiographical influence of Rice as an author and the context of her work. This novel, originally a short story<sup>7</sup>, has been considered one of Rice's most popular books and her breakthrough novel into the publishing mainstream of popular culture and horror fiction. It was written in the 1970's during Rice's period of mourning following the death of her young daughter

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<sup>7</sup> This story can be found as an appendix in Katherine Ramsland's The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Vampire Chronicles. 2nd ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.

Michele. Her use of vampires such as Louis, Lestat and the child vampire Claudia reflect not only herself and her inner demons, but also her husband and even Michele.

This struggle becomes easier to understand through books that will shine light on the author's life itself. Prism of the Night by Katherine Ramsland and Conversations with Anne Rice by Michael Riley are the two books that can give a clearer insight on the author's life since she collaborated in the creation of both. Prism of the Night is Anne Rice's official biography and it records her history, from her parents' union, up to her literary success. At the same time it gives a somewhat subjective psychological overview of the life changing events that molded Rice as an author. Riley's book, on the other hand, is a one on one interview with Rice. It is through Riley's questions that the audience gets not only information about Rice's personal details, but at the same time, Rice's personal opinions about subjects such as positive and negative criticism that has risen as a response to her literary works.

Magazine articles such as Deborah Garrison's "Last Words" also help understand more closely some of the elements that played crucial roles in Rice's life. This article, which was published in the September/October issue of *Poets and Writers* magazine, was written to honor the life of Anne Rice's husband Stan after he died of Cancer. It is known to those familiar with elements of Rice's life that Stan was a rock to her and a strong influence to her creation of Lestat, the main character and narrative voice of most of the *Vampire Chronicles*.

Once the audience gets acquainted with Rice as an author, they can understand better how she discusses through her vampires topics of mourning, the loss of youth and the struggles to adapt to a new lifestyle following life altering events. In Interview with the Vampire in particular, the tale of the vampire is overturned from the classical stereotype to a more intense, more personal narrative seen from the vampire's eye. It also happens to capture the social changes of the time including gender issues and feminist perspectives.

As for the strong autobiographical element that plays a role in Rice's work and how it may affect her worth as a professional author, essays such as Germain Brée's "Autogynography" discuss the credibility of female authors who wrote autobiographies in the professional literary realm and how the credibility and quality of female authors is challenged due to their gender. This essay asks "whether autobiographies written by women constituted a subgenre...or a different genre-in which latter case perhaps they should acquire a different label" (Brée 223). This analysis of the female literary perspective and its connection to authorship helps to better understand some of the struggles that Rice as an author had to face. This, in connection to the believability of her characters, especially since she wrote such autobiographically influenced literature during a transitional time in history where the search for identity and meaning became a high point of interest.

Rice's autobiographical style is seen in many of her novels and it does not only reflect her own life, though these elements are completely disconnected from the novels' storylines. Examples of the different styles of life narratives can

be seen in The Vampire Lestat, which re-introduces the audience with the character of Lestat de Lioncourt, who was one of the primary characters in Interview. This novel begins with a first person narrative of Lestat as he introduces himself to the reader as a character yet at the same time disclosing his inhuman condition in the first lines of the novel: "I AM THE VAMPIRE LESTAT. I'M IMMORTAL" ("Lestat" 3); words that are emphasized in caps to point out the importance of the character's identity and as a reflection of his pompous personality.

Though Louis was the primary character in Interview, it is the character of Lestat that comes to assume the role of lead narrator in several of the books of the *Chronicles* that are to follow this introductory novel. Books such as The Queen of the Damned, Memnoch the Devil, and The Tale of the Body Thief begin their narrative with opening lines such as "I'M THE VAMPIRE LESTAT. REMEMBER ME? THE vampire who became a super rock star? The one who wrote the autobiography?" ("Queen" 1) or perhaps "THE vampire Lestat here. I have a story to tell you" ("Thief" 1), or even more, "LESTAT HERE. You know who I am?" ("Memnoch"1) These introductions to the character as a first person narrator help emphasize the importance of that autobiographical element that Rice's novels encompass, but perhaps none of the novels encompass the longing and desire through a subjective eye as Lestat's opening lines in the last novel of the *Chronicles*.

Merrick, Blackwood Farm and Blood Canticle become the closing novels of Rice's vampire saga and the merging with the *Mayfair Trilogy* which consists

of the novels The Witching Hour, Lasher and Taltos. At the same time, through the narrative voice of Lestat in the first and last chapters of the novel, the audience is subject to finally understand the true meaning and purpose of the vampires and their journeys, which is to find means to deal with their curse as an eternally damned blood seeker, find their own identity as an individual who is not only part of the vampire community, but that also manages to live between humans while at the same time finding solace and redemption from their everyday actions that are a result of the monster they have become.

In Blood Canticle's first chapter, the audience is introduced once more to Lestat through a series of very uncommon requests for a vampire. In his opening lines he states: "I want to be a saint. I want to save souls by the millions. I want to do good far and wide. I want to fight evil!" ("Canticle" 1). A few lines later the audience is briefed about the true identity of the vampire as he discloses his name through his ritual of introduction:

Allow me to introduce myself, as I absolutely crave at the beginning to every one of my books...I'm the vampire Lestat, the most potent and lovable vampire ever created, a supernatural knockout, two hundred years old but fixed forever in the form of a twenty-year-old male with features and figure you'd die for- and just might. I'm endlessly resourceful, and undeniably charming. Death disease, time gravity, they mean nothing to me ("Canticle"1).

Lestat's introduction also serves as the key to understanding the downfall of the vampire as a virtually immortal being: "Only two things are my enemy:

daylight, because it renders me completely lifeless and vulnerable to the burning rays of the sun, and conscience. In other words I am a condemned inhabitant of eternal night and an eternally tormented blood seeker” (“Canticle” 1).

It is important to know that Lestat’s narrative is not the only one presented in the *Chronicles*. Novels such as The Vampire Armand and Blood and Gold, present the readers with other characters within the storylines and their connections. These become part of the books in which the vampire Lestat was not the main character and that as a result, provoked a more negative acceptance from Rice’s devoted fans. Still, they follow through Rice’s literary style of a vampire searching for an identity, solace and redemption as he documents the struggles of his lifetime and his connection to those who surround him.

Some of these novels such as Pandora and Vittorio and Blackwood Farm’s literary devices become important because Rice utilizes epistolary framing devices to develop the character’s transition into their life narrative. At the same time she captures in the storylines her own autobiographical elements through the eyes of fictional characters. They become represented in the form of landscapes, cities, artwork, food and textures to name a few.

Because of the high interest on particular details about the author, her inspirations, and what led her to intertwine personal influences into the book’s storylines, a book titled The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Anne Rice’s *Vampire Chronicles* was created by Katherine Ramsland in collaboration with Anne Rice. This book is not a scholarly publication. It was written for popular

audiences, such as her fan base would be, but proves to be of great relevance for those who seek to understand Rice's process as a writer. It serves as an encyclopedia and contains not only personal accounts and quotes by Rice about her novels, but also catalogs and defines many key concepts about the process of writing and understanding the novels, along with the listing of crucial information about the settings, art, historical events and literary works that permeate in the pages of these books.

This book give the *Chronicles*' audience insight into the Rice's personal interests and the topics she extensively knows about, as well as all of the information she has obtained from her religious education and her many travels to Europe. It will also give additional information to the readers and further understanding of the terminology, characters, situations and background information that influenced Rice to write her novels.

More than a glossary of terms, it offers information about the relationship of the author and her books and allows insight of the personal aspects of Rice's private life that served as inspiration for *The Vampire Chronicles* and *The New Tales of the Vampires*. It provides details of the author that focus on Rice's choices for creating specific characters that embody some of her ideals, conflicts, struggles and perspectives before her writing process began. There is a similar book by Ramsland entitled The Witches Companion: The Official Guide to Anne Rice's Lives of the Mayfair Witches that serves the same purpose for those readers who follow the *Mayfair Witches Trilogy* or that may have become

interested in the subject once Rice created a crossover between both series of novels.

The essay about the *Mayfair Witches Trilogy*, “The Least of These: Exploitation in Anne Rice’s *Mayfair Trilogy*” by Kay Kinsella Rout, helps shed light into the thematic content of the Mayfair storyline and simultaneously overlaps into Rice’s *Chronicles* because of the merging of both plots in the latter *Chronicles*. Books like Merrick, Blackwood Farm and Blood Canticle incorporate Mayfair characters as part of the major vampire storyline. Characters such as Mona and Merrick Mayfair even make the transition into becoming *Children of Darkness*, and Lestat professes his attraction and admiration to Rowan Mayfair.

It is necessary to understand that, though not the main focus of the thesis, novels such as the *Mayfair Witches’ Trilogy* and The Feast of All Saints play an important role in the development of the thesis because they focus on the connections between generations and the role of “family” in the creation of a narrative whose purpose is to define a particular identity. Kinsella Rout’s previously mentioned essay provides insight into the complexities of the Mayfair family unit and the characters’ struggles for control that transgress into Rice’s *Chronicles*.

In order to have a better understanding of the role of this search for an identity, books like Black White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self by Rebecca Walker and Half and Half [Writers on Growing up Biracial + Bicultural], an anthology edited by Claudine Chiawei O’ Hearn become useful because they include autobiographical or autobiographically influenced stories of individuals



that are struggling with coming to terms with the several layers that constitute them as a person. As Danzy Senna expresses in her essay “The Mulatto Millennium”, published in Half and Half as a reference to a list of terms describing different types of Mulattos that defined just before this remark: “The categories could go on and on, and perhaps, indeed, they will. And where do I fit into them? That’s the strange thing. I fit into none and all of the above, or at least, mistaken for each of them at different moments in my life. But somehow, none of them feel right” (Senna 27).

Walker’s autobiography proves to be very useful in the demonstration of the vampire metaphor because in it she discusses many of the sentiments that are voiced by Rice’s fledgling vampires in her collection of vampire tales. Struggling to fit in and feeling uncomfortable or cursed in an existence where these characters cannot help who they physically are just some of the issues that Walker also discusses as she narrates the events of her life in her own book, thus allowing a fairly reasonable basis for comparison between the feelings of Rice’s characters and Walker’s.

The book Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices discusses the portrayal of minorities. It is divided into sub themes such as the representation of “The Other” and the importance of representation and difference. This book also discusses the portrayal of stereotyping, its reversals and positive and negative images of it and proves helpful when analyzing the figure of the vampire not only as a representation of a minority figure through a

fictional character, but as the vampire as a metaphor for marginalized and repressed subgroups of society who struggle to find a sense of identity.

The genre of autobiography may seem simple and narrow, but when analyzed carefully it becomes hardly that as it branches out into many aspects within itself. Books, such as Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, help the reader become familiarized with the background of the genre of autobiography in general and its ramifications. For example, in Reading Autobiography, Smith and Watson categorize fifty-two styles of life writing and how these relate and differ from each other.

This book also points out the genre's evolution, and thus, makes it easier for the reader of autobiographies to better understand these texts. It becomes a helpful reference when reading Rice's *Chronicles* because by researching the different types of autobiographical works, it becomes easier to decipher why Rice would use particular writing strategies in the creation of her character's mock autobiographies.

The book Autobiography by Lisa Anderson, just like the Smith-Watson book, examines canonical and non-canonical books in order to describe the elements of an autobiography. In a different aspect from the Smith-Watson book, "Anderson ranges across canonical and non-canonical texts and looks closely at twentieth-century women's writing, black and post-colonial writing" (Drakakis i). Moreover, in her book Anderson explores the critical approach to topics such as identity, selfhood, languages, and the use of genre in autobiography.

Both books not only define the terminology that branches out from the extensive and complex genre of autobiographical writing, but they also give a description of why particular generations have adopted the autobiographical style in order to document their history. Anderson's book in particular has a more critical approach towards the subject and includes theorists such as Lacan and Derrida thus defining from a more academic approach to the analysis of the personal desires (such as the search for a personal and cultural identity) and social influences that fuel the creation of autobiographical writing.

In the article "On Writing Autobiography" published in The Southern Review, Wallace Fowlie looks back upon his own experience of writing a series of memoirs he later on published. He, just as other writers already mentioned such as Hemingway and Rand, agree that it is important "to recollect the past and to recreate it and to record particulars that may stir the imagination of the reader...with places, with ambiances that retain...very special atmospheres not always easy...to describe" (Fowlie 274). Description and detail are two memorable elements that instantly stand out in the works of Anne Rice.

## **2.3 Chapter Overview**

The works discussed in this chapter can be divided into three main categories. First there are the novels used as the source of research. These include Rice's collection of *Vampire Chronicles*, as well as other novels and non-fictional narratives used as reference of style and content.

The second group of books contains critical theory, essays and discussions on vampire fiction. These books not only include the information

necessary to develop the discussion about the vampire metaphor, but also some included information relevant to Rice's work and personal life. This information proved to be of value when discussing her personal influence in her works and also when trying to determine her methods to allow her fiction to stand on its own and become credible to its audience, instead of it becoming a parallel narrative of her life.

The third group of books and essays included information about race and the portrayal of race in the media and literature. These books did not only focus on the role of one particular race, but also discussed issues of multi-racial, multi-ethnic individuals who are informing the world of the wide range of variety and diversity within the topic of racial and ethnic issues. These books helped the research by providing insight into some of the connections that can be made universally enough to be able to fall into the parameters of the vampire as a metaphor for minorities.

## Chapter III

### The Rice Legacy

I am giving you my life to prove to myself I can...Even when I am not getting paid...Completely and totally, permanently and without hope of reward, just as an act of will.

Chuck Palahniuk, Invisible Monsters

#### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

A writer's work can become a legacy of their lives. Sometimes a work that may have begun as a personal challenge for a writer will end up becoming a creation that will transcend through centuries. This chapter will focus on the particular moments in Anne Rice's life that branded a deep enough mark to mold her into the writer she has become. It will discuss her personal life and her influences a writer while trying to prove what is it about her work that allows her to have such a subjective influence filter into it without turning it into the story of her life.

Although Rice created novels previous to the *Vampire Chronicle*, it was her vampire legacy that gave her world-renowned fame as a writer. With her previous works, she struggled as a writer to get her work published; but it was not until tragedy struck her life that she became inspired by her grief. She became self-motivated into writing a short story that a few years later would revolutionize the genre of Vampire Literature. She wrote Interview with the Vampire as an act of will in order to channel her grief into something else, something better.

She did not envision the outcome that her short vampire story published in 1973 would have, or how it would evolve into a world-renowned bestseller. Nor she foresaw the sudden interest that a brand new audience coming to terms with death and their individual identity would spark in her books amidst a raging incurable epidemic, as they sought for knowledge and solace from the life of this relatively unknown, former writer of erotic novels.

### **3.2 The Re-birth of Popular Vampire Fiction: Rice's Influence in Contemporary Literature**

The works of Anne Rice have gained world-renowned fame and considerably large cult following by eager fans belonging to all fields. "The ever mysterious vampire world [she] has created has made her the most popular vampire novelist since Bram Stoker<sup>8</sup>" (Gordon Metton xiv). She finished a short story about the life of a vampire in 1973<sup>9</sup>. In this story she "tried to capture the vampire's perspective<sup>10</sup>" ("Companion" 207) by having her main character, an unnamed vampire, tell his life narrative to a young radio station DJ with a tape recorder in hand. This interview takes place in an empty room inside an old Victorian house in Divisadero Street<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Anne Rice's first three vampire novels were Interview with the Vampire (1976), Vampire Lestat (1985) and Queen of the Damned (1988). "None of these novels have since been out of print." (Gelder 1994)

<sup>9</sup> "She finished the story in August 1973, one year after her five-year-old daughter Michele had died of Leukemia." ("Companion" 208)

<sup>10</sup> Anne Rice acknowledges that one of her inspirations that influenced her writing of "Interview with the Vampire" (the short-story) was the story "Dress of White Silk" by Richard Matheson, which was "told from the point of view of a child vampire" ("Companion" 207). The film *Dracula's Daughter* also inspired her because "it depicted vampires as both tragic and sensual" ("Companion" 207).

Rice chose this street because she “had visited a small radio station [there] when she was lengthening [her] short story... “Interview with the Vampire” (Ramsland 104) and she “noticed the tragic contrast of tall Victorian houses sitting in the midst of contemporary squalor and gloom” (“Companion” 104). She claims she was inspired because of the feel of the “deep urban Gothic that used to be captured years ago in comic books” (“Companion” 105). To her, the location of this street has great importance in her work because it becomes a “metaphorical joining of diverse neighborhoods—rich and poor, gay and straight, white, yellow and black<sup>12</sup>” (“Companion” 105-06).

After revising the storyline several times, she finally finished writing this tale; a short story that later on would be modified one last time and shortly after come to revolutionize the world of Horror fiction<sup>13</sup> and Vampire fiction forever. It is true that “no vampire novel...has ever surpassed the general popularity of *Dracula*” (Gordon Metton xii), but not since Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* had a vampire story turned out to become so popular<sup>14</sup>. The name of this short story was “Interview with the Vampire”.

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<sup>11</sup> Divisadero Street “cuts across San Francisco, terminating in the Castro District, a gay neighborhood” (Ramsland 104).

<sup>12</sup> “That Louis, a vampire who had left behind political and economic concerns was situated on this street gave the story an interesting juxtaposition between background and character” (Vampire Companion 106).

<sup>13</sup> “For the purpose of examining horror fiction, terror can be interpreted as the extreme *rational* fear of some form of reality, whereas horror can be interpreted as the extreme *irrational* fear of the unnatural or supernatural. Moreover, there is realistic horror— fear of the unnatural or supernatural presented in the guise of the dread of something unpredictable, something that may have potential for violence.” (McNally & Florescu 133)

<sup>14</sup> “Published in May 1897, it [*Dracula*] became a success after Stoker’s death and has never been out of print. In America, where it has been available since 1899, it continues to be a bestseller. (McNally & Florescu 193)

By January 1974, "Interview with the Vampire" had evolved into a full sized novel and the first installment of a series of vampire novels written by Rice. Now her main character had a name, Louis de Pointe du Lac; a background: he was "the son of a plantation owner in New Orleans, Louisiana" (Gelder 110) he also had a brother who was a religious zealot, a sister and a mother who lived in the plantation with him and the novel's content was that of a vampire that "related his fruitless search for redemption and for escape from grief and suffering" ("Companion" xi).

Rice was inspired by the desire to "look at the vampire as a tragic figure, a human who had made the mistake of choosing such an existence to his deep regret" ("Prism" 142). This was because "Anne thought of vampires as images that emerged from a deep primitive consciousness, trapped by their nature in a psychological purgatory, not like Stoker had depicted Dracula" ("Prism" 149). The particular collection of vampire novels that emerged from this first installment would later come to be known as *The Vampire Chronicles*. These novels became popular because in them, Rice "developed the theme of sensitive, beautiful artistic vampires who feel rapture and intimacy when they drink blood, and who find various ways of coping with their dark world and murderous nature" (Gordon Metton, xiv). This takes the original stereotype of the aristocratic<sup>15</sup> vampire such as Count Dracula was and pushes it a notch further, giving more depth to the classical vampire that is already world famous and that had been immortalized in books and movies.

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<sup>15</sup> "It was through the depiction of Count Dracula that the vampire gained such famous and universal traits as being mortal, aristocratic, corrupt, unholy and ruthless." ("Companion" 111)



The story became a novel in the late 1970's, a time considered as "the age of realism and the biases [of this age and time were] in favor of the semiautobiographical" (Riley 122). At first, it may have seem that Rice as a writer would have to struggle against these semiautobiographical ideals sought for in books during this time because instead of appearing to write what was considered mainstream books, she wrote a story with a context based on fantasy. Nonetheless, Interview with the Vampire was distributed and publicized all across the nation in many bookstores<sup>16</sup>. Its popularity caught on with audiences, in part, because Rice's fantasy was deeper than what it seemed to be at firsthand. She wrote "a fantasy that allowed her to go back home" (Riley 123). Since the novel was first released, it has never been out of print.

Following the book's rampant success, with time, her popularity made her a role model for other writers of the genre, including writers who have published novels as recently as 2006. Rice has also influenced reviewers and critics into comparing newer works within this literary genre to her already established influence. An example of critics utilizing Rice as basis for their literary critiques on style and form can be seen in the back cover of the 2006 novel by Mario Acevedo, The Nymphs of Rocky Flats. Here is displayed the commentary of writer J.A. Konrath, author of Bloody Mary which reads "Deliciously unique. A smooth combination of Anne Rice and Michael Connelly with a generous portion of Dave Barry" (Acevedo, back cover).

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<sup>16</sup> "[Rice's] biographer, Katherine Ramsland, reports that Ballantine made the book into an 'event'... (with an extensive tour, coffin shaped book displays, T-shirts and so on), ensuring its success with heavy promotion" (Gelder ,180).

In 1994, approximately twenty years after its print release, this short story turned bestseller<sup>17</sup> was then changed by Rice into a screenplay for *Interview with the Vampire* the movie, which eventually became a blockbuster<sup>18</sup> and earned it two Academy Award nominations for Art Direction and Original Score. The movie was considered controversial at first, shocking people with its depictions of graphic vampire cruelty and violence, but caught on, and years later in the year 2002 it prompted a less successful yet popular sequel based on the also bestselling novel and third part of *The Vampire Chronicles*, Queen of the Damned<sup>19</sup>.

Adding to these two films, after years of development, Rice's work was also taken to the stage in 2006 when the musical "Lestat", based on her also bestselling book The Vampire Lestat, the second novel in the *Chronicles* series, was created and performed in theaters. With a musical score by famous British singer and songwriter Elton John, it showcased in theaters both in San Francisco and a short lived run on the Broadway stage, closing in 2006, in New York City. Another production subsequent to her previous line of popular books turned to film is the non-vampire related novel The Feast of All Saints, which is an example of Rice's works that became adapted for the smaller screen.

The Feast of All Saints, a national bestseller, explored an additional subject in Rice's range of topics of interest and her connection to her place of

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<sup>17</sup> "It was not an immediate bestseller because Rice at this time was unknown—she had not been published before." (Gelder 108)

<sup>18</sup> It was the highest grossing vampire movie ever created. At least up to the year 2002

<sup>19</sup> "In 1988 Queen of the Damned outsold The Vampire Lestat by 400,000 copies. It became a best seller in its first week and stayed in the lists for seventeen weeks" (Gelder 1994).

birth. It portrayed the life of the Free People of Color in Louisiana before the Civil War and was adapted in the year 2001 by Showtime, which created it into a two part mini-series constituted of an all star cast including the talent of actors such as Jennifer Beals, Pam Grier and Peter Gallagher among others.

This novel, although not part of *The Vampire Chronicles*, shows the connection of Rice and Louisiana. More so, it shows the connection and interest that Rice has for the rich and diverse cultural background of New Orleans. The city's history is greatly discussed through references made by her characters and the narrative voice in her novels, making it come alive as it would have been centuries ago during colonial times.

### **3.3 New Orleans' Influence on Anne Rice's Fiction**

Originally named Howard Allen O'Brien, Anne Rice was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 4, 1941. Growing up there and soaking up the culture and the customs and history of this great Southern and Colonial city created a strong impression on her which later on would be greatly represented in her work. Her depiction of local color both in her historically based novels along with her vampire fiction is exquisite. She captures the everyday routine that gave life to New Orleans. From the city's downtown Spanish and French influenced architecture to the plantations that stood erected nearby the banks of the Mississippi River, she manages to make sure that the local lifestyle and customs are being integrated as the part of the back-story that establishes the plot and settings in her books.

New Orleans becomes a fitting choice to describe the Dystopian

neutralization of the vampire's subculture that Rice created in her *Vampire Chronicles*. It must not be forgotten that it is a city that was created by great cultural diversity. It was also known for a sense of modernity and decadence, the supernatural and an *avant-guard* acceptance of all the cultures that arrived to its harbor and that blended within its limits.

As any place that is culturally diverse, there is partial marginalization through its districts, which are known for concentrations of particular minority groups congregating in order to establish their own communities. Though, contrary to other Metropolitan centers like New York City, the margins between these communities blended better between each other. Rice's novels embrace a special connection with her hometown of New Orleans and its essence of diversity:

Anne illustrates the impetus in the human heart to seek others, but she also notes the tendency of wanting to bond with others so strongly that those who find community seek to force others to follow rules. [She] disliked conformity and believed in the preservation of individual rights. However, she also understood the pull to be with others, to be inconspicuous which meant to follow rules that divide insiders from outsiders. Thus she shows how the notion of community becomes a paradox, fed by the urge to dominate others and make them so like oneself that formal bonding can take place, validating the rule makers ("Prism" 172).

New Orleans' tolerance for Free People of Color when the rest of the

United States still debated about their role (or lack there of) in society were also an outstanding factor, which was captured in Rice's work. It was particularly portrayed in her novel The Feast of All Saints but it is also reflected in the pages of *The Vampire Chronicles* as part of the background setting for the storylines. The Afro-Caribbean influence was very strongly present in the city and left a mark as the alternative religious practices became part of the picturesque essence of it. These allowed a series of non-conventional religious practices<sup>20</sup> that are considered to be pagan or taboo by some to be practiced up to this day as part of the cultural background of New Orleans.

Through the eyes of her characters she captures the elements of the city and the essence of the Colonial-Creole lifestyle as it evolves through the centuries. Her characters are the ones that knit with their narratives the historical evolution of the setting and slowly demonstrate the infusion of the variety of cultures that permeate New Orleans as they themselves, along with the city, change through the years.

Rice shows her connection to the place where she grew up by using her knowledge of the city and its traditions in her works. In her biography of Rice, Katherine Ramsland makes a reference to New Orleans by saying that the city "in the 1940's was an interesting place to grow up for Anne" (Ramsland 3). She describes that the city during this time was "alive and with motion and energy, [and it] had a distinct personality. With French, Spanish, and Caribbean

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<sup>20</sup> Some of these practices include Hoodoo, Voodoo and Santería.

influences, genteel, gleefully corrupt, there was no other place in America quite like it" ("Prism" 3).

Rice represents this influence of existential opposites that created the ambience of her city; a city "settled in the precarious banks of the Mississippi [and that] harbored people of strong passion, manic aspiration, fragility and deep despair. They partied hard and repented to excess" ("Prism" 3). She is faithful when describing the way that the city connects with its origins, harboring its influences.

While being interviewed by Michael Riley, he asked her: "What is it about New Orleans that has made it such a powerful presence for you?" (Riley 117) To what she replied as part of her extensive answer: "I think New Orleans is unique, and an honorable recipient of devotion on the part of its native sons" (Riley 120). She also voiced that her attachment to New Orleans has to do with the fact that: "In New Orleans you will see and experience things you cannot find any other place. A different ethic prevails, and it influences all of life...It's a way of celebrating life... and everything that goes along with the Catholic ideal of what's important" (Riley 118).

At the same time the city absorbs and keeps its history despite the many disasters that have plagued it and through the years have aggravated its existence: "New Orleans culture was created by survivors" (Prism 3)<sup>21</sup>. This instinct for survival can be seen in the following excerpt from the novel Interview with the Vampire:

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<sup>21</sup> Through the centuries this cultural spirit of survival remains untouched in New Orleans. Even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it can clearly be seen as the city is being slowly rebuilt following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

[Paris] was the mother of New Orleans, understand that first; it had given New Orleans its life, its first populace; it was what New Orleans had for so long tried to be. But New Orleans, though beautiful and desperately alive, was desperately fragile. There was something forever savage and primitive there, something that threatened the exotic life from within and without. Not an inch of those wooden streets, nor a brick of the crowded Spanish houses had not been bought from the fierce wilderness that surrounded the city, ready to engulf it. Hurricanes, floods, fevers, the plague—and the damp of the Louisiana climate itself worked tirelessly on every hewn plank or stone façade, so that New Orleans seemed at all times like a dream in the imagination of her striving populace. A dream held intact at every second by a tenacious, though unconscious collective will (“Interview” 203-04).

There is no question why it is so easy to make a vampire story seem fitting during a time when people were stricken by disease. If connected to the vampire myth, not only would an illness reflect a good excuse to cover the deaths caused by the vampire, but it would also serve as a clever literary device, such as a metaphor would be to represent a group that has been infected by the disease.

New Orleans, because of its very busy harbor, received many immigrants, visitors and sailors. Due to the large number of foreigners who entered its ports from distant lands, it was not unusual for these visitors and immigrants to bring illnesses, which were spread to the people who were already

living in the city and in many cases had never been exposed to such, therefore making them more vulnerable to acquire and also spread the diseases. The rats and animals that were also brought in as cargo in the ships that docked at the bay were also sometimes tainted, making them threats to the citizens of the city.

Diseases such as the plague, cholera and typhoid were some of the causes of widespread death along the immigrants and citizens, yet at the same time they become the perfect cover for a writer to camouflage the vampires in the novels. The large numbers of victims in the city created a general apathy of those who fell ill. Because of the urge to contain those who were sick, people with any symptoms similar to those of the plague were categorized as having it; therefore this made it easy for the vampires to hide their victims amongst the bodies of those who had been afflicted with the deadly diseases. This device has been used time and time again in vampire stories and movies; even Bram Stoker claimed to have been inspired by his Irish mother, Charlotte Stoker's<sup>22</sup> true horror stories because: "[She] had witnessed the Cholera epidemic in 1832; later Bram recalled her accounts of it suggesting that the vampire pestilence in his novel owed much to the frightful stories told by his mother" (McNally & Florescu 137).

It comes to no surprise then why Rice would set the background in the introduction of the character of Louis de Ponte du Lac in Interview with the Vampire during a time when widespread disease was high and difficult to control in New Orleans. The lack of technology, knowledge and of resources made it hard to do so. Through the years, movies such as *Shadow of the Vampire* and

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<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Stoker was Bram Stoker's mother. She was from Sligo, Ireland.



*Nosferatu* depict at some point how the cities' districts were being affected by disease (in particular, the plague), which was in part spread by rats<sup>23</sup>.

Nearly twenty years after the novel was published, Neil Jordan's version of *Interview with the Vampire* also did the same as the other vampire movies had done before. It blended the historical elements that gave life to the vampire's life. Except this time it was seen from the vampire's eyes instead of its victims. Perhaps most important is the fact that it gave life to the history of Rice's literary and fantastic vision of New Orleans. It portrayed Louis' story beginning on the historical pre-Civil War era of New Orleans in 1791, right before he became a vampire.

The setting was staged so it would depict the range of the city, from the decadence of the lifestyle around the darker parts of town, to the traditions beheld by the slaves who lived in the great plantations, to the devastation brought on by the plague as it ravaged the streets of the city with its horrible consequences. Jordan, as director, created scenes where Louis the vampire walked through the filthy, wet, and muddy puddles on the streets of New Orleans.

There the vampire, soaked by the pouring rain, roamed the back alleys of the city as the rats walked over his feet escaping the plague. Louis becomes walking death where real death had left its mark. Corpses left by the plague are

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<sup>23</sup> The rats also play an important role since they become the source of nourishment for those vampires that were unable to feed from people because of one particular reason or another. Some of the reasons for a vampire not being able to feed from humans include long journeys by ship, such as the one that Claudia and Louis had to endure on their way to Europe and *Nosferatu* also endured on his way to cross from one land to another, and guilt to feed from human victims. Louis suffered great guilt when facing the truth about vampire feedings. When Lestat informed him that he could feed from small and large warm-blooded animals, Louis chose to feed from rats for as long as he could in order to spare human lives.

rolled out in front of him. As the vampire walks in, he is ironically warned by mortals of the lurking danger that awaits him in the direction he is headed into. At that precise moment, the vampire is turned into a metaphor of how this fledgling metropolitan center became alive and challenged death, and, through the cinematographic eye, the city becomes alive through a visual history, tradition, disease and endurance (rats included).

### **3.4 Autobiographical Influence**

It can be said that Rice's own experiences are what caused her to integrate her existential struggles into the pages of her novels. She was brought up in a very strict Catholic environment, which has been infused by her into her narratives therefore systematically reflecting these environments and beliefs upon her characters. As a Catholic, she had stages in her life that made her question her religious upbringing and the dogmas that she had been taught to believe and not question. One of the more striking moments that caused such doubt in her faith was her relationship with the man that would become her husband, Stan Rice.

Because of her religious upbringing, Rice confessed to her interviewer, Michael Riley: "At one point I considered I had to give Stan up because kissing him had been a mortal sin. I was deeply conflicted about it" (Riley 20). Thus demonstrating that for her it was hard to come to terms with this new chapter in her life that seemed to defy everything she had been taught. Part of her big struggle with acceptance to her attraction to Stan was because he was what she would describe as "a bombastic little atheist" (Riley 21). His spiritual beliefs

clashed with every moral and religious lesson that had been embedded in her as a child. Because of her strong catholic background, to her “even kissing him was supposed to be a mortal sin. That was one of [her] first and more horrible Catholic conflicts” (Riley 20).

Just as the vampires that would later come to be the characters of her most famous novels, she would have to debate whether to break free from the structure and stigmas that were used to build character and shape her as amorally, worthy individual of society. While enduring this personal clash of beliefs she would ask herself: “How can this person...somebody I didn’t want to lose no matter what happens in life...really be all that bad and damned and going to hell? How can kissing him be a sin?” (Riley 20)

Later on as part of her novels, even in the non-vampire ones like Cry to Heaven, she used this dilemma of attraction and loving which is predestined to be damned or condemned by society and the church. Still, no matter her inner struggles about her religion and morals, like a victim drawn to a vampire “she was enchanted by him” (Riley 21) and Stan and her married. She explained that for once: “I didn’t care what the Church said. It was too strong a belief that if I didn’t connect with this person I was going to make a mistake I would regret for the rest of my life” (Riley 21).

This was a big step in her defining her own identity as opposed to living up to the expectations and moral standards set by those who had raised her and the influences she had while growing up. It was that defiance for an individual identity that allowed her relationship with her husband. It was this relationship and the

trial and tribulations that would eventually come along with it that eventually built a foundation for the inspiration of what would become the characters of Louis and Lestat.

As for how she connected Louis and Lestat from her novel Interview with the Vampire to her relationship with Stan, Rice expressed to Riley that she “would have been Louis if [she] was anybody, and fell in love with that sort of opposite to [her]” (Riley 16). The opposite to her being her husband Stan and his beliefs and the way they formed a contract with what she had been taught to believe.

When fragmenting the connection of both Louis and Lestat to herself, she considered: “Louis was certainly me when I wrote Interview with the Vampire and then later Lestat was more in me in a fantasy way” (Riley 14). It is not that the characters she created were mirror images of her or her husband, but there was a personal influence that let itself be felt within the characters in the way that she created them. Her interview with Riley reflects how parts of her life become alive through her characters and yet, curiously enough she claims that “neither of these characters is related to [her] real life” (Riley 14).

Still, it cannot be denied that some of the strongest emotional moments in Rice’s life fueled her inspiration and gave her ideas to what later on would become her characters in her vampire novels. The only difference is that these emotions are channeled into representations of completely different situations that did not take place in Rice’s life.

Every writer has his or her own method of creating a character. Ernest

Hemingway once wrote:

When you first start writing stories in the first person if the stories are made so real that people believe them, the people reading them nearly always think the stories happened to you. This is natural because while you were making them up, you have to make them happen to the person that was telling them. If you do this successfully enough, you make the person who is reading them believe that the things happened to him too. If you can do this, you are beginning to get what you are trying for, which is to make the story so real beyond any reality that it will become a part of the reader's experience and part of his memory. There must be things that he did not notice when he read the story or the novel which, without his knowing it, entered into his memory or experience so that they are part of his life. This is not easy to do (Hemingway 6).

Rice had her own way of creating her characters and letting her life infuse itself between the lines of her novels. She could have written of the average person that lived down the street, instead she chose to add reality to creatures that defied reason and common sense when it came to their existence. Her justification for utilizing a fantastic framework and supernatural characters as part of her narrative instead of representing her ideas through more realistic representations of people was "that the fantasy frame allow[ed her] to get to her reality" (Riley 13). And yet, she manages to make vampires appear convincingly human because she grew up "in a religious atmosphere in which the natural

touched the supernatural" ("Prism" 150).

Rice as a writer became more comfortable using her personal structure in order to create her fiction. This embedding of her own beliefs and struggles made it capable so that she could express a more human character through a more supernatural being; after all, "the fantastic has a place in every narrative genre" (Rabkin 28). As she told Riley, her approach to writing to Interview with the Vampire was simple: "You take a fantasy framework, you step into it, you try to write reality" (Riley 123). After all, there is one important characteristic about fantasy that connects it to reality because, despite the fact that it can be defined as it being "not real or based on reality...the fantastic is important precisely because it is wholly dependant on reality for its existence" (Rabkin 28).

It is the use of this strategy that made her become more comfortable with what she was writing. By adding the autobiographical influence to her fantastic characters' ambience, she added the depth necessary for them to become real. While writing The Tale of the Body Thief, one of the novels that belong to *The Vampire Chronicles*, she made an attempt to break free from the supernatural at one point in order to write about a normal set of characters. She explained to Riley as he interviewed her:

I made an attempt to move [The Tale of the Body Thief] apart from *The Vampire Chronicles* to have it be the very same novel but to do it with a mortal man as a hero. At the time I wanted freedom of being out of *The Chronicles*. I spent an enormous amount of time trying to give birth to the novel with a mortal hero, and it didn't work.

It simply didn't work with a mortal character. I couldn't get the voice right. As soon as I entertained the idea of going back to Lestat, everything fell back into place. (Riley 29)

As for having autobiographical factors in *The Vampire Chronicles*, Rice does not imply that by reading her *Chronicles* her audience will be able to define and discover her autobiography in them. She justifies the use of these elements so that the human touch is present in order to reach the level she wanted for her vampires to exist in. What she tries to convey to the readers that look for this autobiographical meaning from her is that: "You have to remember that there is also a statement being made all throughout the books that true art can only be made by human beings. The vampires can't do it themselves" (Riley 30).

This explains why she can easily take a semiautobiographical approach to her novels by using metaphors of events in her life, mainly her childhood and the loss of her daughter, and depicting them in a fictional setting through fictional characters because: "She writes a fantasy that allows her to go back home"<sup>24</sup> (Riley 123). It can be easily seen how the figure of her own alcoholic mother who once told her the craving of an alcoholic was "in the blood"<sup>25</sup> ("Prism" 153) and her Roman Catholic upbringing can be reflected into the creation of the figure of the vampire. "Anne most strongly portrays the vampire as a compulsive sinner, the thirst as an addiction, like the alcoholic for the bottle" ("Prism" 153). Rice

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<sup>24</sup> She also uses the image of the fantasy of going back home in her other novels such as *Violin*, *The Witching Hour*, *Lasher*, and *Taltos*. The latter three, being the novels creating *The Mayfair Witches Trilogy*.

<sup>25</sup> This argument is also used in her novel *Violin*.

described how the desire for blood in her vampires block all reason, such as the addiction to alcohol clouds the judgment of an alcoholic, and goes as far as detailing how “after killing ‘a vampire is warm’...a common sentiment amongst alcoholics” (“Prism” 153).

Even more, during her period of grief and mourning after Michelle’s death, Rice herself also resorted to drowning her sorrows with a bottle. Still, she acknowledges her use of her own drinking experience as an influence in her work. From a writer’s perspective, she decided to use it because “any experience for a writer, anything that involves pain, suffering, anything, you can use” (Riley 190). To Rice, drinking led her in a direction that she would otherwise not have taken. She “got a lot out of it in its own way. It moved [her] into groups where [she] might not have gone and to meet people and listen and talk to them” (Riley 190-191).

According to Ramsland, her character’s frustration towards being trapped in the threshold of their prime represents the loss of Rice’s own childhood due to the fact that she had to deal with alcoholic parents. Rice has used this autobiographical concept as influence to the creation of her characters. One example of this use of the alcoholic parents would be Mona Mayfair: “both of her parents were alcoholics, so she takes over as the responsible one in the family” (“Witches Companion” 290). Therefore, Mona is representing the image of a child that was forced to grow up too early into her life because of the circumstances that surrounded her. Mona, who at first falls into the category of the *Mayfair Witches Trilogy*, later on crosses over *The Vampire Chronicles* as a character in



the latter novels that conclude the series. Rice created Mona and bestowed upon her a reflection of herself writing the character as being: “Obsessed with family, race cars, guns and computers, she shares many of Rice’s interests” (“Witches Companion” 289).

Mona was originally introduced in the *Mayfair Witches Trilogy* as “the little girl with a bow in her red hair” (“Witches Companion” 290), but the truth is that as some of the vampire characters she seems to be stuck in that transition between childhood and adulthood. This theme of the adult trapped in the body of a child or someone fairly young is recurrent in Rice’s books, such as the theme of the child forced to grow up before their time. Mona also reflects this strong depiction of opposites with her sheer constitution as a character, after all “being highly erotic, she lost her virginity at the age of twelve [and] although she is well developed, Mona likes to dress as a little girl. This disguise keeps men off guard” (“Witches Companion” 290).<sup>26</sup>

In Interview with the Vampire, the characters of Lestat and Claudia appear bitter at the fact that they were created at a point in their lives where they would never be able to appreciate complete adulthood. It is for this particular reason that they kill victims that represent that desire and longing in order to release that anger. These deaths became the vampires’ way of dealing with the bitterness that held them and prevented them from coming to terms with their lives. At the same time Rice through writing, came to terms with her own personal loss, not

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<sup>26</sup> The topic of the seductive erotic minor that seduces older men also appears in Rice’s novel Belinda. Claudia also becomes a different sort of child seductress in Interview with the Vampire because she utilized her youthful appearance to deceive her preys and lure them to her.

only for her child, but of the loss of her own childhood.

In the pages of her *Chronicles*, the vampire becomes a metaphor for events in her life, such as her daughter Michele being stolen of her youth by Leukemia and being forced to grow up at five years old. Ramsland considers Louis to “[express] Anne’s feelings of loss to her daughter. Almost six<sup>27</sup>, Michele had been on the verge of experiencing her life more fully when the vampire, Leukemia, had claimed her” (“Prism” 153).

An author’s life is full of memories. Some of these memories are happy and some of them are sad. They create an extensive canvas that allows the author to paint a world with their fiction and bend it whichever way they please and for an author that is so visually impressionable<sup>28</sup>, capturing these images on paper became an easier task for Rice. During the discussions with her biographer, “Anne admitted that all of her work incorporated impressions of people, places, and events familiar to her. And it is evident that her relationship with her and Stan provided intense emotional tones for the book (“Prism” 152).

Her creation of Lestat and his relationship with Louis reflected her husband’s need to take control. He did this as means to deal with slowly losing a child while at the same time claiming his role as man of the house; a role that strained his marriage to Rice because it clashed with her own dominant personality: “While Stan was flattered to be the physical model, he also perceived

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<sup>27</sup> Michele died of Leukemia one month before turning six years old.

<sup>28</sup> When discussing with Riley the importance of visual influence and the impact it had on her writing, Rice expressed: “that happens to be very strong with me—seeing a visual image, whether it is a movie or a painting and being struck by it and wanting in almost a clumsy way to speak of it specifically in a novel” (Riley 33).

that the novel revealed Anne's reaction to this tendency to exert control" ("Prism" 152); the type of control that flares poignantly in those scenes in Interview with the Vampire when Louis and Lestat live together as a family unit before and even more after Claudia was created. As for connecting her books to the process of dealing with death, she considers that "you don't have to run away from what you are suffering when you read these books. You can experience your thoughts and feelings about it, one step removed" (Riley 26).

The idea of her own struggle as well as the vampires' struggle with their previous religious background and their dilemma of trying to find redemption, as well as the promise of Heaven as a reward had primordial meaning and influenced Rice's mindset as a writer. This allowed her to integrate these elements into the creation of the character of the vampire Lestat.

This characters' uncertainty about Heaven or Hell, his view of life and his desire to untie Louis from his religious burden in order to give him more freedom to embrace his identity as a vampire were sparked by the religious beliefs of Stan, her husband, and the effect they had on her. Stan was an atheist therefore his beliefs were completely opposite to her own. She disclosed her predicament with Stan to Riley:

It was Stan the atheist saying to me, Louis the Catholic what do you need all that crap for? Live, look at the life around you, reach for it you've got it all! Don't mourn for a system that may never have existed, or a religion that's dead, or go looking for God and the Devil to justify things. Look at what's right before you (Riley 16).

This brings her back to the process of spiritual change as a person. She faces the possibility of an alternate perspective in which she applied the opposites of her spiritual self to her life. By allowing Stan to influence her, she redefined her beliefs thus merging her previous identity to these new ideals that became integrated in her life as it progressed. As a result, this questioning and slow transformation was mirrored in the development of Louis and Lestat as characters in her novels.

### **3.5 Religion and Morality**

The section in Interview with the Vampire when Louis meets Morgan during his trip to Eastern Europe represents how Rice's characters embrace the human qualities that she as a writer wants to give them. It is then when her way of portraying vampires in her novels encounters the contrasting parallels of the old literary vision of the vampire versus the new literary portrayal of it. The reader is persuaded to identify with these characters in such a way that there are moments within the text where the lines between these characters' lingering humanity versus their supernatural monstrosity merge. Her vampires know that as humans they used to have a soul and are aware of it "they had a conscience, and suffer from guilt, loneliness and many of the numinous questions of their formal morality" ("Prism" 150). Coming to terms with their monstrosity does not become easy for these vampires, as Lestat would express in the novel The Vampire Lestat when he found himself alone a short time after following his transformation:

Well, it has been great fun pretending you will be this vampire

creature, I thought, wearing these splendid clothes, running your fingers through all that glorious lucre. But you can't live as this! You can't feed on living beings! Even if you are a monster, you have a conscience in you, natural to you... Good and Evil, good and evil. You cannot live without believing in—You cannot abide the acts that—Tomorrow you will...you will...you will what?

*You will drink blood, won't you?* ("Lestat" 105).

Rice has a way of creating moral arguments that make the audience justify the vampire's actions<sup>29</sup> and switch their own morality and values<sup>30</sup>. In order to make these switches between Good and Evil and the role they pose against the reader's morality, Rice employs a particular strategy: "The concepts of Good and Evil must be malleably meaning different things in different contexts, but seemingly linked by a threat of continuity" ("Prism 259). The narrative makes the audience forget what they think is right and persuades them to support what normally would be considered unacceptable based on the morals and religious canons of society.

Nonetheless that moral bias is a part of what reinforces her vampire's

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<sup>29</sup> Lestat can be thus construed as a noble innocent following his animal nature. He moves through the world as Dionysus, transcending traditional religious notations of good and evil utilizing the physical immediacy of excess and rock music and making himself vulnerable to be torn limb from limb as he prepares later in [The Vampire Lestat] to go on stage as a rock star.

<sup>30</sup> Rice also finds ways to integrate the audience's knowledge of religious subjects and ceremonies such as the Holy Sacraments of the Catholic faith into her novels. An example of this can be seen in The Vampire Lestat when Lestat's mother Gabrielle is dying and Lestat turns the communion she is receiving into her conversion into the *Dark World*. Instead of offering her The Blood of Christ to save her soul he switches the wine and offers her his own vampire blood, thus saving her and turning her into a vampire. It becomes a vampire equivalent of the Catholic Church's eternity after death.

lifestyle. If anything she presents her characters as angels of death that in some cases come to salvage those humans who seek a way out of their miserable lives; as it can be seen in her novel Pandora when Pandora, the main character addresses David Talbot through her narrative telling him of why she chose to feed off a young woman who was about to commit suicide by jumping into the river: “Let’s see her mother, dead, gone and now waiting. Let me glimpse through her dying eyes the light through which she sped towards this certain salvation” (“Pandora” 10).

Pandora uses the victim’s eyes as vessels to find her lost humanity, and uses them as a vessel to give her victim the redemption and peace she wanted. After the woman dies, Pandora refers to her as “the one I rescued” (“Pandora” 11) thus making the murder seem more morally acceptable to the reader. By choosing these words to justify the murder the vampire goes through a transition from a cruel hunter to a compassionate savior of the hopeless. If anything, the vampire is given a saintly essence.

People adjust their actions accordingly to what they consider is right. Rice also employs this example of adjusting with the character of Lestat in her novels. This is the reason why even though Lestat can be considered to act evil at times, he is not really doomed. “Lestat insists in moving through life like a good man” (Riley161). Even more, in the novel Blood Canticle, he becomes obsessed with the unobtainable idea of becoming a saint. “I want to become a saint. I want to save souls by the millions. I want to do good far and wide. I want to fight evil!” (“Canticle” 3).

Hunting, through the eyes of a Rice vampire, becomes more than just frivolous killing. Rice's vampire characters justify the deaths as more than just satisfying the thirst for blood, but as doing humanity a favor by cleaning the world of killers, drug pushers (who seem to be the favorite prey because they are everywhere), mobsters, serial killers, assassins, and in some cases of having mercy on those poor souls who feel they cannot go on living because life has been too cruel to them and their only way out of the arms of despair is death.

Rice considers that the concept of evil is relative because it is impossible for a human being to correct all of the wrongs in the world. Rice said: "We try in our own lives and in our own groups to achieve a kind of peace and charity that does not exist in nature in any form" (Riley 167). The vampires become an acceptable vision through a fantastic element of a possible solution to eliminate some of the wrongs in the world that humans are incapable of completely eliminating.

The hunt, the art of killing, becomes poetry in the words of these characters and yet it can also be described as an existential dilemma for a number of the vampires. Some vampires cannot stand the thought of having to kill others to fulfill their primitive need to feed. Some try to suppress their hunger, which usually backfires in a feeding rage making them kill victims who they would not have normally killed. In other cases, some decide to have a less glamorous, yet more acceptable way (at least to them) of living and feeding on animals instead of humans. Killing becomes an addiction, and a search for an identity through the lives of each of their victims. Every time a vampire chooses a victim,

usually they describe the process of death as they feed on them. This process may go from a simple feeding in which the victim is left weak but alive, to a grotesque show of force and power to where the victim is completely drained of their blood and sometimes the body is mangled even more by the hunter for a specific reason. Such cases may include territorialism, rage and intimidation.

This process is not just the description of a murder; it becomes a bond between the hunters and their victims. There is a psychic connection in which the hunter has visions of the victim's lives or the pains or joys that the victims have surpassed. With these killings the vampires make their audience aware of the purpose they seek to find to the points where the killing becomes their justification as a favor to humanity. At the same time it becomes their solution in order to blend in and find literal human warmth so that they can walk among those living.

The allure that the narrative has over the audience reflects on them the struggle that the vampires have. The reason for this is because these vampires find themselves trapped in an existential limbo that is attached to their immortality. Usually the most prominent characters in *The Vampire Chronicles* have had religious influence, which made an impact in their lives. Some examples of these characters include Armand, who was to be a monk before he was kidnapped and sold into slavery when he was just a teenager. Other examples include Lestat and Louis who were raised in the Roman Catholic faith. Louis in particular had a brother who was a religious zealot and claimed to have had visions and had heard divine voices speaking to him. Because of this



religious connection, now they find themselves trying to decide if everything they believe and stood for was a lie or not, and even if it is, they question whether they still should abide by those beliefs.

As humans, these now vampires were taught that these dogmas and moral choices were the canonically right thing to do. If they follow them they will be rewarded by going to Heaven, or punished by being damned into Hell. Despite that, even before they become immortals they struggle with the duality of religion and they fear the consequences that their actions might impose on them, as it is evident by Lestat's reflection about his religiously based fears when he was a child: "It had terrified me as a child, the idea that I might go to heaven and my mother would go to hell and that I should hate her. I couldn't hate her. And what if we were in hell together?" ("Lestat" 102). This portrayal of vampires reflecting on their faith and immortality is ever present in Rice's vampire novels.

As immortals these vampires do not face the choice of being sent to Heaven or Hell. They are trapped in limbo because of their immortality and this inability to cross over creates in them great existential angst. With the concept of no reward of an afterlife due to immortality, they must struggle now with the decision of parting with the beliefs they had of Heaven and Hell. It becomes evident to them that in order to survive in their new lifestyle, they are guided to act in ways that were considered to be morally unacceptable to them when they were mortal. Rice wanted to create a sense of vulnerability despite the super human qualities of her characters therefore she described her creations as "the image of a person who takes a blood sacrifice in order to live" ("Prism"149),

somewhat similar to the image of the Catholic's who drink the blood of Christ in order to save themselves even though they are constantly surrounded by sin and temptation leading to damnation. It becomes evident that for them, in order to survive as part of their lifestyle they must accept the paradox of the blood.

Now as part of the vampire lifestyle, drinking blood becomes a means of salvation whether it is spiritual for humans and physical for the vampire. On the other hand, vampires are guided to act in ways considered to be morally wrong to them when they were mortal and somehow, they are not completely damned for their actions. Louis and Lestat: "as corrupted Catholics...seem to have naively and paradoxically believed that consorting with the Devil would somehow get them to Heaven" (Kinsella Rout 88). If anything, Rice described her vampires as "angels going in another direction as finely tuned imitations of human beings imbued with these evil spirits" ("Prism" 150).

Then again, there is also Rice's creation of Lestat who is a secondary character in Interview with the Vampire, but later on obtains his own voice thus making him a central character in the development of *The Vampire Chronicles*. Lestat becomes Rice's way of justifying some of her personal disapproval of some of the moral choices she was taught to practice according to her Roman Catholic upbringing. She becomes a rebel against the practice of these dogmas by using her character as a device to deliver some of these beliefs because: "[Lestat] is Nietzschean overman [sic] creating a new meaning for an age of good and evil, as he has the courage to see it through. He does this by showing the emptiness of the old moral concepts. It is an ingenious device to deliver through

metaphor Anne's feeling by a church that clings to an empty dogma" ("Prism" 259).

A particular argument made by Rice relating to vampires enduring humanity despite their superhuman quality is her use of her character's reflection in mirrors. Initially, it may seem as another attempt for her to break another cliché of the original vampire lore, but when interviewed by her biographer, Katherine Ramsland, Rice explains that the need for mirrors goes beyond simple superstition. The "lack of reflection signifies that their souls were in hell and Anne did not want her vampires to have anymore assurance than did humans that God existed" ("Prism" 150). She wanted to keep her characters equally in the dark as humans are to the existence of God or the Devil and thus "she eliminated those things which would have necessitated too logical an explanation that God or the Devil was at work" ("Prism" 151).

### **3.6 Vampire Types: Breaking the Stereotype of the Old-School Vampire**

In early gothic literature vampires were portrayed as bloodsucking hunters who did not have any particular purpose other than to kill their victims in order to stay alive, and prevent being killed from those who discovered the truth of their identity. Usually the story told by the writers was narrated from the victim's perspective or an omniscient narrator. This narrator sided with the victim's point of view on the attacks.

Although some stories described the vampire's actions and would sometimes superficially go into the character of the vampire itself, it was never really considered to tell the story from the predator's point of view. This was so

because vampires were thought of as evil, inhuman, and were thought to have no place in humanity due to their predatory nature.

In works such as Bram Stoker's Dracula, Polidori's The Vampyre and Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla, the audience is introduced to a series of characters that have been victims to the vampires in the storylines. The audience is also presented to the character of the vampire itself, but there is no retrospective to how the creature came to be. One thing is certain though, the vampire in literature is usually portrayed as a character that is elegant and has high social standing in society with a title such as Duke, Duchess, or are socialites. The Gothic style in the storyline tends to be represented with details in the setting like, for example, Dracula's castle in Bram Stoker's Dracula.

Despite all of her references and influences, Rice's works explode with their own individuality, which makes them stand strong all on their own. Just as Bram Stoker "created a set of vampire traits for the purpose of the novel that came from his own imagination rather than from actual vampire lore" (Gordon Metton xii) Rice decided to apply her own rules when creating her own set of vampires.

With her literary style, a more Western and more modern visionary style of the vampire is created. Instead of finding their identity in the dark hills of Bulgaria and the other geographic locations named in Bram Stoker's Dracula and the original vampire folktales, Rice decides to move her vampires to Western Europe. It is in Paris where they finally begin to find the answers they had been searching for to unlock the secret to their identity. When creating the characters,

she kept some of the basic concepts such as them being killed by sunlight, and she kept the aristocratic appeal of the vampire, but despite some of the seldom traditional traits that her characters exhibit, she manages to break free from the already established mold and gives new life to her *Children of the Dark*: “garlic, crucifixes, mirrors and stakes do not frighten [her vampires] anymore” (McNally & Florescu 168).

Her description of the vampires’ encounter with Eastern European people has a comical accent to it because it defies all of the folkloric taboos and traditions that had been established by vampire literature written before. Rice even addressed the subject of the contrast of the old vampire beliefs versus her newly created myth with a hint of humor when, in Interview with the Vampire David Malloy, the interviewer, approaches the subject and questions Louis. Louis responds to David’s inquiry by replying: “Oh the rumor about crosses! ...Nonsense, my friend, sheer nonsense. I can look on anything I like. And I rather like looking on crucifixes in particular” (“Interview” 23). Louis even demonstrates that they do not affect him when he narrates to Malloy the incident at the Inn, where one of the village women gave him a crucifix to protect himself from the vampire that had been causing deaths in the vicinity once Louis insisted that he would go out into the night, an action which went against the advice of the locals at the inn.

As for turning into mist to go through keyholes, Louis dismisses that notion by telling David, “I wish I could” (“Interview” 23). In the case of “the stakes through the heart...the same...Bull-shit” (“Interview” 24). There is no question

that Rice's turn on vampire fiction has revolutionized the genre. She has become role model for many, and, even critics accept that there is a trace of her style in the new novels that have hit the market since Interview with the Vampire was first published.

It is true that novels such as Bram Stokers' Dracula have given the reader a very slim insight into the vampire's point of view. This type of vampire is seen as a predator:

Although Stoker modeled Dracula on the historical Vlad V of Walachia and the East European superstition of the vampire, he adds a number of humanizing touches to make Dracula appear noble and vulnerable as well as demonic and threatening; and it becomes difficult to determine whether he is a hideous bloodsucker whose touch breeds death or a lonely and silent figure who is hunted and persecuted. The difficulty in interpreting Dracula's character is compounded by the narrative technique, for the reader quickly recognizes that Dracula is *never* seen objectively and never permitted to speak for himself while his actions are recorded by people who are determined to destroy him and who, moreover, repeatedly question the sanity of their quest (Senf 423-424).

Rice's perspective of the vampire takes a different turn when approaching the portrayal of this immortal creature she breaks from the traditional stereotype and makes the vampire's story more subjective to the reader because she "wanted a new take on the vampire. She retained the need for coffins as a mere

superstition, but defied the traditions in which the vampires are killed by stakes, fear crucifixes, can become mist and have no reflections in mirrors” (“Prism” 150).

In her novels, Rice overturns this old fashioned view of the Slavic, Eastern European vampire, depicting it as a “hollow mindless animated corpse” and moves her own vampires in a different direction. If anything this hollow vampire reflects the old vision of the folkloric and literary vampire. It represents Anne Rice’s realization of the “gulf between nineteenth-century literature and the vampire in folklore” (“Prism” 149). Her representation of the Eastern European vampire in Interview with the Vampire portrays these creatures as being supernatural, with no soul, evil and with no purpose in life other than to kill and feed on its prey in order to conserve its animation; the meaning, the essence and depth of true immortality is lost.

This portrayal of the folkloric Eastern European vampire presents a character with no background and no distant future. The readers of Interview with the Vampire, when confronted with Old World vampires will care about the fate of Rice vampire’s which, for a moment, connects with the audience with its human qualities, instead of caring for the Old World vampire. They will want to see the Old World vampire dead, finished and destroyed because they are predators and momentarily will forget that they are being simultaneously confronted with Rice’s new style of vampire because of its depth and capabilities of assimilation within a human crowd.

Anne Rice’s writing style has a particularity about its tone and how it

directs the audience towards creating an affinity to respective characters within the storyline. In the essay “The Least of These: Exploitation in Anne Rice’s Mayfair Trilogy” Kay Kinsella Rout discusses it applying it to the Mayfair Witches Trilogy, but it can easily be adapted to *The Vampire Chronicles* also:

Whether the wish be to exploit others or to exterminate them, ruthlessness sets the tone. A dominant sub-theme of the intertwined histories and bloodlines is thus the exploitation of helpless beings in the name of self-interest. Whenever an explanation is offered, the perpetrator always feels justified in the name of survival, the elimination of “evil,” or even curiosity, but in every case Rice is on the side of the victim (Kinsella Rout 87).

According to Katherine Ramsland, Rice’s portrayal of the Old World vampires also poses as a metaphor to the representation of the vampire in popular culture and literature after Bram Stoker’s Dracula was published. In her novels: “The Old World Vampires symbolize what vampires have become in fiction since Bram Stoker published Dracula in 1897. Many contemporary authors present vampires and monsters who kill without compunction and, for decades, films have depicted the same image” (“Companion” 331).

Rice pays homage to the influence of Bram Stoker’s Dracula and the vampire folktale. She does utilize the old narrative device of utilizing a human, Morgan, to lead the reader into the vortex of the vampire hunt. Still, she manages to change the perspective of the classical narrative style in vampire literature by focusing once again into the narrator, who in this case happened to be Louis, a



vampire. The events in Varna and the situation involving Morgan and his fiancé resemble the events in which the character of Lucy Westerna went through in Bram Stoker's Dracula.

Rice utilizes in this particular storyline the classical scene where a body (in this case that of Morgan's fiancé) is dug up and the locals stab it through the heart with a wooden stake. She as a writer takes her comparison of the classical folktale as far as having the villagers insist on the decapitation and burning the body to ensure the safety of the people present, while at the same time ignoring Morgan's plea to avoid the desecration of his beloved's corpse.

Louis the vampire, who had studied the history of the old country, becomes a witness who is familiar to these rituals. He becomes the vessel for the audience to witness the savage actions, and just as Morgan, he considered the desecration of the body grotesque and unnecessary. With this situation, the reader is confronted with a particularity that is fairly uncommon in vampire fiction; the human in the story and the vampire both think alike and are on the same side. Even more, as the situation unfolds, the vampire is willing to save the human because he feels compassion for him.

This situation moves the audience to reconsider their vision of the vampire they had already created in their minds because of previous literary works. It provokes them to ask themselves who the real barbarian in the story is. Is it the vampire or is it the angry mob that is willing to desecrate a corpse based on their skewed yet ignorant vision of safety based on cultural tradition?

Anne Rice's fiction becomes the counterpart of these Old World vampires. She goes against the mainstream representation of them by struggling to create believable, realistic and dynamic characters utilizing fantastic elements. As a writer she began experimenting with vampires and eventually found her perfectly human creation: "In contrast [to the classical literary vampire] Rice's vampires suffer guilt and loneliness because they experience strong connections to their former humanity. They thus offer a psychologically richer portrait of the vampire experience" ("Vampire Companion" 331).

In other words, vampires such as Louis, who struggles to maintain a stronghold of his humanity long after being converted into a *Child of Darkness* breaks from the stigma of hollowness of the traditional vampire, giving the character depth and meaning, thus blurring the vision of the vampire the audience previously had. Based on old tradition, it would make more sense for Louis to side with the Eastern European vampire instead of defending Morgan from him; after all, Louis first went to Varna with Claudia in search of another vampire, but because of the depth added by Rice's literary style and the human perception that is attached to the character, it is understandable why the reader would side with Louis instead and hope he defeats the mindless corpse that is to attack him.

### **3.7 The World Seen Through Vampire Eyes**

In the pages of her novels, her words paint a multi-dimensional landscape that evokes the senses of those who read them. From the picturesque colorful streets of Renaissance Italy, the somber gothic and rustic landscapes of the

Slavic regions of Eastern Europe and the alluring, cold and wet, dark nights of Paris, France, her readers travel the world, seeing it through the keen perception of vampire eyes. Vampire eyes evoke a more in depth perspective of the world. In a more supernatural and metaphorical sense vampire eyes becomes a type of “third eye or mind’s eye” (“Vampire Companion” 491). An example of seeing how this perception is important is that after seeing through these eyes Louis learns that “he can see aging among mortals more clearly... [and] he sees life as too precious to waste. Savoring that which mortals take for granted, he understands that this is possible only because of his new perspective” (“Vampire Companion” 492).

This personal perspective is what gives life to her books because she as a writer: “wanted to know what it really feels like. [She] wanted to see through vampire’s eyes” (“Vampire Companion” 207). Not only that, but by flaunting the perspective of an immortal character in her pages, it gives her mortal readers a new vision and appreciation of life.

Her depiction of historic events includes real historical figures that interact with her fictional characters; figures such as Sandro Botticelli in the novel Blood and Gold and Cosimo de’ Medici in the novel Vittorio the Vampire. But the effect of accuracy is not only the mentioning of these famous figures. It becomes familiar because the vampires through their life narratives guide the reader through a tour of history, retold through what may seem to be the witnessing eyes of experience.

An example of historical events in the *Chronicles* can be seen in her novel The Vampire Armand when Armand and Marius are traversing through the streets of Florence, Italy in the middle of the night on the day that Savonarola was tried and executed by Lorenzo the Magnificent, ruler during that time and member of the very famous Medici family:

An execution had taken place that day, hardly an uncommon occurrence in Florence...It had been a burning. I smelled wood and charred flesh though all the evidence had been cleared before night...Now as we moved into the great Piazza della Signora, I could see that [Marius] was displeased by the thin ash that still hung in the air, and the vile smell... 'It's their great reformer Savonarola' Marius said 'He died on this day, hanged, and then burnt there. Thank God, he was already dead when the flames rose ("Armand" 170-71).

Rice's historical and geographical descriptions include detailed accuracy including specific names of streets and people. These are elements that make the story more veritable and are connected to her extensive research, her love of reading and her years of traveling around the world. Rice is known to let her love of history, traveling, and literature embeds itself in the lines of her novels while infusing it with a deep originality all of its own. It evokes the spirits of the past to arise again through words. They enter through the eyes of the reader into their minds filling them with the resonance of ancient cultures who have long gone been dormant.

Rice's keen eye on detail reaches the point up to where she will capture the smells of the cities, the textures of fabrics, the weather to set the mood of her scenes, the emotions that linger around in the crowds and the flavors of the foods; even colors of everything that creates her fictional world. From landscapes to objects she makes sure to mention what gives them the essence of life. She has been known to research the textures of fabrics used by particular time periods and specific cultures in order to encompass them in her character's narratives to give them even more veracity. These are elements that enthrall her readers with such magnitude that they can be persuaded into believing that the characters she created for her novels are real, and lived during the many centuries captured in them.

### **3.8 Academic Appreciation: Literary Impact in Rice's Works**

At a postgraduate academic level, Rice has been considered by some scholars as worthy of becoming part of the hard to change literary canon. This consideration is based on these scholars' admiration of her thematic content and their capability of looking over the idea that her work is mere popular fiction, and looking in further into the other aspects that it has to offer. Rice has defended her use of fantasy in her storylines against the skepticism of critics that frown upon her choice of literary genre. She states that: "we forget that Hamlet has a ghost and Macbeth has witches" ("Prism" 248), so it is possible for a canonical work to include elements of fantasy and the supernatural without it having been dismissed as unimportant or not serious enough because of its content.

The truth is that, although Rice's works have not been accepted into literary just yet, her novels are becoming academically popular because they "not only reflect a wide range of research in various intellectual disciplines, but they are now being taught in schools" (Riley 192). These are observation made by Riley as he interviewed Rice for his book Conversations with Anne Rice. During the interview, Riley tells Rice: "students frequently tell me that they first read one of your books—usually Interview—in a class" (Riley 192).

Conversations with Anne Rice has a section entitled "Critical Reputation: 'My readers took me out of that world' ". In it Riley approaches the subject of literary reputation as he interviewed Rice by pointing out that there are people who tend to create superficial judgment on her success based on her books' popularity without having even read them. They "dismiss the possibility of serious literary achievement"<sup>31</sup>, as if popularity and seriousness were mutually exclusive" (Riley 192).

Further on, he makes a point of Rice's previously voiced "frustrations that come from reviews that simply dismiss a book about vampires on the assumption that the subject would be of no interest to an intelligent writer or reader"<sup>32</sup> (Riley 192). Rice begs to differ from these accusations. She considers that "good

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<sup>31</sup> Rice describes herself as "never been a sophisticated writer" (Riley 33), and expresses that now in order to write she "no longer [worries] about seeming naïve or foolish" (Riley 33).

<sup>32</sup> Ann Rice is quoted in Riley's book of saying: "most of the writers I knew in Berkley were far too guarded or sophisticated to write anything like Interview with the Vampire. They wouldn't have been caught dead with it" (Riley 33).

writing could be done in the supernatural genre and that there were not necessarily any stigmas attached” (“Prism” 248)<sup>33</sup>.

While discussing the misinterpretations of Rice’s works by critics and their responses, Riley recalled a review he had once read in a “popular weekly magazine”. According to the reviewer “a vampire story needs a human victim to lead the audience into the vortex and help them escape it” (Riley 261). And perhaps, if looked at from a superficial point of view when reading Interview with the Vampire, that may have seem to be the role of David Malloy, the reporter; but Anne Rice’s novel was not written to be read with that particular vision in mind.

Rice reacted to this review by justifying the vampires in her novels. She claimed that in her books “[vampires] are metaphors for us, and obviously that reviewer completely missed that point” (Riley 262). To Rice, “her books... were essentially mainstream asking strong questions of the human condition” (“Prism” 248). To be more precise about the relevance or lack-there-of of David’s role, because the story is told from Louis’s point of view, and because it is a first person narrative, the reader identifies more with him, the vampire, until they forget about David’s presence.

It is only when the storyline is broken to go back to the interviewer that the narrative reminds the reader that he is in the same room as the vampire. This allows the audience to be led through the story by the vampire and not the human; therefore, separating Rice’s narrative style from earlier vampire tales.

This is important because it permits the reader to have a more personal

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<sup>33</sup> “Fans, she considers, were astute and perceptive, allowing writers of fantasy the greatest amount of freedom with their visions that could still be psychologically compelling” (“Prism” 248).

perspective of the situations that are taking place in the storyline. It changes the style of the vampire literature that had been written up to that point just because it allows the audience to perceive the story from a different angle. It opens their eyes and allows them to view into the life of a character that up to this point had been two-dimensional.

Michael Riley justified the switch of perspective and defends Anne Rice's omission of the human victim defending it against the claims of the article he had read and brought to Rice's attention. In his argument Riley declares that "what it misses...is the extent to which in [Rice's] version of the myth viewers and readers perceive these characters, themselves as human. So the audience doesn't experience an absence of a human victim. However paradoxically, the vampires *are* the human victims in Interview" (Riley 261-262). They are human victims because even though they have forsaken their human condition by transforming into vampires, they have a hard time resigning to every human quality that was encoded into their minds before their super human physical transformation.

The narrative language and style she utilizes in her writing is another element worthy of admiration. Still, it is not completely understood or accepted by all critics of her work. Some of her critics have a hard time dealing with her elaborate use of description and criticize her for it "they call it florid and dense and unreadable" (Riley 86). This type of language is a style that Riley identifies as "a kind of overripeness [sic] that's characteristic of [her] style" (Riley 86). Nevertheless, despite some negative views about her work, her accurate and



sometimes controversial use of history, literature, art and religion has become a subject worthy of discussion amongst professionals that compose a range of thematic fields, including scholars and fans alike. Those who admire her use of words and description do so because it surpasses the typical and general overviews of a written storyline.

### **3.9 Literary Inspiration for Rice's Vampire Fiction and Style**

While Rice was writing her *Vampire Chronicles*, “she researched the sparse vampire lore, reading mythologies from other cultures, as well as stories like Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Carmilla”<sup>34</sup>. She tried Bram Stoker’s Dracula but stunned to see vampires portrayed in such animalistic fashion, she did not finish it” (“Prism” 149). Her revolutionary new views were not just based on old vampire novels and folktales. She was also influenced by literary classics, along with films and more contemporary works that have marked change in the way that vampire fiction had been established so far. It cannot be denied that in literature “the archetype of the vampire that Stoker molded has become the standard against which all other fictional vampires are compared” (Gordon Metton xii). Still, Anne Rice’s works are deeply infused by the writings of many famous authors other than Stoker. Writers such as Lord Byron, Oscar Wilde, John Milton and William Shakespeare to name a few have become Rice’s inspiration as she molds her creations. Even more, “Inspired by a poem by William Blake, she felt that light itself becomes God to the vampires, but they are forever barred from it” (“Prism” 151).

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<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to see how the character of Claudia also does research such as Rice did in order to find the truth about vampires according to literature.

Her characters, along with her settings, evoke the nostalgic feel of pre-20<sup>th</sup> century literary works. For example, when referring to Louis, the protagonist of the novel Interview with the Vampire, she clarified that “the vampire was not Louis, really, but an Oscar Wilde sort of character” (“Vampire Companion” 207). When referring to Lestat, Rice described him as a “blond haired, Shakespearean-mannered creature that has no qualms about religion, little sympathy for moral weakness and exerts a strong will for those around him” (“Prism” 152).

When referring to Rice’s writing process in Interview with the Vampire as a novel, Ramsland elaborates on how “the first-person perspective took a Dickensian quality, and Louis revealed his faults yet sustained his sympathy” (“Prism” 143). Rice explains that the importance of this “Dickensian” vision because, according to her, by utilizing it “you can make something wonderful and deep and it can be available to people from eight years or even younger” (Riley 277). This “Dickensian” quality is one of the main reasons why her books appeal to such a wide range of people.

Going back to the character of Louis and the influence of other classics upon Rice’s creation of him, “his attitude about life echoed Hamlet<sup>35</sup>, and his tone had the flavor of Oscar Wilde—an aristocrat humorously observing modern life” (“Prism” 143), therefore emphasizing this influence of the classical literary characters. Lestat was also a reflection of Rice’s Shakespearean influence and it can clearly be seen in Interview with the Vampire when “Lestat quotes from this

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<sup>35</sup> “Louis is the character that has many of Hamlet’s brooding passive qualities...According to Rice ‘Louis is the most tragic character in the book. He says yes to becoming a vampire and suffers terrible regrets’ ” (“Companion” 182).

play when he kills a man who has a range for his hotel room...‘good night sweet prince’, he says echoing what was said to Hamlet as he lay dying”<sup>36</sup> (“Vampire Companion” 182).

Still it is not only these two characters that reflect the Shakespearean influence within the *Vampire Chronicles*. The latter *Vampire Chronicles* are infused with Shakespearean elements as well. The novels Merrick, Blackwood Farm and Blood Canticle<sup>37</sup>, for example, utilize supernatural elements both found in Shakespeare’s Macbeth (with the use of witches), and Hamlet (with the use of ghosts). These examples reinforce that literature that includes paranormal and supernatural characters, as well as fantastic elements can still be considered worthy of the literary canon.

Blackwood Farm in particular strongly echoes the influence of Hamlet. Not since the characters of Lestat and Louis, have the *Vampire Chronicles* depicted a character that oozes that Shakespearean quality. Tarquin Blackwood reflects the character of Hamlet in many ways. Just as the character of Hamlet, he lives in conflict with his mother and feels as though his mother has set him aside in order to pursue other interests. Even more so, Quinn evokes the essence of the character of Hamlet by being hunted by restless ghosts who seem to seek vengeance for their death, thus making him question his own sanity<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> “The quote reinforces that he was at the hands of fate, just as Hamlet was” (“Companion” 182).

<sup>37</sup> These three novels are the last three novels of the *Vampire Chronicles* and are a crossover between Rice’s *Mayfair Witches Trilogy* and the *Chronicles*.

A reference to this situation is made in chapter 19 of Blackwood Farm. Here, during a conversation with Fr. Kevin, Tarquin seeks guidance in relation to his encounters with Rebecca's ghost and its seeming intent to get him to help him resolve a problem. Fr. Kevin used Shakespeare's Hamlet as lesson as to why Quinn should ignore the ghost:

Don't talk to it, don't entertain it... Remember it can't do much to you without you helping it. Just maybe it *can't* do anything without your helping it. Take the ghost of Hamlet's father for instance. Suppose Hamlet had never gone to meet it or spoken to it. Suppose he had never given the ghost an opportunity to put a story of murder into his mind. The result was pure destruction for innocent and guilty ("Blackwood" 257).

Still just like Hamlet, the character of Tarquin Blackwood becomes drawn to the ghost. His actions eventually lead him to his mortal death because by following the ghost to the island hidden in Sugar Devil Swamp, he disturbed the vampire that later on attacked him and transformed him against his will into a *Child of Darkness*. These impulsive actions and their result, demonstrate the naïve and choleric side of Tarquin, who was lead by his emotions into completely ignoring the advice that could have saved his human life (much like Vittorio). They also reflect the theme of the child who attempts to take control and establish order when he feels his parents have lost control of their duties.

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<sup>38</sup> In the play, Hamlet was haunted by the ghost of his father, the king, who appeared to seek for someone to avenge his death. In Blackwood Farm, Quinn is approached, and (seduced) by the ghost of a woman named Rebecca, who also appears to seek vengeance for her death. At the end of the novel it is also learned that Quinn's doppelganger is actually the ghost of his twin brother.

Also, just like Hamlet had a love interest, Tarquin also had a love interest that reflected the Shakespearean play, serving as his emotional counterpart in Blackwood Farm, Mona Mayfair<sup>39</sup> enters the novel's framework. She is the witch with whom Tarquin Blackwood becomes enamored with, and coincidentally, she adopts the name Ophelia<sup>40</sup> as a pet name when she and Tarquin begin their relationship<sup>41</sup>.

The name, fittingly enough, evolves later on into Ophelia Immortal when she becomes a vampire. Just as Ophelia embraces her death by committing suicide, Mona embraces death by accepting immortality and becoming a vampire. Her mortal death evokes the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, for she and Tarquin become star-crossed lovers separated by circumstances, yet they refuse to let death separate them, thus being reunited by it<sup>42</sup>. The scene of Mona's death reflects the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet even more as Quinn rushes to her: "I stood there shocked to the core of my being...My Mona, my frail and withering Mona, my pale and magnificent Mona" ("Blackwood" 529).

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<sup>39</sup> The character of Mona first appears in the novel The Witching Hour which is the first installment of the *Mayfair Witches Trilogy*. "She is a "twentyfold" Mayfair and a very powerful witch" ("Witches Companion" 291) and she is "obsessed with the image of Ophelia of Hamlet" ("Witches Companion" 291).

<sup>40</sup> After her first sexual encounter with Tarquin, Mona tells him that his doppelganger has disappeared and bestows upon herself the name Ophelia by telling Quinn: "I am Ophelia once again" as she lay on the bed between the pillows. She repeats: "I am Ophelia drifting in the "weeping brook", so light, so sure "or like a creature native and endued onto to that element." They won't find me until tonight and maybe not even then" ("Blackwood" 294).

<sup>41</sup> At this point in the novel both Tarquin Blackwood and Mona Mayfair are still mortal.

<sup>42</sup> At the end of the last chapter of Blackwood Farm Mona is gravely ill and lay dying in Quinn's bed.

As is the case in several of Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* Tarquin becomes the desperate, already undead lover who cannot bear to see his dear companion die, thus he offers her a chance for immortality by offering her the *Dark Gift*<sup>43</sup>. Mona's final resting place also becomes a reflection of Hamlet's Ophelia's death. "The bed was covered with her flowers...the roses, the marguerites, the zinnias, the lilies" ("Blackwood" 529-530) and Tarquin described her in the last paragraph of the book as "Ophelia in her nest of flowers" ("Blackwood" 530).

Curiously enough, Bram Stoker also had a strong Shakespearean influence as he wrote Dracula. It can be seen that: "Throughout the novel [Dracula] allusions to Shakespeare's dramas—*Hamlet* in particular—complement the storyline" (McNally & Florescu 146).

Some examples of the ways in which the influence of Shakespeare's Hamlet infiltrates the pages of Stoker's work include segments in the novel, for example:

"Early in the novel, in an entry dated 8 May, Midnight, Harker records in his diary that after a long talk with the count about his ancestry, from Midnight to "close on morning" the count abruptly cuts off the conversation and flees, "as if everything has to break at cock-crow...like the ghost of Hamlet's father" (McNally & Florescu 146-147).

Other parts in Dracula that demonstrate the Shakespearean influence and the play Hamlet are documents such as Lucy Westerna's diary entry, dated 12

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<sup>43</sup> Lestat intervenes and offers to give Mona the *Dark Gift* in order to allow Mona and Quinn to keep their connection, which otherwise would be lost if it were Quinn who turned her into a vampire.

September. In it she wrote “Here I am to-night, hoping for sleep, and lying like Ophelia in the play, here with ‘virgin crants and maiden strewments’ ” (McNally & Florescu 148). It must be taken into account that Stoker had helped produce a staged performance of the play during the period of time surrounding December 30, 1878 <sup>44</sup>.

Stoker’s relationship with his mentor Henry Irving contributed to his familiarization with the theater, in fact “Stoker organized the first American tour of Henry Irving’s theater company, one of the first tours that included entire theatrical productions and equipment” (McNally and Florescu 145). Their relationship as master and mentor can even be daringly compared to the relationship between Louis and Lestat in the *Vampire Chronicles* because:

In all, Stoker as Irving’s private secretary and confidant for twenty-seven years, which are described in his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*. He called their friendship “as profound, as close, as lasting as can be between two men.”<sup>45</sup> But there was more to the relationship than that. Irving held such fascination for Stoker that he achieved an extraordinary dominance over him. Indeed, in life Irving was lord and master to Stoker as in fiction Dracula is to Renfield (McNally & Florescu 140-141).

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<sup>44</sup> The play had a run on stage for one hundred days and starred Stoker’s mentor sir Henry Irving. “Hamlet evidently remained in [Stoker’s] mind when he wrote Dracula.” (McNally & Florescu)

<sup>45</sup> Stoker held such admiration for Henry Irving that he named his only child Irving in honor of his idol, “but the boy apparently resented the connection and preferred to be called Noel” (McNally & Florescu 140).

Even if it was not inspired by the relationship between Stoker and Irving or Dracula and Reinfeld, Lestat and Louis still had a close relationship in which Lestat served as mentor and companion to Louis. Just like Sir Henry Irving familiarized Stoker with theater life, Louis would attend plays with Lestat. This part of their relationship becomes clearly evident when Louis tells David Malloy during his interview about his escapes with Lestat<sup>46</sup>:

He was positively friendly, in one of those moods when he wanted my companionship. Enjoyment could bring that out of him. Wanting to see a good play, the regular opera, the ballet. He always wanted me along. I think I must have seen Macbeth with him fifteen times. We went to every performance, even those by amateurs and Lestat would stride home afterwards, repeating the lines and even shouting out to passers-by with an outstretched finger, 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow!' until they skirted him as if he were drunk ("Interview" 128).

Nonetheless, in Rice's case, the storyline embraces the change that centuries have brought with them, thus allowing the works to evolve thematically into a more contemporary view and interpretation of the characters and the world that surrounds them: "Her vampire's work is much like our own... The good

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<sup>46</sup> During this particular time in the story, the family unit that Lestat had created with Louis and Claudia was less than perfect due to tension that was dividing their family dynamic. Lestat would seek out the theater as his means to escape the arguments and tension in the household. He would take Louis with him in order to keep himself company, just like he did before Claudia became a part of their lives.



vampires are the heroes; men are the villains. The vampires are also bisexual”<sup>47</sup> (McNally & Florescu 168).

Katherine Ramsland, Rice’s biographer expressed that: “Rice is as comfortable with philosophical depth and psychological dynamic as she is with a lighthearted romp through Edwardian England or with creating a sexually explicit fairytale” (“Prism” xii). Up to this point, vampires had been seen as dark fear evoking predators. Now through Rice’s literary influence, the audience is confronted with her characters, her vampires, who exhibit the influence of dandyism. This versatility allows her to take her narratives to a whole new dimension: “Anne enlarged [her vampire’s] existence with a mythological context, stiffened with the starch of contemporary logic, psychology, and enduring philosophical questions” (“Prism” 150).

### **3.10 Chapter Overview**

There are many elements of Rice’s life that saturate the pages of her novels. Her novels in general, as well as her characters, reflect her great love of history, music, art literature, as well as her love for travel and her deep connection with her birthplace, the city of New Orleans. Her storylines reflect the places she has traveled to and her literary style reflects the influence of the many books she has read, in many cases including elements of authors such as William Blake and Charles Dickens, to the point where her novels has been

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<sup>47</sup> “Anne wanted to write about a romantic relationship that would avoid the clichés attached to heterosexual couplings, and she was also enamored of the image of lovers as equals....Having already written about homosexual attractions, the relationship between her vampires came easily and naturally” (“Prism 148).

described as having a Dickensian quality because they appeal to a wide audience with a various range of backgrounds.

Considering that Interview with the Vampire is a novel that embodies so many of Rice's emotions as well as how the other *Vampire Chronicles* reflect so many of Rice's interests, surprisingly enough, they do not narrate a paraphrase of her life. The characters manage to obtain voices that stand on their own. Both—characters and events—become a metaphor of Rice's life, representing through mock autobiography her personal influence (her feelings, events, interests) but allowing her as an author to maintain a twice removed perspective of her own subjectivity when writing.

What allows her stories to stand on-their-own is her great use of detail and history as her vampires narrate their own mock autobiographies, which are in no way identical to any of the events in Rice's life except for maybe the strong influence that the city of New Orleans has in her storylines. Rice creates a great verisimilitude to everyday life, which her audience can see through vampire eyes. She gives life to the storylines using her knowledge of history, using not only real historical events, but famous historical figures also. These help the audiences situate themselves and the characters in a particular place and time that was real thus making them more acceptable and believable.

People are drawn to Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, because through these works they are allowed a rare and previously forbidden glimpse as witness of a vampire's autobiography and get to know not only the character's origin, but the character himself as human, in some cases, and as a vampire in other

instances. The reader can connect, for a change, with those beings which had been otherwise portrayed as a objective, fantastic characters. These character become a portal for the audience to address their own repressed violent desires and gain satisfaction from them one step removed from actions that would normally be reprimanded by society.

Because vampires are not truly human, the vicious, sadistic actions that are being performed by them become acceptable to the audience. This is because they are fitting to their character and to be expected from such creatures. As a result, the audience overcomes the moral repercussions of the vampires' actions and admires the characters because of who they are and the feats they have achieved; as opposed to what they do to remain alive. In the case of Rice's fiction, there is an additional link between the vampire's humanity and the reader's that allows a sense of sympathy, forgiveness and even justice to some of the murderous actions taken by these creatures. After all, as it has been mentioned several times within Rice's fiction, her vampires drink for a living from their victims but they do not feed until the victim is dead. The victim's death (in most cases) comes after the vampire has already released them.

## Chapter IV

### Rules, Secrets, Lies and the Quest for Truth in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*

You talk of finding other vampires! Vampires are killers! They don't want you or your sensibility! They'll see you coming long before you see them, and they'll see your flaw; and, distrusting you they'll seek to kill you. They'd seek to kill you even if you were like me. Because they are lone predators and seek for companionship no more than cats in the jungle. They're jealous of their secret and of their territory; and if you find one or more of them together it will be for safety only, and one will be the slave of the other, the way you are of me.

Anne Rice, Interview with the Vampire

#### 4.1 Chapter Introduction

In order to discuss the vampire metaphor and to apply it to another subject such as minorities while using Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* as basis, it is necessary, first, to understand the construction of the Rice vampire. This is particularly important because her vampires break most of the stereotypical characteristics that have been imposed on the figure of the vampire in works previous to her publications.

Initially, the idea of including the image of the Rice vampire as basis of comparison in the discussion of topics such as race may seem farfetched. Still, when looked at closely, there are many similarities involved in the thematic content of their narrative. Topics that include social codes, segregation, assimilation, immigration, traditions and culture are some of the few that can be

mentioned and that are also strongly connected with the social and personal ideal of the quest to find an identity.

Even if the topic of the vampire's origin is discussed in Rice's novel, The Queen of the Damned, none of her characters really know the full truth about their origins. Those characters that are more familiar with the secrets and are capable of disclosing them have become forced to maintain their silence. The new source, Akasha, is kept locked in a temple with her companion Enkil, where they lived as marble statues sitting on a throne, not feeding and eventually finding their own demise from the hands of other vampires once they rise from their slumber. Those who attempt to reach them to obtain their blood and knowledge are also murdered.

Maharet and her sister Mekareh, the redheaded twins are also linked to the original source. One has been blinded while the other's tongue was ripped out to maintain her silence. Even as survivors they isolate themselves and find ways to prevent the secrets of the blood from being disclosed to those who do not understand its mysteries.

These vampires become a representation of social structures present in everyday life. They become a symbol of taboos and secrets, and fictional representations of the forbidden and those who struggle to break through the boundaries set in order to create new rules of social understanding, thus breaking marginalization caused by ignorance of the unknown. Whether the restricting master in this social relationship translates to actual people, or an individual's internal and psychological monsters, some individuals decide to go

against the rules and become outlaws, rebelling against society in order to find their own identity. This ideal of rebellion has been linked in the past to ethnicity, social and racial issues, especially during times of segregation.

Through difficult struggles, Rice's vampires play with the social and personal parameters that restrict them from finding themselves. They become an easy parallel to those people who decide to do soul searching, or travel to their countries of origin or that of their ancestors in order to deal with the ghosts and conflicts of their past. Decisions to uncover past histories can at times provoke conflict from people close to those who go on this quest, especially those who are closest to the situations of the past; as well as stranger who will encounter these curious individuals and who consider that they are meddling with things that do not concern them.

On the other hand, sometimes the leaders of the subgroups are willing to go through extreme measures to maintain the secrecy of their ways. Organizations like cults, for example, as well as racial supremacy groups have created strict codes that attack those who threaten their orders and its' members. They have also been known to kill in order to keep the secret, or to repel those who meddle; even more, they have killed to protect their members from outsiders who try to intrude into what they consider sacred.

#### **4.2 Vampires: Origin and Adaptation to an Alternate Lifestyle**

In Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, the existence of secrets and lies becomes a major struggle in the character's quest for identity. The same can be said for members of minority groups who struggle with their own secrets and lies

in order to fit in as they simultaneously struggle to maintain their own identity. In *The Chronicles*, the true definition of the essence of what it is to be a vampire is unknown, and lies are told to protect that secret. The same can be said for groups within a culture, who debate to maintain a level of secrecy about their traditions, customs, lifestyles and even rituals. Some of these groups can be categorized, for example, as social, ethnic, and religious.

If necessary, protective and defensive actions are taken by those who surround the members of these subgroups, in most cases because of fear that these individuals will betray the identity of the other members of their community as well as their own, by trying to answer questions that go beyond their capabilities. This struggle to maintain a grasp of the secrecy within the minority is constantly represented in *The Chronicles*, as characters usually face continuous threats from the elder vampires. These elders refuse to disclose information to those who are unable to manage the power that goes hand in hand with the secrets of their kind.

The same occurs to people of mixed race that attempt to identify with a singled out characteristic or racial group out of the two or more that constitute who they are. There is usually a sense of betrayal attached when attempting a level of assimilation to one particular side, therefore isolating the others. For the individual, this moment of transition usually comes accompanied with feelings of shame and betrayal.

As presented in Rice's Blood Canticle, Lestat's moment of enlightenment about his kind does not imply that he will take the opportunity to acknowledge the truth and disclose it to others:

I did not want to be taken to [Maharet's] famous jungle compound. No, not for me that fabled place of stone rooms and screened enclosures [...] And as for the legendary archives with their ancient tablets, scrolls and codices of unimaginable revelations, I could wait forever for those treasures as well. What can't be revealed to the world of men and women can't be revealed to me. I had no taste or patience for it ("Canticle" 296).

Just like a person attempting to find an independent racial identity within a biracial or multi-cultural group, finding an identity and a place of origin does not justify that the character will obtain a sense of self-fulfillment or gratified happiness. In Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, vampires that encounter similar struggles become a metaphor for minorities in the United States even though they do not embrace a particular group out of the many that exist. By being created from an ordinary human into a supernatural being, vampires are forced to deal with rejection from society because they do not exclusively fit into any of the subdivisions of the social whole:

Anne Rice, commenting on her Interview with the Vampire (1976) and its sequels, asserts that the vampire is a 'metaphor for the outsider'. She made Lestat a rock star in The Vampire Lestat (1984), she says, because 'rock singers are symbolic outsiders'



who are 'expected to be completely wild, completely unpredictable, and completely themselves, and they are rewarded for that.'

Contemporary American society, in glorifying and —at least to some extent — rewarding the outsider, differs from the cultural milieu that engendered the literary vampire (Carter 27).

By being forced to resign to their human condition and most of their human characteristics, the vampires portrayed in Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* embark on a difficult journey of self-discovery just like minorities in the United States. According to the essay "The Vampire as Alien in Contemporary Fiction" by Margaret L. Carter: "the logic behind this identification of the vampire with the outsider is supported by Tobin Sieber's theory of superstition as 'a symbolic activity, in which individuals of the same group mark one another as different' " (Carter 27). Carter further discusses Sieber's theory by quoting his argument that: "Superstition always represents identities as differences. The group represents individuals or other groups as different for the purpose of creating a stable center around which to achieve community...Such false differences create a structure of exclusion"(Carter 28).

Outside of Rice's fiction and as part of everyday life, people have been known to cast aside those who they do not understand, forcing them to create a smaller community of socially condemned outcasts. Within Rice's fiction, some of these newly created vampires are lucky enough to be introduced into the vampire world with some ease while others are just dumped into that void by being turned into *Children of the Dark* against their will. In the novel Interview with the

Vampire, Louis complains about his life, and the burden that he must live with as a vampire: “but while Louis may bemoan his condition, he is still a vampire by his own choosing. However ill-informed his choice, his fate is the result and his torments are not entirely undeserved” (Silver and Ursin 218).

The vampires that are forced to the change are usually burdened by their transformation because they were not allowed to opt out of it and in many cases were tricked by their masters into embracing immortality. Some of the characters in Rice’s novels that have gone through this change include Lestat and Armand who are some of the original characters and which appear in most of the books of the series, Tarquin Blackwood who is one of the central characters in the last two volumes of the *Chronicles*, and Vittorio, whose story is part of the *New Tales of the Vampires*.

These particular characters have a higher tendency to become dazed and confused with what is expected from them once they have become fledglings; a term that can be considered a metaphor for the process of transitioning into *the other*. This phase of transition can be adapted to people dealing with transgender issues as well as minorities trying to fit into a racial whole that is different or partially similar to their own.

These individuals become burdened by the new lifestyle and feel trapped inside an immortal prison made of flesh. This situation can easily translate to bi-racial minorities, as it is stated by Rebecca Walker in her autobiography. Throughout her book, she constantly looks back into the memories of her life and

meditates about the existential significance of the struggles she lived through often writing thoughts that reflect her unhappiness with herself such as this:

The only problem, of course, is me. My little copper-colored body that held so much promise and broke so many rules. I no longer make sense. I am a remnant, a throwaway, a painful reminder of happier and more optimistic, but ultimately unsustainable time.

Who am I if not a Movement Child? (Walker 60).

Some of these vampires reach a higher level of desperation and try to find ways to end their lives. They attempt to tempt faith approaching their doom by the hands of more powerful others. Usually this is because they cannot handle the burdens and the guilt of having to kill in order to survive, as Lestat clearly declared in the opening chapter of Blood Canticle: “I am a condemned inhabitant of eternal night and an eternally tormented blood seeker” (“Canticle” 1).

Through their adapting to the hunt and kill and their need to find others of their kind, these vampires endure this journey of self-discovery, although sometimes it may drive them away from their roots and those people closest to them before their transition. They are confronted with the raw and awful truth of what being a vampire is about and the numerous secrets that will prevent them from getting the secret answers they are trying to obtain.

In Rice’s *Chronicles*, the fledglings realize that there is no simple way to access concrete documentation about this new *persona* they have been transformed into. Not knowing how to act properly as part of their new lifestyle also becomes a struggle. It reflects in part the same struggle that many people

endure once they have been diagnosed with an illness, or they have migrated to a country that is unknown to them; even the struggle of coming to terms with an identity that is socially segregated by racial or sexual boundaries set by those who cannot live in harmony with people who are different to them.

In the *Chronicles*, vampires narrate how they must endure through centuries of uncertainty and blind ignorance as they struggle to survive through encounters with people and entities that become threats. Once again, an argument that can easily translate to cultural and racial segregation and the struggles that people have had to endure through the centuries as they struggle for integration.

In Rice's *Chronicles*, vampires were threatened by even those belonging to their own kind that wish them harm, a fact that can also be said of humans and people who are different to what is considered the social norm. For the vampires, learning to survive through long journeys around the world as history takes place around them becomes crucial. Facing years of solitude and heartbreak just to find solace in the idea that someday they will find a place where they belong will always be a burden upon them. These vampires long for a time when they will finally find their reward for an eternity of suffering and strife. They hope and desire to find redemption and freedom from their cursed existence, no matter if that freedom is physical or psychological. In some cases, they only find death.

Immigrants who travel leaving their own kind in order to find a better life and a place they can call their own usually struggle with the same situations. They are known to cross Oceans and great distances to far away lands in hopes

of integrating themselves into other cultures and become part of a society that holds promise to a better future. These choices usually come with the consequence of having to reject or deny the individual's original heritage and cultural and moral regulations.

### **4.3 The Laws of the Lawless: Unwritten Rules and Codes of Conduct in *The Vampire Chronicles***

Because vampires are immortal creatures of the night, a structure in order to keep the low profile of this minority group's place in society becomes implemented by their predecessors. A set of unwritten rules is implemented by the older vampires to maintain a code of conduct<sup>48</sup> as an attempt to create margins for its constituents. The purpose of this code is to preserve the secluded lifestyle that their progeny must lead. Here is where the secrets and lies begin to unravel.

Even in non-fictional scenarios, people are forced to live by a social code of order that restricts their behavior within the environment of their community. Whether the rules are dress codes, etiquette or moral guidelines, it is fairly common for people to have disciplinary guiding principles to their lives, even if these rules are unspoken or constantly recalled. Some are even unwritten laws of conduct, but people respect them because these are implied as part of an everyday routine.

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<sup>48</sup> The *Laws of the Lawless* described in diverse literature for all ages. It normally applies to groups of characters categorized as outcasts. An example of its use in Young Adult Literature is the Greaser's code of honor in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. The code consists of 2 rules: 1. Always stick together and 2. Never get caught. These rules are simultaneously precise and generally and can be applied to any gang of outlaws, including Anne Rice's vampires.

In the *Vampire Chronicles*, only those vampires who belonged to covens or were familiar with covens knew about the five Great Rules of conduct to which they must abide by. This becomes a clear reflection of Rice's religious background. After all, only those who belong to a particular religion are the ones who really know the codes and rules of conduct expected from the members of their church. In *The Chronicles*, these rules "are based on religious ideas and prohibitions" (Ramsland 390). Their source becomes trivial when referring to the author's subtle influence upon the text, because religion always plays an important role in Anne Rice's fiction.

The code of conduct was created with the purpose of establishing which actions are permitted or are not. Further on, vampires create a code of conduct that summarizes what actions might be punishable may it be the case that someone is foolish enough to break the code. Once more this reflects the social codes of conduct found by members of particular minority subcultures within the social whole. If applied to gangs, it is evident that they also create their own system of justice and punishment for those who betray the secrecy of their group. This is also applied to outsiders who meddle into guarded territory

One of the most recognized secular groups in *The Vampire Chronicles* was the Roman Coven, a satanic coven led by a vampire named Santino<sup>49</sup>. His form of punishment to those who did not abide by his rules was very particular: invaders or intruders were "considered outcast and must be burned by fire"<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Santino was a "black-haired Italian vampire...Born to Darkness in the mid-1300s, during the reign of The Black Death" (Ramsland 406).

(Ramsland 390). The Roman coven becomes another example of how Rice utilizes her background knowledge about religion and Catholicism and applies it to her fiction. It “patterns itself inversely on the Roman Catholic Church, worshiping Satan as Christians worship God” (Ramsland 376). The form of punishment by fire also brings out the memory of the Inquisition and the burning of the heathens that were persecuted.

Santino’s code of conduct in the Roman coven was named The Great Laws, and it consisted of five specific commandments. First, “Each coven must have a leader to work the Dark Trick” (Ramsland 391). This imposes a sense of hierarchy and structure. It gives the coven a leader. The leader is necessary to make sure the rules are followed plus to offer guidance to the followers.

Usually, in social subgroups and marginalized minorities there is always an individual that is considered as the leader of their cause or of their people. They usually provide others with guidance and a sense of security which protects them from those who they feel might threaten their community. Usually this leader becomes the voice of those who the majority refuses to acknowledge. Figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcom X and Ghandi have become examples in the past of those who have been rejected by a majority.

Second: “Mortals who are granted the Dark Gift must be beautiful in order to insult God” (Ramsland 391). In some cases, measures are taken to guarantee that this rule is followed. An example of some of the means taken to preserve the heightened ideals of beauty is presented in the novel Blood and Gold, one of the

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<sup>50</sup>Marius suffered this horrible fate, yet survived when Santino’s followers raided the studio that he owned in Venice.

*Vampire Chronicles* that follows the original five written by Anne Rice. Marius, the main character of this *Chronicle*, has invited Thorne<sup>51</sup> into his home and they partake on a conversation. Thorne reveals to Marius that he was a Norsemen. Marius asked him: “Why is there no red beard my friend? [...] I remember the Norsemen with their beards. I remember them when they came to Byzantium” (“Blood and Gold” 25). It is then when Thorne discusses the grooming rituals that are performed in order to preserve a higher quality of beauty once the transformation has taken place. He replies he was asked to shave before he was transformed into a vampire: “My beard was thick and long even when I was very young, let me assure you, but it was shaved the night I became a blood drinker. I was groomed for the magical blood<sup>52</sup>. It was the will of the creature that created me” (“Blood and Gold” 25).

The social standards of beauty have always had their own strong influence. Race and gender alone have their own particular and greatly noticeable guidelines. In a society that has placed so much weight on the importance of beauty, people have become marginalized just because of the way

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<sup>51</sup>The character of Thorne makes an appearance for the first time in the novel *Blood and Gold*, which is the *Chronicle* about Marius's life. Marius extended his hospitality to Thorne by inviting him into his home during a snowstorm. During a conversation Thorne tells Marius he was of Nordic origin, and that he had been created by Maharet, one of the most Ancient vampires in the Bloodline.

<sup>52</sup> The reason for the grooming is that once transformed, even though the character's hair and body will change appearance (The skin becoming smoother and the hair more lustrous) the way that the character looked when he was transformed will be preserved to eternity. For example, if the character had long hair like Gabrielle in *Vampire Lestat* or a beard like Thorne in *Blood and Gold* when they were transformed into a vampire, no matter how many times they cut their hair or shave the beard, it will be restored to its full length by the following night. Wounds are also healed, and tend to heal faster when a character feeds on victims before going to sleep. If the wound is too severe it might take some time before the vampire is fully healed, as it is the case of Marius after he was set ablaze by Santino's followers.



they look. There is a constant struggle to fit in, as some individuals go through grueling processes of dieting to stay eternally thin, and plastic surgery to maintain eternal youth in order to live up to the unspoken standard that has been set for them. There is a great level of dissatisfaction in today's youth with the way their body looks, and even they have had to face the rejection of their peers because of the clothes they wear, their weight or the way they style their hair just because it doesn't live up to the social standard of the moment. They become the outcasts, forming their own groups trying to find an identity and acceptance from other who have suffered the same fate from the judging eye of their peers.

The third rule is: "No old vampire should work the Dark Trick, for otherwise [this] would make the young vampire too strong" (Ramsland 391). It refers to the age of existence instead of the physical age when the vampire was created. Most vampires are turned from human to *Children of Darkness* while they are in their twenties or thirties due to their optimum physical beauty during that age. As a result of their transformation they will remain at the optimum point of physical beauty they had obtained up to that age and from that point on resemble that age forever. This stereotype falls under the second rule of beauty. Only a few vampires have been created beyond that age.

Still, this is also applied as a metaphor for the younger groups attempting to fit in with an older majority. Usually there are rules that dictate when a person should drink, drive and become sexually active. This is because the consequences of acting without the proper maturity to perform these actions will result in reckless, harmful behavior from the person that is acting and it may be

hard for those surrounding that person.

There are exceptions to the rule of age and beauty established by the coven. One such exception would be Magnus<sup>53</sup>, the old, aged and unappealing vampire who created Lestat<sup>54</sup>. He defied the second rule by stealing the Dark Gift from a vampire he captured when he was mortal. He is referred to amongst the other vampires as Prometheus for having stolen the gift of the gods and immortality<sup>55</sup>. Once his purpose was complete, he passed on the Dark Gift to a French, twenty year-old mortal by the name of Lestat de Lioncourt, making him a vampire, and after, destroyed himself by jumping into the fire; a fire that Lestat had helped create for him under his command.<sup>56</sup> Through his actions of self destruction, Magnus becomes an example of one of the vampires that could not endure their existence and searched for a way out of it. Still, he leads the way for those outlaw vampires who want to make a difference and defy the rules in order to make a prosperous change to the rules established.

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<sup>53</sup> "Rice's inspiration for this character came from the short story 'Count Magnus' by M.R. James.

<sup>54</sup> "According to the tale [by M.R. James], Count Magnus is a sixteenth-century Swedish aristocrat. 'Phenomenally ugly', he is both powerful and cruel, and the general populace fears him. Interested in alchemy and the secret of eternal life, he makes a 'black pilgrimage' to the city of Chorazin— where, reputedly the Antichrist was born— and returns home with a mysterious stranger. After the count's death...a gruesome murder on the count's land suggests that Magnus has risen from the dead...Magnus appears to possess the power to hypnotize people and to move objects at will. He also pursues people relentlessly, appearing wherever they are and making it clear that he is slowly closing in on them as if he intends to kill them" ("Companion" 272-273).

<sup>55</sup> "When human, Magnus had been an alchemist who had trapped a vampire and stolen from him his blood and with it the immortal gift" ( Ramsland 273).

<sup>56</sup> "Magnus...lights a fire, dances around it, extracts a promise from the reluctant and terrified Lestat to scatter his ashes, and jumps in to destroy himself. As promised, Lestat tosses Magnus's ashes to the wind" (Ramsland 274).

#### 4.4 Relationships, Maturity, Submission and Psychological Change

The Fourth rule is that “No vampire is allowed to destroy any of its own kind, except for the coven leader, who has obligations to destroy certain types of inappropriate and outlaw vampires” (Ramsland 391). This rule in particular becomes broken in several occasions throughout the *Chronicles*; mostly by vampires who are considered outlaws, such as Lestat and Claudia.

Claudia attempted the worst crime of all according to the Great Rules; killing her creator. This connects to Rice’s Roman Catholic upbringing once again as it reflects the Church’s rule to honor thy father and thy mother. Also, Claudia reflects the previous commandment of youth and knowledge. When she was created she was only five years old in human years, thus she was not allowed to obtain the human maturity and emotional growth to be sympathetic and have an appreciation of life.

Claudia tried to kill Lestat because she refused to live like the servant or slave of the man that should be giving her the knowledge she wants about her identity. She particularly despised Lestat for this reason. Her situation reflects typical characteristics of the vampire relationships with each other. Usually vampires live alone. If he or she were to get a companion, this companion would be submissive as opposed to their maker. It is a sadomasochistic relationship between creator and fledgling as well as a battle for power between master and servant. If a third vampire was made, it was usually to find companionship for the servant, but the connection between the creator and created is of hate and distance even if it originated out of love.

Claudia struggled with Lestat's dominating personality. She considered that the only and most logical way to rebel against him to break free of his power over her and Louis was to eliminate him. Because of Louis's submissive and needy personality, he had the most difficult time breaking away from Lestat's dominant grip. This may translate to cultural ties between parents and children. Usually if a child decides to leave the family unit in a culture where there is a family centralized style of living, the child will have to struggle against their background. It usually causes tension between parents and children because the parent will feel betrayed and abandoned by the child they not only created but educated with the morals and values of their ancestors.

Once more, the idea of rebellion is linked to knowledge<sup>57</sup>. Claudia was only five years of age<sup>58</sup> when Lestat transformed her into a vampire. After sixty-five years of living with Lestat and Louis she felt trapped and confused about her vampire origin, especially because of her inability to age. "Her body! The boy said... She was never to grow up!" ("Interview" 101) is a crucial observation made by the interviewer as Louis discusses Claudia's sudden hunger for an identity.<sup>59</sup> It reflects growth just as teenagers want to break free from their parents to find

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<sup>57</sup> There is a connection with The Old Testament. Eve ate the fruit from the tree which gave her knowledge of good and evil thus defying the rules established by God. In the *Chronicles*, Claudia demands answers from Lestat and defies the rules and attempts to kill him when he cannot provide the information she wants. Eve was punished by being cast out of paradise. Claudia is left to be incinerated by the sun for her murderous actions.

<sup>58</sup> "Rice based Claudia's appearance on her own daughter Michele, who died at the age of five from Leukemia" (Ramsland 70).

<sup>59</sup> Claudia becomes the example of a repressed woman. She is to be young forever and cursed to look like a porcelain doll. Lestat tries to shield her from the world and to keep her ignorant of everything except for what he wants her to know. She exhibits the characteristics of a teenage human including resentfulness against her "parents" for shielding her from the world. She is driven to kill to find her freedom from repression.

themselves or how sometimes members of minorities want to do a pilgrimage to rediscover their origins or the motherland of their faith.

A strong impatience brewed quietly within her: “She was to be the demon child forever” (“Interview” 101-102) Louis explained. The word demon<sup>60</sup> having a duality because when Claudia was created she had barely experienced what it was to be human. She may have had the body of a child: “But her mind. It was a vampire’s mind” (“Interview” 102).

At the same time, Louis struggles with the intellectual change that Claudia has endured. As a father figure, he accepts that he grew accustomed to having her as a companion. There are high levels of intimacy between them, and his relationship with Claudia borderlines as incestuous. He felt connected to this woman in the body of a child and became her mentor as a way to remain connected to her. In this situation Louis takes control as the elder who provides the knowledge she sought and she became his apprentice: “She came to talk more, though she was never other than a reflective person and could listen to [him] patiently by the hour without interruption” (“Interview”102). This reflects the often cultural stereotype of respect for an older figure that is considered wise and educated by life.

As he did this he unconsciously overlooked that Claudia’s personality was changing gradually despite her inability for physically changes. He saw her as a

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<sup>60</sup> Demons are “creatures of the dark that symbolically embody the human tendency to diabolize people of different cultures or beliefs. Their monstrous form mirrors the human fear of inadequacy and the need to dominate and control such fear. A demon is usually the husk of an old god of past seasons. For example patriarchal religions treated as demons people of older religions who believed that their souls originated from their mothers...Vampires are thought to be a form of demon, and the vampires occasionally employ this word to describe themselves. However, the use of *demon* in the *Chronicles* is generally metaphorical” (“Vampire Companion” 94).

parent would overlook with denial their own child's maturity. Louis, through the use of Claudia, explored the vampire mysteries. He wondered how she would be able to change at all: "I strained to know how she moved towards womanhood" ("Interview"102). During his narrative about Claudia he acknowledges: "I knew her to be less human...Not the faintest conception bound her to the sympathies of human existence" ("Interview" 149)<sup>61</sup>. She became tortured by her ignorance about her identity. Louis described her change into a woman as gradual, but he overlooked crucial factors about her. The most noticeable changes were mainly her ruthlessness and determination.

Claudia's process of maturity reflects her psychological growth, and the physical transition that she was unable to go through. It included several signs that flared the change that was taking place within her: "She grew cold to Lestat. She fell to staring at him for hours. When he spoke, often she didn't answer him, and one could hardly tell if it was contempt or that she didn't hear" ("Interview"105). Louis discovered how fierce Claudia could be, even though he did notice when she was converted into a fledgling, that she had the same innate instinct for the kill that Lestat had. Louis lacked this instinct. It became a personal trait that made him a target to Lestat's constant criticism. Lestat thought of Louis as a weak vampire because of Louis' overwhelming longing for human compassion<sup>62</sup>.

This weakness in Louis' character can be adapted to the inability of many

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<sup>62</sup> Louis and Claudia held a tighter bond with each other than with Lestat because they did not share each other's blood through the Dark Gift. The void between master and creator did not apply between them.

individuals to gain the strength of character needed to internalize the ability to confront the social barriers that faced when coming to terms with their identity. This indecision, these inner monsters have a duality of making a person stronger while simultaneously defeating them. Not letting go of his humanity made Louis vulnerable as a vampire, but it made him a stronger individual because it was the only thing he could consider he could still hold on to for comfort.

As for the quest for identity, when Claudia demanded from Lestat to give her answers he was unable to do so<sup>63</sup> and Louis to could only reply: "I don't know the answers to your questions...I wonder the same things you wonder. I do not know. How I was made, I'll tell you that...that Lestat did it to me. But the real "how" of it I don't know!" ("Interview" 111). This infuriated her and fueled her desire for knowledge even more.

Claudia is a character that becomes overwhelmed by ignorance; not only her own, but the ignorance of others. She justified her murderous decision to kill Lestat because he reinforced the barrier she was trying to overcome to understand who she was. She tells Louis: "And why not kill him! ...I have no use for him! I can get nothing from him! And he causes me pain, which I will not abide!" ("Interview" 123).

The peculiarity about Claudia is that her own ignorance made her reject her origins when this is what she looked for. Her personality was more similar to Lestat's than what she was willing to accept. She was equally dominant and

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<sup>63</sup> Lestat displays authority by withholding information from Claudia. His way to keep both Louis and Claudia by his side was to make them feel that he still had secrets they needed to know, but in truth he did not know everything. When Claudia points this out, Louis can see that and for the first time he is genuinely scared.

manipulative of Louis and used his weakness to serve her purpose because of her own limitations. She was her own minority; physically young, weak, female, and vulnerable but with a will stronger than those that surrounded her.

The latter part of the fourth rule is also important. “The coven leader... has obligations to destroy certain types of inappropriate and outlaw vampires” (“Vampire Companion” 391). This fragment becomes the catalyst for the action in most of the *Vampire Chronicles*. The vampires that are particularly considered outlaws become the main characters of their own chronicle, which evolves into a mock autobiography that includes the other vampires they encountered in their lifetime, as well as their impact in it. Characters, such as Claudia and Louis have a strong yearning to find their origins<sup>64</sup>. They struggle with their old morality versus their newly acquired life code.

#### **4.5 The Urgency of Secrecy**

In many cases these vampires appear to be hypocritical. They take actions contradictory to their beliefs about finding the truth and try to silence the others who seek them for answers. Once again this becomes a reflection of society’s hypocritical actions against racism and discrimination. In most cases, those who preach for love and equality are so blinded by their dogma that they become arduous practitioners of that which they preach against.

In *The Chronicles*, the vampires seek to silence those who threaten to disclose the ancient truths and the little information they know. According to Marius’ mock autobiography entitled Blood and Gold, as well as other *Vampire*

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<sup>64</sup> Many Creoles desire to go back to Europe to find their origins. Louis considers himself Creole because he was too young to remember his life in France before he arrived to live in Louisiana.



*Chronicles* such as The Vampire Armand and Pandora, for centuries he bore the weight of the secrets of vampires on his shoulders. He became soul protector of 'Those Who Must Be Kept'<sup>65</sup>, the most ancient vampires and the closest connection to the source of every answer the outlaw vampires search for.

By disclosing the essence of the source, the vampires become the hunted. The others who are trying to silence them become hunters and usually are ignorant and intolerant of their lifestyle. Clouded by ignorance and fear of that which poses a threat, the world feels the need to destroy what is unnatural and different to their own kind; a situation that has been repeated in real history over the centuries time and time again.

In return, vampires must protect their truth from those who do not understand their lifestyle in order to save themselves and their ancient traditions. Vampires become an extreme representative example of what a minority group will have to endure to protect their traditions when faced with having to assimilate to a new culture. It becomes particularly important when facing the threat of being engulfed by the larger group that surrounds them. If this were to happen, the smaller group would be facing the threat to disappear into that whole<sup>66</sup>.

The main problem that each minority group must confront is that, in most of the cases, they do not even know the background of their identity or the

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<sup>65</sup> In the novel *Blood and Gold* Marius explains how the title came to be: "...no religious impulse guided me. I had thought of the "god" of the Druid woods to be a monster. And I understood that in her personal way Akasha was a monster. I was a monster as well. I had no intention of creating devotion for her. She was a secret. And from that moment she came into my hands she and her consort were Those Who Must Be Kept" (*"Blood and Gold"* 53).

<sup>66</sup> An example of this is the Americanization of minorities that live in the United States of America. The newer generations become more assimilated and breakaway from their cultural traditions, forgetting them. As a result they are lost.

veracity of the secrets they are trying to protect. They are safeguarding and defending the dogma of their existence and only their faith and loyalty guides them.

During one of the most heated confrontations between Claudia and Lestat, Claudia confronts Lestat<sup>67</sup> in order, aggravate and belittle him:

You know nothing! ... And suppose the vampire who made you knew nothing, and the vampire that made that vampire knew nothing, and the vampire before knew nothing, and so it goes back and back, nothing proceeding from nothing, until there is nothing! And we must live with the knowledge that there is no knowledge!' <sup>68</sup>  
(“Interview 120)

There is one final rule established: The fifth rule. And it becomes crucial to the saga created by Rice because it is bluntly broken for the first time in the opening novel of the *Vampire Chronicles*, Interview with the Vampire. This rule establishes that “No vampire should reveal to mortals his nature, name, coven, locale, or history and allow them to live” (“Lestat” 301-302). This statement becomes the cardinal rule to break by the outlaw vampires. As the *Chronicles* progress throughout the series, each vampire writes down their own story for the world to read about. Rice, as writer, depicts this revelation of information in

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<sup>67</sup> Books like The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald demonstrate the fall of the hero when knowledge is presented. In Fitzgerald’s novel Gatsby seems to be in control of everything until Daisy walks into the same room as he is. The fact that she would know who he used to be makes Gatsby’s guard fall and for a second his physical reaction reflects how “social godliness” appears to be defeated.

<sup>68</sup> Lestat becomes shaken and scared at the realization that Claudia was right. Louis becomes a witness to this argument, which marked the dissolution of the family unit Lestat had attempted to create with the three of them.

several forms that range from manuscripts, to songs, to books of popular fiction that has been penned under a *nom de plume*.

Nearing the last chapters of the novel Blood Canticle, Mona Mayfair confronts Lestat about his hypocrisy about this secrecy<sup>69</sup>. She accuses him of being defensive of the secrets of the vampire ways and then contradicting himself. Lestat managed to break this rule by writing his life narrative and writing songs when he decided to become a rock star. These songs were particularly defying to the ode of secrecy because they were a call to the masses and disclosed some the secrets that other vampires had struggled for centuries to keep under wraps.

Lestat, being the clever character that he is, manages to rest his defense on the use of fiction and freedom it gives him as a writer justifying the reinforcement his actions. He considers that pen names and framing devices allow the audience to believe what they desire to believe. These literary devices blur the borders that define what is real and what is not because it is left to the audience to accept what they consider is deemed as believable.

#### **4.6 Mentoring and Life Lessons: Guidelines for Vampires in a Struggling Subculture**

As for the Great Rules, Santino is not the only vampire that takes the initiative to create a coven or a set of rules. Just like Santino, the vampire Armand created his own coven in Paris. At first, Armand lived under the

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<sup>69</sup> The novel The Vampire Lestat (mainly) along with the novels Interview with the Vampire and Queen of the Damned discuss how Lestat used to be a rock star. In his songs he wrote and sang to the world calling others of his kind and disclosing some of the Ancient secrets that the other vampires were trying to protect.

mentoring and companionship of Marius, but after a series of unfortunate events, Marius and Armand ended up living separate lives; mostly because Armand believed Marius had been murdered in front of him<sup>70</sup>. It was centuries before Armand saw Marius again. Armand became independent of his master and eventually became a leader himself. He created his own coven. His rules were known as the Rules of Darkness and he traveled throughout Europe teaching them to other covens. This basically consisted as the same commandments established by Santino in the Rome coven, but he added a few more elements.

Once again there is a connection to Rice's religious background, but these rules are also a parallel of societies constraints in order to maintain a civilized behavior from those who are part of it, as well as those who have become integrated into it.

Those who abide by Armand's Rules of Darkness "are to live among the dead in cemeteries, return to their own graves, shun places of light, honor the power of God, and never enter a church" ("Vampire Lestat" 225). Even here, an unspoken respect for God and the church can be perceived from creatures that call themselves Satanists. Lestat manages to break all of Armand's rules, and by doing so, he shakes the base of the whole establishment Armand had worked so hard to create. He disclosed the secrets Armand tried to contain by defying him.

After their transformation, suddenly Rice's vampires have to face that they must live a life in which almost everything they knew as mortals becomes

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<sup>70</sup>After being abducted from Marius's studio in Venice by Santino's followers, Armand joins Santino's Coven and later on becomes leader of an extension of it. He did not strongly believe in what he preached (he was like a priest to his followers), but he followed the lifestyle and adapted to it as means to survive from the same fate as his master Marius (death by fire).

questionable logic. They must now endure a lifetime in which their morals and religious background become obscured by means of survival in their new real world. Now, for them the matter of life and death becomes a paradox of life through death in a spiritual and physical way. The worst comes when their maker tells them they must learn through life experiences what it is to be who or what they are, such as the way Magnus told Lestat right after he transformed him and right before destroying himself, 'There are things you must know. You're immortal now. Your nature shall lead you soon to your first victim' <sup>71</sup> ("Lestat" 290).

Vampires must let their predatory instinct set in and start their new lives from there. They must adapt to what is morally wrong in order to survive. The rules of nature take over and it becomes tolerated to feed from a human victim as long as it is not frivolous killing. The murderous actions also become acceptable (as well as in a non-fiction scenario as long as the reason for killing benefits others from one who poses a real and acceptable negative threat against others.

The audience of the *Chronicles* can see how general a phrase like this can be. Magnus will point out details that Lestat must know, but he will not go into depth or detail about information of great importance, except for Lestat's new reality in which he is now immortal. As a result, just as any other predator, instinct will guide him to what is needed to stay alive.

It can be compared to the way humans kill animals to feed or the case of some struggling minorities who have faced hard times. Sometimes they have found themselves acting on instinct and stealing food, or even killing in order to

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<sup>71</sup> Louis tries to mentor Claudia. During his interview he realizes that he should have done a better job.

feed themselves or their children, even if it goes against their morals.

In Interview with the Vampire, Louis reaffirms his statement that sometimes he wished he would have been better prepared to face this new alternate lifestyle he was about to begin. By narrating the experience of his first hunt, he expresses disappointment of Lestat for not telling him everything he needed to know about vampires and hunting humans for food: "There were many things, as I mentioned which Lestat might have said and done. He might have made this experience rich in so many ways. But he did not" ("Interview" 29). Louis is not gratifying death, but he is disappointed that he could not embrace his identity as a vampire because his lack of instruction.

Louis learned how to be a vampire as time went by, but his bad experience as a fledgling was blamed on Lestat's attitude: "He was concerned only with our victims, finishing my initiation and getting on with it" ("Interview" 28). This attitude scarred him into limiting himself to living up to his full potential as a vampire.

Lestat's refusal to inform Louis of his background was very troubling for Louis. This is evident when he confessed to the interviewer: "He had never told me how he had become a vampire or where I might find a single other member of our kind. This troubled me greatly then, as much as it had for four years" ("Interview" 63). Louis was a very submissive character; always dependant of a companion although he had the power or means to be in control. He felt emotionally dependant of Lestat. Later on he was submissive to Claudia's desires and motivations. He went as far as imposing restrictions on himself such

as “not allowing himself to fly or to read the minds of his victims” (“Body Thief”<sup>104</sup>). A situation that can be reflected in minorities once more since usually people of scarce resources and of foreign backgrounds are told they cannot achieve success because of their background, so they limit themselves because of the barrier that pulls them down based on these ideas. They are expected to fail or to remain in the social strata they live in because of who they are and where they came from.

Lestat’s selfish attitudes did prove to have beneficial side effects towards Louis’s growth as a vampire. The distance and tension between them grew to a boiling point. It fueled Louis’s desire to flee from Lestat’s influence and find his own identity as a vampire. He finally gathers up enough courage and takes on the mission of venturing out into the world to find answers about his new lifestyle.

Claudia plays an important role in Louis’s interest to travel to find his identity. His emotional co-dependency along with his interest in her reignites his drive and passion to leave New Orleans and travel to France and the rest of Europe with her. Feeling like a victim herself, she gives him the reasons and motivation he needed to break away from the bond he had with Lestat.

One of the major turning points for Louis’ struggle to leave came after a great argument following Louis’ failed attempt to save the young man from Lestat’s doom. He realized that he could take Lestat’s overpowering control no longer. He confessed to the reporter : “I was confident we must part ways at once

that I must, if necessary, put an ocean between us”<sup>72</sup> (“Interview” 63).

The arguments he was frequently having with Lestat created within Louis the confidence he lacked before. He confesses: “I realized that I’d tolerated him this long because of self-doubt” (“Interview” 63). He even acknowledges to David Malloy<sup>73</sup> the excuses he utilized to justify his dependency of Lestat when he claims: “I’d fooled myself into believing I stayed for the old man, and for my sister and her husband” (“Interview” 63) thus reflecting the tie that usually family can have in an individual who is seeking personal growth. The old man he refers to is Lestat’s father, who was blind and frail and lived with them at the house at Pointe du Lac. Still, he found another existential plateau of comfort that distracted him from his longing for an identity when he lived with Claudia and Lestat as part of the family unit Lestat had created for him.

Through Louis’ account in Interview with the Vampire, the audience can understand the value that these morsels of advice acquired by their life experience and the role they play in the fledgling’s acceptance of this alternate lifestyle which he/she must adjust to. The information their maker gives them (in Louis’ case the maker being Lestat), instructs them to the understanding that even the capabilities of immortality become relative<sup>74</sup>. Lestat mentors Louis while he is still adjusting to his transformation by warning him: “You will die, you know.

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<sup>72</sup> In many Caribbean Literature Novels, the protagonist crosses the ocean back to Europe or the Motherland of their ancestry. Examples of novels that include this crossover are Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea and Jamaica Kincaid’s Annie John.

<sup>73</sup> David Malloy is the name of the reporter in Interview with the Vampire.

<sup>74</sup> Young vampires become more susceptible to death by sunlight or fire because they are easily distracted by their new powers and supernatural perspective of the world. They also have not developed fully their vampire senses; therefore they fall as easy prey to any predator or threat that might surround them.



The sun will destroy the blood I've given you, in every tissue, in every vein" ("Interview"25).

Through Magnus' words, the secret of their immortality is disclosed. They are not immortal unless they follow the rules of survival. "But you shouldn't be feeling this fear at all" ("Interview"25). These words are spoken to say that they are death incarnate:

Although vampires survive their own physical death as mortals, they never escape death itself, nor the threat of annihilation...vampires are the living dead. Through immortalized blood they experience their own death without losing consciousness. Once the body dies, the vampire experiences a sense of invincibility and can survive many things that would have killed him as mortal...[but] despite possessing personal fears about death the vampires do not hesitate to bring death to mortals; not only is it necessary to their survival, but they find it irresistible ("Vampire Companion" 90-91).

Because of their own existence they should not fear what they are<sup>75</sup>. Lestat illustrates his point by making a comparison: "I think you are like a man who loses an arm or a leg and keeps insisting that he feels pain where the arm or the leg used to be" ("Interview" 25). Louis tells the reporter about his first experience sleeping inside a coffin: "I had a dread of being enclosed... It was a

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<sup>75</sup> Louis tries to explain to Claudia the meaning of death in the novel *Interview with the Vampire*. He shows her the decaying corpse of a woman and tells her: "This is death...which we cannot suffer. Our bodies will stay always as they are, fresh and alive; but we must never hesitate to bring death, because it is how we live" ("Interview" 98).

normal enough fear. And now I realized as I protested to Lestat, I did not actually feel this anymore. I was actually remembering it” (“Interview”24-25). He acknowledges the importance of this conversation because he was told about the possibility of mortality and the newfound truth about his humanity and he begins to accept himself: “That was positively the most intelligent and useful thing Lestat ever said in my presence, and it brought me around at once” (“Interview”25).

Just like human life, there is no instruction manual to what it is to be a vampire. Just like a parent would teach their child about crucial things in life, these new creatures are told by their masters or makers simple rules such as, “Stop your feasting... before the victim’s heart ceases to beat. In years to come you will be strong enough to feel that great moment, but for the present pass the cup to time just before its empty. Or you may pay heavily for your pride”<sup>76</sup> (“Lestat” 93). Moreover, vampires must not question or try to meddle with the past as an attempt to search for answers about their kind. By doing so they are bound to meet their doom in the process.

This is portrayed in a nearly humorous manner in the novel Blackwood Farm. Tarquin “Quinn” Blackwood, the main character writes a letter to Lestat in hopes to contact him. In the postscript Tarquin writes to his defense and as a justification for mercy due to his defiance of the ancient rules “Remember I am only twenty-two and a bit clumsy. But I can’t resist this small request. If you do

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<sup>76</sup>The concept of pride and damnation can also be seen in the character of Satan in John Milton’s “Paradise Lost”. Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles are similar to Milton’s “Paradise Lost” because they include a series of characters that have been damned and are struggling for salvation and redemption. Milton’s Satan is similar to the vampires because he, just like them, is an intellectual character who tries to persuade the reader into his story and tries to get the reader to have sympathy for him despite of his anti-moral actions.

mean to track me down and eradicate me, could you give me an hour's notice to say some sort of farewell to the one mortal relative I love most in all the world?" ("Blackwood" 9).

On a more serious note before the postscript ends, he points out that if he is to die, not to let his death be in vain. The letter's purpose was to ask for help in order to kill a doppelganger by the name of Goblin. Quinn wants to emphasize on the seriousness of his request while at the same time reinforcing his acknowledgment of the threat his act might impose on his life by writing: "let me plead with you. Let me live, and help me destroy Goblin or put an end to us both" ("Blackwood"10). This supports the importance of his plea for help and his insolence as to writing the letter in the first place.

#### **4.7 The Vampire's Kiss: Link to Knowledge and the Vampire Legacy**

Unlike humans, as part of "the act of transforming a mortal into an immortal by draining the mortal of blood and feeding them the blood of a vampire" (Ramsland 89), the vampires receive some of the knowledge that the maker acquired as a vampire prior to transforming his victim. The ingestion of blood becomes osmosis of knowledge between master and fledgling. The victim will not only possess these memories, but may also discover new gifts that come with it. These include the ability to read minds, telekinesis or to set things ablaze by thought in the most powerful of cases. These are gifts that are kept secret by those who have them, unless it becomes completely necessary to use them<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup>Claudia seemed to have acquired some of these gifts from Lestat, such as *The Mind Gift*, but she was not familiar about them because Lestat did not tell her about them. She did not live long enough in order to develop them or find out what she was capable of.

The moment when the bite occurs is when this connection between hunter and hunted happens. Here, the victim falls into a trance-like state which is considered in many cases as sexual ecstasy because:

The vampire's teeth sink into erotic zones of the mortal's body, the mortal's subsequent pain mingles with pleasure, making the experience highly sexual and seductive. Although the vampire is stealing the victim's vitality via the kiss, the victim is often aroused enough to want to surrender...In traditional genre fiction, the kiss is most often heterosexual...however, the first vampire kiss described in the *Chronicles* is from Lestat to Louis, and continues to be free of such gender-role biases ("Vampire Companion" 499).

Lestat describes this moment prior to his transformation as it follows: "I was altogether lost. I was incorporeal and the pleasure was incorporeal. I was nothing but pleasure. And I slipped into a web of radiant dreams" ("Lestat" 88). The vampire can then choose to kill or spare the life of his victim henceforth turning him into a fledgling, which is a relative term to what is considered a young vampire relative to the age of the older vampire to which the youngest is being compared to.

There is one consequence to the vampire's bite that affects the bond between vampire and fledgling. Once the Dark Trick has taken place, and the mortal is turned into an immortal, "The Dark Trick results into a veil of silence between the vampires and their children, destroying the intimacy that the vampire's were trying to capture by making a companion" (Ramsland 88). This

secret becomes the curse of immortality, sentencing vampires to lead a relatively lonely existence despite the presence of others of their kind.

Some vampires had affective bonds with their victims prior to their transformation. It is their need for companionship and attachment to their victims that drives them to turn them into *Children of the Dark*. After the transformation is complete, the bond is broken. Louis points this out when he tells the reporter “Before I died Lestat was absolutely the most overwhelming experience I’d ever had” (“Interview”25) to what the reporter asks “you mean when the gap was closed between you... he lost his spell?” (“Interview” 26) Louis simply responds “Yes, that’s correct...Lestat’s constant chatter was positively the most boring and disheartening thing I’ve ever experienced”<sup>78</sup> (“Interview”26). This proves to be an argument that reflects the contrast of opposites before and after he became a vampire.

Still, “vampires can read minds to a fairly accurate degree, except those of their own children or minds that are skillfully cloaked against them” (Ramsland 497). This turns into a duality of advantages and disadvantages for the vampire’s role as predator. The lack of a psychic bond with those it created (their children) becomes a vulnerable point if they become their prey. Some vampires are better at hiding their thoughts from others than other vampires. In some cases older age is a factor for developing and mastering the defense against the Mind Gift. Vampires are not the only ones that can read minds.

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<sup>78</sup>Claudia, who was also created by Lestat, confesses to Louis that she has grown bored and annoyed by Lestat. “He made me then...to be your companion...He gives me nothing...I used to think him charming...But I no longer find him charming” (“Interview” 118).

These are some of the secrets that are not really discussed in depth in Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. The audience becomes aware of the vampire powers that some of the characters develop after their transformations. Some powers will be similar to those of their makers, some will not. In some cases the source of these will be disclosed but not the details of how they came to be, or why some of the characters display them and others don't. If compared to science, it would be the equivalent of genetics and the randomness of dominant and recessive genes.

As the narrative unfolds in each of the novels, some of these storylines will overlap between books as the characters encounter each other throughout their lifetimes. The audience will discover that not every vampire has the particular gifts that others might have, and that only the most powerful ones, or the ones who have succeeded in their attempts to drink from the source<sup>79</sup> are the most likely to manifest particularly strong supernatural forces.

In the novel The Vampire Armand, the reader gets to see how a mortal Armand gets rescued by Marius, converted into one of the Children of the Dark because of an ill fated event<sup>80</sup> and educated by his master before and after the transformation. Those who follow the series come to understand that this becomes a privilege for him because Marius, who is considered one of the

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<sup>79</sup> Lestat was allowed by Akasha to approach her and drink her blood even if Marius did not want this to happen. He developed the ability to fly, was able to read minds and set things on fire by thinking of it.

<sup>80</sup> Armand was poisoned during a sword fight. Marius could not tolerate seeing him die, so against his own will he gave Armand the Dark Gift to save him.

ancients, was the key holder to the many secrets that other vampires had died while trying to obtain. In many cases, he witnessed as Akasha and Enkil murdered these daring few<sup>81</sup>.

Akasha and Enkil are crucial characters of the background history of the *Chronicles* and are known as *Those Who Must Be Kept*. They are the Adam and Eve of the *Vampire Chronicles*. Marius was the sole protector of the sources of the Dark Gift. When he created Armand he made sure to give him a proper upbringing. He did educate him using some of the secrets he had sworn to keep safe, but he never went so much into detail as to give away the nature of the *Dark Gift* or those directly connected to its origins.

#### **4.8 Importance of the Storytelling Outlaw Vampire in the Development of *The Vampire Chronicles***

Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* consist of vampires that are considered outlaws. Despite warnings and threats they refuse to keep their secrets and not stick to the rules imposed on them in the hopes that the knowledge they disclose will help others of their kind to become aware of their identity. Whether it is to find some sort of salvation, to find meaning to their lives, or request the help of someone more experienced when they are in trouble or simply to be rebellious, they try to contact each other and write about themselves and others they have met. Writing a life narrative, letters or an autobiography becomes their way of defying an unscripted law that forbids documentation of and about any type of vampire and their origins.

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<sup>81</sup> Many other vampires had invaded the secret temple Marius had built to attempt to approach Akasha and Enkil. They would either die incinerated or crushed when Akasha used her psychic powers to reject them.

These laws are evidently known by the characters. Still, they insist on defying them. Lestat in particular voices his opinion on the subject. He says: "I had already broken the dark commandments, telling the name of an immortal...I had never been good at obeying rules" ("Vampire Lestat"320). He emphasizes the code he was to abide for, yet he went against it as a part of his quest for answers about his own existence. He always seems to find a reasonable excuse to reinforce his actions. In the last novel of *The Vampire Chronicles*, Blood Canticle, Mona and Lestat argue as Lestat intervenes against Mona's idea of creating a web page about the vampires. She protests, reminding him that he had published the *Vampire Chronicles*. He replies justifying his actions by telling her that publishing is:

An age-old form of public confession...sacrosanct...A book goes forth quietly into the world, labeled fiction, to be perused, pondered, passed from one to another, perhaps put aside for the future, perish if unwanted, to endure if valued, to work its way into trunks and vaults and junk heaps, who knows? I don't defend myself to anybody anyway ("Blood Canticle" 272-273).

It is through those mock autobiographies that the readers get to understand the development of each character as they live through the ages. Their records become written profiles of their lifetime and struggles as well as records of their physical and spiritual maturity. Each one is framed with real historical events that add a sense of accuracy to their tales. The life narratives jumble the mind of the readers by making them momentarily forget that they are



reading a work of fiction, and even more, play with their rationality by fooling them with framing devices into believing that these events might have actually happened. What's even more interesting is that through these pages, the audience becomes aware of the complex connection that intertwines some vampires with the others.

The whole framework becomes a narrow to wide angle from the very beginning, intricately connecting them from the ancients, to the very wide family tree in which they all become part of. Through them the audience becomes a spectator of the character's evolution and growth as part of the *Children of the Night*. Just like humans connect their origins to the biblical reference of Adam and Eve, the vampires in Rice's novels connect to the mother and father or the source, Enkil and Akasha.

Then there is the particular motivation of these characters to tell their tale. Lestat, for example, is the rebel of the group because of his defiant and careless attitude. Still, even his rebelliousness is laced with a serious and conservative undertone about maintaining the secret of the old ways. It is interesting how at first he was outraged to find out that the very vampire he had created and who for about a century had become his companion betrayed the trust he had bequeathed on him about the secret of the *Dark Gift*. His curiosity about this leak of information arose when he was told by a group of rock musicians about a novel entitled Interview with the Vampire. He came upon it while he was in his quest to create a rock band. The storyline was "Something to do with a mortal boy getting one of the undead to tell his tale" ("Lestat" 13) he described his initial

reaction by saying “I got a preternatural chill of sorts at the sight of the cover” (“Lestat” 13).

Some characters are very forward about disclosing that there is an “understanding” that the story of the vampires must be kept unscripted, yet in order to find a meaning to their own life and teach a moral to the new generations of vampires, they break the ancient rules and write about their own life journeys. Eventually each story is knitted together into one now disclosed secretive truth. In it each tale or chronicle overlaps with the others, therefore filling the gaps that each character might have left when telling their particular point of view. It becomes a quilt by telling a story through patches of partial stories of generations after generations making a whole out of different fragments.

Despite the personal reason each character has, one common denominator seems to permeate and stand out from each one of these autobiographies. Writing becomes a medium of redemption and justification, if not a cry for forgiveness for the actions that each one has committed. No matter what background each character had during their mortal lives they are all joined in blood in more ways than one.

Even in the novel Interview with the Vampire, the book that Lestat describes as the first act of defiance against the rules of secrecy between vampires, the audience can see the mysticism of the actual act of transformation. In Rice’s books, her characters might describe some of the reasons why they became part of the undead, whether it is by choice, destiny or the simple unfolding of a chain of events that lead to that moment. Yet the actual reason of

why and how they become vampires remains the biggest secret of all. A genealogic tree can be created, tracing back to Ancient Egypt and to when Akasha was created. Even more, the line can be traced to the creature that created her, but where it got its powers and how the fusing of the blood itself occurred in order to create an immortal being remains a mystery. During the interview the reporter asked Louis: “How did you change exactly?” (“Interview”15) His response was: “I can’t tell you exactly, I can tell you about it, enclose it with words that will make the value of it to me evident to you” (“Interview”15).

Louis’s answer becomes the reflection of how people feel when asked to explain something mystical. They cannot express in words the process, or the secrets, just the actual sensations or humanization of this un-describable thing; and even then, they might find themselves in an unsatisfactory loss of words. As Louis would simply put it “I can’t tell you exactly, anymore that I could tell you exactly what is the experience of sex if you have never had it” (“Interview”15).

Understanding becomes a matter of experience. Only those who have lived through it can really experience the truth about the subject. Those who have not will just have to settle with explanations of the whole, but will never be able to embody the experience or fully visualize it until they go through it themselves. Even then, because of the individuality of each being, no two experiences will ever be completely alike; therefore the real truth will never be able to be fully described and put into words.

As the interview progresses and Louis gives the details of his transformation to the reporter, the audience becomes aware of the challenges of

description as Louis voices his frustrations about not being able to describe the process accurately because of restrictions that are difficult to pinpoint. He tells the reporter: “How pathetic it is to describe those things which can’t truly be described” (“Interview” 20).

Nonetheless, an aspect that becomes interesting about the narrative of the novel Interview with the Vampire, in which the reporters asks that question about transformation, is the sudden change of subject by Louis: “The young man seemed stuck with still another question, but before he could speak, the vampire went on” (“Interview” 16). Louis’ actions reflect to the audience that one must not ask impertinent questions<sup>82</sup> about the act of transformation itself. One should just settle with the information facilitated by its provider.

The whole argument about accepting the information given becomes a reflection of religion. One must not question the Dogma. Instead, people should just lead their beliefs by faith, recognize these words, live by them and the feelings attached. The believers should follow what the doctrines will teach, but never question the mysticism of it. In most cases these doctrines can never be fully explained without them losing their greatness. The meaning becomes lost in translation.

This subject is not brought to light solely by vampire fiction. The secrecy enclosed by mysticism has been recently brought up by other authors in their

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<sup>82</sup> The saying “Ignorance is bliss” becomes particularly important in Interview with the Vampire because as long as Louis and Claudia did not ask questions about their origins, the family unit that Lestat had created managed to be stable. Lestat becomes visibly upset when Claudia became curious about what it was to be a vampire and treats the need for this knowledge as an illness when he accuses Louis of putting ideas into her head by telling him “you infected her with this” (“Interview” 121).

works, such as Dan Brown in his book Angels and Demons. In this novel, the secret of the existence of God becomes questionable through science because of a scientific discovery, which serves as a revelation about Creation. In his book, he presents his audience with the question (which can also be reflected in Anne Rice's fiction) of who is the real villain. It becomes questionable of whether it is he who claims to hold the secrets of Creation and existence, such as the church, or cultural tradition, or the vampires in Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. These are the same people who can be accused of withholding secrets from the masses and telling them to rely on faith. Or are the real villains those who are driven by curiosity and the search of a more complete existence like the character of Lestat, and Magnus? Those people who dare to defy the rules in order to find a more solid answer than that which doctrines can provide, while at the same time preventing the masses from experiencing the secrets implied.

This matter simplifies to a situation of control. He who controls the information will control the masses. The truth about secrets and lies is that they lead us into a paradox of fear and desire. In which people desire knowledge, but are afraid to dig into the true depth of the reality of the phrase "Knowledge is Power", in fear of the repercussions that are attached to this. Enlightenment can be a powerful thing, but not everyone is ready to face the truth and handle the powerful consequences that may come along with it. Sometimes it is just better to lie about the whole thing for the sake of humankind, fiction or not.

## 4.9. Chapter Overview

Each subgroup within a larger society will have rules and codes that they must abide by. Some of these codes of conduct are unspoken and even unwritten, but that does not mean that they are unknown to the people of that society. There will always be outcasts in larger groups. Usually intolerance and ignorance of these outcasts will reflect negatively and create social myths against them casting them aside from a culture, religion, opportunity or group that they can belong to.

There are cases when an individual will rebel against mass ignorance and become a controversial subject amongst those of his kind, as well as those he is attempting to connect and communicate with. In many cases it is these outlaws who allow for the social rules to change opening doors of progress and knowledge to the same people that once may have been blinded by ignorance.

Usually social minorities have a stronger need to survive and succeed in life just to establish to others that there is an underdog out there capable of proving wrong those who thought of them as inferior; the will to survive transcends over determining who is the stronger force in a battle of minds. There is also the feel to preserve the traditions and rituals that created a culture, or even subculture. The process of assimilation and integration can sometimes threaten the essence of an individual making them forget the importance of their ethnic and social background. Rejection and ignorance can be threatening

elements against one person who seeks to belong into a larger whole while struggling to keep a hold of where they came from.

This chapter used examples from Rice's *Chronicles* to explore the different journeys that an individual must go through, as well as the situations they have to face in order to regain their individual, strong sense of personal identity. The quest for identity is not only a physical journey, it is also a mental process towards finding a place for both physical and mental comfort within another group that was previously threatening, while at the same time finding personal enlightenment.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion:

### The Vampire as a Metaphor

I make a hundred choices everyday, decisions about where to put my money, who to talk to, what food to eat. And yet the fundamental experiences which have shaped my life, the cities I've lived in, the family I've been born into, the people I've been attracted to, the color of my skin, the books I am drawn to read, the ideas which compel me, none of these I choose. I find my map without a traditional trajectory, too fragmented for a linear narrative. There is always a direction. There is never a dead end, never a path that does not make me more a human being than I was before. I am always moving. I am always in life, walking.

Rebecca Walker, Black, White and Jewish

### 5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will bring to light the results of the objectives discussed in the introduction of the thesis. This section will determine the use of the vampire as a metaphor and how it is used to represent minorities; as well as discuss how the *Vampire Chronicles* serve as a medium to convey this image of the vampire metaphor through the mock autobiographical narrative of the vampires portrayed in them. There will be a focus on the representation of the vampire as the metaphor for a dystopian minority dealing with issues such as mortality, illness, conflicts of faith and struggles with identity not only because of sexuality, but because of race. Hopefully this discussion will open the door for future possibilities of thematic investigations never discussed in link with The *Vampire*



*Chronicles* as well as for an expansion of the ideas already associated with Rice's work.

After all, a person's life is full of choices and as they live their life, these choices will eventually mold a story about who they are. Still, there are things in life that are beyond that person's control because they were either born into them or were really in the hands of someone else. Examples of these would be race, the social background they were born into or the way their life changes after being diagnosed with a fatal illness.

An individual, such as how the biracial, multi-ethnic writer Rebecca Walker, daughter of African-American writer Alice Walker, portrays herself in her autobiography, demonstrates through a series of memories how she will adapt to the changing elements of society as well as her struggle to find a way to mold these elements to her convenience in order to find and create identity that would allow her to better fit in as she grew up. In many cases a more acceptable lifestyle will result from this, but not without having to go through great personal, emotional and social struggles to obtain it first. They will learn from those moments that challenge them, and sometimes use them as fuel to make the best of their existential situation.

Autobiographical works such as Walker's tap into their author's mind exposing private feelings and personal struggles which can be deemed universal and malleable to other groups of social outcasts. The exposure of these through written works allow audiences to identify with them and give the opportunity to writers such as Rice to mold them into creating a fictional character who narrates

a life of hardship as well as of enlightenment through a mock autobiographical work.

Walker chose to write the story of her life by using herself as the subject of her book. Others will read that story and identify with it; even apply it to their own lives, but there are also writers like Anne Rice that write fictional stories about a character's life story and people will identify with these characters also.

Writing mock autobiographies becomes the perfect tool to create a metaphor out of a character. Fictional characters have the power to not only become a person being spoken about, but through the power of literary license, they may also turn into the embodiment of an emotion such as loss or mourning would be to a grieving parent; a struggle such as finding an identity within a group of people that reject because of race or a life choice taken by the individual, or a social issue that otherwise would not be addressed such as violence, or an epidemic that condemns its victims to die.

## **5.2 The Vampire Metaphor**

Metaphorically speaking, the figure of the vampire has been given interpretations that range from the tangible and physical, to spiritual, or interpretations that reflect social and global issues. Through the centuries, the image of the vampire has morphed through cultures and adjusted itself to social evolution, time and the new influence the societies have brought in. Vampires have gone through a cycle that has taken them from satanic evildoers to trendy and do-gooder super heroes. One fact remains the same though, although these vampires have assimilated through time to the surrounding cultural influence of

the literary context they were written into, they will always be considered outcasts in the human social groups of every century they will live through. Because vampires are supernatural creatures represented in literary works and ethnic folklore, they lack the human conditions that will allow them to completely fit in with the people that surround them, thus forbidding them to lead the life that a normal human being would in a social environment.

Newer styles of literary works, which include those that have integrated in them the old vampire lore, present a retrospective narrative of the vampire's life. These works go beyond the original representation of the literary and folkloric vampire as an unexplainable creature of the night. Now their stories narrate the transition from human to immortal and the repercussions that this change will bestow upon this person, now creature, for the remainder of its lifetime.

In Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, the narratives reflect how the creature slowly becomes a minority and how it has been marginalized from the world it used to know, banned from daylight, and separated from the beliefs that once ruled its lives when it used to be human. The narratives also capture how the vampire must now struggle to assimilate itself to its surroundings in order to find an identity and survive.

It cannot be denied that literature has borrowed from history and folklore in order to create the characters that constitute it. Authors like Bram Stoker in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Anne Rice in the 20<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup> century used their knowledge about subjects that interested them. They also used memories of stories about history

that their mothers would tell them, thus turning everyday horrors into mythical representations and create fantastic creatures that rule their fictional world.

Subjects such as homoeroticism are not new in these tales. But they tend to make themselves noticeable during periods in which sexuality tends to make a noticeable mark in society. At first, the vampire was there during Victorian times when sexuality was repressed. It re-appears a century later when there is a sexual revolution. Even today, the vampire's kiss has been considered a metaphor for a sexual act. Its depiction in the novels has always been described as highly erotic. It is understandable how the spilled blood, added to the exchange of bodily fluids is connected with sexual intercourse as well as some of the consequences implied with it, like diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

At the same time, the periods in which Stoker and Rice have lived in have also been marked by deadly epidemics that would be merciless upon the affected victims. Victorian and Edwardian times were marked by Typhus and cholera, while now in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century people are plagued with potentially and deadly diseases like HIV and AIDS, illnesses of the blood that can be easily linked to the representation of tainted blood in a vampire tale and the transition between a normal human being to someone who has been affected by a foreign body that takes over their blood and makes the victim one of "them".

### **5.3 Current Events: Minorities, Illness and the Connections to Anne Rice's Vampires**

Current events are a definite influence for writers as they create a storyline. Whether the writer's work is based on historical context or an actual interpretation of recent situations, it cannot be denied that current events can

affect the storyline as well as have an effect on the audience's perception of it. The impact these events will not only be reflected as context, but as the tone of the product written; including its narrative style: "Narratives of crisis, focused on injury self-reinterpretation, and testimony have proliferated in response to widespread illness and genocidal war, to profound changes in personal life, and to the growing audience demand for personal accounts such as self help" (Smith and Watson 147).

In times as recent as the decade of 1980, the emergence of contagious and deadly blood related diseases such as HIV/AIDS and the effect of potentially deadly illnesses such as Cancer have sparked in society the desire to produce a new line of literary works<sup>83</sup> involving "oral histories, critical analysis, poetic engagement with metaphors of history, and factoids" (Smith and Watson 147). The importance of life narratives has taken a new turn since now people look for new ways to cope with their fears, their grief and mourning and most of all, to find a place of belonging now that they have been marginalized from society due to their ailments. Also, "the emergence of the "new" vampire as a popular mass culture figure during the 1970's and 1980's suggest a number of possible directions for inquiry concerning the effects of multimedia presentation of a popular icon" (Zanger 17).

The image of the vampire in literary works has evolved through the years to reflect the ever-changing social environment of the centuries since the first works were written:

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<sup>83</sup> "For example, the outpouring of narratives by victims and survivors of the AIDS crisis has generated critical studies focused on the rhetoric of mourning in personal narratives" (Smith and Watson 147).

When Rice set out to make the “animal” vampire a new person, she imagined the process as part of a larger program of what the 1970’s call *liberation*, whether sexual, gay or women’s. The icons of this program were already figures of ambiguous signification, bodied forth by the beautiful-boy stars of glam rock<sup>84</sup> or the unisex fashions launched by designers like Rudy Gernreich. For Rice, trying to unsettle the clichés and to imagine her way out of the ossified categories of human and monster, self and other, gender uncertainty provided an exemplary metaphor (Tomc 96).

As a characters, the vampires become the embodiment through metaphor of many issues, fears and concerns that society has faced during the time when each of the works that depict them had been created. “The figure of the vampire, as a metaphor, can tell us about sexuality, of course, and about power; it can also inscribe more specific contemporary concerns, such as relations of power and alienation, attitudes towards illness, and the definition of evil and the end of an unprecedentedly [sic]secular century” (Gordon & Hollinger 3).

An example of how narrative and the use of the vampire as a metaphor is used in her books, Rice was able to deal with her own mourning process caused by the loss of her daughter Michele. She did this by incorporating the concept of immortality into the pages of the novels that encompass the *Vampire Chronicles*. The novels were her escape from her grief when her daughter died of Leukemia at such an early age. Rice displaced her feelings, making them flow into her

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<sup>84</sup> Some of these popular glam rock icons include David Bowie and Ziggy Stardust and Iggy Pop.

characters, fueling the storylines of an uncanny narrative that told the tragic story of a solitary and confused vampire's life. These vampires' mock biographies portray how these creatures searched for redemption as an exchange for the actions they were now doomed to perform and live with and that would only bring death: "Here was a way for Anne to buffer her fear of death and to ease her grief over those taken from her. Working through immortal characters gave her a safe place from which to ponder the fact of death" ("Prism" 146).

Despite the fact that Rice has said that she did not intentionally plan to reflect her own feelings in her novel Interview with the Vampire as she wrote it, she accepts that the grieving process brought upon the death of her daughter might have driven her to set the tone for the book. In the end, when asked about the novel during an interview for "Lear's Magazine" she acknowledged that:

Interview with the Vampire is about grief, guilt, and the search for salvation even though one is in the eyes of the world and one's own eyes a total outcast! ...When vampires search for their past trying out to figure out who they are, where they come from, if they have a purpose, that's me asking the same questions about human beings (Zanger 23).

Louis, the main character is forced to question his faith, just as Rice faced hard times when she lost her daughter. Why would God take a young innocent child making it suffer with such an illness of the blood<sup>85</sup>? Casually enough,

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<sup>85</sup> The 1983 movie "The Hunger" portrays the subject of vampirism as an illness of the blood. It can be easily interpreted as a direct metaphor reflecting the AIDS epidemic that was raging during this decade as well as the evolution of the decadence leftover from the 1970's. The

vampirism is like an illness of the blood. Louis, like Rice is also grieving when he is first introduced to the reader. He has lost his brother and blames himself for his death. No matter the centuries that pass, there is part of the death of his brother that clings to him. He also loses Claudia, his companion and “adoptive” daughter. His relationship with her can be considered intimate and romantic, emotionally needy and simultaneously incestuous, adding to the controversy and taboo that Rice always manages to incorporate into her storylines. The connection between Claudia and Louis is very complex and multi-leveled. Louis feels that Claudia completed him and inspired him to retaliate from Lestat’s power over him. This reflects how Rice felt about her husband Stan Rice and how he inspired her to break her bindings from tradition and faith in order to create a new life and family for herself with him.

Because of the context of the *Chronicles*, Rice managed to create a numerous following of readers who must face social marginalization<sup>86</sup> and/ or death due to illnesses such as HIV/AIDS. As part of their need for solace and new meaning for their narrowed-down lives, this particular audience turns to books and stories of other individuals, even fictional characters. They try to find acceptance and relief from situations that caused them to become outcasts from groups where they once had found a strong sense of belonging.

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vampires in this movie can walk in daylight and are promiscuous. Their victims are portrayed as club going individuals with a thirst for excitement and seduction. They are lured by the forbidden and obscure. It is through an exchange of bodily fluids after an intimate contact that the victims become infected and the vampire blood/virus takes over their blood. The movie also has homoerotic highlights and its main character, Miriam, seduces both beautiful men and women into her trap. There is a great attraction between her and the female scientist trying to discover the mystery of the “sick” blood that takes over the human blood and makes it its own.

<sup>86</sup> Rice has managed to gain great admiration and a cult level following by members of the ‘queer’ demographic and people affected by the AIDS virus.



An illness is a factor that can cause such marginalization. Whether it is because of physical limitations or fear and misunderstanding from the masses, all of a sudden the affected groups find themselves limited from the freedom to live they once held. These situations create boundaries between people and their respective societies due to fear and rejection. As an added result in many cases fear also creates in them a sense of threat from those who surround them. This threat arises from a fear of the unknown due to lack of knowledge of how the people may react to the change that is going on. The person going through this change does not know whether they will be accepted or if people will react negatively towards it because of ignorance and prejudice.

An illness defies the racial and cultural boundaries that other types of minorities have encountered in the past and push these limits of tolerance further. If anything, these “new minorities” created by illnesses and diseases become a Dystopian minority because illness can strike victims despite their sex, race, religion or social status they may hold in society. These groups now have to deal with the possible rejection of those they considered equals to themselves; even worst, people they considered inferior to them. Once their condition, whether it becomes deadly or life threatening has affected them, they become integrated to a sub-group forced to struggle with a new type of acceptance in a larger community.

How apt that the vampire reflects such border anxieties, since it penetrates boundaries by its very nature—between life and death, between love and fear, between power and persecution. And how

apt that it thrives in its post modern milieu of dissolving borders, between the rivals and the real, between private and public personae, in the breakdown of cultural and national boundaries, while a plague transmitted by the penetration of body boundaries, and often through blood, sweeps the world (Gordon & Hollinger 7).

It is understandable then why the figure of the vampire has been used in literature as the perfect metaphor to represent these global groups; people who do not fall into an established minority, but whose type has existed for centuries into their own marginalized subgroups. As means of acceptance, these subgroups manage to follow the primeval sense of community that is innate in all human beings. By creating their own subculture within the parameters of the society in which they live in and developing their own global community. They work to find a network of acceptance and support making it easier for them to struggle with the changes they have been forced to adapt to.

There is one truth that overcomes the boundaries or marginalization though, and that somehow unites people who are and are not suffering from an illness: "death is just death, finally everybody does it" (Riley 158). Attached to this idea is people's fear of death. They are terrified of the idea of being doomed because an ailment has accelerated their life process thus making their life's span appear shorter than what they had visualized it would be.

When the feeling of impending death becomes tactile to a person as the result of the diagnosis of a fatal or potentially fatal illness, it provokes an awakening in the individual who is diagnosed, as well as the people who are

close him or her. The same reaction occurs when someone close, like a family member or friend dies. This process allows the individual to see how short life can be and how death can be right around the corner when they least expect it. This awakening is acknowledged as the impending sense of doom.

In her novels, Anne Rice considers that this fear can be overturned. Michael Riley quotes her as saying “I think the novels are about a refusal to being doomed” (Riley 161). She understands people’s needs to come together in their own subgroups in order to face adversity; which is connected to the theme of redemption and hope that can be found in these minority sub-groups.

If one is to connect this context to Anne Rice’s *Vampire Chronicles* then it can be seen why so many readers tend to identify themselves with her storylines and characters. The characters in her novels, just like many people, are outsiders in their own groups they belong to and live in. As part of her personal writer’s touch, Rice deals with the topic of death from a different perspective than the way death has previously been portrayed in literary works prior to her and in history altogether. In many books, the topic of death is commonly seen as dark and hopeless. It is seen as a pessimistic overview of life and is approached with somber and chaotic undertones. Rice overturns this depressive ideal into an approach that can be interpreted as beautiful.

Michael Riley targets this particular subject by confronting Rice about her portrayal of death in her novels and the influence they have on her very faithful audience. He comments: “You’ve been engaged in a quest to discover not just a system of belief but a consolation in the face of death. It seems important that

your books strive to realize something that will survive the moment of death” (Riley 155). To Rice, writing these books became her outlet to cope with her own personal loss. For this reason, people who read her novels become drawn to the characters and storylines. Her pages provide a different outlook on the concepts of life and death.

Rice explains her depiction of such themes in her novels by emphasizing that her “novels are always trying to say that somehow or other, no matter what’s happened, the world is not meaningless and it is not absurd. It’s not, in itself horrible, and neither are human beings” (Riley 155-56). She is uncertain and puzzled of why people that are terminally ill read her novels. Still, she was told by one of her friends, that people find a transition between life and death through her books that relieves them of their fear of the unknown. “The books are a marvelous bridge over” (Riley 25) though she accepts that in truth, she is “not really sure what that means” (Riley 25). In many cases, people who are closer to dying try to find a sense of meaning to the lifetime they have left and refuse to live with the more prominent sense of impending doom that approaches as each day goes by. They may resort to books and other means to find an escape from the sad and fearsome side of death, and instead recapture the beauty of life that they neglected during the years that they lived before the death sentence was placed upon them.

Rice’s theory about the terminally ill audience<sup>87</sup> seeking for comfort in her novels is that as people facing such a critical situation in their lives, they:

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<sup>87</sup> Rice has a large fan base consisting of people afflicted with the AIDS virus.

Are dealing with death at a symbolic and metaphorical remove. They are making a coherent world, which obviously isn't the literal world, which obviously isn't the literal world right here...you don't have to run away from what you're suffering when you read these books. You can experience your thoughts and feelings about it, one step removed...people want this desperately...they want even more literal treatments of death (Riley 25-26).

#### **5.4 Vampires: Metaphor for Identity and Fitting in a Diverse World**

The search for identity is a desire that comes naturally to human beings. In fact, it is part of human nature to be social. No matter if there are individuals that decide to be an outcast from a majority by choice, or individuals are forced to be an outcasts due to an illness, race or any other standard set by the social majority, they will eventually feel a need to find others that will share their way of thinking or the experiences they are going through. The search for meaning and acceptance from others becomes necessary.

It becomes crucial for these outcasts to find an identity for themselves before they can fully accept who they are as part of this community. By doing this, they will allow themselves to functionally perform as a member of the new group or they will fall into after they became outcasts. Whether it is belonging to a social class, a particular social group, or a culture, obtaining and coming to terms with their identity allows them to develop a feeling of individuality, existential peace and self-satisfaction within this "community".

As for technical names that can be associated with reasons for social marginalization, the term “ethnicity” can be applied to the ideal of the outcast searching for their identity. It also happens to coincide with the thematic content of Rice’s *Vampire Chronicles* because “ethnicity is typically based on contrast” (Sollors 288). Contrast is constantly seen in the *Chronicles* because of the many parallels discussed such as life vs. death, damnation vs. redemption, love vs. hate and humanity vs. monstrosity to name a few. It has been noted that: “If all human beings belonged to one and the same ethnic group we would not need such terms as “ethnicity”, though we might then stress other ways of differentiating ourselves such as age, race, sex, class, place of birth, or sign of the zodiac” (Sollors 288).

This is what happens with the vampires in the *Vampire Chronicles*. All of the vampires fall into the same ‘ethnic’ subgroup, yet within this level there are subdivisions such as masters and apprentices, ancients and fledglings, Old World and New World vampires.

Literature becomes a medium in which this striving for an identity is represented. In the case for writers like Anne Rice, fiction provides a wider creative range where a character may become a superhuman representation of a specific social subgroup group or subculture. The characters partake on a quest to find their individuality. From the perspective of the outlaw vampires, life seen through vampires’ eyes cannot be fully understood by the others that surround him, or those who just became vampires. These outlaws understand, as based on their personal experience, that the other characters’ individual need to

document their stories is for the purpose of creating a sense of community for the wide and divided range of vampires who do not know about their history.

According to Sollors and his theory of an ethnic community:

Ever since Herder and the Grimms, the notion has gained dominance that a “people” is held together by subliminal culture of fairy tales, songs and folk beliefs—the original (“völkish”) subsoil of the common people’s art forms that may culminate in the highest artistic achievements. As a result, this legal “ethnicity” as a term for literary study, evokes the accumulation of cultural bits that demonstrate the original creativity, emotive cohesion, and temporal depth of a particular collectivity, especially in a situation of emergence—be it from obscurity, suppression, embattlement, dependence, Diaspora, or previous membership in a larger grouping (Sollors 290).

At the same time, fiction becomes a means for opening up doors that would otherwise seem absurd or impossible in an everyday type of situation due to the barriers that society imposes on peoples’ beliefs of lifestyles. Literature becomes a way of utilizing the fantastic elements to break free of these stigmas, which become acceptable because the characters, despite the fact that they may be autobiographical representations of the writers themselves, are fictional. The advantage that fiction provides is that it gives the writer creative freedom to make this quest for identity either harder or easier, the challenges that the character must endure becomes molded to what the author wants to demonstrate.

## 5.5 Vampires: Metaphor for a Minority Struggling with Assimilation

There are those who struggle to fit in once they have been transformed into a vampire. In many cases this is because these fledglings were victims of a Master that changed them against their will as a result of a selfish desire. As victims of an event that is irreversible, they are left with two options: One would be to slowly come to terms with the person they are; the other one would be to kill themselves and end their existential angst. Some, such as Louis and Armand have opted to accept the latter choice, as they can't bear the burden of their cursed existence. Even then, the life altering decision proves the duality of the word enlightenment. They both choose the drastic choice to literally go into the light and face the death of the person they are. As a result of their actions, they are burnt and scarred by these actions.

Sometimes there is a twist to this drastic decision. They survive and eventually emerge and heal from their wounds, both physically and psychologically, thus becoming stronger individuals who have come to terms with themselves, learned of their past troubles and accepted the future that awaits them.

The action of walking into the light becomes the perfect metaphor for minorities that struggle with an ethnic background. Autobiographies such as Rebecca Walker's Black White and Jewish narrate the author's struggle from childhood and her efforts to fit into the social environment she was brought up in. This autobiography in particular depicts Walker's struggle on how to deal by being the incarnation of opposites as were her White, Jewish father and her



African-American mother. She constantly describes how she feels she is out of place even when she has friends in those places; how she struggles to “pass” as best as she can and assimilate herself to her White, Jewish heritage while at the same time denying her African-American bloodline. Her life becomes a constant struggle of opposites to what everyone else considers is right and what she considers is right in order to accept who she really is as a bi-racial multicultural female. As means to adapt she says: “I do what I do everywhere else, I heighten the characteristics I share with the people around me and minimize, as best as I can, the ones that don’t belong” (Walker 184-185).

For Walker, as many other minorities who deny who they are and are caught up in the turmoil of their existence, it became evident that it is impossible to fully deny one’s identity. “Shame sticks to me like sweat”, (Walker 72) she said as she recalled the memory of pushing away her mother, ashamed of what others may have thought, when they saw that she was African-American. To Walker, recalling the struggles of her past, confronting the memories and experiences of her youth become a painful process she describes as “shards, pieces of glass that rip my skin and leave marks” (Walker 73). To her, reminiscing becomes “self mutilation” (Walker 73) and memories become “battle scars” (Walker 73). Still, when her battles with her subconscious and her past are finally over, she recalls the lessons she learned in the process:

Its jarring to think that most of my life I have been defined by others, primarily reactive, going along with the prevailing view. It makes me feel younger now, new, and slightly terrified. Having to

remember my own life means I have to feel it, too. I have to pay attention to the thoughts that float, uninvited, to mind. I have to heed the unsettling emotions that erupt from somewhere inside of my chest, from some dark pocket behind my eyes. Remembering my own life means knowing that everything can look one way from the outside but there is always another story to be told. (Walker 74)

In Rice's *Chronicles* the process of assimilation becomes represented by the act of the vampire feeding from its victims. The before and after representation of the vampire's description allows the reader to see how every time this creature takes blood and the life force of each of its victims, the vampire slowly blends into the majority that has threatened and rejected him, thus allowing his status to change from victim to victimizer. Blending in becomes means of survival. By blending in he assimilates, but this assimilation is accompanied by the price of losing part of the essence of being his true self, thus making the vampire turn into something he is not and that others of its kind will lament and reject.

An example of this argument is clearly described by the character of Armand in Rice's The Vampire Armand. In this novel, Armand accompanies his Master, Marius, to a feast being held by a group of men that were causing conflict by disrupting and threatening the life of those who Marius held dear to him. Armand first came in contact with his Master, as he Marius, held him. He described his "white fingers" as "these inhuman things that felt so like stone or

brass" ("Armand" 30) and his eyes as "gentle blue eyes" ("Armand" 30). He then describes in detail the rest of his appearance:

He was dressed all in red velvet and splendidly tall. His blond hair was parted in the middle in a saintly fashion and combed richly down to his shoulders where it broke over his cloak in lustrous curls. He had a smooth forehead without a line to it. And his high straight golden eyebrows dark like golden threads over his eyelids. And when he smiled, his lips were flushed suddenly with a pale immediate color that made their full careless shape all the more visible...His upper lip and chin were all clean shaven. I couldn't even see the scantest hair on him, his nose was narrow and delicate though large enough to be in proportion to the other magnificent features of his face ("Armand" 30).

This description of Marius emphasizes the physical traits that make him look too flawless to be human. It accentuates the pallor of his demeanor enhancing the ghastly yet alluring perfection of his vampire self. At this point, Marius is a savior and a saint to Armand, who, in the midst of his confusion believes Marius to be "Christ" coming to save him. Marius clears his confusion by telling him "Not the Christ, my child. But one who comes with his own salvation" ("Armand" 30).

The contrast of Marius's assimilation to the human form during his attack on his victims is also described through the eyes of Armand. All of a sudden, with every victim that he takes, his demeanor changes him turning him more and

more human, at the same time reflecting with color the horrid consequences of his murderous actions: "I could see the blood pump into my Master's hand. I couldn't wait for him to raise his head, and this he did very soon...his countenance was all afire. He looked as human as any man in the room, even crazed with his special drink, as they were with their common wine" ("Armand" 104).

Here the audience can see how the vampire, by assimilating, seems to be losing his essence as he is corrupted and blinded by the human blood while he slowly becomes one of "them". This transformation makes him turn distant from those he belongs with. Armand would describe this sudden detachment from his own and the integration into the opposite of who Marius was: "I stared at my Master. Never had I seen him so lovely as now when he was flushed with this new blood. I wanted to touch him. I wanted to go into his arms. His eyes were drunken and soft as he looked at me...But he broke off his seductive stare and went back to the table" ("Armand" 105).

The sudden transformation was now more evident. The transition experienced by Marius created an expanding void as every minute passed between master and pupil. Armand, just as those who are close to an individual going through the transition of assimilation became a witness watching as that person they once knew faded and merged into someone else. As a result, the individual stands witness to a complete stranger as opposed to the person was before assimilating, thus separating this assimilated person from their original social strata:

Marius was human, utterly human. There was no trace of the impermeable and indestructible god left. His eyes and his face simmered in the blood. He was flushed as a man from running, and his lips were bloody, and when he licked them now his blood was ruby red...He kissed me...and his mouth was human and hot. ("Armand" 109, 112)

The character of Armand thus becomes a metaphor. He is converted into the speaking conscience that expresses the longing to regain the qualities of the original being that was lost as part of the assimilation process. He describes that moment of detachment and observation, yearning for the past and examining it from a removed point of view that sets reason into perspective. From him emerges the will to reach out in order to regain the identity that was lost: "I broke away. He let me break away. 'Oh come back to me, my cold white one, my god.' I whispered. I lay my face on his chest. I could hear his heart. I could hear it beating. I had never before heard it, never heard a pulse within the stone chapel of his body. 'Come back to me, most dispassionate teacher' " ("Armand" 112).

## **5.6 Chapter Overview: Final Thoughts**

The three objectives proposed at the beginning of the thesis were successfully met as a result of this research. First, it established the relevance and usefulness of autobiography for deeper understanding Rice's fiction. It allows the reader to appreciate the difference between real and mock autobiography. It provides insight into the mental process of the writer and a clearer view of her intended purpose.

Second, the study establishes that Rice was successful in creating a boundary between herself and her fiction by allowing her characters to fortify their own storylines even if inspired by elements of her life.

Third, through the use of several literary sources, including autobiographical examples of non-fictional biracial individuals to support the argument, it was determined that the Rice vampire is capable of becoming a successful metaphor for a dystopian minority because its characteristics accommodate and represent the struggles of different types of minority groups that exist in society.

In addition to the topics that are covered in this thesis many of the people who study her work focus on homoeroticism, race, history, religion, feminism, gender studies, and art.

The situation surrounding her characters' lives capture the attention of scholars who are interested in the thematic content of her work as well as her audience. In the case of *The Vampire Chronicles*, the audience does not only become curious about the vampires' past history, but they fall prey to being seduced into the vampires' narrative or mock autobiographies. This audience hungers to know more about these mysterious creatures that lurk in the shadows. They want to know where they came from, how they are connected to other people and creatures, and where their choices in life will take them in the near and distant future. Through these vampire narratives the audience is transported within the context of Rice's books into a subculture created by vampires who roam the world at night, witches that hide century old secrets of

their supernatural legacies, ghosts that haunt generations, and secret societies that struggle to connect every bit of information in order to record everything they can about the supernatural.

Despite Rice's works being thought of as pop culture fantasy and horror fiction, some of her books can be considered also as examples of mock autobiography. Each of Rice's novels has its own style, but some of *The Vampire Chronicles* and *New Tales of the Vampires* in particular have stronger characteristics that target the ideal autobiographical format. Whether it is through the framing device portrayed by David Talbot, the fledgling vampire and "Superior General of the Talamasca" (Ramsland 448) or by Rice using herself as a medium through which a manuscript is delivered in order for it to be published: "I went to Florence to receive this manuscript directly from Vittorio di Raniari" ("Vittorio" 289), she has a way of creating a narrative through her characters that, intermingled with superhuman sensory based description, emotional struggles and historical accuracy, create the perfect blend to form a concise character worthy of narrating his life to an audience serious enough to study it.

Rice's subtleness when writing allows her to use her own life experiences from a twice-removed perspective to influence her characters' conflicts and mold them into their particular personas, therefore allowing a form of autobiographical reflection of her upon her fiction that captures her essence as a writer without making the storyline overtly about her. Curiously enough, Rice has confessed that when she wrote Interview with the Vampire she did not write it intentionally framing it with her life. The character of Louis is grief stricken and self-

destructive. He grieves the loss of his brother and gambles with life and death, just as Rice grieves for her lost daughter and perhaps her own sense of loss of her Catholic faith.

There is no question that Rice's turn on vampire fiction has revolutionized the genre. She has become a role model for many, and, even critics have accepted that there is a trace of Rice's style in the new novels that have hit the market since Interview with the Vampire was published and became a literary success. It is true that novels such as Bram Stoker's Dracula did give the reader a very slim insight from the vampire's point of view, but still the vampire was seen as the predator. In Rice's fiction this perspective changes and now the audiences could acquaint themselves better with a more personal and less threatening character.

Rice's portrayal of the Old World vampire also poses as a metaphor of the representation of the vampire in popular culture and literature after Bram Stoker's Dracula: "The Old World Vampires symbolize what vampires have become in fiction since Bram Stoker published Dracula in 1897. Many contemporary authors present vampires and monsters who kill without compunction and, for decades, film has depicted the same image" (Ramsland 331).

A more western and more visionary style of vampire has emerged since then. Now instead of finding their identity in the dark hills of Bulgaria and the places included in Dracula and the earlier vampire novels, Rice's vampires move along to Western Europe, and it is in Paris when they finally begin to find the true



definition of their identity.

Rice's description of the vampire's encounter with villagers of the Old Country is somewhat comical because it defies all of the folkloric taboos and traditions associated with the vampire myth including the use of garlic, wooden stakes and crucifixes that were used to slay the creatures. This becomes a metaphor of new generations of humans going through a transition in their lives from the old traditions of their background whether it is ethnic or social to the more modern reality that surrounds them. Rice's fiction represents the longing to come to terms with a past while in the process the person's character is disclosed. These individuals through their personal journey go against and sometimes break the stigmas of their past, creating new rules and codes of conduct. They defy the taboos and already established traditions as part of coming to terms with who they are.

If anything, it can be considered that the literature in the latter centuries, including novels like Rice's, reflect just as the earlier works, the turmoil of social changes and transitional societies as they evolve. Even in the past, books both popular and academic, including works such as Charles Dickens' novels, reflected the social struggles and situations of the time while using literary styles such as the bildungsroman. These works have inspired writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century such as Rice, whose books have been described as having that "Dickensian" quality. Both the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century consist of events such as the sexual revolution of women and feminist movements created to fight for women's rights and a chance of equality.

Both centuries also reflect Gothic revivals in which there is new interest for the Gothic style in literature. Another particular fact that can be allotted to these time periods is how they reflect a spiritual crisis led by scientific and technological advances, as it is reflected in works such as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Still, Rice manages to incorporate the growth of science and technology to make it work in her fiction, bringing with it a sense of new hope and promise for a new tomorrow. It is through this technology that her vampires go where others of their kind had never been before. Now they are able to see the light again after they have been cast to a world of shadows.

Through her novels, Rice brings forth her interest of the world and science and she represents this through scientific research that characters such as Rowan Mayfair perform. As a character Rowan investigates mysterious conditions and illnesses, she even does genetic research in hopes to find information that may prove to be useful for later generations.

As a whole, Rice's work manages to merge the old and the new traditions. She creates a legacy of vampires that through mock biography incorporate in a metaphorical sense the needs and angst that the modern generations are struggling with. Her characters become universal portals of issues that are usually not talked about, and become means for discussion of topics that would have been controversial to discuss, thus allowing her as a writer the creative freedom to target and confront through the use of metaphors her personal monsters as well as the monsters that society is afraid of dealing with.

She has become triumphant as a writer. People continue to read her work to this day still identifying with them and giving her praise for her talent as a writer whose work appears to be on the road to becoming timeless. Through her innovative changes to vampire literature and personal ways of thinking, she has inspired people to search for answers outside of religious doctrines and inside literary works, which may reveal a more viable and socially acceptable meaning of life.

## Appendix

### Interview with the Vampire

*A short story by Anne Rice, August 1973 approx.. Later became a novel completed January 1974.*

"Do you wish to record the interview here?" asked the vampire.

The boy had drawn the small tape recorder timidly from his briefcase. He hadn't expected this response. "You don't mind . . . that I record the interview, possibly broadcast it on FM radio throughout San Francisco?"

"I haven't the slightest objection," said the vampire. "I was referring to the room." He gestured now to the small round oak table, the straight-back chairs. In the rhythmic flashing of a neon sign beneath the window, the boy saw these, and a door that was not the hall door, partially open.

"O, it's fine," said the boy, and quickly he checked the batteries of his recorder, lifted its clear plastic lid to start the tape, and looked timidly at the vampire. "Is this . . . your room, then?" he asked.

"No," the vampire smiled. "Just a room." He was standing at the window and the red light shone on him at intervals of three seconds. Then there was only the dim light from Divisadero Street and the passing beams of traffic. The boy could see a washbasin and a mirror, and again he stared at the partially open door.

"Do you want the light on?" asked the vampire gently.

"You mean you don't mind?" asked the boy.

"No, of course I don't mind," said the vampire, walking slowly and silently to the center of the room. His long cape flared around him. "I know that you did not have a close look at me in the bar. It was very dark. I don't want you to be nervous, frightened."

The rest of this story can be found as an appendix in Katherine Ramsland's The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Vampire Chronicles. 2nd ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.

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