

THROUGH THE EYES OF A VAMPIRE:  
THE EFFECTS OF RHETORICAL  
CONTEXT IN TWO OF ANNE  
RICE'S VAMPIRE CHRONICLES

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THROUGH THE EYES OF A VAMPIRE: THE  
EFFECTS OF RHETORICAL CONTEXT IN  
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*VAMPIRE*: The very word evokes fear in most readers. And yet, since the mid-1970s, the vampire in literature has become a more sympathetic character. Not only do the roots of our traditional perception of the vampire as the embodiment of evil lie in the history of the literary vampire, but also the reasons for that current change and the rhetorical effect of context. Our modern perception of character insists that the reader consider such matters as the extenuating circumstances of situations, the dynamics of scene and action, and the interplay of protagonist and antagonist.

By comparing Bram Stoker's Dracula with Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire and The Vampire Lestat, I have found that context affects the reader's perception of the character and that even deeply ingrained ideas, such as the evilness of vampires, can be affected and perhaps even altered by rhetorical perspective.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE VAMPIRE IN MYTH AND LITERATURE

*VAMPIRE*: The very word evokes a sense of discomfort, if not outright fear, in most readers. "Vampires or vampire-like beings have existed in the recesses of human imagination since time immemorial and surface in the folklore of most every culture" (McSorley 2). And yet, since the mid-1970s, the vampire in literature has become a more sympathetic character. The vampire has become "a monster that retains the full consciousness of its human self and is able to reflect on its human past, its transformation, and its new existence as a vampire" (Scripps 3). Not only do the roots of our traditional perception of the vampire as the embodiment of evil lie in the history of the literary vampire, but also the reasons for that current change and the rhetorical effect of context. Our modern perception of character takes into consideration more than a character's nature or authorial point of view; it insists that the reader consider such matters as the extenuating circumstances of situations, the dynamics of scene and



action, and the interplay of protagonist and antagonist. That is, the understanding of literature and thus of literary characters is colored by filters from the reader's experience as well as from the author's--what Kenneth Burke called "terministic screens" and what modern rhetoricians refer to as "context" or "rhetorical situation."

Although the actual genesis of the vampire myth has never been authoritatively determined, Devendra P. Varma has traced vampire-fanged images similar to the conception of the traditional vampire to "the Indus Valley civilization of the Third millennium BC," making it reasonable to postulate an Oriental origin: "The Nepalese Lord of Death, the Tibetan Devil, and Mongolian God of Time, whose specific vampire-fanged images adorn many monasteries, take us to the very source of this curious legend" ("The Vampire" 14). To these ancient civilizations as to modern cultures, blood is the life force. These vampire gods serve as a kind of purgatory through which each person must pass in order to reach salvation. The undead "stimulated the mystics to comprehend that a man can arrive in heaven only if he has the daring and perseverance to wade right through Hell" (15).

From its beginning in the far East, then, the myth was carried by horse and camel over the Great Silk Route,

arriving in eastern Europe and "in Greece shortly after Christ had delivered the Sermon on the Mount" (18). From there it spread all over western Europe, throughout "Transylvania, Hungary, Poland, Silesia, Moravia, Bohemia, Austria, and Lorraine" (18). Thus, versions of the myth are as diverse as the people who passed them from one to another. The basic premise, however, is constant: that the revenant is one who has died but refuses to remain in the grave. Instead, the vampire returns to the land of the living and must feed on living beings to remain [un]dead, bringing death and then [un]life to their victims. "A vampire cheats death by taking blood, the life force, from the living" (Holte 246)

The vampire image is not, however, always seen as malevolent. According to Varma, Tibetan belief accommodates the notion that devils can be catalysts for salvation. The Tibetan gods embody evil as well as good just as death is an integral part of life ("The Vampire" 16). We will see this dichotomy again in The Vampire Chronicles, in Louis' and Lestat's discussion of the "Dark Gift."

Most cultures include in the myth the notion that the newly created vampire would first attack the ones closest to them in life, and then venture out into the population. "In Roumania as in Greece and other lands the vampire first

attacks his own household and even the animals belonging to his family" (Nixon 18). This representation of an evil that destroys its own loved ones adds to the horror of the myth.

How is a vampire created? Modern popular culture answers this question by saying that an individual bitten by a vampire becomes a vampire. The myth, however, takes another view. Those who were wicked in life risk becoming a vampire after death. "Usually, 'the Vampire is one who has led a life of more than ordinary immorality or unbridled wickedness'" (Nixon 16). Those who commit suicide are especially prone to vampirism, as are those who have been excommunicated from the church. Additionally, some are believed to have become vampires quite passively. For example, "'if some animal of ill-omen (such as a cat) . . . leaps over a corpse, the dead person should be considered in danger of becoming a vampire'" (Nixon 17). The child of a pregnant woman who has been looked upon by a vampire is at risk. "Likewise, children born with a caul on their head, or with their teeth showing, or with contiguous eyebrows are expected to become vampires" (Oinas 108). A child born on Christmas Day is "doomed to become [a] vampire. This is a punishment for the presumptuousness of their mothers in having conceived on the same day as the Virgin Mary" (108).

Unlike the Gothic character of literature, the mythological vampire is repellent: "Among a vampire's physical characteristics are a gaunt and lean body, hideous countenance and eyes, blub red lips, and white and gleaming teeth with canines distended" (Winkler 196). Stoker's Dracula changed the notion of the vampire from a monstrosity to a distinctly human-like figure, albeit one who was exceedingly pale, with "[a] hollow beneath his eyes [which] adds to his romantic expression of undefinable melancholy diffusing a lonesome sadness" (Varma, "The Vampire," 20). Another vampire characteristic (which is rejected in the Rice tales) is the lack of reflection in a mirror. It has been postulated that this belief stemmed from the theory that the soul is reflected in a mirror, "and since the vampire is an animated corpse, he would not have a soul" (Carlson 27).

Perhaps most intriguing is the depiction of the ways a vampire may be destroyed. A stake through the heart, decapitation, and burning are generally considered to be the most effective methods of dealing with vampires. However, there are other, less well-known techniques, depending on the regional origin of the myth. For example, some cultures believe that vampires are obsessed with counting. Therefore, "[o]ne may also offer the dead a peaceful occupation

by putting quantities of sand and poppy seed into the coffin. The sand and poppy seed must be counted grain by grain before the vampire can leave its coffin" (Oinas 109-10).

Veselin Cajkanovic and Marilyn Sjoberg report in "The Killing of a Vampire" that, among the Serbian people, staking a vampire does nothing more than bind the vampire to his grave. If the stake is of any other wood than hawthorne, the vampire can remove it. All of the body, then, must be destroyed to actually kill a vampire because the soul inhabits the entire body, except for the bones:

[B]ecause, the soul, the vegetative soul, tied to blood, to the heart, to muscles, and to the intestines, continues to exist until the last part of all of this exists, and the vampire will exist up until the least bit of his body exists. (264)

Additionally, anything that might try to escape the fire must be driven back, as "it may be the Vampire embodied in one of these, seeking to escape" (Nixon 21). This cultural myth also links the soul with decomposition. Until decomposition occurs, the soul is tied to the body and cannot escape. While this directly contradicts the belief that vampires have no souls, it correlates with the lack of decomposition in most vampire myths when the grave (not the

sleeping coffin) of the vampire is opened. The reason for the lack of decomposition is believed to be "that the Earth is refusing to receive the person's body" (Nixon 19).

Relics of the Church are believed to ward off vampires, specifically "the crucifix, . . . the sign of the cross, holy water, and above all, a consecrated host" because, as "servants of Satan, the Church has power over them" (Holte 247). Another prevalent method of dealing with the vampire is to bury the offender, staked through the heart of course, at a crossroads. The belief is that the revenant will be too confused to know which way to go upon rising from the grave and so: "[H]e will be puzzled to know which way to take and will stand debating until dawn compels him to return to the earth" (Nixon 16). Further, for unknown reasons, vampires are believed to be repelled by garlic. As recently as 1973, a Polish immigrant living in England choked on a piece of garlic he had placed in his mouth upon retiring for the evening. It is unknown whether the man believed himself to be the target of a vampire, or a vampire himself (Oinas 110). However, this event testifies to the power of the myth, even in modern times.<sup>1</sup>

While the vampire enjoyed great popularity in literature during the nineteenth century (and is making a comeback in the twentieth), it can be found in ancient

literature. Specifically, a vampire is apparent in "the story of Philinnion from Phlegon's 'Concerning Wonderous Things' in Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum" (Twitchell, "Vampire Myth," 245). This story, "[a] second-century tale" (245), tells of Philinnion who comes to Machates only at night. Philinnion, carried away with Machates, fails to leave before sunrise and perishes with the sun. A local seer orders her body to be burned, and Machates commits suicide.

Another example is "found in Philostratus' third-century Life of Apollonius of Tyana" (245). Apollonius determines that a young friend of his is smitten with an unfamiliar woman, whom Apollonius concludes is a vampire and whom Apollonius successfully drives away. In The Living Dead, Twitchell postulates that, in Beowulf, "Grendel, with its 'horrible fierce eyes' and blood lust, seems to derive in part from some folk belief that perhaps sprouted from the vampire story" (30). Twitchell also relates a twelfth-century tale of a man who fulfills the vampire myth after death, returning to destroy his family first, then extending into the community, finally making his appearance during the day. The Church is called upon and the vampire is dealt with according to custom (31-32).

The vampire virtually disappears until the early eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Carol Senf has found evidence of an article written in 1732 which "suggests the writer's awareness of metaphoric possibilities in the vampire superstition" (The Vampire 22). Scholars began to take an interest in the vampire as a result of Dom Augustin Calmet's Traite sur les Apparitions des Esprits, et sur les Vampires, written in 1746. According to Twitchell, "Calmet was possibly the greatest Catholic Biblical scholar in the eighteenth century . . . and his work, really an anthology of folk horror stories, was quickly translated into English" (Living Dead 33). It is generally held that German writers were the first to treat the vampire in literature: "In 1748 Ossenfelder wrote 'The Vampire,' in 1773 Burger wrote 'Lenore,' and in 1797 Goethe created 'The Bride of Cornith'" (Holte 250). "Lenore" served as the inspiration for a flurry of activity from the English Romantic poets, who saw "the vampire as metaphor or symbol [rather] than as a character" (251). M.M. Carlson postulates that the vampire figure gained popularity as a result of the advent of rationalism: "Vampire literature per se is a post-Enlightenment phenomenon, a result of Romanticism and of the interest in folklore encouraged by Herder's romantic nationalism" (26).



The vampire made its first appearance in English literature in 1798 in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" (Whitehead 243-44). Byron's "Fragment of a Novel" followed in 1816, and was augmented by John Polidori in "The Vampyre," which was published in April 1819 in the New Monthly Magazine (Ryan 1). "Polidori took a creature of legend and turned it into a cultural symbol. . . [and] established the conventions of the modern vampire story and made the vampire a popular literary figure" (Holte 251). The success of Polidori's story led to the acceptance of "Varney the Vampyre, or, The Feast of Blood," published in 1847. The work was originally attributed to Thomas Preskett Prest, "but recent scholarship has established [James Malcolm] Rymer as almost certainly the author" (Ryan 25). The author of "Varney" used sensationalism to retain readership, and most scholars place little literary value in the work, but agree that it was a major factor in soundly establishing the vampire myth in literary history: "His [the author's] genius reveals a significant chapter in the history of the Gothic movement, for he stands as a link between John Polidori and the later Bram Stoker" (Varma, "The Vampire," 26).

One of the most widely acclaimed nineteenth-century vampire stories is J. Sheridan LeFanu's "Carmilla" (1872).

"LeFanu deliberately adapted Coleridge's 'Christabel' into a prose narrative, recognizing and emphasizing the elements of perversion in his source" (Holte 252). Using elements from both folklore and literature, LeFanu set the stage for the acceptance of Bram Stoker's Dracula, to be published in 1897. Although the traditional vampire story was not as popular in America as in Europe, early suggestions of vampirism appear in Charles Brockden Brown's unfinished novel, which may herald the American development of the symbolic vampire. For such authors as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James, "the motif of the vampire becomes a metaphor for spiritual violation, for transgression against the personal integrity of another" (Babener 6669-A).

Thus, study of the vampire literature preceding Dracula reveals what I believe to be significant commonalities that affect the reader's perception of the vampire character. Adherence to the myth that has existed for centuries enhances the nefarious perception of the vampire character. While Lord Ruthven (in "The Vampyre") is free to roam about during the daytime, he nevertheless exhibits the blood-drinking characteristic of the mythological vampire. In addition, after he is shot and his death is witnessed, and after being carried into the moonlight, he returns to "life"

and continues his destructive life by wooing Miss Aubrey. Varney is the embodiment of the folkloric vampire, including the horrifying countenance, supernatural strength, and "a strange howling cry that was enough to awaken terror in every breast" (Rymer 30). Carmilla also exemplifies the vampire. Although she, like Lord Ruthven, is not hampered by daylight, "[s]he used to come down very late, generally not till one o'clock, she would then take a cup of chocolate, but eat nothing" (LeFanu 91). As local villagers begin to die of a mysterious wasting disease, the townsfolk become frightened. Enter the vampire killer, Baron Vordenburg, and Carmilla is disposed of "in accordance with the ancient practice . . . [with] a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek at the moment" (134).

The guise of the vampire is generally, while not necessarily, horrific, in the very least frightening. For example, Lord Ruthven is described as having "the dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, did not seem to penetrate, and at one glance to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart" (7). Varney is presented as:

[P]erfectly white--perfectly bloodless. The eyes look like polished tin; the lips are drawn back, and the principal feature next to those dreadful

eyes is the teeth--the fearful-looking teeth--projecting like those of some wild animal, hideously, glaringly white, and fang-like. (29)

Conversely, Carmilla has an extremely pleasant countenance: "Her complexion was rich and brilliant; her features were small and beautifully formed; her eyes large, dark, and lustrous" (88). Instead, she gives the narrator, Laura, a sense of horror through her obsession with her. She whispers to Laura:

In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life, and you shall die--die, sweetly die--into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love. (89)

Most of the literary vampires come from "somewhere else," i.e., are strangers. Carmilla "exercised with respect to herself, her mother, her history, everything in fact connected with her life, plans, and people, an ever wakeful reserve" (88). Varney simply appears in a maiden's window, from where unknown. Lord Ruthven, while noble, is "more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank" (7). This exotic background situates the vampire character firmly in "the conflict

between the individual and the community" (Senf, The Vampire, 28), a theme that will be the heart of Bram Stoker's work.

A third element which will appear more precisely in Dracula but which is alluded to in previous works is the nature of the vampire prior to its [un]death. Lord Ruthven has a fondness for the gaming tables, and it is soon discovered that his "affairs were embarrassed" (9). While he appears to be quite generous, "the idle, the vagabond, and the beggar, received from his hand more than enough to relieve their immediate wants" (9), it is soon discovered that those upon whom he has shown favor ultimately "found that there was a curse upon it, for they were all either led to the scaffold, or sunk to the lowest and the most abject misery" (9). Polidori uses a combination of real and metaphoric vampires. Some of his victims actually succumb, while "[m]ore often . . . victims continue to live, their reputations and will destroyed instead of their lives" (Senf, "Polidori's," 202). Carmilla is discovered to be the last remaining member of the ancient Karnstein family, who destroyed an entire village before their vampirism was discovered.

In each of the works, the victim plays an important role in establishing the evilness of the vampire. Lord Ruthven, as mentioned, preys on those who have already shown depraved tendencies. However, he also destroys the innocent, in Ianthe and Miss Aubrey. Varney's victim is a young virgin: "a girl young and beautiful as a spring morning" (27). And Carmilla seeks out Laura, a nineteen-year-old girl who has lived all her life in an isolated schloss with only her father and governesses as company, and who knows very little of the world beyond her household. Preying on the virtuous predicates the diabolism of the vampire.

Finally, the narrative context affects the reader's perception of the vampire character. Both Varney and Lord Ruthven are revealed through a third-person, uninvolved narrator. While Aubrey's thoughts are revealed to the reader: "If before his mind had been absorbed by one subject, how much more completely was it engrossed, now that the certainty of the monster's living again pressed upon his thoughts" (20), Lord Ruthven remains a closed book. Similarly, Varney is described in monstrous terms, but the inner workings of his mind continue to be obscure. The narrator,

however, communicates the terror felt by his victim:  
"But, oh, that look of terror that sat upon her face, it was dreadful--a look to haunt the memory for a lifetime--a look to obtrude itself upon the happiest moments, and turn them to bitterness" (29). The narrator of *Carmilla* is the victim herself, Laura. She shares the effect Carmilla has upon her, but Carmilla herself is enigmatic, as Laura describes her:  
"[S]ometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church" (137). All of these characteristics lay the groundwork for the quintessential vampire, Bram Stoker's Dracula, which will be explored in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### DRACULA

Immensely popular since its publication in 1897, Bram Stoker's Dracula has never been out of print. Indeed, the novel has become the model from which twentieth century vampire literature has emanated, and its main character, Count Dracula, has become synonymous with vampire. Dracula until recently received little critical attention but has continued to appeal to the masses. Written in reaction to a world of reason, the novel is purposely mysterious. What happens in the novel is enigmatic and cannot be explained empirically. Twitchell comments: "Bram Stoker knew that action itself is always explainable. Dracula, unlike his literary brother, the Frankenstein monster, simply cannot be explained" (Living Dead, 133).

Written in a quasi-epistolary style, the story unfolds through a series of diaries, journals, and newspaper articles. As Twitchell suggests, the epistolary style adds to the mysteriousness by reporting, rather than showing, the action. The epistolary vehicle allows one of the major players in the drama to filter the information the reader



receives. The reader receives some first-hand accounts of what happens, but the action is also distanced by being reported second, or even third hand. These various letters and journals are the binding force that ultimately will destroy evil and return life to normalcy, the major theme in the novel.

Stoker's use of the letter form stresses its social significance as an act of communication from sender to recipient. . . It is only here that the characters who will be Dracula's opponents begin to define themselves. (Seed 199)

While Stoker "de-emphasizes the novel's mythic qualities by telling the story through . . . the very written record of everyday life" (Senf, "Dracula," 161), he adds to the tension by having his narrators doubt their own observations. The question of insanity is repeatedly mentioned, and "the characters, indeed, are obsessed with keeping accurate accounts" (Carter, Specter, 106). Not until the group comes together and compiles all of their entries do they come to believe there is a force they must deal with.

Jonathan Harker's journal of his trip to Transylvania begins the novel. It is through his eyes that we first

begin to sense that something is amiss. "The first section of the novel dramatizes the gradual breakdown of rational explanation before mystery" (Seed 197). Harker first suspects that things are not normal when he tries to query the innkeeper about Count Dracula: "both he and his wife crossed themselves, and saying that they knew nothing at all, simply refused to speak further" (Stoker 14).

Dracula, himself, is never revealed except through the eyes of the "'posse of good;' Professor Van Helsing, the realist; Dr. Seward, the pragmatist, and John Harker, the 'everyman,' who faces intense odds" (Schraft 20). Senf notes that Dracula's voice is never heard "while his actions are recorded by people who have determined to destroy him and who, moreover, repeatedly question the sanity of their quest" ("Dracula" 162).

Although there are some differences between the folkloric vampire and the literary vampire, Stoker utilizes elements of the myth to build his case against Dracula. Harker's first introduction to the Count is in the form of what he thinks is a coachman. The man is wearing a large hat which covers his face but his eyes "seemed red in the lamplight, as he turned to us." The Count's prodigious strength is revealed by a "grip of steel" (Stoker 20).

Their journey to the Count's castle is plagued by wolves, whom the "coachman" is able to control. Harker then arrives at the castle and is greeted by an old man dressed in black. He is welcomed into the castle by the Count, and invited to "Enter freely and of your own will!" (25). Seemingly transfixed until Harker crosses the threshold, Dracula springs into action at the moment of Harker's entering and grips Harker's hand with his own, which is "cold as ice--more like the hand of a dead than a living man" (25).

Harker begins to notice oddities about his host which cause him some unrest. For example, although the Count sets a fine meal before Harker upon his arrival, he declines to eat anything himself. When wolves begin to howl, Dracula comments: "'Listen to them--the children of the night. What music they make!'" (28). He informs Harker that he will be away until late afternoon the next day, a pattern which continues throughout Harker's stay in Transylvania. Perhaps most telling is the morning that the Count startles Harker by coming in while Harker is shaving. Harker cannot believe that he has not seen the Count in the mirror, since by its placement he could see the whole room. Harker had nicked his face when startled, and blood is apparent on his chin. Upon seeing this, the Count lunges at him but comes

into contact with the crucifix given Harker by a village woman (which he had felt uneasy about wearing because of his affiliation with the Church of England) and is immediately repelled.

Harker sees the Count leave the castle via the window and "begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, *face down* with his cloak spreading out around him like great wings" (43). He sees gypsies come to the castle and remove many "great, square boxes" (52). Finally, finding that he is being held prisoner in the castle, Harker determines to seek out Dracula during the day, having surmised that Dracula must be nocturnal. He finds Dracula lying in one of the boxes with

[E]yes [which] were open and stony, but without the glassiness of death--and the cheeks had the warmth of life through all their pallor; the lips were as red as ever. But there was no sign of movement, no pulse, no breath, no beating of the heart. (57)

Horrorified, Harker comes to the realization that he will be partly responsible for aiding the monster of folklore in his quest for supremacy. He is helping the Count get to London, where he would "satisfy his lust for blood, and create a new

and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (60).

By introducing these elements early in the novel, Stoker encourages the reader "to make a series of recognitions, to spot resemblances between later events and those in the opening four chapters" (Seed 198). Repeating these components again and again in the narration by other characters and keeping these characters in the dark about their meaning increases the tension, because only the reader has knowledge of their significance. Additionally, Carlsen points out that horror fiction benefits when supernatural elements can be found in the ordinary events of daily life (30).

As noted previously, appearance plays an important role in establishing the malignancy of the vampire. Dracula has the capacity of changing his appearance. As the coachman, he sports a long brown beard, but when he comes to the door of Castle Dracula, he is clean-shaven except for a white mustache. Harker offers this description:

His face was a strong--a very strong--aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very

massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth . . . was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

(27)

Harker goes on to note that Dracula has hirsute palms, sharp, pointy fingernails, and nauseating breath. Thus, while Harker has described a rather odd-looking individual, he seems nevertheless to consider the Count human with aristocratic features. Not until the Count discovers that Harker has disobeyed his orders to sleep nowhere but his own room and finds Harker in the clutches of the three female vampires are his eyes revealed: "His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them" (47).

Stoker makes use of the red/white factor to reveal Dracula's strangeness. The eyes and lips are brilliant red while the complexion is waxen. The colors of the typical

English complexion, Stevenson points out, were "created by the perception of red *through* white--blood coursing beneath pale skin" (141-42). In the vampire, the appearance is of white tainted by red, the opposite of good health, "what looks like dead flesh stained with blood" (142).

As he feeds, Dracula appears to reverse the aging process as well. When Harker goes back to Dracula's coffin for a second time to attempt to get the key to escape, "[t]here lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; . . . the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood" (60). Harker likens the Count to a parasite: "He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion" (60).

Stoker utilizes the forces of nature as well, by having the Count arrive on English soil during an intense storm. The Count shape-shifts into a dog to leave the ship, and bounds off into the night. Through a newspaper article, we discover that, even in canine form, the Count is evil. A large mastiff is found mutilated, its throat cut and abdomen split in two, just across from its master's yard. This killing of an innocent animal defending its master enhances the malevolence of the vampire.

When confronted by the posse in his London dwelling, the Count presents his most fierce visage. As they attempt to protect themselves by using religious paraphernalia,

[i]t would be impossible to describe the expression of hate and baffled malignity--of anger and hellish rage--which came over the Count's face. His waxen hue became greenish-yellow by the contrast of his burning eyes, and the red scar on the forehead showed on the pallid skin like a palpitating wound. (311-12)

Another aspect that determines the reader's perception of the vampire is the creature's life prior to becoming [un]dead. Stoker admitted to patterning his Dracula after Vlad Tepes, whose cruelties earned him the name "Impaler" (Varma, "Genesis," 45).<sup>3</sup> Dracula himself shares with Harker his blood-thirsty ancestry, in one of his few personal appearances in the novel (filtered through Harker's journal), as he boasts: "'What devil or what witch was ever so great as Atilla, whose blood is in these veins?'" (38). He hints at his egoism when he retorts: "'Bah! what good are peasants without a leader?'" (38). As the posse gathers together to begin their work, Dr. Van Helsing, the father-figure of the group, shares what he knows of Dracula:



He must, indeed, have been that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turk. . . If it be so, then he was no common man. . . The Draculas were, says Arminius, a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have had dealings with the Evil One. (246)

Varma reminds us that Vlad Tepes was considered to be the Devil Incarnate whose lust for power governed his life ("Genesis," 44). And so the historical Dracula's bloodthirsty reputation followed him into [un]life.

To support the major theme of the power of good over evil, the vampire must be destroyed. For good to triumph the needs of the many must supersede the needs of the few, or as Gregory Waller puts it: "[T]he confrontation between Good and Evil that is so apparent in *Dracula* increasingly becomes synonymous with the struggle between the values of a selfless, unified community and the destructive excesses of egotistical individualism" (40).

Dracula is a stranger who comes from a foreign, eastern land filled with medieval trappings and notions. To an Englishman of this time, according to Stevenson, "what is foreign is monstrous, even if it is only a matter of table

manners" (142). Even Dracula recognizes this fact, and attempts to learn everything there is to know about how to fit into English society. Harker, of course, soon realizes that Dracula's motivation for trying to become English is to take over society and create his own followers--new vampires who will create yet others from helpless victims.

The posse of good then gathers together: Dr. Van Helsing, scientist, doctor, lawyer, the "good father figure" (Roth 60), who is invaluable as "[h]is insight and tenacity serve time and again to protect the virtuous from the powers of evil" (Raible 107); Dr. Seward, the psychiatrist; Arthur Holmwood, the aristocrat; Quincy Morris, the Texas sharpshooter with a heart of gold; Jonathan Harker, the businessman; Mina Harker, the mother-figure whose "pure (almost virginal) intuition combines with his [Van Helsing's] scholarship to put down the demonic Dracula forever" (Raible 107). All of these players have contact with the evil individually at the beginning, but attempt to rationalize what they are perceiving. They do not realize the depth of the power they must fight until they gather together and compare notes. Even then, because all are the inheritors of the Age of Reason, they have difficulty believing. Van Helsing exclaims: "Ah, it is the fault of

our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explains not, then it says there is nothing to explain" (197).

Eventually all begin to accept the reality of Dracula and to recognize the importance of working together in a unified community to achieve the desired outcome: destruction of the vampire. However, the importance of this group in establishing the malevolence of Dracula lies in their willingness as a group to commit acts they would individually not consider. For example, after Lucy's death and subsequent resurrection as a vampire, Van Helsing gathers a partial group including Seward, Holmwood (who was Lucy's fiancé) and Morris. He tells them that her body must be destroyed in order to set her soul free. On their own, none of these men could have conceived of committing such a heinous act, but collectively they agree that it must be done. Arthur, as Lucy's true love, is the chosen:

He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it. (222)

Again and again the posse is forced to act in ways that cause a loss of innocence almost as profound as that involved in becoming a victim of Dracula himself. Each in turn questions his own sanity and begins to wonder if the lunatic Renfield is, in fact, the only sane one. Doubt, then, insinuates itself into the minds of previously confident people. Harker explains this to Van Helsing: "Not knowing what to trust, I did not know what to do; and so had only to keep on working in what had hitherto been the groove of my life. The groove ceased to avail me, and I mistrusted myself" (194). And so Dracula's poison spreads beyond his actual victims to infect even his destroyers.

Finally, and I think most importantly, is the role the victim plays in establishing the vampire's diabolism. Not only is the posse collectively forced to compromise their value system in order to destroy Dracula, but almost from the beginning Stoker situates the individual players in the role of victim. Harker, a man of irreproachable character before visiting Castle Dracula, questions his own reaction to the three female vampires when he is approached by them in the night: "There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (46). Ironically, he is saved

from his own weakness by Dracula himself. Harker is again victimized by the Count who dresses up in Harker's clothes to go into the village to obtain victims for his three brides. At least twice Dracula brings back a child to be sacrificed to the trio. Harker is horrified when a woman begins wailing at the gateway to the castle. When he looks out, she sees him and cries: "'Monster, give me my child!'" (54), thinking that Harker is the one who has stolen her child. The Count calls in the wolves to dispense with her. As a result of his experiences in Castle Dracula, Harker has a breakdown, and Mina, who joins him later, finds him "so thin and pale and weak-looking. All the resolution has gone out of his dear eyes, and that quiet dignity which I told you was in his face has vanished" (113). Stoker thus enlists the reader's sympathy for Harker and distaste for the Count.

Stoker emphasizes the diabolical when he makes the Count's first victim on English soil the mastiff who tries to protect his master. An old man who had befriended Lucy and Mina during their visits to the graveyard at Whitby becomes the second. This man, Swales, loves to share the history of the area with the girls, and fills them in on the "real" stories behind the deaths of those buried in the graveyard, one of Lucy's favorite places. However, his

stories disturb Lucy as she discovers that her favorite seat in the graveyard is directly over a man who committed suicide. Shortly before the Count's arrival in England, the old man seems to sense his own impending death and frightens the girls with this recognition. Soon after Dracula's arrival, Mr. Swales is, indeed, found dead in the graveyard. Mina reports: "He had evidently, as the doctor said, fallen back in the seat in some sort of fright, for there was a look of fear and horror on his face that the men said made them shudder" (97). He becomes, as Carter says, "a harbinger of Dracula's advent" (Specter 110).

Dracula then sets his sights on the lovely Lucy Westenra who is introduced through letters exchanged with Mina, and represents the traditional virginal victim. She says, "Here am I, who shall be twenty in September, and yet I have never had a proposal till to-day, not a real proposal, and to-day I have had three" (65). Not surprisingly, all three proposals come from men who will make up the posse: Dr. Seward, Quincy Morris, and Arthur Holmwood, whose proposal she ultimately accepts. She is portrayed as kind and tenderhearted. She feels deeply when she must refuse the proposals of Dr. Seward and Mr. Morris, and worries about their reaction to her rejection. She is somewhat frail, even before the attacks by Dracula, and her

friends feel that they must keep from her the news that her mother is dying. Mina says of her: "Lucy is so sweet and sensitive that she feels influences more acutely than other people do" (97). All of these factors combine to create the perfect victim for the vampire. Her innocence versus his evil is colorfully described as Mina seeks out the sleep-walking Lucy in the graveyard:

[F]or there, on our favourite seat, the silver light of the moon struck a half-reclining figure, snowy white. The coming of the cloud was too quick for me to see much, for shadow shut down on light almost immediately; but it seemed to me as though something dark stood behind the seat where the white figure shone, and bent over it. (101)

As Lucy becomes weaker from Dracula's attacks, Dr. Seward calls in his friend and mentor, Dr. Van Helsing, who suspects from the beginning what might be wrong with Lucy. Her condition worsens, and Van Helsing feels a blood transfusion must be performed. Being a relatively new procedure, transfusions were thought to connect the two persons involved in a manner similar to matrimony. Therefore, because Lucy receives transfusions from Dr. Seward, Van Helsing, Mr. Morris, and Arthur Holmwood, her

virginity is symbolically compromised. Van Helsing notes this when he says: "Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though no wits, all gone--even I, who am faithful husband to this now-no-wife, am bigamist" (182). So not only has this chaste woman been figuratively raped by Dracula, she has committed polygamy as well, all due to Dracula.

As she lies dying, Lucy appears to change. As Arthur kneels beside her, "she looked her best, with all the soft lines matching the angelic beauty of her eyes" (167). But then a startling change transforms her as she opens her eyes, "which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft, voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips:--'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me!'" (168), at which point Van Helsing intervenes in order to save Arthur's life.

Soon after Lucy's death, disturbing reports from the community indicate that something is harming the village children. The posse suspects it is Lucy. Finding her in the churchyard, the posse discovers her much altered:

The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness.  
 . . . [W]e could see that the lips were crimson



with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe. (217)

And so Dracula has created a monster from a maiden.

Perhaps even more effective in developing the diabolical is Dracula's attack on Mina Harker--Mina who is described by Van Helsing as "one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven. . . So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist" (194). From the outset, Mina takes on the caretaker role. She comes from humble origins and must work for a living. But she vows to learn shorthand and typewriting so she can help her future husband, Jonathan, in his law business. She takes over the care of Lucy and seeks to shelter her from the knowledge of her mother's impending death. She even blames herself for the vampire marks on Lucy's neck, thinking she has pricked Lucy: "I was sorry to notice that my clumsiness with the safety-pin hurt her. Indeed, it might have been serious, for the skin of her throat was pierced" (103).

It is Mina who contacts Dr. Van Helsing with Jonathan's journal from his journey to Transylvania, and it is Mina who at last compiles the various journals, letters, and articles into a chronological record of Dracula's actions. Mina

accepts the role of nurturer, and as she comforts Arthur after Lucy's death, reflects: "We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked" (236). Because of her mother role, the posse tries to protect Mina by excluding her from the hunt, unwittingly leaving her open to attack from the vampire. And Dracula is quick to note that by destroying the mainstay of the posse, "he can sever the ties between heaven and earth" (Waller 39). Interestingly, while the attacks on Mina are taking place (without her knowledge), the only person who notices a change in her is the lunatic, Renfield: "'When Mrs. Harker came in to see me this afternoon she wasn't the same: It was like tea after the teapot had been watered'" (Stoker 286).

Imagine their horror, then, when they burst into the room and discover Mina in Dracula's embrace. The Count, dressed in black of course, is bending over the white-clad figure of Mina, forcing her to drink blood from a wound on his chest: "The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink" (288). Equally horrifying is the fact that Jonathan is stuporous in the bed beside them, unable to defend his wife from the monster's attack. Mina is, of course, distraught over the discovery that she has

become the latest victim, and prostrates herself before Jonathan: "'Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear'" (290).

Van Helsing, feeling responsible for Mina's predicament, once again tries to protect her by placing a piece of the Host on Mina's forehead. Instead of protecting her, she is branded. She cries out: "Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgment Day" (302). Yet Mina, despite her tribulations, pleads sympathy for Dracula:

That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all. Just think what will be his joy when he, too, is destroyed in his worser part that his better part may have spiritual immortality. You must be pitiful to him, too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction. (314)

Mina's condition renews the vigor with which the posse seeks to destroy Dracula. As they come closer and closer to the Count's home, Mina begins to show further evidence of her infestation. Van Helsing comments on the changes he

observes: "I can see the characteristics of the vampire coming in her face. . . . Her teeth are some sharper, and at times her eyes are more hard" (328). Once again the posse must keep Mina in the dark about their plans, not to protect her as before, but because of her psychic connection with Dracula. This connection, however, aids them in their quest for the vampire in that she can be hypnotized just prior to sunrise and read Dracula's mind, a feat which disturbs her greatly but which she allows to be utilized for the greater good. But she knows the danger of Dracula's power over her, as she warns Jonathan: "I know that when the Count wills me I must go. I know that if he tells me to come in secret, I must come by wile; by any device to hoodwink--even Jonathan" (332). Once again individual values are desecrated.

In the end, of course, Good triumphs over Evil. During the skirmish to destroy Dracula, Quincy Morris becomes the Count's last victim as he is stabbed by one of Dracula's gypsy escorts. Morris, as he lays dying, is the first to notice that Mina's forehead is no longer scarred: "See! the snow is not more stainless than her forehead! The curse has passed away!" (381). All return to their former lives but none are untouched by the experience.

And so these elements--adherence to the myth, appearance, life before [un]death, community conflict, and

victimization--are utilized by the author to create an abhorrent vampire character. Dracula meets the reader's expectations by exhibiting the typical vampire characteristics such as supernatural strength and dependence on blood for survival. While initially appearing human to Harker, Dracula's appearance ultimately reflects that of the mythic vampire. Stoker bases Dracula on a human known for excessive cruelty and embodies Dracula with a desire to rule the world after creating a legion of [un]dead followers. The posse of good must rally to destroy the evil, risking their own mortality and values in the conflict. Dracula takes the innocent as his victims. Stoker uses these components to create a wholly loathsome vampire. Interview with the Vampire shows how Anne Rice utilizes the same elements with a completely different outcome.

### CHAPTER 3

#### LOUIS DE POINTE DU LAC

The vampire was utterly white and smooth, as if he were sculpted from bleached bone, and his face was as seemingly inanimate as a statue, except for two brilliant green eyes [emphasis mine] that looked down at the boy intently like flames in a skull. But then the vampire smiled almost wistfully, and the smooth white substance of his face moved with the infinitely flexible but minimal lines of a cartoon. (Rice, Interview, 4)

Sound familiar? Except for the eye color, Rice could be describing Count Dracula. But even a minor element such as eye color can have a tremendous impact on reader response. Instead of having "red, gleaming eyes" (Stoker 101), Louis retains his human eyes, much as he retains his human sensibilities. Thus does Louis become the protagonist rather than antagonist, in his quest for meaning in [un]life.

Rice virtually rewrites the vampire myth in this novel. Not only are her vampires less vulnerable, more immortal

than Stoker's, she "revises the vampire myth to dissolve the barrier between good and evil" (King, 76). As the reporter queries Louis about various aspects of the myth, such as the power of religious paraphernalia, the ability to shape-shift, the efficacy of stakes through the heart, Louis answers, "'That is, how would you say today . . . bullshit?'" (23). Louis himself, however, was not always so sure that the myth was wrong. At one point in his wanderings, he comes upon the church in which his brother's funeral had been held. As he enters, he "had no fear. If anything, perhaps, I longed for something to happen, for the stones to tremble as I entered the shadowy foyer and saw the distant tabernacle on the altar" (142). But no stones trembled, and he was, in fact, mistaken for a human in need of spiritual guidance. A priest who tries to help Louis falls victim instead, as Louis cries, "Why, if God exists, does He suffer me to exist!" (147).

Louis and Claudia, in search for the truth about their nature, travel to Eastern Europe in search of Old World vampires, in search of their kin, a pursuit that leads them into the heart of the myth. As they move deeper into Eastern Europe, they unwittingly seek rest in a village beset by a vampire. The inn where they stay is crowded with villagers who have come for protection. Garlic and

crucifixes abound. And when Louis and Claudia decide to go out into the night, despite dire warnings from all present, the innkeeper "ripped the crucifix from the beam over her head, and she had it thrust out towards me now" (183). Louis, thinking they had been discovered, expects the words, "'Get thee behind me, Satan.'" (183) But what he hears, instead, is "'Take it, please, in the name of God,'" (183). What irony--to be given the very object believed to protect the living from the [un]dead.

The search into the night leads Louis and Claudia to that which they seek--the Old World vampire. But this creature answers no questions for the pair. Instead what they find is a "mindless, animated corpse. But no more." (190).

Rice's vampires are not indestructible, however. Armand answers Louis' inquiry of how a vampire can be destroyed: "'The destruction of your remains,' he said. 'Don't you know this? Fire, dismemberment . . . the heat of the sun. Nothing else. You can be scarred, yes; but you are resilient. You are immortal.'" (290). Rice's vampires share other commonalities with the folkloric vampire. They can move with speed imperceptible to humans. They can survive on the blood of animals. They must sleep during the day, and at that time are particularly vulnerable. "[The]



shutting of the coffin is always disturbing. It is rather like going under a modern anesthetic on an operating table. Even a casual mistake on the part of an intruder might mean death" (76). Rice's vampires are telepathic, like Dracula, and possess extraordinary strength.

Like Stoker, Rice utilizes appearance to set the tone for her characters. Unlike Stoker, however, Rice's characters evoke a sense of pleasure in the beholder. Louis is described by the reporter as "...beautiful, actually" (Rice, Interview, 47), an adjective seemingly inappropriate for a vampire. Louis describes his creator, Lestat, as "a tall fair-skinned man with a mass of blond hair and a graceful, almost feline quality to his movements" (13). Claudia, the child vampire created cooperatively by Louis and Lestat, is "always a vision, not just of child beauty, with her curling lashes and her glorious yellow hair, but of the taste of finely trimmed bonnets . . . and sheer white puffed-sleeve gowns with gleaming blue sashes" (99). Even the oldest vampire (or so he claims), Armand, appears young with auburn hair, dark eyes, and a "rich voice [which] effortlessly filled the house" (223). Thus by maintaining a human appearance can these players live among humanity without suspicion.

Rice, however, does not entirely avoid the use of the stereotypical vampire. The actors in Armand's coven, who disguise their true nature by pretending to be humans pretending to be vampires, adopt an appearance they think meets the criteria for vampires. One of the actors explains to Claudia that her "lovely pastel dress was beautiful but tasteless. 'We blend with the night,' she said. 'We have a funereal gleam.'" (244). All, with the exception of Armand, dye their hair black. They serve as a foil for Louis and Claudia as "Claudia gleamed like a jewel in their midst" (245). They, too, seem to be searching for answers, as they collectively gather about them paintings and engravings of horrors performed by men, explaining, "[V]ampires had not made such horrors themselves but merely collected them, confirming over and over that men were capable of far greater evil than vampires" (244).

Stoker used as a model for Dracula a human who was capable of horrifying cruelties, thus establishing the vampire character as the embodiment of evil. King points out how Rice establishes her characters in the same way, by establishing that they "were not evil when they were human beings, unlike Dracula, who gains his powers in part by his bloodthirsty nature" (76-77). Louis describes himself as a plantation owner in Louisiana in 1791, the year of his

transformation. Because of his father's death, he is responsible for his mother, sister, and brother. He declares, "I was so regular! There was nothing extraordinary about me whatsoever" (Rice, Interview, 6). Having been brought up Catholic, Louis believes in the power of the Church and seeks to live an exemplary life. When his brother shows signs of religious fervor, Louis attempts to encourage it, building an oratory where his brother might pray. But when his brother's fervor becomes frenzy and he insists that Louis sell everything so that he might "do God's work in France" (8), Louis begins to suspect that the brother might be insane. During the argument that follows, the brother falls and is killed. (Paradoxically Rice leads the reader to believe that the brother commits suicide--a reference to the myth whereby those who commit suicide are destined to become vampires). Louis is consumed with guilt over his brother's death and seeks, passively through drink and other ruinous behavior, to destroy himself: "I lived like a man who wanted to die but who had no courage to do it himself" (11). He created, of himself, the perfect victim for Lestat.

Of Lestat's life before [un]death we learn very little in Interview with the Vampire. We do learn, however, that he has a blind father for whom he cares, "who did not know

his son was a vampire and must not find out" (16). Claudia, however, is only a child and has little character-building experience to draw upon. Louis discovers her sitting with the body of her mother who had died from plague: "She was only five at most, and very thin, and her face was stained with dirt and tears" (74). Louis is discovered feeding on the child by Lestat, who taunts him unmercifully. The child survives this first attack and is taken to a hospital by passers-by--a hospital for orphans and victims of the plague. Lestat tells Louis that he saved her life, because he left the window open and people saw her there with her dead mother. The two then saved her again by taking her from the hospital: "The doctor was saying how glad he was we'd come for her, how most of them were orphans" (89). So even though Claudia becomes a powerful killer in her [un]death, she begins as an innocent child.

While a major theme in Dracula is the power of good over evil, Rice creates a "deconstruction of binary oppositions" (King 82), obliterating the demarcation between good and evil. Throughout the book, Louis searches for meaning in his [un]life, for a sense of history and community among vampires, knowing instinctively that a "vampire can starve from a lack of attention, affection, and the ability to function in a group" (Ayaz 32). Isolated in

life, Louis seeks to find meaning in [un]life through companionship with others like himself. He discovers that he can roam the world of the living without detection: "[A] vampire, richly dressed and gracefully walking through pools of light of one gas lamp after another might attract no more notice in the evening than hundreds of other exotic creatures--if he attracted any at all" (Rice, Interview, 40). Yet he gets no satisfaction from his invisibility and seeks to find community among those like himself. He remains with Lestat, in spite of the dislike he feels for him, "because he was the only one of my kind whom I knew" (63).

Just as the posse of good believed they could find common salvation through the destruction of Dracula, Louis believes he will find his purpose through a community of vampires: "And I'm confident I shall find vampires who have more in common with me than I with you. Vampires who understand knowledge as I do and have used their superior vampire nature to learn secrets of which you don't even dream" (81). Desperate to keep Louis with him and in an attempt to create a community that will ease Louis' mind, Lestat creates a daughter for the pair. And for awhile this ploy works; Louis feels compelled to stay with Lestat in order to care for Claudia. "Together Lestat, Louis, and

Claudia compose a parody of the nuclear family" (Badley 110). In Claudia, Louis finds a bond in [un]life that he never experienced in life. "I loved her so completely" he states, "she was so much the companion of my every waking hour, the only companion that I had, other than death" (105). And yet, as time passes and Claudia grows in mind, although not in body, even she begins to ponder the idea of a community of vampires. She begins a course of intensive study of the vampire myth, and implores Louis to take her to Eastern Europe where the myth seems to have originated. But their discovery that the Old World vampires are mindless monsters dashes their hopes and they retire to Paris, giving up hope of finding a brotherhood of vampires. In Paris they discover a coven, but what they find is a group of beings whose customs are as rigid and unyielding as those of human society. Their leader, Armand, whom Louis believes to possess the answers he seeks, engages Louis in a philosophic exploration of the existence of good and evil, during which Louis discovers that even after four hundred years, Armand finds no signification in either concept. Armand cries,

This evil, this concept, it comes from disappointment, from bitterness! Don't you see? Children of Satan! Children of God! Is this the only question you bring to me, is this the only

power that obsesses you, so that you must make us gods and devils yourself when the only power that exists is inside ourselves? (239)

At this point Louis realizes that he will never find the community that he seeks, that what he has found is an "unnatural group who had made of immortality a conformist's club" (246). In fact, Louis' sensibilities cause the group to seek to destroy him. Armand warns, "'That you are flawed is obvious to them: you feel too much, you think too much. As you said yourself, vampire detachment is not of great value to you'" (252). Thus, instead of finding comfort in community as had the posse of good, Louis finds himself an outcast, even among his own "kind." His passion and his sense of isolation and loneliness invite the reader to empathize.

Rice further deconstructs the vampire myth in the way she situates the victims. In Dracula, the victim of a vampire always becomes a vampire, and the Count uses these victims to replicate himself: "Dracula lives to eat and procreate. He creates his vampire wives to help him get the blood he needs, and to be always subservient to him" (Coburn 15). Conversely, in the Rice novels, the victim must be a willing participant in the process of becoming a vampire. Louis presents the perfect victim for Lestat's greed and

loneliness. Distraught after his brother's death and horrified of death itself, "I did not escape my brother for a moment. I could think of nothing but his body rotting in the ground" (Rice, Interview, 11). He moves away from his plantation and begins a course of self-destruction.

Although first attacked while in a drunken stupor, when Lestat returns to make him a vampire Louis becomes fully aware of what is being offered. He makes the choice to become a vampire:

Decided. It doesn't seem the right word. Yet I cannot say it was inevitable from the moment that he stopped into that room. No, indeed, it was not inevitable. Yet I can't say I decided. Let me say that when he'd finished speaking, no other decision was possible for me, and I pursued my course without a backward glance. (14-15).

Louis is appalled to discover, however, that his existence can continue only by denying life to others. He chooses animal blood for sustenance at the beginning, even though he finds this lacking. One of his first human victims is Lestat's own father, who is already dying: "The old man never even knew what happened. He never awoke from his stupor. I bled him just enough, opening the gash so that he would then die without feeding my dark passion.



That thought I couldn't bear" (57). Thus his act becomes one of humaneness, of euthanasia.

Louis can never accept Lestat's crass disregard for human life, and is shocked to find Lestat playing with his victims like a cat with a mouse. He causes the death of a woman whom Lestat had brought to the point of no return, in an effort to bring peace to the woman: "Tell God only that you are sorry . . . and then you'll die and it will be over" (86). He finally comes to terms with the idea that he must feed on humans, but he never fully accepts it. He chooses as his victims only strangers: "I drew only close enough to see the pulsing beauty, the unique expression, the new and passionate voice, then killed before those feelings of revulsion could be aroused in me, that fear, that sorrow" (98). Forced, much like the posse of good, to commit acts which go against his own moral code, he continues to regard himself as corrupt: "And what constitutes evil, real evil, is the taking of a single human life. . . . Because if God does not exist, this life . . . every second of it . . . is all we have" (237). And so he suffers each day of his existence, coming to believe that his continued existence can only have meaning if he tells his story to the world, if he warns humanity about the reality of vampires. This brings him to the reporter to whom he tells his story. But,

once again, he flounders as the reporter begs him to grant the "gift" of immortality: "He looked again at the boy. 'I've failed,' he sighed, smiling still. 'I have completely failed . . . '" (340).

Claudia, perhaps, is the most pathetic victim. Ironically, through Louis' attack on her, she is saved from certain death by plague and starvation and is taken to a children's hospital. Then Lestat rescues her from the hospital, but for his own sake, not hers. He believes that by creating a child for Louis he will be able to keep Louis with him, so she is sacrificed to his agenda. She becomes not only an intellectual companion for Louis, but also a savage killer. As time passes, however, her mind matures although her body does not, and she becomes a woman trapped in a child body, "her doll-like face seem[ing] to possess two totally aware adult eyes, and innocence seemed lost somewhere with neglected toys and the loss of a certain patience" (102). Not only is she painfully aware of her situation, Lestat torments her about it. When she tells him she has brought him a present, he quips, "'And I hope it's a beautiful woman with endowments you'll never possess,' he said, looking her up and down. Her face changed when he did this" (132). Anne Rice describes Claudia in Katherine Ramsland's Prism of the Night not only as "a woman trapped

in a child's body." She points out that Claudia is "the person robbed of power" (154). Elsewhere she explains further: "'There are women who are eternally called girls--cute, sweet, adorable, pinchable, and soft--when in fact they have a strong mind that's very threatening'" (Ramsland, Companion, 69).

Even though Louis continues to treat Claudia as a child, she loves him deeply. After she attempts to kill Lestat and Louis rejects her, she is grievously wounded. Louis hears her crying and is astonished: "The sound of it was terrible. It was more heartfelt, more awful than her mortal crying had ever been." (Rice, Interview, 140). It is she who convinces Louis to travel to Eastern Europe to seek their origin. And it is she who arouses the ire of the coven of vampires in Paris. They look upon her as a novelty, but as one which threatens them because she refuses to conform to their ideals. She is ultimately destroyed by the vampire antithesis to the posse of good because she has broken the vampire laws, becoming the preeminent victim.

Anne Rice, then, fashions a vampire with sensibility. The reader discovers, along with Louis, that he is less evil than the myth indicates. Rice's version of the myth corrodes the barrier between good and evil by insinuating doubt. Louis is pleasant in appearance and refuses to

accept the coven's dedication to mortal belief. Louis was an average man in life, dedicated to the care of his family, who fell victim through an error in judgment. He seeks meaning in [un]life through aesthetics not, like Dracula, through power. He chooses his victims carefully. Through deconstruction of the vampire myth and by situating her characters in a context of questing for knowledge and truth but finding only disillusionment and sorrow, Rice evokes a sense of compassion for the vampires from the reader. Notable, however, is the negative construction given to Lestat, the creator of both Louis and Claudia. But is he really evil? Is he Dracula rejuvenated? A close look at Rice's treatment of Lestat in The Vampire Lestat gives a different perception.

## CHAPTER 4

### LESTAT DE LIONCOURT

"Have I not told you?" sang the vampire queen.  
"Haven't we always known? There is nothing to  
fear in the sign of the Cross, nor the Holy Water,  
nor the sacrament itself . . ." She repeated the  
words, varying the melody under her breath, adding  
as she went on. "And the old rites, the incense,  
the fire, the vows spoken, when we thought we saw  
the Evil One in the dark, whispering . . ."  
(Rice, Lestat, 225-226)

In The Vampire Lestat, Anne Rice continues her  
deconstruction of the vampire myth. In fact, she takes the  
reader on a journey back in time and completely recreates  
the myth. Although Lestat must drink blood in order to  
remain functional, he will not perish if he does not.  
Instead, Lestat explains: "Now, when a vampire goes  
underground as we call it--when he ceases to drink blood and  
he just lies in the earth--he soon becomes too weak to  
resurrect himself, and what follows is a dream state" (4).

In fact, at the end of Interview, Louis discovers Lestat just awakening from "going underground" for reasons that are significant. The first "death" occurs after he has lost everyone he loves: his mother, Armand, Nicholas; the depth of his despair is simply too much to bear. Thus, without actually knowing what he was doing, he goes "underground," a state of suspended animation. After being aroused by Marius and learning the origin of vampirism, he attempts to live out a human life as Marius recommends. Along the way he makes many mistakes, among them the creation of Claudia, the child vampire. He loses Claudia and Louis, who try to destroy him, and becomes "a hideous and crippled monster, who could strike down only the very young or infirm" (502). The intensity of his passion becomes intolerable and he retreats underground again in 1929. He is just awakening from this stupor at the conclusion of Interview. Rice uses this element of her new myth to reveal the fervor of sensibility present in Lestat.

Rice questions even those elements thought to cause the absolute end for a vampire. After learning of Akasha and Enkil, Lestat begins to wonder if his creator, Magnus, has really perished, even though he appears to have been consumed by flames. Lestat introduces himself at the beginning of the novel with words that reflect the doubt:

"I am the Vampire Lestat. I'm immortal. More or less. The light of the sun, the sustained heat of an intense fire-- these things might destroy me. But then again, they might not" (3).

Through a complex pilgrimage back in time, Rice constructs a genesis for vampirism. The alpha vampires were victims of an evil demon who coveted their physical bodies. This ancient king and queen, Akasha and Enkil, "had come into Egypt from some other, older land" (437), and were horrified to find a people who practiced cannibalism. They led their people into an earth worship and were beloved by most people. As is often the case, however, a small group of cannibalistic men resent the intrusion of this good King and Queen. These men set upon the King and Queen as the sovereigns are attempting to exorcise a demon from the house of a steward. Mortally wounding the pair, the band leaves them for dead. However, seizing opportunity, the demon enters the bodies and creates the Adam and Eve of vampires:

"In sum, the demon had added and the demon had taken away, and the King and Queen were New Things. They could no longer eat food, or grow, or die, or have children, yet they could feel with an intensity that terrified them. And the demon

had what it wanted: a body to live in, a way to be in the world at least, a way to *feel*.

"But then came the even more dreadful discovery, that to keep their corpses animate, the blood must be fed." (440-441)

Thus the monarchs were forced to perform the very act of cannibalism that they had resisted.

Being wise, the good King and Queen realize that they must mystify their abhorrent fate. So they decide that if sacrifices must be made, they would be made for the good of the people. They accept themselves as a path to the gods who could bring good fortune to the people, and "girded with the symbolic and the mysterious what could not be allowed to become common" (443). For centuries the myth endures, albeit changing through time. Marius is abducted by the Keltoi to become the god of the woods, without whom the Keltic people could not survive. "Marius's history illustrates that humans originally perceived the blood-drinking immortals as servers of the good. He explains that it was only during the end of the Roman Empire that they were seen as demons by the Christians" (Roberts 49-50).

By situating Lestat as a descendent of "gods" who took human blood for the good of the people, Rice introduces doubt as to the malevolence of vampires in general and



Lestat in particular. Ironically both Parisian covens of vampires (Armand's original coven and the coven that established the Theatre of the Vampires) accept the Christian definition of themselves as evil and adhere to the beliefs of folklore, i.e., the danger of religious icons to vampires, the conviction that vampires are children of Satan. Lestat, always the rebel, refuses to espouse these beliefs, even before he knows of Akasha and Enkil and the inception of vampirism.

Akin to black and white hats signifying good and evil in the old westerns, Rice uses opposites in her novel to distinguish the good from the bad. Gabrielle is blond, fair-skinned, and gives the appearance of light: "She looked delicate as a diamond can look delicate when preyed upon by the light" (160). Armand, when first encountered with the coven in Paris, appears surreal. He was dressed in tatters, black of course, "[b]ut his face was shining white, and perfect, the countenance of a god it seemed, a Cupid out of Caravaggio, seductive yet ethereal" (200). As mentioned earlier, Louis and Lestat are both very attractive beings. Lestat describes himself in the following passage:

I have thick blond hair, not quite shoulder length, and rather curly, which appears white under fluorescent light. My eyes are gray, but

they absorb the colors blue or violet easily from surfaces around them. And I have a fairly short narrow nose, and a mouth that is well shaped but just a little too big for my face. It can look very mean, or extremely generous, my mouth. It always looks sensual. But emotions and attitudes are always reflected in my entire expression. I have a continuously animated face. (Rice, Lestat, 3)

By contrast, the original coven of les Innocents resembles the stereotypical vampires, much as the later coven in the Theatre des Vampires appear. This coven espouses the Christian doctrine that they are children of Satan and they live and dress the part. They live in a graveyard, surrounded by "bodies in various states of decomposition" (210). They retain the original clothes of the grave, and live in filth and decay. They present a picture of madness and horror: "I saw young ones, old ones, men and women, a young boy--and all clothed in the remnants of human garments, caked with earth, feet bare, hair tangled with filth" (211). In short, they provide the foil for Lestat's sensibility and increase the sense of refinement attributed to Lestat.

Like Louis, Lestat begins his life as an ordinary human. Born the seventh son of a Marquis, his prospects in life are bleak given the fact that, although aristocratic, his family is poor. (Does Rice tease us with his place in the family? Was his father also a seventh son? Was Lestat predestined to become a vampire?) As a child, he is taunted by his older brothers, and becomes the family rebel. At the age of twelve, Lestat is sent to a local monastery school, where he decides his purpose in life is to become a priest. He explains that he enjoyed being surrounded by people who saw him as good: "I wanted to be enclosed forever with people who believed I could be good if I wanted to be" (31). But his family is outraged at the idea of their son becoming a simple parish priest and force him to return home. A few years later, he runs off with actors who bring their performance to town, after discovering that he has a gift for impromptu creation. Again he is dragged home.

Finally, an important episode changes his life forever. During an extremely cold and brutal winter, a pack of wolves besieges the village. Lestat, who has by now thrown himself into perfecting his hunting, decides to save the village from this plight. He sets out with his two beloved mastiffs and his own personal mare to "slay the dragon." During the course of the hunt, we are given important insight into the

vigor of his emotions. His mare is mortally wounded, causing Lestat indefinable anguish: "She was like an insect half mashed into a floor, but she was no insect. She was my struggling, suffering mare" (28). He defeats the wolves and returns home, to be met with incredulity from his brothers that he could have performed such an act. This disbelief from his family, coupled with his sorrow at losing his mare and his constant companions, the dogs, leave him disconsolate. Soon, however, the village learns of his courage and he becomes a local hero. Moreover, this courage attracts the attention of his vampire creator, Magnus, who "see[s] Lestat as a proper heir because of his fearlessness in fighting the wolves" (Roberts 41).

As a result of the wolf slaying, Lestat is befriended by Nicholas, who is the son of a local merchant and who is also a rebel. Nicholas is an extremely talented violinist, but his family refuse to allow him to go to Paris to become a musician. Thus Nicholas and Lestat, both insubordinate, strike up a friendship and engage in deep philosophical debates. During one of these disputations, however, Lestat becomes aware of the inevitability of his own temporality. Horrified by death, "[r]eal death, total death, inevitable, irreversible, and resolving nothing!" (Rice, Lestat, 57), Lestat becomes even more vulnerable to the vampire's attack:

"Lestat's conversion begins not in a loss of faith (Lestat has none) or the deaths of parents (his father is blind and his mother unconventional) but in an immediate, visceral confrontation with his own mortality" (Badley 115).

Feeling persecuted, Lestat and Nicholas flee to Paris with the aid of Lestat's mother, who understands his discontent. There Lestat finds happiness in a small theater. He discovers his innate talent in acting and succeeds in finding his calling, despite the undercurrent of his continuing dread of death, what he calls his "malady of mortality" (Rice, Lestat, 69). Thus Rice paints a picture of a man who is aristocratic, spirited, full of life, who through no fault of his own but by misfortune, becomes the prey of a vampire.

Rice continues her deconstruction of the polarity of good and evil through Lestat's search for purpose in existence. Yet Lestat's quest for validation takes him not in search of a vampire community, but into the world of art and beauty, through which he seeks his truth. He finds his heightened sensibility as a vampire entrancing, and falls in love with the essence of humanity: "I doted upon their pink skin and delicate limbs, the precision with which they moved, the whole process of their lives as if I had never been one of them at all" (114). He spends little time

decrying his fate and instead uses his newfound wealth to enhance the lives of those he loves. Originally horrified at the thought of causing death in order to survive, he philosophically pledges to feed only upon the evildoer, thus converting his own malevolence into a societal usefulness.

Much as Stoker's posse of good feels compelled to compromise their own values for the collective good, Lestat is compelled by vampirism to compromise his. He is pained that he must lie to his mother to keep his condition a secret and spare her (122). He agonizes over the isolation from his family and friends that his condition imposes. Knowing his mother's horror of death, he feels impelled to offer her the "Dark Gift" so that she might escape her fate. Overjoyed by the prospect of spending eternity with her, he is nevertheless shocked by the ruthlessness with which she takes victims. When Gabrielle asks Lestat to share the "Dark Gift" with Nicholas so that they can be reunited, he vehemently refuses. When asked why, he replies, "'Because he's young . . . and he has life before him. He's not on the brink of death'" (179).

The conflict in this novel as well as that in Interview with the Vampire occurs between the vampires themselves, not, as in Dracula, between the living and the [un]dead. Lestat parodies the posse of good when he finds himself

pitted against the original Parisian coven. He is mystified by this community which chooses to live beneath a graveyard, in darkness and the stench of decay. This group attacks him because he chooses to walk among the living, to live by his own set of rules rather than those handed down by the Church. They claim, "In vanity and wickedness you disregard the Dark Ways. You live among mortals! You walk in the places of light" And he retorts, "'And why don't you? . . . Are you to go to heaven on white wings when this penitential sojourn of yours is ended? Is that what Satan promises? Salvation? I wouldn't count on it, if I were you'" (213). Lestat looks for morality "within the heart of the individual; not in a church or its trappings" (Kemp 20), and so finds no possible goodness in this band of vampires who are mindlessly clinging to the old ways. Warned that by living among mortals, he will be sentencing himself to a living hell because he will come to love mortals, he questions whether the "Dark Trick" by which these vampires were converted had robbed them of their wits, "'Or were you monsters when you were living? How could we not all of us love mortals with every breath we take?'" (Rice, Lestat, 232).

Ultimately Lestat finds his purpose, his place in the "Savage Garden." Through his establishment of the rock band

and the proclamation to the world that vampires exist and are real, he seeks "to affect things, to make something happen!" (522). He endeavors to give mortals a true dragon to slay, and in the process draw out all the vampires in the world, either to unite or to destroy each other. His motives are not entirely altruistic, however. In his typical puckish way he hopes to gain from the experience commenting, "How could I not love it, the mere idea of it? How could it not be worth the greatest danger, the greatest and most ghastly defeat? Even at the moment of destruction, I would be alive as I have never been" (17).

Rice modifies the concept of victim in this novel. No longer are the victims innocent; in this novel they are guilty of crimes more horrible than Lestat's. Lestat is quite meticulous about the victim he will choose: "I had to wait a long time for the particular kind I wanted--a man who had killed other mortals and showed no remorse" (6). His very first victim is the old servant of Magnus, "and a somewhat treacherous one at that" (109). He pledges from the outset to feed only on evildoers, thus in his mind validating his existence. But his heightened faculties make him aware of the beauty of each victim, even the most evil: "But you can't imagine what it's like for us to look on living flesh. There are those billions of colors and tiny



configurations of movement, yes, that make up a living creature on whom we concentrate" (133). And therein lies Lestat's basic conflict--how can he destroy what is so beautiful to behold? As Gordon points out, because his senses are heightened, the vampire experiences the individual character and suffering of each victim, "a kind of love [that] makes predation and survival a moral conundrum" (232).

The paradox of love and suffering exists even with those the vampire cares most for. Although Lestat shares the Dark Gift with Gabrielle as an act of clemency to spare her the horror of death, he is dismayed, much as Louis was with regard to Claudia, that she kills so ruthlessly and seemingly without conscience. Gabrielle eventually discovers that she is happiest away from the world of men, and seeks her truth in nature. She begins to leave Lestat for longer and longer periods of time, eventually disappearing altogether, leaving Lestat grieving over the separation.

Lestat impulsively and against his better judgment shares the gift with Nicholas, who begs for it, but then Lestat discovers that Nicholas's motive from the outset is destruction--destruction of those who would hold him back and destruction of himself. Nicholas saw himself as the

converse of Lestat--the dark versus the light. Nicholas rages at Lestat, "And for every aspect of our proposed damnation you found exuberance. . . . And in exact proportion to the light coming out of you, there was the darkness in me!" (266). Lestat generously seeks to share the gift with Nicholas in order to give Nicholas the preternatural sensibility, but he makes a grave miscalculation, not realizing how profound is Nicholas's torment and how deep his need for revenge. Thus Lestat himself becomes the victim when Nicholas rejects him and Gabrielle abandons him.

Perhaps Rice most effectively establishes the reader's empathy for the vampire character by revealing, in a kind of counter-clockwise motion, that vampires were victims themselves. Lestat was taken, against his will, to the lair of Magnus, where Magnus attacks him. Lestat tells us how he resisted, "harder than I had ever fought anyone or anything in my existence, even the wolves. I beat on him, kicked him, tore at his hair. But I might as well have fought the animated gargoyles from a cathedral, he was that powerful" (88). And then Magnus jumped into the fire, leaving Lestat alone with his new and abhorrent condition, to fend for himself, to find the answers alone, abandoned, isolated, a monster with a conscience.

Armand, too, was a victim. He had been ripped from his mother's arms and carried away to become a sex slave for depraved Moorish monarch. Marius rescued him from this ordeal and allowed him to grow and mature. The kindness that Marius showed the young boy was such a relief that Armand felt compelled to do anything to be able to stay with Marius, even to accept the Dark Gift (294-95). But because Marius chooses, as Lestat does, to walk among mortals, he is hunted down by the coven who believe Christian doctrine. Marius is thrown into the fire and seemingly destroyed, and Armand is taken into the coven, to become "as the Black Death itself, a vexation without explanation, to cause man to doubt the mercy and intervention of God" (301).

Moving backwards in time, Rice reveals that Marius was also kidnapped. Captured by the Keltoi to become their god of the woods, he was chosen because he was a man of learning, and was imprisoned until Samhain when he would become the new god of the woods, without whom the Keltoi felt they could not survive. The previous manifestation of the god had been burned, almost to death, and the Keltoi believed that without the god of growing things, they would perish. They forced Marius into the lair of the weakened god, who nevertheless had enough strength to attack Marius and make him a blood-drinker. The dying god charged Marius

to go into Egypt to find the cause of the god's mysterious injuries. Marius was able to escape and seek out the origin of vampirism:

I had to find the old gods because I could not bear to be alone among men. The full horror of it was upon me, and though I killed only the murderer, the evildoer, my conscience was too finely tuned for self-deception. I could not bear the realization that I, Marius, who had known and enjoyed such love in his life, was the relentless bringer of death. (425)

Marius's quest for solace takes him to Egypt, where he discovers other revenants like himself, all of whom had been burned like the old Keltic god. He finally discovers the Elder, a vampire who is entrusted with the care of the Adam and Eve of vampirism, Akasha and Enkil. From the Elder, Marius learns the story of the origin, that Akasha and Enkil had actually been benevolent rulers who were victimized by a demon.

This complex interweaving of tales leads the reader back to Lestat who also does not choose to become a vampire. Once transformed, he is left alone to cope with the change to his entire being. He must learn the rules by himself, and is isolated from everything and everyone that he once

knew. Although wanting nothing more than to be good, he is attacked by other members of his kind, and abandoned by those he has loved. He retreats into the earth to escape the pain, but only to regroup, not to give up. He celebrates the evolution of mankind, and relentlessly questions the old ways. He has passion, courage, and devotion. He has made the mythical quest into the depths of Hell and survived. In short, by situating Lestat as victim, as worthy instead of evil, as a moral human before [un]death, as pleasing rather than hideous, as a casualty of folklore, Anne Rice has created the champion she required. She sums it up by saying, "Lestat was my male hero who could do what I couldn't" (Ramsland, Companion, 249).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

"Don't you see?" I said softly. "It is a new age. It requires a new evil. And I *am* that new evil." I paused, watching him. "I am the vampire for these times." (Rice, Lestat, 228)

Anne Rice, then, uses words in her Vampire Chronicles to undo centuries of myth. She has pitted her vampires against the archetypal Dracula and won. Much like Bram Stoker, Rice has not received much scholarly attention, although her work has been widely accepted. Most of her books have attained the status of bestsellers, and Interview with the Vampire was made into one of the highest earning films in 1994. "The mass appeal that her novels have makes her an index of the trends of our time" (Langley 1).

Rice has unraveled the myth as it has been passed from generation to generation, and rewoven it to be reflective of our contemporary disillusionment and societal *angst*, attributes with which she has imbued her characters. Her myth rejects the Christian ideology that has driven the traditional myth through time, and she has devised a legend

which attributes vampirism to extrinsic rather than intrinsic factors, i.e., vampires in the Rice myth became so through accidental means. Rice's vampires are not affected by religious paraphernalia; they refuse to accept the evil placed upon them by human beliefs. Rice understands "that part of what the reader reconstructs as the text's point of view includes the ideology which, historically, gave rise to that text's production" (Cohan 346). By rewriting that ideology, Rice mirrors the contemporary frustration with religion, and thus awakens the reader's sense of identity with the characters.

Rice frames her vampires in such a way as to evoke sympathy from the audience. Whereas Dracula is frightful to behold, Rice's vampires are aesthetically pleasing. Rice embraces the Aristotelian tenet of creating pity and fear in the reader by structuring her vampires as relatively ordinary creatures who, through misadventure or an error in judgment, fall prey themselves. As Aristotle says in his *Poetics*: "[P]ity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves" (240). Rice accomplishes this idea by having her vampires tell their own stories, unlike Dracula who is revealed through the eyes of the living. Thus Rice's vampires create themselves as sensate beings and allow the reader to comprehend their

situations with greater clarity. As Norman Friedman remarks, this technique allows the reader to perceive "the action as it filters through the consciousness of one of the characters involved, yet perceive[s] it *directly* as it impinges upon that consciousness" (1164).

By using first-person narrative, Rice allows us into the minds of the vampires. We are able to experience the struggle for meaning, the struggle for delineation between good and evil that occurs outwardly in Dracula. Although Rice retains the outward struggle by setting her main characters against the Old World vampires, the main conflict occurs within the major figures. Louis pursues meaning in his [un]life through aesthetics, while Lestat seeks to force humanity to accept his malfeasance as truth and to arouse a sense of purpose in an aimless society. Rice blurs the distinction between good and evil by creating intrinsically good characters forced to commit abhorrent acts in order to survive.

Rice chooses her victims carefully. She situates her major characters as victims, focusing the reader's attention on "the inner turmoil that transformation causes, a turmoil [prompting] us to view the vampire more as a victim searching for control than as a figure of power with the ability to control" (Skrip 14). Louis, at first, refuses to



take human victims, eventually realizing that without the human/vampire interaction, he will perish, so he then takes victims quickly and compassionately. Lestat vows to take no innocent blood. Victims are not destined, as they are in Dracula, to become vampires. Dracula's victims are chosen for the way in which they could advance his desire to take over the world. Louis and Lestat choose victims out of compassion or necessity.

Louis and Lestat seek, ultimately, nothing more than to discover their place in an ever-changing society; how they can survive in a world of mortals; what meaning they can bring. In fine, Louis and Lestat echo the human quest for signification.

Are perhaps the revival of vampire literature, its translation to films, and the success of Anne Rice in the late twentieth century a reaction similar to the response in the late nineteenth century which is credited with the success of Bram Stoker's Dracula? Is society refusing, in the wake of significant technological and scientific advances, to accept only that which can be explained? I think perhaps Anne Rice anticipated the drastic political and sociological move to the conservative right that has occurred in America in the past decade or so. She has, in consummate post-modern fashion, denied the circumscriptions

evoked by such a move. Cognizant of the fact that "literature is part of society, that literary values are social values" (Weimann 275), Rice challenges us to accept beings not like ourselves and to see these beings as individuals with sensibility, emotion, intellect. Perhaps in social terms she urges society to movement toward acceptance of other humans as beings worthy of existence, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual preference, etc. She uses the rhetoric of context to compel the reader to recognize the commonalities of humanity, rupturing the demarcation between good and evil and thus forcing us to re-examine our own value system, because "[h]uman values, and human roles, change--and rhetoric itself is the effecting of change through language" (Baumlin 37).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a complete discussion of the vampire myth, see also Ernest Jones' On the Nightmare, Montague Summers' The Vampire: His Kith and Kin, and J. Gordon Melton's The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Carter's The Vampire in Literature: A Critical Bibliography is an excellent source for the vampire in literature.

<sup>3</sup> For a complete reference of the history of Dracula, see Raymond T. McNally's and Radu Florescu's In Search of Dracula: The History of Dracula and Vampires.

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