

RESHAPING THE ARCHETYPE:
MYTHMAKING AND MATRIARCHY IN
ANNE RICE'S VAMPIRE CHRONICLES

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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RESHAPING THE ARCHETYPE:
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ABSTRACT

Since its birth in the nineteenth century, the vampire has been a prominent figure in English prose literature. John Polidori, J. Sheridan Le Fanu, and Bram Stoker adapted and reshaped the creature of legend into the archetypal character we see today in popular literature and films. These authors began a literary tradition through which the vampire became far more than the mindless, animated corpse of folklore. It served as a symbol of evil, predation, aberrant sexuality, and abusive power - a corruptive force which parasitically drains the innocent victim of life and soul, and which, consequently, must be destroyed by human society.

The twentieth century has seen a resurgence of interest in the classic monster. In particular, in The Vampire Chronicles, Anne Rice has adopted and transformed the nineteenth century fiend into a "vehicle for introspective examination of the human condition" (Skrip 3). Even though Rice creates a new vampire mythology, it is nonetheless rooted in the tradition established in the nineteenth century. She rejects many of the traditions, and reforms the cold-hearted killer into a sympathetic character with a conscience. Rice's vampires explore complex issues such as the nature of morality, the need for community, the

aesthetic principle, and the equality of the sexes.

In the first three novels of The Vampire Chronicles, namely Interview With the Vampire (1976), The Vampire Lestat (1985), and The Queen of the Damned (1988), Rice explores the vampire's quest for knowledge and identity. The result is the progressive development of a mythology of vampirism in which oppositions are blurred. The concepts of good and evil, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, vampire and god, death and life, become malleable, reflecting her vision of a society in which ethical behaviour depends upon replacing the patriarchal and religious absolutism of the nineteenth century with relativism.

While nineteenth century literature presented a vehicle for asserting patriarchal standards of social behaviour, depicting women as subservient, self-sacrificing victims or sexual deviants, Rice liberates women from restrictive, male-imposed roles. Commencing her mythology in Interview With the Vampire, Rice assaults traditional views of women as infantilized objects of exchange between men. She reacts against nineteenth century patriarchal and religious absolutism and creates instead strong female and male characters who struggle against the established ideologies. The mythology becomes more intricate and matrilineal as the series progresses, and in The Queen of the Damned, Rice realizes her vision of gender equity by reconstructing

vampirism as a matriarchy. Patriarchal structures deemed effective by nineteenth century writers because they restore order by suppressing the monstrous female become defective structures in Interview With the Vampire because they create the monstrous female by repressing her. Finally, these structures are subsumed by matriarchal structures in The Queen of the Damned by liberating the feminine. Rice constructs an ethical system which encourages individuals to search for the goodness within rather than relying upon gender divisions or abstract ideologies, be they social, political, or religious.

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CHAPTER ONE

Bloodlines

The vampire is a creature that has existed in folklore as long as a vampire's unlife-expectancy. However, in English fiction, the genesis of the vampire can be traced to a specific event and time. A genealogy of vampires reveals that the grand patriarch is the result of a ghost-story writing contest between members of the "brat-pack" of the nineteenth century, Byron, the Shelleys, and Dr. John Polidori. The Gothic Summer of 1816 spawned the creature which would dominate the imaginations of writers of horror and gothic fiction even to the present decade: "Not only was 'The Vampyre' the first work of its kind in English prose, but its leading character, Lord Ruthven, embodied many of the characteristics of the literary vampire that shape the genre to the present day" (Leatherdale 51). Polidori began a tradition in literature, which was later adopted and adapted by J. Sheridan Le Fanu in "Carmilla", and by Bram Stoker in Dracula, in which the vampire moves among society, enticing and corrupting the innocent, draining the bodies of its victims' vital life-force - living blood.

Macdonald and Scherf (Collected Fiction) point out that,

The vampire of folklore, insofar as one can generalize about it, is . . . a corpse reanimated not by its own spirit but by an external, and

often impersonal, evil force. Like many revenants, it is usually confined to haunting a specific locale; often, it preys only on members of its own family (1).

The vampire writers of the nineteenth century injected new life into an ancient legendary creature and imbued it with its own diabolic intelligence and human characteristics. Beginning with Polidori's tale, the vampire story became a conscious battle of wills, human and vampiric, which embodied the more abstract concepts of Good and Evil. In the nineteenth century, these opposing concepts took the shape of the oppositions between religious faith and rejection of religion as superstition, asexual "purity" and aggressive sexuality (particularly in women), and patriarchal control and feminine chaos.

The archetypal vampire we know today is in large part due to Polidori's adaptation of Byron's fragmentary ghost story, begun at the Diodati writing contest of June, 1816. Macdonald suggests that although Mary Shelley stated unequivocally that the ghost stories were 'never related',

Polidori too clearly knew Byron's story. He summarized it several times, most fully and coherently in his introduction to Ernestus Berchtold . . . 'The Vampyre', as Polidori wrote it later in the summer, follows his outline of Byron's proposed tale closely, and contains a version of the incident in Byron's fragment. (89)

Polidori's tale, like Byron's fragment, involves two men who travel together from England to the Continent; while there,

one dies after extracting from his friend a promise never to reveal news of his death to anyone. Polidori also adopts from Byron the event which becomes the birth of the vampire into English prose: the remaining traveller returns to England to discover his late companion moving in the same circles as his own family and ingratiating himself to his sister (Macdonald 88-89).

Byron did not only aid Polidori's tale by providing a plot. Indirectly, Byron also contributed to the popularity of the story in the public eye. The publishers originally credited Byron with authorship, and despite his insistence to the contrary, this association greatly encouraged readership. On 1 April, 1819, Henry Colburn's New Monthly Magazine published 'The Vampyre: A Tale by Lord Byron'. Colburn was apparently attempting to boost sales for his magazine which was having financial difficulties, but Polidori was blamed for the fraud in the suggestion that he had used Byron's name in order to be published. Indignant, he wrote to the magazine demanding that this be remedied. He was not alone in this sentiment; Byron, too, wrote to the magazine in which he saw "The Vampyre" advertised, in order to disown it. Macdonald provides Byron's letter, in which he states,

. . . I presume that it is neither unjust nor ungracious to request that you will favour me by contradicting the advertisement to which I allude.

- If the book is clever it would be base to deprive the real writer - whoever he may be - of his honours; - and if stupid - I desire the responsibility of nobody's dullness but my own. (185)

Fortunately for Polidori, the public on the continent did not generally know of Byron's disavowal; thus 'The Vampyre's' popularity continued to grow. In 1819 alone, according to Macdonald, "the tale went through five English editions" (190).

However, it was not only increased readership which Byron added to Polidori's story. In fact, Polidori adopts the character of Lord Byron, himself, for his story's main character. Lord Ruthven, Polidori's vampire, draws his name from a character in Lady Caroline Lamb's Glenarvon, Clarence Ruthven, Lord Glenarvon, based on Byron. Moreover, the personality traits of Polidori's Ruthven mirror Byron's personality with remarkable similarity: "Ruthven is . . . transparently a portrait - or caricature - of Byron: a gloomy and financially embarrassed but highly fashionable aristocrat, fond of travel and successful with women Perhaps Polidori was turning the tables on an employer who had made fun of him enough]" (Macdonald 98).

As Leatherdale points out, "Polidori may not have thought of his tale in vampire terms - to him it was a further variation on the Gothic villain - but it opened up new possibilities for the fictional vampire" (51).

Polidori's vampire, Lord Ruthven, is no longer the mindless revenant of folklore. He is more human than monster: he is able to move easily through society, he is able to form intimate relationships with friends and lovers, he is even able to inspire loyalty and duty in others. Macdonald and Scherf (Collected Fiction) discuss Ruthven's humanness:

.... The vampire of popular culture is a human being, though usually a sinister or horrible one; it is an aristocrat, a wanderer, a seducer. In short, it is a combination of the Byronic hero and of a caricature of Byron himself. (1)

Polidori, indeed, paints Ruthven as a Byronic hero even in his first paragraph. Ruthven is portrayed as one who is self-isolated, yet popular for his peculiarities:

He gazed upon the mirth around him, as if he could not participate therein. Apparently, the light laughter of the fair only attracted his attention, that he might by a look quell it, and throw fear into those breasts where thoughtlessness reigned. Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose: some attributed it to the dead grey eye . . . His particularities caused him to be invited to every house. (7)

The Byronic qualities with which Polidori endows Lord Ruthven cause the vampire to seem human. His apparent alienation inspires sympathy, while his coldness and insensitivity towards others inspires antipathy; his peculiarities inspire interest and attraction, while, simultaneously, his "dead grey eye" and "deadly hue" inspire revulsion. To add to this sense of ambivalence, Polidori adds a wild, irresponsible personality which can be

attractive until it harms another. For example, he tries to attract only pure and innocent women so that he can corrupt them. The corrupt, or easily corruptible, hold little interest for Ruthven:

. . . the possession of irresistible powers of seduction rendered his licentious habits more dangerous to society. It had been discovered that his contempt for the adulteress had not originated in hatred of her character; but that he had required, to enhance his gratification, that his victim, the partner of his guilt, should be hurled from the pinnacle of unsullied virtue, down to the lowest abyss of infamy and degradation. (10-11)

Similarly, in gambling, it is only those who desperately need money who lose against Ruthven. He loses only to those who have ruined others.

In detailing this reprehensible behaviour, Polidori focuses primarily on Ruthven's moral corruption rather than his vampirism. He corrupts the innocent by human rather than supernatural means. As Senf suggests, "Seeing Ruthven as both a vampire and a derivative of the eighteenth century rake, Polidori often chooses to emphasize his character's moral failure rather than his supernatural ability" (36).

An important addition to the vampire myth which is explored in Polidori's tale is the intimate relationship which forms between the vampire and his human travelling companion, Aubrey. Ruthven begins to form a bond of intimacy with Aubrey by first eliciting a sense of gratitude from the young man upon inviting him to join Ruthven as a

companion in his travels: "Flattered by such a mark of esteem from him, who, apparently, had nothing in common with other men, he gladly accepted it" (9). This bond is slightly eroded when Aubrey witnesses Ruthven's immoral behaviours, but is reinstated when Aubrey falls ill as a reaction to Ianthe's death:

... Lord Ruthven chanced at this time to arrive at Athens, and from whatever motive, upon hearing of the state of Aubrey, immediately placed himself in the same house, and became his constant attendant . . . Lord Ruthven, by his kind words, implying almost repentance for the fault that had caused their separation, and still more by the attention, anxiety, and care which he showed, soon reconciled him to his presence. (15)

Ruthven establishes himself as a caring and loyal friend, which Aubrey is later called upon to reciprocate, cementing the human bond of intimacy. When Ruthven is mortally wounded by bandits, he extracts an oath from Aubrey, based on honour and friendship:

" . . . you may save my honour, your friend's honour . . . if you would conceal all you know of me, my honour were free from stain in the world's mouth - and if my death were unknown for some time in England . . . Swear by all your soul reveres, by all your nature fears, swear that for a year and a day you will not impart your knowledge of my crimes or death to any living being in any way, whatever may happen, or whatever you may see" . .
 . "I swear!" said Aubrey. (17)

Aubrey later repents this decision when it prevents him from warning others against the vampire; however, his initial reaction toward Ruthven is one of honour, loyalty, and

obligation. Auerbach remarks, "This oath . . . has absolute binding power in Polidori's 'The Vampyre' . . . The oath is frightening because it involves not raw power, but honor and reciprocity . . . the oath signifies . . . a bond between companions that is shared and chosen" (14). Once again, the vampire's human capacities of intellectual and emotional manipulation are emphasized over supernatural control. Aubrey voluntarily gives his oath in friendship; he is not coerced through any form of supernatural influence.

Polidori changes the vampire tradition in yet another important way. While the vampire of folklore was generally confined to a particular region of the world and a particular circle of victims, usually its own family, the new vampire has a wider reach. By making his vampire an aristocrat, Polidori increases Ruthven's power in society as well as his mobility. Leatherdale writes, "By casting Ruthven as a nobleman, Polidori invests him with greater literary potential: the vampire becomes more mobile, his erotic qualities are enhanced, and he is able to exercise 'droit de seigneur' over his victims" (51). As an aristocrat, Ruthven is able, even expected, to travel. Thus, his evil activities are no longer confined to his home region, but are extended to the far reaches of the world, increasing the fear of contagion. Most importantly, however, with the increased eroticism, and the possession of

'droit de seigneur', the vampire's power over women is increased. These factors introduce an erotic patriarchal power associated with the vampire. Senf suggests that "While the vampire in most folklore versions has been simply a hungry corpse with no special preferences about the choice of victim, Polidori suggests an erotic attachment - often perversely so - between vampire and victim" (34).

Polidori's vampire is confined to feeding on women as his power does not extend to feeding on men: Ianthe, the woman Aubrey falls in love with, explains that the vampire is "forced every year, by feeding upon the life of a lovely female to prolong his existence for the ensuing months" (12). That women become the sole victims of the vampire is not surprising, considering the view of women as portrayed by Polidori. Ianthe is described as a pure object, an ivory tower, who waits on Aubrey without participating in his activities: she is "innocence, youth, and beauty . . . she would stand by, and watch the magic effects of his pencil, in tracing the scenes of her native place" (12). She is viewed as a child and an intangible object. She is a "frank, infantile being," to whom Aubrey is a "guardian" rather than a lover; understandably so since it is "her innocence" which "won his heart," as well as her "almost fairy form" (13). She would seem, to the nineteenth century reader, to be the ideal woman. Unfortunately, she does

possess one unacceptable quality which necessitates her destruction - intelligence: "her eyes spoke too much mind for any one to think she could belong to those who had no souls" (12). This defect in the woman is remedied when she comes to belong to one who had no soul; in losing her life-blood to Ruthven, Ianthe belongs to the vampire. One might infer that perhaps she did not possess as much "mind" as Aubrey originally thought.

Similarly, Aubrey's sister, who seems the ideal of womanhood, betrays a profundity of spirit which is unacceptable and must be destroyed:

Miss Aubrey had not that winning grace which gains the gaze and applause of the drawing-room assemblies. There was none of that light brilliancy which only exists in the heated atmosphere of a crowded apartment. Her blue eye was never lit up by the levity of the mind beneath. There was a melancholy charm about it which did not seem to arise from misfortune, but from some feeling within, that appeared to indicate a soul conscious of a greater realm. Her step was not that light footing, which strays where'er a butterfly or a colour may attract - it was sedate and pensive. (19)

Polidori sacrifices this deep-thinker to Lord Ruthven, as well. Thus, both women, who are close to Aubrey, are killed by the vampire. The women seem to be pawns in a sinister game played between the two men: Aubrey foils Ruthven's plot to debauch an innocent girl, and interrupts his feast on Ianthe, and Ruthven uses his association with Aubrey to find new victims. Aubrey, too, is killed, albeit

indirectly, by Lord Ruthven. Driven to distraction by his dilemma as to whether to honour his oath to Ruthven, or to risk accusations of insanity by warning others against him, Aubrey falls ill. He is finally destroyed by his sister's impending marriage to Ruthven and his own inability to save her from Ruthven's corruptive influence: "'Remember your oath, and know, if not my bride to day, your sister is dishonoured. Women are frail!'" (23). Again, a woman is a pawn in Ruthven's game against Aubrey.

One final innovation introduced into vampire mythology by Polidori is the vampire's association with the moon; in fact, "Polidori is the first to suggest that moonlight can rejuvenate a vampire" (Senf 34). Twice within "The Vampyre" Polidori insinuates that the vampire's powers increase after dark. After telling Aubrey stories about the existence of vampires in her native region, Ianthe warns him to return from his expedition "ere night allowed the power of these beings to be put in action" (14). This association is more clearly delineated after Lord Ruthven's "death":

[Aubrey] was about to enter the hovel in which he had left the corpse, when a robber met him, and informed him that it was no longer there, having been conveyed by himself and comrades, upon his retiring, to the pinnacle of a neighbouring mount, according to a promise they had given his lordship, that it should be exposed to the first cold ray of the moon that rose after his death . . . when [Aubrey] had mounted to the summit he found no trace of either the corpse or the clothes.
(18)

Evidently, Polidori seems to suggest that under the lunar influence, the vampire's strength increases and injuries are healed. Under the "cold ray of the moon" the vampire rises again. However, this connection is implicit in the narrative, and is never fully explained. Auerbach notes that "Polidori does align the vampire's life with the moon, but only incidentally. . . . Polidori's moon never reappears, but his descendants played on vaster fears: the forgettable moon of Polidori's robber became central to imaginations of the vampire for decades" (24).

This important addition, though incidental to Polidori's tale, leads to further additions to the mythos in later works. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" adopts all of the elements of the vampire myth which were introduced by Polidori, and expands on them, adding to and radically changing the character of vampirism. The vampire of "Carmilla" attacks only at night when the experience of the vampire's bite can be dismissed as a dream, and, with the power of the moon, it is able to shapeshift, disguising its identity from the victim. Le Fanu's vampire is invested with many of the same characteristics as Polidori's: it is an aristocrat, it is attractive, it is seductive, it is a traveller. There is one important difference, however: Le Fanu's vampire is a woman. Carmilla is the first female vampire in English prose, and she is the first homosexual

vampire, as well. Finally, Carmilla is the first vampire to demonstrate an aversion to religious symbolism.

The story of "Carmilla" is related to a "town lady" by a young woman, Laura, who lives a lonely isolated life in a Styrian castle, with only her father and two governesses for company. When a travelling trio of women has trouble with the carriage and one of the women asks to leave her ailing daughter in their care, Laura and her father do not hesitate to welcome the girl into their home. Carmilla and Laura become fast friends, in spite of Carmilla's eccentricities; she shares the same dreams as Laura, she sleeps most of the day, she seems averse to religion, and she is too ardent in her affection toward Laura. At the same time as Laura is delighted and entertained by her new companion, she is also haunted and terrified by nightmares, often involving a black cat which seems to become a woman, seen once as Carmilla, and sensations of needles piercing her breast or throat. Laura becomes ill and the doctor informs her father of his suspicions regarding the cause of the illness (the reader infers that the doctor suspects vampirism to be the culprit), but both keep this important knowledge from her. Carmilla is not suspected until a family friend, General Spielsdorf, makes the connection between Carmilla and Millarca, who, under circumstances similar to those of Laura and her father, invaded his household and killed his niece.

Carmilla is revealed to be Mircalla, the Countess Karnstein, to which family Laura's mother was related, and the hunt for the vampire ensues. She is discovered in her coffin and is destroyed in a violent execution scene, and Laura is presumably saved.

As in "The Vampire", the murderous creature is again described in very human terms. Carmilla is portrayed as an attractive, personable girl, whose supposed illness adds an element of vulnerability to her character. Laura's first encounter with a conscious Carmilla inspires her sympathy with Carmilla's vulnerability and sense of abandonment by her mother. She, like Laura, seems to feel motherless, alone in the world: "I heard a very sweet voice ask complainingly, 'Where is mamma?'" (Le Fanu 82). To add to Laura's attraction to the new guest, beyond a sense of identification, her governesses describe Carmilla in very positive terms:

"I like her extremely," answered Madame, "she is, I almost think, the prettiest creature I ever saw; about your age, and so gentle and nice." "She is absolutely beautiful," threw in Mademoiselle . . . "And such a sweet voice!" added Madame Perrodon.
(83)

Also adding to Carmilla's attractiveness is her social rank. Like Polidori's vampire, Le Fanu's is a member of the aristocracy. Carmilla is later revealed to be a Countess, but immediately Laura can tell that her family has

encountered "a person of rank" by the richness of the travelling carriage (79) and the mother's air and appearance:

There was something in this lady's air and appearance so distinguished, and even imposing, and in her manner so engaging, as to impress one, quite apart from the dignity of her equipage, with a conviction that she was a person of consequence. (81)

Le Fanu, like Polidori, shrouds his vampire with an air of mystery and ambivalence. Firstly, Laura notes that Carmilla's mother, as well as Carmilla herself, insists on the secrecy of their identities, their origin, and their destination. All that Laura and her father know about Carmilla is her name. Secondly, Carmilla reveals a bizarre psychic connection with Laura through shared dreams. Laura is horrified, upon first meeting Carmilla, to recognize her face as that of her childhood 'nightmares': "What was it that . . . made me recoil a step or two from before her? . . . I saw the very face which had visited me in my childhood at night . . . and on which I had for so many years so often ruminated with horror" (85). Carmilla, like Ruthven with Aubrey, lulls Laura into a false sense of security by establishing a bond of intimacy through the psychic connection of their dreams. Carmilla recounts the same dream that Laura had as a child, but assuages her fears and repulsion by casting the dream in the positive light of

identification through common experience and of a friendship that was meant to be:

"I don't know which should be most afraid of the other," she said, again smiling. "If you were less pretty I think I should be very much afraid of you, but being as you are, and you and I both so young, I feel only that I have made your acquaintance twelve years ago, and have already a right to your intimacy; at all events, it does seem as if we were destined, from our earliest childhood, to be friends. I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you; I have never had a friend - shall I find one now?" (87)

Laura's feelings toward Carmilla are ambivalent, even in the light of their supposedly psychic connection and common experiences of friendlessness, but Carmilla's efforts at intimacy, like Ruthven's, win over her prey: "I did feel, as she said, 'drawn towards her,' but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed" (87). The intimacy Carmilla offers fills the void in Laura's life and eases her craving for friendship, thus overcoming her ambivalence toward Carmilla. Rather than using supernatural means to mesmerize Laura, Carmilla "relies on seduction . . . During the day she woos Laura with words and actions" (Senf 48). The mystery surrounding Carmilla becomes a shared mystery with Laura, a secret bond between friends:

. . . as Laura tells her own story, she lives, motherless and exiled, with her myopic father and two silly governesses in a Styrian castle. She is cut off from England and other women. When

Carmilla penetrates her household - through dreams and tricks as well as bites - she presents herself as Laura's only available source of intimacy . . . she arouses, she pervades, she offers a sharing self. (Auerbach 38)

While Polidori introduced an erotic twist to vampirism, Le Fanu expands this into a twisted eroticism, according to nineteenth century views. The new sexuality of Polidori's Lord Ruthven becomes homosexuality in Le Fanu's Carmilla. While Lord Ruthven was strictly heterosexual, feeding only on young women, Carmilla is strictly homosexual, also feeding only on women. As Auerbach points out, ". . . Carmilla leap[s] from homoerotic friendship to homosexual love" (18). Ruthven and Aubrey share an intimate bond of friendship, as well, but Ruthven's only means of exercising influence over Aubrey's life and hence possessing him, is through the women closest to him. Carmilla is not prevented by gender, in this way, from possessing her friend. Auerbach suggests that Le Fanu adds an erotic dimension with his female vampire that never would have been possible for the male vampire in Polidori's tale:

[Carmilla's] story is less an account of predation than it is of the recognition that underlies all vampire literature before the close of the nineteenth century. This erotic recognition is not a tender alternative to the coldness of male vampires, but a performance, featuring female characters of the homoerotic identification men, even vampires, dare not act on. (42)

This may appear to liberalize the vampire story,

expanding the female potential as well as the sexual options into areas that male vampires are not able to go. However, as Macdonald points out, "this only complicates the tale's discreet misogyny with a discreet homophobia. Laura innocently wonders whether Carmilla is really a 'boyish lover' in disguise, but though 'this hypothesis' is 'highly interesting . . . to [her] vanity,' the reality of Carmilla's caresses is 'hateful'" (200).

Carmilla still represents aggressive sexuality, attacking her unwitting and unwilling prey much in the same way as Ruthven attacks Miss Aubrey. Unlike Ruthven, however, Carmilla loves her prey. She says to Laura, "'Darling, darling . . . I live in you; and you would die for me. I love you so'" (98). This "love" is not the mutual relationship of homosexual love; it is invasive and violent on the part of one woman against another. As Helen Stoddart argues,

"Carmilla" represents aristocratic female homosexual desire. Yet the physical nature of the relationship between the narrator and the vampire is a far cry from mutual lesbian desire and can more clearly be seen in this light as a masculine fantasy of and about lesbianism. Rather, then, it becomes the violent Gothic invasion by one figure, this time a woman, with power over another. (32)

Although he uses women violently and vengefully, Ruthven's sexuality is acceptable within nineteenth century standards, whereas Carmilla's sexuality is a perversion of

all that women stood for in Le Fanu's patriarchal society. Carmilla's homosexuality supplants the male position in the hierarchical order of the family. It also replaces the female role as life-giver with the role life-taker: Carmilla is incapable of reproduction, and by attacking women, she renders her victims barren as well. Thus her sexuality poses a threat to "familial roles and the sanctioned hierarchy of marriage" (Auerbach 47). For this reason, Carmilla must be destroyed, while Ruthven is allowed to escape. As Stoddart suggests,

Carmilla's particular distinction is that . . . she is exclusively drawn to members of her own sex, thus sharpening her threat to the nuclear family . . . Carmilla, then, is seen as positing attacks on every front and at every turn. In this light it is little wonder that her annihilation is so vigorously executed and so spectacularly displayed by her victims' avengers. (28)

The vampire is executed and the entire scene is carefully detailed so readers can see how aberrant female sexuality and subversion of the patriarchal order is dealt with in the nineteenth century:

The body . . . in accordance with the ancient practice, was raised, and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek at the moment, in all respects such as might escape from a living person in the last agony. Then the head was struck off, and a torrent of blood flowed from the severed neck. The body and head were next placed on a pile of wood, and reduced to ashes, which were thrown upon the river and borne away, and that territory has never since been plagued by the visits of a vampire. (134)

Whereas Polidori allows Ruthven to escape, Le Fanu brings to his story the means and method of executing a vampire¹, an element which subsequent writers adopted and made even more violent for over a century.

Another innovation Le Fanu brings to the vampire mythos grows out of Polidori's notion of the power of moonlight over vampires. . . . The moon which was incidental to Polidori's story becomes a central image in Le Fanu's. The moon introduces the mystery and hint of the supernatural which precedes Carmilla's arrival and surrounds her sojourn at the castle. The moon is responsible for the inhabitants of the castle witnessing Carmilla's carriage accident in the first place: they were outside specifically "to enjoy the exquisite moonlight" (78). Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, the finishing governess, expounds upon the mysterious powers of the moon: "when the moon shone with a light so intense it was well known that it indicated a special spiritual activity . . . 'The moon, this night,' she said, 'is full of odylic and magnetic influence'" (78-79). The mystical activity which accompanies the moonlight this night is the vampire which comes into their midst.

The moonlight, which rejuvenated Polidori's vampire, allows Carmilla to slip in and out of the castle and Laura's

¹An earlier example of this occurs in Varney the Vampire by James Malcolm Rymer.

room relatively undetected; it gives her strength; it allows her to shapeshift. Le Fanu hints that Laura's nightmares are not dreams at all, but are reality when one night Laura "dreams" of a woman at her throat and the next night wakes up to see "Carmilla standing near the foot of [the] bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood" (106). Laura believes this to be a dream-warning and, fearing for Carmilla's safety, she awakens the household to break into Carmilla's locked room, only to discover the room empty. Apparently, Carmilla is able to come and go from a completely sealed room. In an earlier nighttime horror fest, Laura, between consciousness and unconsciousness, sees a "sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat" spring onto her bed. After feeling a needle-like sensation pierce her breast, she awakens to see only a woman at the foot of the bed (102). Le Fanu seems to infer that under cover of night, the vampire can change its shape. Laura sees a black cat, while the General reports seeing a shapeless black object, "a great, palpitating mass" (130), but in both cases the object becomes Carmilla / Millarca. Thus, with the power of the moon, Carmilla, like Ruthven, becomes more powerful. Carmilla is also limited by the moon. She only has strength at night, while she has no energy during the day:

She used to come down very late, generally not

till one o'clock . . . we then went out for a walk, which was a mere saunter, and she seemed, almost immediately, exhausted, and either returned to the schloss or sat on one of the benches that were placed, here and there, among the trees.
(91)

While Ruthven was not shown to be weakened by anything, Carmilla is weakened by the daylight, and by another of Le Fanu's additions to vampire mythology in literature - religion. One example of this weakness occurs when a funeral procession passes Carmilla and Laura. Laura joins in singing the hymn, while Carmilla cringes from the sound that Laura thought was "sweet":

She said brusquely, "Don't you perceive how discordant that is? . . . You pierce my ears," said Carmilla almost angrily, and stopping her ears with her tiny fingers. " . . . your forms wound me" . . . All her energies seemed strained to suppress a fit, with which she was then breathlessly tugging; and at length a low convulsive cry of suffering broke from her, and gradually the hysteria subsided. "There! That comes of strangling people with hymns!" (91-92)

Senf points out that the vampire of Le Fanu's story is "immobilized by certain holy objects . . . Carmilla's discomfort when she hears the funeral hymns is the first literary example of the power that religious artifacts have over the vampire" (53). While Polidori's story detailed a secular morality in the battle between Good and Evil, Le Fanu's story details a religious morality as well. The forces of religious morality, represented by church leaders, are called in to aid in the battle against the vampire and

to protect the innocent from her evil:

My father . . . said: "It is time to return, but before we go home, we must add to our party the good priest, who lives but a little way from this; and persuade him to accompany us to the schloss" . . . The ecclesiastic with my father kept watch in the adjoining dressing-room. The priest had performed certain solemn rites that night, the purport of which I did not understand. (133-134)

Religious trappings combat the evil of the vampire and protect Laura's soul while Aubrey, Ianthe and Miss Aubrey must look after themselves. Crawford explains Le Fanu's new innovation biographically:

The era in which [Le Fanu] lived was increasingly troubled by questions about the existence of God and a supernatural order . . . We know from his notebooks and correspondence that Le Fanu was a very religious man having difficulty coming to terms with a culture filled with radical doubt about revealed religion. (94)

Le Fanu affirms the existence of God in "Carmilla" as symbols of God, through the church, effectively offend and weaken the symbol of evil, the vampire.

Like Le Fanu's "Carmilla", Stoker's Dracula provides a solution to the evil of vampirism through religion, specifically Roman Catholicism. However, he also introduces new fears while intensifying old ones. Polidori and Le Fanu present vampires who are more human than supernatural, and their corruption is a human immorality more than a supernatural evil. Stoker presents a less attractive, more animalistic creature, whose supernaturalism is frightening

from the first introduction. Stoker further extends the eroticism of the vampire and intensifies the threat of female sexuality which was introduced by Le Fanu. This threat is intensified by Stoker's introduction of the notion of contagion into the vampire story. While victims of the vampires in "The Vampyre" and "Carmilla" generally die if the vampire is not stopped, victims of Dracula, but only female victims, become vampires themselves. Thus, the threat of sexuality becomes more terrifying.

While Dracula may seem like a typical bite - hunt - and kill story, Stoker's innovations with the vampire myth bring life to the undead in important ways. Stoker's vampire is more monstrous than previous vampires. Dracula is an aristocrat like Ruthven and Carmilla, but unlike his predecessors, Dracula is not attractive or alluring, with an "aquiline" face and a "cruel-looking" mouth (Stoker 23) which frighten rather than intrigue. In fact, the descriptions of his "long, sharp, canine teeth" (27) which "protruded over the lips", his ears which are "pale and at the tops extremely pointed" (23), and the hair growing in unusual places call to mind images of an animal rather than a human. While Dracula's predecessors move about in society and are popular with those they meet, Dracula is a recluse, self-isolated in an ancient and decrepit castle. Jonathan Harker notes Dracula's implicit supernatural qualities, such

as his lack of a reflection or shadow and his face-down wall-climbing (37) and he is more frightened than intrigued:

What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man? I feel the dread of this horrible place overpowering me; I am in fear - in awful fear - and there is no escape for me; I am encompassed about with terrors that I dare not think of (38).

Considering the sense of terror and repulsion the Count inspires, he cannot seduce his prey the way Ruthven and Carmilla can. Thus, Stoker introduces the element of mesmerism to the list of Dracula's powers. In Lucy, the vampire's mesmeric powers manifest themselves in her somnambulism. In sleep he calls to Lucy and she comes to him but does not remember the encounters when she is awake: Mina Harker records in her journal that "twice during the night I was awakened by Lucy trying to get out. She seemed, even in her sleep, to be a little impatient at finding the door shut, and went back to bed under a sort of protest" (88). Auerbach marks this shift when she writes that "Earlier vampires insinuated themselves into a humanity Dracula reshapes, through magic and mesmerism, into his unrecognizable likeness" (64). Nowhere is this more evident than in the scenes during the chase after the vampire in which Dracula invades Mina's mind. Van Helsing postulates the disturbing theory that, both by the physical control through blood-drinking and by mind control, Dracula is

making Mina into his accomplice and a mirror image of himself:

"Now my fear is this. If it be that she can, by our hypnotic trance, tell what the Count see and hear, is it not more true that he who have hypnotise her first, and who have drink of her very blood and make her drink of his, should, if he will, compel her mind to disclose to him that which she know?" (287)

Stoker emphasizes, more than ever before, the sexuality of the vampire. Dracula is strictly heterosexual, like Ruthven, but, unlike his predecessors, Dracula shuns any intimacy with his victims. Instead, through mind control and violent possession, he exercises brute force to overpower and to control them: "Stoker suggests, plausibly enough, that sexual desire, once divorced from affection, can easily be allied with the desire for power" (Macdonald 202).

The women infected by Dracula's vampirism may be controlled by the vampire, but in their own world, these women are liberated from the constrictive roles imposed upon them by society. Auerbach notes that "Earlier vampires enfeebled their prey; Dracula energizes his, reminding his victims - and us - that they have life in them" (95). Normally passive women become aggressive sexual beings, in other words, "monstrous", by nineteenth century standards. Jonathan's encounter, related in explicitly sexual terms, with the three vampire women in Dracula's castle can attest

to that:

All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. 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 . . . There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive. (40-41)

Macdonald points out that "Jonathan feels 'a wicked, burning desire' for Dracula's brides; nobody in the novel ever seems to feel any other kind of desire" (202). Sexuality is demonstrated as evil, and female sexuality is something to be feared.

Dracula's first convert, Lucy Westenra, is in life a pure and chaste girl. She belies rebellious tendencies, but she invariably returns to the traditional, conservative, repressed female role: Lucy writes in a letter to Mina, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it" (59). Senf explains this excerpt as Stoker's response to the New Woman of the nineteenth century, who is more sexually aware and open, and who is exploring less traditional options in lifestyles and occupations: "her desire for three husbands suggests a latent sensuality that connects her to the New Woman of the period. It also implies that Lucy is unhappy with her social role and that she is torn between the need to conform and the desire to rebel" (66). In spite of this brief

display of individuality, Lucy makes the traditional, expected choice of a husband, the Englishman and aristocrat, Arthur Holmwood, Lord Godalming. After her conversion, however, Lucy becomes as much the voluptuary as the previous three vampire women: "In a sort of sleep-waking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never hear from her lips: - 'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me!'" (145-146). Lucy takes the sexually dominant position, reversing traditional gender roles. She also transgresses against her female role as mother-figure. While the vampire-hunters await Lucy in her crypt, she enters, bent over a fair-haired child on whom she had been feeding, to which her lips, "crimson with fresh blood" (189), were a testament. Her abuse of the child sparks in the men a violent reaction of anger and hatred:

At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. As she looked, her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh, God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone . . . There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur. (190)

According to Craft, it is because of these behaviours outside of social constraints that Lucy must be executed,

violently and visibly, to instruct women in the dangers of subverting sanctioned gender roles: "The vigor and enormity of this penetration . . . do not bespeak merely Stoker's personal or idiosyncratic anxiety but suggest as well a whole culture's uncertainty about the fluidity of gender roles" (231). The staking of Lucy, Craft calls "corrective penetration" and suggests that, in destroying Lucy with such a phallic symbol, Stoker restores patriarchal order and conveys the message that "A woman is better still than mobile, better dead than sexual" (230). As in "Carmilla" the men of Dracula employ violent means as a corrective measure against Lucy, whom they perceive as an aberration of the traditional notion of womanhood, in order to restore the accepted patriarchal hierarchy.

Mina Harker, née Murray, is Dracula's final target. She may seem to be a more logical choice for vampirism because she displays more behaviours of the New Woman than Lucy. Not a member of the upper class, Mina has had to work for a living. Stoker points out that, prior to her engagement, Mina had been a school-mistress, and in the confines of the novel, she trains herself to perform various secretarial duties. Furthermore, Mina speaks of the merits of New Womanhood within the novel:

Some of the 'New Woman' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or

accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won't condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too! There's some consolation in that.
(85)

However, as Leatherdale points out, "Mina . . . is constructed as a dual-faceted creature. She adopts certain trappings associated with the New Woman, while remaining at heart a devoutly traditional female" (146). Mina displays great intelligence and efficiency, which eventually contribute to Dracula's defeat, but which she intends to use in service to her husband: "He was surprised at my knowledge of the trains offhand, but he does not know that I have made up all the trains to and from Exeter, so that I may help Jonathan in case he is in a hurry" (168).

Unlike Lucy and the vampire women, Mina is the masculine ideal of womanhood; thus she must be preserved. As Leatherdale observes,

Mina is the nearest thing to a saint that Stoker can conceive of. She has shown no hint of malice in her life. . . . and always puts the welfare of others before herself. (143)

She is intelligent, but passively so, never overstepping her feminine bounds. More importantly, however, Mina is sexually benign: "There is nothing sexually threatening about Mina. Even the child which eventually does grace her life is named after those who fought Dracula on her behalf, as if a multi-platonic love affair had conceived it . . .

The maternal has beaten off the challenge of the carnal" (Leatherdale 148-149). Mina does not display the same cruelty to children that other vampirized women exhibit. Even as the only woman in a group of five men, one of whom is her husband, sexuality never enters into the relationship. Instead, she becomes a mother-figure to the other characters:

We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked; I felt this big sorrowing man's head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby that some day may lie on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he were my own child. I never thought at the time how strange it all was. (206)

Mina evidently believes in the traditional role of mother that had been assigned to women. As Senf suggests, "While both the vampire-women and Lucy prey on children, Mina believes that motherhood is an important responsibility" (69).

Mina, in fact, is the ultimate example of sexual repression. While Lucy embraces her newfound sexuality, becoming as much of a voluptuary as the vampire-women, Mina repudiates the sexuality which is forced upon her. Senf affirms this notion of repression: "Mina is horrified by her brief tryst even though Dracula has overpowered her in her sleep. She also seems to recognize . . . the sexual nature of her clandestine relationship, and she fears that

she will spread that contagion" (71). Her horror is even more for others than herself; she fears for Jonathan's safety from herself, introducing into vampire literature the notion of contagion: "'Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his (Jonathan's) worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear'" (253). The sexuality of the act of vampirism and the fear of infecting her husband calls to mind the fear of venereal disease. According to Macdonald and Scherf (Collected Fiction),

In Stoker, contagion has become the essential characteristic of vampirism. If it evokes the fear of venereal disease, it does so largely in order to evoke a fear of sexuality itself as a demonic force that, awakened by one fatal kiss, can change one utterly and irreversibly. (201)

More specifically, the fear of sexuality is actually the fear of female sexuality. Mina repudiates her own sexuality as "unclean" and fears sexual role reversal, aggressive feminine sexuality represented by the notion of pollution. This firmly establishes her as a traditional, ideal woman who must be saved because she is the only woman worthy of fulfilling the feminine role of child-bearer. As Jan McDonald puts it, "Mina, 'the angel in the house', must be cleansed and restored to her role as helpmeet and, even more significantly, as potential mother" (85).

In recounting the tale of her attack, Mina demonstrates

both her recognition of and her fear of her own sexuality when she says, "'strangely enough, I did not want to hider him. I suppose it is a part of the horrible curse that this happens when his touch is on his victim. And oh, my God, my God, pity me!'" (256). However, instead of responding with hatred and violence, as do the men, Stoker's saint responds with Christian charity and pity for her attacker: _

"I know that you must fight - that you must destroy even as you destroyed the false Lucy so that the true Lucy might live hereafter; but it is not a work of hate. 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 worsser 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." (274-275)

This speech puts Dracula in the context of the Byronic hero, like Ruthven and Carmilla, inspiring sympathy for the monster. By comparing him to the pre-vampirized Lucy, and later to herself, Mina emphasizes the humanity of the monster, as well as the remedy - the Christian teachings of love and charity: "'perhaps . . . someday . . . I too may need such pity'" (275). For the first time in vampire literature, Stoker presents sexuality and love as mutually exclusive, even opposing, concepts, which represent Good and Evil: "In Stoker's novel, what opposes the evil power of sex is the pure power of love . . . The novel articulates the split between affectionate and sensual feelings, between

sacred and profane love" (Macdonald 202).

This opposition relates to another of Stoker's innovations, built on the concept of religious morality introduced by Le Fanu, and his introduction of new superstitions. While Carmilla expressed a distinct aversion to religious symbols, Stoker's vampires can actually be physically injured by them. Stoker places new limitations on the vampire, which carry over into the literature of the present century:

Dracula inhibits future vampires in major ways . . . His existence is hedged by absolute if arbitrary rules vampires fear to break even now. His need to travel with hampering boxes of native earth; his enfeebling inability to form alliances; his allergies to crucifixes, communion wafers, and garlic; his vulnerability to daylight - all defined vampires by the many things they could not do. (Auerbach 85-86)

Stoker ties together the elements of religious faith, light, and humanity in opposition to the elements of faithlessness, darkness, and animalism to represent the foremost opposition of the novel - Good versus Evil. While by night Stoker's vampire can gain access to any space by shape-shifting into a wolf, a bat, a dog, or even fog or mist, he is restricted by the rule that the vampire must be invited into that space without coercion (Stoker 248-249). This recalls the element, introduced by Polidori, that suggests the victims participation in her own victimization: "There is a curious emphasis . . . on the will of the 'innocent' partner in the

evil act. The vampire cannot simply go about the world devouring: He or she must be invited across the threshold in some indirect way; the victim must somehow be 'seeking' the encounter" (Wilt 91). Lucy's rebelliousness represents her participation; even Mina states that she did not want to resist the vampire (Stoker 256), but in her case, it was another who invited the monster in. Like Carmilla, Dracula is at his strongest at night, but is physically weakened by the sunlight. Thus, Stoker aligns evil with the darkness, and goodness with the light, which Van Helsing emphasizes in his admiration of the purity and goodness of Mina:

"There are darkneses in life, and there are lights; you are one of the lights. You will have happy life and good life, and your husband will be blessed in you." (166)

On Mina's behalf, the men defeat the powers of darkness and restore Mina, the symbol of divine purity, to the light.

While the vampire's power rivals even God's, he is held at bay by the symbols of God. Carter details the relationship between the profane and the divine:

Dracula imitates the creative act of God the Father in his ambition to become "father or furtherer of a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not life." How the vampires's rising from the grave parodies the Christian resurrection of the body is obvious. The follower of Christ must lose his life in order to find it (Matthew 10:39), and after death he expects to rise again to a transfigured existence . . . The vampire attempts to circumvent this process, bestowing an immortality not spiritual but physical, subhuman rather than superhuman. The

vampire also parodies the sacraments. (116)

Varnado points out, however, that "the mysterious laws that govern [the vampire's] activities are related to the divine" (102). Dracula's powers are flouted by the symbols of man's faith in God, such as Jonathan's rosary (Stoker 30), and especially communion wafers, which Van Helsing places in the cracks of doorways to ward off the vampire and in Dracula's native soil to purify it and eliminate any refuge. He traces a circle around the endangered Mina with the Holy wafer to protect her from the vampire-sisters. The vampire is powerless against the divinity he attempts to imitate: as Van Helsing says,

"Then there are things which so afflict him that he has no power, as the garlic that we know of, and as for things sacred, as this symbol, my crucifix, that was amongst us even now when we resolve, to them he is nothing, but in their presence he take his place far off and silent with respect." (215)

Stoker picks up where Le Fanu leaves off. While Polidori was concerned with secular morality, Le Fanu and Stoker seek to "reaffirm the existence of God in an age when the weakening hold of Christianity invited fresh debate about what lay beyond death" (Leatherdale 190). While previous writers emphasized the extraordinary powers of the vampire, Stoker specifically notes the vampire's limitations, his slavery to his own nature: "He can do all these things, yet he is not free. Nay he is even more prisoner than the slave

of the galley, than the madman in his cell . . . His power ceases, as does that of all evil things, at the coming of the day. Only at certain times can he have limited freedom" (Stoker 214). Thus, while Stoker creates a vampire who is more frightening and more threatening than ever before, Dracula is also more restricted than previous vampires.

.....Nineteenth century gothic writers may vary the characteristics and powers of the vampire, but together they establish an archetype which has endured through the decades. The vampire remains an immortal creature which infiltrates society to feed on human blood. However, twentieth century writers, for the most part, reject the notion of the animalistic vampire as a fiend without a soul or conscience and adapt the archetype to fit the more secular nature of this age. The vampire has conveniently developed an immunity to religious paraphernalia and is now governed by its own conscience. Furthermore, twentieth century writers tend to reject the nineteenth century view of women as weak-willed victims, creating female characters who are strong, independent and wise. Moreover, female sexuality is no longer viewed as monstrous, but is portrayed as sensual and liberating. Finally, Ruthven, Carmilla, and Dracula simply accept and embrace their nature, whereas the more human vampires of the twentieth century seek to justify their existence and to find a purpose and identity. While

Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles develops out of the nineteenth century tradition, she creates a new mythology of existential vampires who are more concerned with each other than devouring mortals.

CHAPTER TWO

If you bite us do we not bleed?: The Humanised Vampire

The vampires of the nineteenth century are a cruel breed. They court their prey, seducing and mesmerizing, until the victim is lulled into a false sense of security, or is blissfully ignorant of the vampire's activities. The attack is vicious and calculated, rendered even more cruel in light of the deception and infiltration into the victims' personal lives. Anne Rice's new vampires bring a different perspective to the mythology of vampires. In her first novel of the series The Vampire Chronicles, Interview With the Vampire (hereafter identified as IWTV), Rice introduces a new breed of vampires who are more humanized and existentialist than ever before. As Brian Frost points out,

These days, with undead counts and countesses now considered passé, the traditional image of human bloodsuckers - as vicious, self-seeking predators - has undergone a dramatic change. In contemporary horror novels the prevailing trend is to portray vampires as highly intellectual beings living a separate but not entirely incompatible existence alongside the human race, with the pursuance of knowledge (rather than nubile maidens) as their main recreation. (24)

IWTV presents a detailed account of the experience of immortality from the point of view of the immortal himself. From the very beginning of the interview, Louis makes it clear that this is not the traditional vampire story. He tears down almost all of the elements of vampirism that had

been built up by both folklore and nineteenth century literature, notions held onto by the interviewer, as a human. The first of these is the association with the "Dark Side". The interviewer recalls the vampire's preference for the dark, an archaic signification of the evil creature consigned to lurk in the shadows, hidden from the light of goodness: "'I'm going to turn on the overhead light.' 'But I thought vampires didn't like light,' said the boy. 'If you think the dark adds to the atmosphere . . .'" (3). Later in the first chapter, Louis laughs at other myths about vampires promulgated mainly by nineteenth century gothic writers:

"Yes?" said the vampire. "I'm afraid I don't allow you to ask enough questions."

"I was going to ask, rosaries have crosses on them, don't they?"

"Oh, the rumor about crosses!" the vampire laughed. "You refer to our being afraid of crosses?" "Unable to look on them, I thought," said the boy. "Nonsense, my friend, sheer nonsense. I can look on anything I like. And I rather like looking on crucifixes in particular."

"And what about the rumor about keyholes? That you can . . . become steam and go through them."

"I wish I could," laughed the vampire. "How positively delightful. I should like to pass through all manner of different keyholes and feel the tickle of their peculiar shapes. No." He shook his head. "That is, how would you say today . . . bullshit?" . . .

"The story about stakes through the heart," said the boy, his cheeks coloring slightly.

"The same," said the vampire, "Bull-shit," he said, carefully articulating both syllables, so that the boy smiled. "No magical powers

whatsoever." (23-24)

While Carmilla and Dracula display open hostility toward religious paraphernalia, Louis seeks refuge in a church, a mainstay of religious faith. He even goes so far as to seek comfort from confession of his sins to a priest:

"I stared at him for a moment. And then I said it, lifting my hand to make the Sign of the Cross. 'Bless me, father, for I have sinned, sinned so often and so long I do not know how to change, nor how to confess before God what I've done.'

"'Son, God is infinite in His capacity to forgive,' he whispered to me. 'Tell Him in the best way you know how and from your heart.'"

(146)

Also, while Stoker states that vampires are evil and soulless, implied by Dracula's characteristic lack of a reflection, Rice reinstates the soul of the vampire, blurring the concepts of good and evil. Furthermore, Louis' horror at what he sees as his monstrous nature reflected back at him reinforces the notion that the vampire does indeed have a conscience:

Something glimmered in my swoon; it shivered ever so slightly with the pounding of feet on the stairs, on the floorboards, the rolling of wheels and horses' hooves on the earth, and it gave off a tinkling sound as it shivered. It had a small wooden frame around it, and in that frame there emerged, through the glimmer, the figure of a man. He was familiar. I knew his long, slender build, his black, wavy hair. Then I saw that his green eyes were gazing at me. And in his teeth, in his teeth, he was clutching something huge and soft and brown, which he pressed tightly with both his hands. It was a rat. A great loathsome brown rat he held, its feet poised, its mouth agape, its great curved tail frozen in the air. Crying out,

he threw it down and stared aghast, blood flowing from his open mouth. (195)

Ramsland suggests that "Lack of reflection signified that their souls were in hell, and Anne did not want her vampires to have any more assurance than did humans that God existed" (150). In the absence of God, then, but with the evident presence of a conscience, Rice invests these new vampires with a secular rather than religious morality.

Rice does not negate all of the previous vampire myths, however, retaining several elements from "The Vampyre", "Carmilla", and Dracula. Louis' counterparts in the novel - Lestat, his maker, and Claudia, his "child" - both like to toy with their prey prior to the kill. Claudia, in fact, lures her victims by gaining their sympathy with her innocent child's features:

. . . to watch her kill was chilling. She would sit alone in the dark square waiting for the kindly gentleman or woman to find her, her eyes more mindless than I had ever seen Lestat's. Like a child numbed with fright she would whisper her plea for help to her gentle, admiring patrons, and as they carried her out of the square, her arms would fix about their necks, her tongue between her teeth, her vision glazed with consuming hunger. They found death fast in those first years, before she learned to play with them, to lead them to the doll shop or the café where they gave her steaming cups of chocolate or tea to ruddy her pale cheeks, cups she pushed away, waiting, waiting, as if feasting silently on their terrible kindness. (100-101)

This is remarkably similar to Ruthven's method of killing in "The Vampyre," as he courts Miss Aubrey and insinuates

himself into the lives of his victims prior to killing them. Also, while Ruthven malevolently destroys by lowering only the chaste into dishonour and financially ruining only those most in need, Lestat follows suit by killing those who have the most to contribute to their families and to society in general. For example, as Louis observes with respect to Lestat's murder of a neighbour's son, the Freniere boy,

"The better the human, as he would say in his vulgar way, the more he liked it. A fresh young girl, that was his favourite food the first of the evening; but the triumphant kill for Lestat was a young man .

. . . "You see, they represented the greatest loss to Lestat, because they stood on the threshold of the maximum possibility of life."
(41-42)

The moon which rejuvenated Ruthven and lit Carmilla's way into Laura's bedroom and her dreams becomes the vampire's sun in INTV, while the sun which weakened Carmilla and limited Dracula's power becomes lethal to Rice's vampires. Lestat, angry at Louis' reactions and fears about becoming a vampire, threatens him with sunlight: "' . . . It's almost dawn. I should let you die. You will die, you know. The sun will destroy the blood I've given you, in every tissue, every vein'" (25). The threat is carried out against Claudia and Madeleine, the "mother" Louis makes for Claudia, by the Paris vampires as a punishment for Claudia's attempt to kill another vampire, Lestat. The intensified effect of sunlight is demonstrated in their total

immolation:

"A door stood open to the rain

"Then I saw something through the open doorway these two lying under the gentle rain were Madeleine and Claudia, and Madeleine's lovely red hair mingled with the gold of Claudia's hair, which stirred and glistened in the wind that sucked through the open doorway. Only that which was living had been burnt away - not the hair, not the long, empty velvet dress, not the small bloodstained chemise with its eyelets of white lace. And the blackened, burnt, and drawn thing that was Madeleine still bore the stamp of her living face, and the hand that clutched at the child was whole like a mummy's hand. But the child, the ancient one, my Claudia, was ashes." (303-304)

Rice includes several elements of vampirism from Dracula. Louis' description of the steps to becoming a vampire are similar to, albeit more extensively detailed than, Mina's description of her seduction by Dracula. Louis says that

" . . . he sank his teeth into my neck.

" . . . I remember that the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion . . .

"The result was that within minutes I was weak to paralysis. Panic-stricken, I discovered I could not even will myself to speak I felt his teeth withdraw with such a keenness that the two puncture wounds seemed enormous, lined with pain. And now he bent over my helpless head and, taking his right hand off me, bit his own wrist He pressed his bleeding wrist to my mouth, said firmly, a little impatiently, 'Louis, drink.' And I did." (19-20)

In both accounts there is a mutual exchange of blood, as the vampire drains the victim and then refills him or her with

its own blood. Also a common element is the power of mesmerism. Mina, too, recalls not wanting or being able to fight the vampire. This ability to mesmerize and control the mind, as Dracula controls Mina's, is even more clearly demonstrated in an incident involving Armand, when Louis and Claudia question him about their existence:

... "'Do you know what it was that he told me over and over without ever speaking a word; do you know what was the kernel of the trance he put me in so my eyes could only look at him, so that he pulled me as if my heart were on a string?'
 "'So you felt it . . . ' I whispered. 'So it was the same.'
 "'He rendered me powerless' she said." (249)

Another element unique to Stoker which Rice adopts is the emphasis on the prior human existence of the vampire. Louis makes this clear from the very beginning: "'You weren't always a vampire, were you?' he began. 'No,' answered the vampire. 'I was a twenty-five-year-old man when I became a vampire and the year was seventeen ninety-one'" (5). Skrip notes that

The vampire . . . begins its unlife as a human being, is infected with vampirism, and undergoes a period of transformation which results in 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. (3)

In Dracula, Mina attempts to inspire compassion by pointing out Dracula's former existence as a human and his present existence as a lost soul (274), and Van Helsing indicates

that, in life, Dracula was "that Voivode Dracula who won his name against the Turks" (215) (a reference to a fifteenth century Wallachian ruler). Claudia responds negatively to the knowledge that she had once been human, because it suggests that her present state as a grown woman trapped in a helpless child's form might have been avoided had it not been for Louis' and Lestat's selfishness:

"'You speak of us as if we always existed as we are now,' she said, her voice soft, measured, the child's tone rounded with the woman's seriousness. 'You speak of them out there as mortals, us as vampires. But it was not always so. Louis had a mortal sister. I remember her. And there is a picture of her in his trunk. I've seen him look at it! He was mortal the same as she; and so was I. Why else this size, this shape?'" (108)

Whereas Stoker uses this element to clearly distinguish between the human good and the vampiric evil, and to emphasize division by suggesting that the vampire is a soul gone awry, Rice uses it to minimize the distinction between human and vampire. Claudia emphasizes connection rather than division, the fact that vampires are merely transformed human beings, not soulless corpses reanimated by some evil spirit. By this token, the distinctions between human and vampire, and hence good and evil, become blurred. As Auerbach observes, "The interfusion . . . between vampire and mortal makes familiar boundaries fluid, offering a wider world than home, a larger self than one sustained by sanctioned relationships" (19).

Finally, Rice retains an element from Stoker which becomes somewhat superficial in IWTV. In Dracula, one of the first signals to Jonathan that Dracula has supernatural powers is his odd skill at climbing down sheer-faced walls with only his hands and feet as support. Similarly, the vampires of Rice's new mythology share Dracula's wall-climbing powers.. Armand shows Louis that they possess this skill, introduced by Stoker, when he brings Louis to his secret tower room, away from the Paris coven:

"Armand had begun, his boots finding the cracks between the stones, his hands sure as claws in the crevices; and I was moving after him, tight to the wall, not daring to look down, clinging for a moment's rest to the thick, carved arch over a window Higher and higher we climbed until we had reached the window of the tower itself, which Armand quickly wrenched open, his long legs disappearing over the sill; and I rose up after him, feeling his arm out around my shoulders."
(279)

The difference between Stoker's and Rice's use of this element is that Stoker invests his vampire with odd skills in order to intensify his alienation. The more unusual characteristics Jonathan observes, the more he criticizes Dracula as a 'foreigner', on the fringe of acceptable society. Rice, however, uses this element to liberate the vampire, to expand his potential, making its alienness a positive factor: "'He was forcing me into some acknowledgement of my powers, that the paths I'd normally chosen were human paths I no longer need follow'"(278).

The fact that Rice adopts some elements for her mythos from Stoker does not mean, however, that she highly regards his novel. According to Ramsland, Rice "tried Bram Stoker's Dracula but, stunned to see vampires portrayed in such an animalian fashion, did not finish it" (149). In fact, Rice includes some elements from Dracula in order to mock them as myth and religious superstition, implying that Louis' is the true account of vampirism. She undermines Stoker's method of killing vampires, eliminating the power of religion in the process. Van Helsing describes a very specific and deliberate method of destroying a vampire with a stake through the heart and decapitation accompanied by a plethora of religious rites and symbols. According to Stoker, this is the only means by which a vampire's immortal soul can be restored. In IWTV, vampiric death is discussed matter-of-factly and practically, informing Louis of what to avoid. As there is no suggestion that there is any life-everlasting afterward, nor that the vampire's soul is in jeopardy, the religious rites are unnecessary. Thus death is a more final and straightforward event in Rice's mythos and is discussed as such:

"What can kill me?" I asked.

"Again [Armand] stopped. '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)

Even these means of destruction are not the worst of Rice's imagination. The factor which poses the greatest threat to Rice's vampires is essentially boredom. As Armand points out to Louis,

"How many vampires do you think have the stamina for immortality? They have the most dismal notions of immortality to begin with. For in becoming immortal they want all the forms of their life to be fixed as they are and incorruptible When in fact, all things change except the vampire himself; everything except the vampire is subject to constant corruption and distortion. Soon, with an inflexible mind, and often even with the most flexible mind, this immortality becomes a penitential sentence in a madhouse of figures and forms that are hopelessly unintelligible and without value. One evening a vampire rises and realizes what he has feared perhaps for decades, that he simply wants no more of life at any cost And that vampire goes out to die. No one will find his remains. No one will know where he has gone He will vanish." (283)

Whereas Le Fanu's and Stoker's stories are mainly a battle of human against vampire, Rice's story is more internal, focusing on the danger of his own angst to the vampire. As Roberts suggests, "In Rice's contemporary fictional reality, the focus shifts away from the traditional external conflicts depicting moral victories of . . . human beings over the vampire and toward the psychological struggles of the vampires themselves seeking ways of surviving the conditions of their eternal existence" (20).

Rice also subverts the Old World of Stoker's imagination. Stoker presents the place of origin of the

vampire as Eastern Europe, a backward, primitive place where legend and superstition allow the vampire to flourish as lord over the people of his region. While Rice picks up the notion of the primitiveness of the Old World, she extends it to the vampires of that region as well. When Claudia and Louis travel to Transylvania seeking out others of their kind, they find vampires, but they are by no means their own kind:

"I pinned him down again and the moon shone full on his face. And I realized, through my frantic sobbing breaths, what it was I held in my arms. The two huge eyes bulged from naked sockets and two small, hideous holes made up his nose; only a putrid, leathery flesh enclosed his skull, and the rank, rotting rags that covered his frame were thick with earth and slime and blood. I was battling a mindless, animated corpse. But no more." (190)

While Rice mocks the primitive vampires of the Old World; she also scorns belief in the religious myth and superstition that vampires are pure evil, which is just as primitive. Ramsland's describes Rice's vampires as "neither holy nor demonic. They are merely vampires, killing over and over again to sustain their existence. It sends a message to people who justify themselves within religious systems" (172). While Stoker combines modern technology and knowledge with ancient superstitions to destroy the vampire, Rice renders these factors powerless against her new breed of vampires. Religious paraphernalia which fought Dracula

is nothing but empty symbolism to Louis and Claudia:

" . . . I took Claudia into my arms. She turned her face towards me, and I heard her whisper, 'Louis, the garlic, the crucifix above the door!'

"I had not seen these things. It was a small crucifix, with the body of Christ in bronze fixed to the wood, and the garlic was wreathed around it, a fresh garland entwined with an old one, in which the buds were withered and dried . . . I pressed near [the woman] until I was almost at the threshold, and she opened the door wide suddenly as if she'd only just decided to let us in. She said a prayer as I passed her, I was sure of it, though I couldn't understand the Slavic words."
(171)

Louis and Claudia simply pass through a doorway adorned with various and sundry articles believed to ward off vampires and mingle with those who believe in them.

Stoker's Old World is the ideal place for his vampire to hide because the primitive beliefs and superstitions of the locals keep him safe in his isolation. Rice's Old World becomes a dangerous vampire-hunting ground because the locals believe in vampires and are not afraid to kill them (which is no surprise, considering the lack of wit of the Old World vampires). Stoker's progressive New World provides the people and the tools to destroy the vampire. Rice's New World provides the ideal haven for her vampires, where progress means acceptance of many different types and where anonymity comes with foreignness:

"This was New Orleans, a magical and magnificent place to live. In which a vampire, richly dressed and gracefully walking through the 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, if anyone stopped to whisper behind a fan, 'That man . . . how pale, how he gleams . . . how he moves. It's not natural!' A city in which a vampire might be gone before the words have even passed the lips." (40)

While Stoker presents difference as a threat, something to be marginalized and killed by the standard or "centre", Rice presents "otherness" as the very fabric of her magical New Orleans. In Rice's mythos, the marginal becomes the centre, and there is no "standard".

Rice, through both reliance on and rejection of nineteenth century literature, has produced a new vampire mythos with broader appeal and greater introspection. As Skrip suggests,

. . . writers are able to use the vampire's condition as a transformed human being aware of its previous human existence to create stories which explore the human condition and challenge the moral, religious, philosophical, and social structures which help us define ourselves as human beings. (3)

Louis, the most human vampire in the novel, and Claudia, the most inhuman, embark on a quest for identity, seeking answers to the questions that contemplative human beings would ask, such as where they came from, what their purpose is in the grand scheme of things, what the nature of morality is. It is this quest which definitively sets Rice's vampires, especially Louis, apart, as "literature's

first existential vampire" (Scrip 4). Previous writers base their mythology on the simple assumption that vampires do exist, while Rice seeks to determine from whence they came.

Louis is Rice's equivalent to the Byronic hero, attempting to resolve the Romantic dilemma, reconciling the real with the ideal. Roberts suggests that Rice's existential vampires,

Like their great Byronic ancestors, . . . travel toward destruction, suffering and renewal. The imprisonment from which they are delivered is not the stifling tyranny of men over women but that resulting from the Blakean mind-forged manacles, their own dependence on self-delusions concerning social institutions and religious myths. (19-20)

Louis suffers continuously in existential angst. It is because of his feelings of guilt and responsibility over his brother's death that Louis opts for vampirism, seeing his eternal anguish in what he believes to be a soulless, evil existence as penance. He says to the interviewer, "I lived like a man who wanted to die but who had no courage to do it himself. I walked black streets and alleys alone; I passed out in cabarets. I backed out of two duels more from apathy than cowardice and truly wished to be murdered" (11). This sort of self-isolation and melancholia is not relieved by his new condition, but is only intensified by Louis' opposing values, his respect for human life and his need to kill for blood. Thus, his undeath is fraught with even more angst than his human life because the dilemma now becomes

eternal:

"It was as if this night were only one of thousands of nights, world without end, night curving into night to make a great arching line of which I couldn't see the end, a night in which I roamed alone under cold mindless stars.

". . . you see, though Lestat had never said anything about devils or hell to me, I believed I was damned when I went over to him." (68-69, 72)

Raised in the Roman Catholic faith, Louis believes in God, the Devil, and saints and angels, but this belief system does not allow for the existence of a creature of pure evil, as vampires were believed to be. Louis demands of the priest he later kills, "'Why, if God exists, does He suffer me to exist! . . . You talk of sacrilege! . . . Why does He suffer me to live?'" (147). Conversely, if the vampire is pure evil, Louis wonders why he is repulsed by the thought of killing and the acceptance of being evil:

"Am I damned? Am I from the devil? Is my very nature that of a devil? I was asking myself over and over. And if it is, why then do I revolt against it, tremble when Babette hurls a flaming lantern at me, turn away in disgust when Lestat kills? What have I become in becoming a vampire?" (73)

Thus, one of the existential dilemmas Louis is faced with is the nature of good and evil. His quest therefore begins with the desire for knowledge, an attempt to uncover what he is as a vampire, and if he is in fact evil. As Skrip observes, "At the time of his initiation into vampirism, Louis has lost touch with the values and beliefs from which

he drew his sense of self; once he became a vampire, he tried to understand his new existence in terms of the humanity he had lost" (4). The intrinsic irony of Louis' situation rests in the fact that the quest for knowledge, a function of his human existence, results in disillusionment with his human beliefs and the loss of the humanity he is trying to preserve. To Louis, the ideal is humanity, the beauty of human life, a condition he finally understands:

"My vampire nature has been for me the greatest adventure of my life; all that went before it was confused, clouded; I went through mortal life like a blind man groping from solid object to solid object. It was only when I became a vampire that I respected for the first time all of life. I never knew what life was until it ran out in a red gush over my lips, my hands!" (81-82)

The reality, however, is that he is a vampire, a condition Louis does not yet understand, but mistakenly attempts to understand within the scope of his former humanity. Thus, disillusionment is inevitable because the real can never be reconciled with the ideal. Louis cannot reconcile his respect for human life with his need to kill humans for their blood. Lestat recognizes the inevitability of Louis' disillusionment and urges him to explore his vampirism from an exclusively vampiric perspective rather than a human one which is constrained by social and religious consciousness:

"... you must listen to me because you are in danger. You do not know your vampire nature. You are like an adult who, looking back on his childhood, realizes that he never appreciated it.

You cannot, as a man, go back to the nursery and play with your toys, asking for the love and care to be showered on you again simply because now you know their worth. So it is with you and mortal nature. You've given it up. You no longer look "through a glass darkly." But you cannot pass back to the world of human warmth with your new eyes.'" (82)

The danger to which Lestat refers is the death Armand describes in which the vampire can no longer deal with his vampirism and goes out to die, and Louis is certainly a likely candidate to be in such danger as long as he cannot accept his own nature.

Louis' questions about his new nature lead to the philosophical contemplation of good and evil in general. Louis' human understanding of these concepts is rather narrow, but as a vampire his concept of good and evil must expand if he is to survive. He must reassess morality from the perspective of an immortal, a perspective which goes far beyond Louis' former moral beliefs based on Catholicism. Lestat articulates one new perspective which does not absolve the vampire of guilt, but rather defies conventional religious morality, comparing the vampire to God and, in a Promethean way, allowing the vampire to usurp God's position as creator and destroyer:

"'Evil is a point of view,' he whispered now. 'We are immortal. And what we have before us are the rich feasts that conscience cannot appreciate and mortal men cannot know without regret. God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we; for no

creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms." (88-89)

Lestat advises Louis to embrace his evil as a means of defying God or else doing His work for Him: creatures who are supposedly pure evil, but who are able to freely roam the earth, killing indiscriminately and with impunity. Louis' search for identity then takes another turn: he no longer seeks to determine whether he is evil or simply part of God's plan, but seeks instead to confirm that he is a child of Satan, irredeemably evil:

"It struck me suddenly what consolation it would be to know Satan, to look upon his face, no matter how terrible that countenance was, to know that I belonged to him totally, and thus put to rest forever the torment of this ignorance. To step through some veil that would forever separate me from all that I called human nature." (163)

Such a discovery would at least affirm Louis' purpose on earth (Roberts 10), and comfort would come with knowledge and direction.

Louis' quest leads him to the Paris coven where he is faced with a different perspective of evil, one which is slightly less radical than Lestat's, but no more acceptable to Louis. Armand tries to show Louis with logic and within the confines of Louis' religious faith that his new condition requires a renewed perspective of evil, in which killing as a necessity to his survival is not as evil as

Louis believes. In terms of religion, Armand suggests that even vampires must be the children of God and therefore cannot be pure evil:

"Then we are not . . . 'I sat forward. ' . . . the children of Satan?"

"How could we be the children of Satan?" he asked. "Do you believe that Satan made this world around you?"

"No, I believe that God made it, if anyone made it. . . . But He also must have made Satan, and I want to know if we are his children!"

"Exactly, and consequently if you believe God made Satan, you must realize that all Satan's power comes from God and that Satan is simply God's child, and that we are God's children also. There are no children of Satan, really."

". . . 'Aren't there gradations of evil? Is evil a great perilous gulf into which one falls with the first sin, plummeting to the depth?"

". . . 'Surely you attribute great degrees and variations to goodness

"And how is this evil achieved? . . . How does one fall from grace and become in one instant as evil as the mob tribunal of the Revolution or the most cruel of the Roman emperors? Does one merely have to miss Mass on Sunday, or bite down on the Communion Host? Or steal a loaf of bread . . . or sleep with a neighbor's wife?"

". . . 'But if evil is without gradation, and it does exist, this state of evil, then only one sin is needed. Isn't that what you are saying? That God exists and" (234-236)

Armand's exercise in logic caters to Louis' Catholic background by beginning with the assumption that God and Satan exist. However, Louis' experiences as a vampire threaten such beliefs, while the continued existence of good and evil is undeniable. The gradual erosion of Louis' belief in God presents him with even more existential problems, leaving his angst unassuaged. As John Walton

points out, "Poignancy comes from the vampire being confronted with the fact that he is unquestionably on the side of evil - he is therefore presented with weighty questions of responsibility" (31). Louis relates this notion of responsibility to Armand, who is trying to show him a perspective of evil in which the vampire is absolved of guilt and responsibility:

"I don't know if God exists," I said. "And for all I do know . . . He doesn't exist."

"Then no sin matters," he said. "No sin achieves evil."

"That's not true. Because if God doesn't exist we are the creatures of highest consciousness in the universe. We alone understand the passage of time and the value of every minute of human life. And what constitutes evil, real evil, is the taking of a single human life. Whether a man would have died tomorrow or the day after or eventually . . . it doesn't matter. Because if God does not exist, this life . . . every second of it . . . is all we have." (236-237)

Bette Roberts suggests that, particularly in Gothic literature, "Repeatedly, a confrontation with religious faith is part of the process [of self-realization], as the protagonists face the meaninglessness of traditional values and recognize the accidental nature of their lives" (11). This confrontation is a major step in Louis' journey toward self-realization as a vampire. As Lestat had predicted, Louis is disillusioned when he receives the answers to questions of his existence and he loses a little more of his humanity in the process:

"Then God does not exist . . . you have no knowledge of His existence?"

"None," he said.

"No knowledge!" I said it again, unafraid of my simplicity, my miserable human pain. . . .

Then it began to sink in. It was as I'd always feared, and it was as lonely, it was as totally without hope. Things would go on as they had before, on and on. My search was over

"I can now accept the most fantastical truth of all: that there is no meaning to any of this!" (238-239)

Louis comes to accept the knowledge that his former values and morals were based on an invalid belief system, but his angst continues while the last vestiges of his humanity remain. It is Claudia who drives the final nails into the coffin of Louis' humanity. The first of these "nails" is Madeleine. Claudia's quest brings her to the recognition of her need for a mother, whom she carefully selects. Madeleine is a woman whose own child has died, but who still obsesses about children, as is demonstrated in her occupation as a maker of dolls, all of whom have the same child's face, her child. She is willing to become what Claudia is; however, she is also a full grown woman, too big for Claudia to vampirize and Claudia requests that Louis make her a vampire. Louis at first refuses: "I will not make her one of us. I will not damn the legions of mortals who'll die at her hands if I do!" (265). He can finally accept with regret the necessity of killing for survival, but not creating more killers. Claudia uses Louis' guilt

over her creation and his impending departure from her for Armand, and her own helplessness in a stunted form, to convince Louis to give in. He creates a vampire of Madeleine to care for Claudia and loses more of his humanity in the process:

"I smiled. I nodded. 'Bear me no ill will,' I said. 'We are even.'

-----"At that she moved her head to one side and studied me carefully, then seemed to smile despite herself and to nod in assent.

"'For you see,' I said to her in that same calm voice, 'what died tonight in this room was not that woman. It will take her many nights to die, perhaps years. What has died in this room tonight is the last vestige in me of what was human.'" (272-273)

For Louis, going back on his principles is a lethal strike to his humanity, but he is not completely accurate. Claudia's death delivers the final blow. Her attempt to free herself and Louis from Lestat by killing him results in her own death at the hands of a posse of the Paris coven, headed by a vampire named Santiago. These vampires lock Claudia and Madeleine into an outdoor chamber, leaving them at the mercy of the sun. Louis' discovery of their incinerated bodies is the final blow to his human nature. He seeks to rekindle some semblance of human feeling in art, but fails: "'Before, all art had held for me the promise of a deeper understanding of the human heart. Now the human heart meant nothing. I did not denigrate it. I simply forgot it'" (318). From this moment on, Louis sheds his

human morals and ethics and embraces undeath as a vampire:

"I never changed after that. I sought for nothing in the one great source of change which is humanity. And even in my love and absorption with the beauty of the world, I sought to learn nothing that could be given back to humanity. I drank of the beauty of the world as a vampire drinks. I was satisfied. I was filled to the brim. But I was dead." (321)

Louis does become a true vampire, coldly killing and not allowing himself to feel anymore. He loses his passion, love, compassion, desire for knowledge, and simply exists. One thing which has not changed is Louis' belief that he is damned by his actions, whether there is a God or not. As Skrip suggests, " . . . the tragedy of Louis' acceptance of his condition is that his definition of good and evil and of his own damnation are rooted in the morality of his Catholic background, a morality which his vampirism . . . has shown to be invalid" (5). His sense of self-damnation causes Louis to eventually isolate himself from other vampires and as he shuts himself off from Armand, he explains the conditions of his acceptance of his vampiric nature as functions of beliefs from his human existence:

"I wanted love and goodness in this which is living death It was impossible from the beginning, because you cannot have love and goodness when you do what you know to be evil, what you know to be wrong I knew it when I first took a human life to feed my craving it was all the same, all evil. And all wrong. Because no one could in any guise convince me of what I myself knew to be true, that I was damned in my own mind and soul." (336-337)

One major innovation Rice's first vampire novel brings to the tradition, but which rejects nineteenth century conventions, is her treatment of sexuality and gender: Rice levels gender hierarchies. Just as she blurs the distinctions between vampire and mortal, and margin and centre, Rice blurs the distinction between male and female.

David Punter observes that

Time and time again, those writers who are referred to as Gothic turn out to be those who bring us up against the boundaries of the civilised, who demonstrate to us the relative nature of ethical and behavioural codes and place over against the conventional world a different sphere in which these codes do not operate, or operate only in distorted forms. (405)

Sexuality in the nineteenth century, even in the unconventional world of the vampire, was conventional. Sexuality was either male imagined heterosexuality, as in "The Vampyre" and Dracula, or the male fantasy of solely female homosexuality, as in "Carmilla". In both cases, however, the attraction was for a human by a vampire and the situation was one of power rather than desire. In IWTV, the most intense attraction is usually between vampires which equalizes the positions of power, and the issue of choice of victim comes to depend upon aesthetics rather than gender. Auerbach observes that "[IWTV's] vampirism is a select club, a fraternity of beauty and death whose members are expected to be handsome and refined enough not to irritate each other

throughout eternity . . . Though the entire world is the vampire's spectacle, the most satisfying sight is each other" (154). Louis describes his reaction to Lestat's appearance in the encounter in which he chooses to become a vampire in terms of Lestat's overwhelming attraction. To keep a clear head, Louis will not look at Lestat in order to avoid being "spellbound by the sheer beauty of his appearance" (17). He is next attracted to Claudia, the child vampire. She is described as "the most beautiful child I'd ever seen, and now she glowed with the cold fire of a vampire" (94). It is not just physical appearance which attracts the vampire; it is also her sensual spirit which shows in her voice and eyes: "She had a voice equal to her physical beauty, clear like a little silver bell. It was sensual. She was sensual" (93). Louis is almost equally attracted to Armand, but for different qualities. He is attracted to Armand's physical appearance, but is more attracted to his knowledge, wisdom and intensity:

"It seemed he possessed an aura and even though his face was very young, which I knew meant nothing, he appeared infinitely old, wise . . .
 "And there seemed nothing human about him; even his handsome features and dark hair became the attributes of a terrible angel who shared with the rest of us only a superficial resemblance . . .
 . . And though I felt drawn to him, more strongly perhaps than I'd ever been drawn to any living creature save Claudia, he excited me in other ways which resembled fear." (237- 280)

Lestat, the apparently cold-hearted, unsophisticated

vampire, is not immune to attraction to others. He is attracted to Louis for his money and to Claudia for power over Louis. However, he is also attracted to physical beauty and androgynous purity:

"When I reached the door. . . he was bending over the settee. Two small boys lay there, nestled among the soft velvet pillows, totally abandoned to sleep as children can be, their pink mouths open, their small round faces utterly smooth. Their skin was moist, radiant . . . Lestat had sunk down beside the darker one; he was by far the more beautiful. He might have been lifted to the painted dome of a cathedral. No more than seven years old, he had that perfect beauty that is of neither sex, but angelic." (133)

Similarly, Louis finds the genderless beauty of Armand's volunteer blood-donor, sexually appealing: "' . . . on the linen pillows of the little stage lay that boy, his black hair parted in the middle and curling about his ears, so that he looked now in his dreamy, fevered state like one of those lithe androgynous creatures of a Botticelli painting'" (231).

While nineteenth century vampires are restricted to a particular gender for their choice of victims, Rice's vampires are free to join with males or females or both. Rice casts off the notion of sexual and social convention, and invests her vampires with aestheticism rather than social consciousness. Roberts observes that

As if to belie further the idea of restricting human development and to encourage faith in human potentiality, Rice engages her characters in

experiences that exaggerate their independence and their transcendence from conventionality. Often this theme comes from their bold sexuality . . . In the Gothics, the androgynous sexuality of the vampires, inviting male and female identification, implies that the liberating life of Lestat is intended for both sexes. (11)

Claudia presents one example of this departure from earlier vampire literature - criticism of the patriarchy. While nineteenth century writers reaffirm the patriarchy by characterizing women as weak victims and restoring conventional order in their destruction or consignment to traditional domesticity, Rice unleashes a pint-sized female powerhouse onto the patriarchy and makes some serious points about the defectiveness of the social inequitability of the distribution of power.

Claudia seems to be the ideal vampire. Her innocent beauty is the perfect hook to lure her victims, and her cold, ruthlessness in killing is not marred by conscience; hence she is not troubled by Louis' brand of angst. However, there is a major flaw in the ideal: Claudia will never grow up physically, but mentally she progresses naturally into a mature woman. Because of her size, this intelligent, independent woman is forever dependent on the "fathers" who created her for their own selfish needs. Louis explains this condition to the interviewer, describing her progressive resentment of her condition in terms of Claudia's increasing coldness and viciousness:

"Her body!" the boy said. "She was never to grow up." The vampire nodded. "She was to be the demon child forever But her mind. It was a vampire's mind Yet more and more her doll-like face seemed to possess two totally aware adult eyes, and innocence seemed lost somewhere with neglected toys and the loss of a certain patience . . . she became an eerie and powerful seductress, her voice as clear and sweet as ever, though it had a resonance which was womanish, a sharpness that proved shocking." (101-102)

Claudia's indignation is a function of her growing impatience with being objectified and used as a pawn in a game of power between men. Louis and Lestat dress her as a child, style her hair as a child's, buy her toys, and play with her as though she were "a magnificent doll" (99). In fact, Louis admits to calling her "Doll, doll" (102), even when he becomes aware that inside her small form is a mature woman, thus locking her into a permanently infantilized state:

. . . it is the vampire's story that admits the monster - a girl vampire named Claudia - whose death leads to the reestablishment of homosocial bonds between men. No longer is it the woman who must be protected from the monster; she is the monster. In place of the monstrous sexual appetites of Stoker's somewhat marginalized vampire women is the rage of a monstrous girl vampire against her infantilization and dependency in a world defined by fathers. (Doane and Hodges 424)

Claudia's resentment finally grows to the point at which her independent spirit can take no more and she plots to kill her oppressor, Lestat:

" . . . having heard the whole story [she] said,

'He made me then to be your companion. No chains could have held you in your loneliness, and he could give you nothing. He gives me nothing . . . we've been his puppets, you and I; you remaining to take care of him, and I your saving companion. Now's time to end it, Louis.'" (118)

Claudia's attempt to kill Lestat fails and she is executed for her efforts to free herself from an oppressive patriarch. However, there are more important statements made here than the nineteenth century affirmation of convention by killing the monstrous female who flouts social constraints and restoring patriarchal order. Claudia's death becomes her release from a torturous imposed dependence on and objectification by patriarchy. It is also the inevitable outcome of the usurpation of the woman's role in motherhood by men. Lestat seeks to be the ultimate authority figure, assuming the role of father, and then requiring the role of mother as well: "'I want a child tonight. I am like a mother . . . I want a child!'" (89). For Claudia, death is also a release from the "self-enclosed mock-family" (Auerbach 154) she had been forced into and trapped in by the megalomaniacal Lestat. The absence of the mother is strongly felt by Claudia throughout her undeath. From the beginning of her vampirism, Claudia asks for her "Mamma" and gets Lestat instead. She insists she cannot be Lestat's and Louis' daughter: "'I'm not your daughter,' she said with the silvery voice. 'I'm my mamma's daughter'"

(94). Once she rids herself of her unnatural male "mother", Claudia's quest becomes a search for a "surrogate mother" (Doane and Hodges 426) which she finds in Madeleine. As Auerbach suggests, "Claudia is an adult male construction, a stunted woman with no identity apart from the obsessions of the fatherly lovers who made her . . . The degradation of Claudia's undeath is her enforced existence as a doll" (158). By usurping the position of the mother, Lestat and Louis deprive Claudia of the maternal influence and trap her into their power struggle in which she becomes an object of exchange (Doane and Hodges 425) causing her to revolt and search for the conspicuously absent mother-figure.

Thus, Rice's innovative depictions of Claudia's rage against her infantilization and objectification, the norm for females in nineteenth century vampire literature, becomes Rice's "protest against the kind of femininity offered to women in a patriarchal culture" (Doane and Hodges 424). A step towards the resolution of this problem is provided in her other innovation, androgyny. The androgynous sexuality of Rice's vampires promotes greater sexual and social freedom for both men and women, equalizing the hierarchy of power in terms of gender:

. . . Anne said . . . "I see the androgynous figure as the ideal figure." The relationship between Lestat and Louis, then between Louis and another vampire, Armand, has homoerotic overtones as male and female distinctions become

insignificant, since vampires do not engage in genital sex. The new vampire is brought over into a dramatically changed existence with a gender-free perspective. (Ramsland 148)

Thus, while nineteenth century vampire literature invests its mythology with religious and sexual conventions, Rice sets up a framework for a new mythology in which vampires are not limited by social, sexual, or religious constraints.

The vampires of the twentieth century are no longer solitary, superficial portraits of a killer. Rice's new vampires belie a depth of character never before exhibited by the undead. The soulless predator is replaced by a creature who is divested of, but who continues to long for his humanity, agonizing over existential questions which humans themselves contemplate. They are introspective and philosophical, attempting to find a sense of identity and purpose by interacting with other, more experienced vampires. Thus, Rice develops an ever increasing community of vampires who depend upon one another for knowledge and survival in a world of mortals, from which they are inevitably excluded. As a separate and distinct race, Rice's vampires are imbued with a mythology all their own, which is developed throughout the next two novels of her series.

CHAPTER THREE

Hunters of the Savage Garden

In Interview With the Vampire, Louis introduces "the brat-prince," Lestat, as his irresponsible, unsophisticated vampire-father. He whines throughout the novel, in existential angst, about the meaninglessness of his undeath and Lestat's apparent lack of consideration for the greater implications and responsibilities of the vampiric state. As the title indicates, the second novel in Rice's vampire series, The Vampire Lestat (hereafter identified as TVL), moves away from Louis' perspective to Lestat's take on vampirism. Lestat portrays himself in a much more positive light, revealing his own experience of grappling with the same existential questions about which Louis agonizes. Lestat pursues his own quest for a sense of identity and purpose, both as a human and as a vampire, which leads to his unearthing of an extensive genealogy and mythology of vampires. Just as Louis' and Claudia's quest brings to light an international community of vampires, Lestat's quest pries open the most ancient sarcophagi of the undead. The Queen of the Damned (hereafter identified as QOTD) picks up this mythological thread and further details the genesis of vampirism. Framed by Lestat's perspective, this novel diversifies to include retrospective, first-hand accounts of the undeaths of the oldest vampires, going back to the

vampire-progenitor, Akasha, "the Queen of the Damned." As Auerbach observes,

Lestat and his company are a species apart. They scarcely participate in history, even as an oppressed race. When Louis and . . . Lestat seek the origin of vampires, that origin is unrecognizable to the human reader: these vampires live without reference to us, composing a mythic landscape of their own. (153)

.....Lestat's first task in his own narrative is to set the record straight, to clarify Louis' misconceptions regarding his maker's nature. The straightforwardness of the beginning of *TVL* reflects Lestat's up-front honesty and his in-your-face method of dealing with humans and other vampires, inspiring trust in the veracity of his story: "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). Lestat paints a very different portrait of himself from the obnoxious, insipid, superficial, and inhumanly cold-hearted killer Louis depicted. In fact, Lestat's description of his reaction to Louis' misinterpretations of his behaviour does not resemble Louis' concept of a Lestatian reaction in the least. He responds with compassion and empathy in spite of the pain Louis' story caused him. Although his initial reaction was to shred Louis' novel to bits, in what he acknowledges as "a moment of contemptible anger" (14), when Lestat calms down

he seeks to resolve his problems with Louis by means of understanding and compassion:

I had to find Louis. I had to talk to him. In fact, after reading his account of things, I ached for his romantic illusions, and even his dishonesty. I ached even for his gentlemanly malice and his physical presence, the deceptively soft sound of his voice.

Of course I hated him for the lies he told about me. But the love was far greater than the hate. He had shared the dark and romantic years of the nineteenth century with me, he was my companion as no other immortal had ever been.

And I ached to write my story for him, not an answer to his malice in *Interview with the Vampire*, but the tale of all the things I'd seen and learned before I came to him, the story I could not tell him before. (16)

Louis describes Lestat as an evil monster, who "kills indiscriminately," for very trivial reasons, such as financial gain, jealousy, and malicious revenge against the humanity which he can never recapture. Lestat's story reveals his personal quest for goodness, however. In his human life, he strives to be good, desiring, at the age of twelve, to enter the priesthood because, as Lestat says, "I wanted to be enclosed forever with people who believed I could be good if I wanted to be" (31). Unfortunately, Lestat's youthful attempts at achieving goodness are flouted by his father and older brothers, who do not understand Lestat's existential concerns. Even the bitterness Lestat experiences at the hands of his father is turned into goodness when he becomes the sole provider for his family,

culminating when he finally earns the fearful respect of his father and brothers by killing a pack of wolves that had been terrorizing the countryside.

Lestat's quest for goodness, coupled with his courage and adventurousness, brings him to the stage in Paris, as an actor. He believes that on the stage he is actually creating something good. His musician friend, Nicholas, debates the nature of goodness with Lestat, darkly suggesting that goodness is merely a descriptive modifier, a tag word differentiating between "good art and bad art" (72). To Lestat, however, the entire meaning of life is goodness. He explains this concept to Nicholas:

"All you can do is make your life have meaning, make it good--

"... if you could only believe in it ... that we do good when we make others forget their sorrow ...

"I can live without God. I can even come to live with the idea there is no life after. But I do not think I could go on if I did not believe in the possibility of goodness." (71-72)

Lestat finds that his need for goodness is intensified once he is transformed into a vampire and then abandoned by his maker, Magnus. As a creature who is traditionally seen as evil, he is now faced with the challenge of making goodness out of evil. Roberts suggests that, "Lestat determines to use his evil nature 'to do good,' that is, to show mortals what evil really is" (10-11). He corrects Louis' misinterpretation of Lestat's ruthlessness in toying

with his prey and killing, by pointing out that while Louis sees the innocent, promising young man as Lestat's favourite victim, in actual fact, he feeds only on society's criminals: "I raided the worst sections, tangling with thieves and killers, often giving them a playful chance to defend themselves . . . my favourite was the very young scoundrel who'd kill you for the coins in your pocket" (121). Although he is incensed by Louis' interpretation of his method of killing and choice of victim, Lestat responds with regret at Louis' ignorance:

When [Louis] says I played with innocent strangers, befriending them and then killing them, how was he to know that I hunted almost exclusively among the gamblers, the thieves, and the killers, being more faithful to my unspoken vow to kill the evildoer than even I had hoped I would be? (499)

It is mainly this intention to do good that leads Lestat to become a rock star in the twentieth century. Ramsland suggests that Lestat

wants to be good despite his dark nature. Thus, when he realizes that, as literal evil, he has no place in the twentieth century (thanks to vampire fiction that makes his existence unreal), he feels he can still do good by portraying evil symbolically . . . Thus, he can ensure that humans do not make a friend of horror but keep it in its place, as something to be resisted. (251)

Lestat applies his theory of the goodness of art, derived from his human experiences, to his new existence as a vampire:

Pure evil has no real place.

And that means, doesn't it, that I have no place.

Except, perhaps, the art that repudiates evil - the vampire comics, the horror novels, the old gothic tales - or in the roaring chants of the rock stars who dramatize the battles against evil that each mortal fights within himself. (10)

As a rock star, he attempts to verbalize the true evils that plague society, such as pain, hunger, and war, what his songs call "visible" and "material" "Demons" (541). As an archaic symbol of evil, he sings about the new mortality, secular humanism; he represents old religions and superstitions that, in themselves, perpetrate evil by diverting attention away from tangible evils and towards intangible, abstract ideologies which are, in all likelihood, as much of a myth as is the vampire in twentieth century thought. To mortals, Lestat sings, "Mythic evil you don't need anymore. / Drive out the vampires and the devils / With the gods you no longer adore" (541).

Louis portrays Lestat as an overbearing and oppressive "father" who irresponsibly creates him to gain access to his land and money, and who creates the child-vampire, Claudia, in order to maintain Louis as his benefactor. He sees this as an assertion of power and control. Lestat, however, explains his creations in terms of the vampire's need for love and the need for community in order to survive. Each depends upon the other for guidance as to how to adapt to a

new age and to ease the sense of isolation from the human community. Ramsland writes that "The vampires are prototypical outsiders pried loose from their natural human habitat, shunned by human society, alienated from God, and contaminated by the blood of their victims. They seek protection and companionship with their own kind" (172). Louis briefly alludes to this instinct for community in IWTV, but points to it, through Claudia's words, as a negative situation: "'We could not bear to live alone! We needed our little company! A wilderness of mortals surrounded us, groping blind, preoccupied, and the brides and bridegrooms of death. 'Locked together in hatred,' [Claudia] said'" (116). Lestat, however, asserts that his need for Louis was based in love: " . . . I loved him, plain and simple. And it was out of the desperation to keep him, to bind him closer to me at the most precarious of moments, that I committed the most selfish and impulsive act of my entire life among the living dead" (TVL 498).

It is mainly the need for community, and the collective knowledge of the community, that leads Louis and Claudia to seek out other vampires. Similarly, Lestat searches for others to ward off the loneliness of his condition after Magnus abandons him. As Roberts observes,

In the Chronicles . . . family patterns among vampires are created, dissolved, and reshaped again and again. Vampires can endure a timeless

sentence in a godless, seemingly meaningless universe, but they cannot abide the isolation and loneliness of their condition. (10)

Lestat first encounters the Paris coven, an example of the negative aspects of community. Led by Armand, the Paris vampires exist in an oppressive state where survival is believed to depend upon conformity to old superstitions and rules. This community resides beneath the cemetery, Les Innocents, and strictly adheres to a system of rules, "the Dark Ways," based on the belief that vampires are Satan's minions, God's disciplinarians, and cannot participate in the pleasures and benefits of immortal existence, much less interact with human existence. It is Lestat who brings this old coven into the new era, helping them to adapt to the changing times, bringing them out of the dark and into the lights of the Paris stage at the Théâtre des Vampires. With the loss of the Dark Ways, Armand now requires guidance in adapting to the new public way of life. He explains how the community's ancient rules, based upon religious superstition, were what kept them together and safe, and that this is what Lestat has destroyed: "It is finished for my children . . . for they know now they can disregard all of it. The things that bound us together, gave us the strength to endure as damned things! The mysteries that protected us here" (225). Lestat, however, teaches them the need to adapt in order to survive. He points out that

Les Innocents will soon be no more and the coven will be forced out into the public sphere. He shows them that it is best to adapt to each new age rather than to hide from change:

"You must know that the forms of goodness change with the ages, that there are saints for all times under heaven. . . .

And so it is with evil, obviously. It changes form. . . . How many men in this age believe in the crosses that frighten your followers? . . . What does it matter to them if white-faced haunts prowl a churchyard after dark? . . .

Don't you see? . . . It is a new age. It requires a new evil. And I am that new evil. . . . I am the vampire for these times." (227-228)

The oldest of the coven, and its dethroned leader, Armand, is the most resistant to change. Thus, when the community he knows falls apart, and he is forced to change with the ages, he is lost. He seeks to form a bond with Lestat in order to create a new community which can help him survive in the new secular era of the eighteenth century:

[Armand] told me that if I opened to him and gave him my strength and my secrets that he would give me his .

. . . Some reverence and terror in me made me reach out and embrace him, and I held him, battling my confusion and my desire.

"Leave Paris, yes," he whispered. "But take me with you. I don't know how to exist here now. I stumble through a carnival of horrors." (282)

Lestat may desire Armand and he may crave the companionship Armand offers, but he also recognizes the threat of Armand's type of community to his own individuality: "I wanted only that he should remain. I wanted to be with him, what he

was, and all the things he had said were true. Yet it could never be as he wished it to be. He could not have this power over us" (287). When Louis meets Armand at the Théâtre des Vampires in the next century, it is Louis with whom Armand forms such a community for a brief time. Just as Louis personified for Armand the nineteenth century, so had Lestat before him embodied the spirit of the eighteenth century, and it is the spirit of the age which Armand, or any vampire, needs to learn and embrace in order to survive.

With Claudia's execution, Louis and Lestat both discover the extent to which Armand will go to manipulate others and assert his own authority under the pretence of enforcing conformity to coven rules. As Ramsland points out,

[Rice] illustrates the impetus in the human heart to seek others, but she also notes the tendency of wanting to bond with others so strongly that those who find community seek to force others to follow rules . . . Yet the real self . . . is the constructive force within individuals to discover and express their uniqueness rather than to conform to an ideal formed by someone else. (172)

Lestat is just such an individual whose real self will not allow him to be restricted by anyone else's rules or ideals, not even Armand's: "Lestat's resilience and resourcefulness are typical of the continuing appeal of the vampire myth . . . [he] has a devil-may-care attitude that enables him to be not only an adapter par excellence, but a challenger to the

status quo" (Roberts 43). It is because of these qualities that Lestat's autobiography was written and other "outcasts" and reformers are named, described, and given a voice in the sequel. He says of himself, "I had already broken the dark commandments, telling the name of an immortal and putting it into written words. Well, it gave me a wondrous satisfaction to do it. And after all, I had never been very good at obeying rules" (TVL 320).

One outcast who shares these qualities with Lestat and teaches him about his origins and surviving the centuries, and whose name Lestat revealed, is Marius. The artist who lived among mortals and broke vampiric rules before Lestat was even a gleam in Magnus' eye is attracted to the qualities he sees in Lestat which he himself possesses. As the oldest known vampire to this point, Marius is a natural choice to be a source for Lestat's search for his vampiric roots. He answers Lestat's call and begins his history of vampirism, tracing its genealogy back to its genesis, as he understands it to be. As Ramsland points out, "It is within Marius' story that Anne weaves her vampire mythology" (255).

Through Marius, Rice connects the vampire myth with other ancient myths, creating a time line which dates back far beyond the nineteenth century, the literary birthdate of the vampire. Roberts observes that

In tracing vampire histories and linking them with

pagan beliefs, Rice legitimizes vampirism as another myth. Primitive tribes constructed stories of the supernatural to account for natural events and performed ceremonies to plead for survival against the cruelties of natural phenomena, and so Rice also ties vampirism to human needs and fantasies. (58)

Rice presents the vampire as an accepted, even worshipped, creature believed by many different peoples worldwide to be a beneficent deity. . . . Marius recounts the tale of his human existence, during another, more ancient, secular age, "In the years of Augustus Caesar, when Rome had just become an empire, when faith in the gods was, for all lofty purposes, dead" (382). He draws the connection between his own attitudes and Lestat's in terms of their common faith in humanity and goodness, in spite of their godlessness: " . . . you were born on the cusp of the old way of seeing things. And so was I. You came of age without faith, and yet you aren't cynical. And so it was with me. We sprang up from a crack between faith and despair, as it were" (382). Marius informs Lestat that vampires even predate the Christian god, and that the concepts of good and evil as associated with Christ and Satan, even secular yet still abstract concepts of good and evil, have little to do with vampires. He describes a time when good and evil were associated with nature and gods were creatures who could affect nature either positively or negatively and human behaviour was governed by conscience rather than religion:

"... evil was the drought and the plague of the locust and the death of the crops. I was made what I am by these men in the name of good" (383). To Lestat, this is an image of innocence and goodness, the mythological Eden, or as he calls it, the Savage Garden: "... it all seemed more than ever the story of the Savage Garden, ... where no law prevailed except the law of the garden, which was the aesthetic law" (383).

Marius reveals that his transformation occurred as a result of pagan myth and ritual. He describes his abduction by the Druid, Mael, and the plan of the Keltoi to make Marius into a vegetation god to replace the old god who has been stricken by "the revenge of the sun god" (409). Mael's people fear for the state of their crops and they fear a recurrence of the sun god's vengeance so Marius is selected to go into Egypt to "seek out the old gods and find out why this calamity has occurred" (417). Marius discovers that the god of the tree, to whom human sacrifice is made to ensure the regeneration of the crops, is in fact a vampire, a creature who feeds on blood but who has no control over the state of the agriculture or the seasons. The vampire has no actual regenerative power over the crops, but is a symbolically appropriate figure to support the fertility rituals of Druid mythology, hence he becomes a god: "[Marius] describes how he became a blood-drinking immortal

within a tree, an appropriate adaptation of pagan myth, since this transformation ritual is widely known as a symbol of growth, regeneration and therefore immortality" (Roberts 49). The possibility of building an entire religion on a creature who is evidently not a god points to the human capacity for self-delusion. The mass destruction of human life at the hands of the Druids for the sake of such self-delusion, as witnessed by Marius, exemplifies the danger of constructing false meaning rather than accepting what is real. According to Ramsland,

Druids sacrificed condemned criminals in a huge ceremony every five years to ensure the fertility of the crops. The more they killed, they believed, the greater the crop. The criminals were burned in colossal structures of wicker and grass to appease the god of vegetation. (255)

Marius expresses this to Lestat as he traces humanity's dependence upon false gods throughout history so as to impose a facade of order on a natural world that cannot be controlled:

"Very few beings really seek knowledge in this world. Mortal or immortal, few really ask. On the contrary, they try to wring from the unknown the answers they have already shaped in their own minds - justifications, confirmations, forms of consolation without which they can't go on."
(380)

It is his role as a Druidic fertility god that draws Marius to the discovery of the origins of the vampire, of which he only has tenuous and sketchy knowledge, because

"the Mother" and "the Father" have never moved or spoken to tell their story and Marius knows of no other vampires old enough to remember the genesis story. As he understands the story from the burned Elder, who put the Mother and the Father in the sun, the origins of the vampire are tied to yet another myth from another part of the world, the Egyptian and Greek myth of Isis and Osiris. According to the Elder, the first of the vampires were once the King and Queen of Egypt, Enkil and Akasha, who as "worshippers of the Good Mother Earth," directed the Egyptians away from the practice of cannibalism. He describes these two as "benevolent rulers" who "had some vision of all things being united in good, of all forces being made to go on the same divine course" (438). During an attempt to persuade an unruly demon who wanted a physical body to follow this course, the King and Queen were set upon and stabbed repeatedly by cannibal conspirators who resented Enkil's reforms. The demon entered their bodies, healing their wounds but transforming them into eternal "Blood Drinkers." In order to avert the chaos, the Elder explains, of humans attempting to steal the vampiric blood and multiplying, and in order to impose reason on the unreasonable, Enkil and Akasha create of themselves a new religion, with themselves as gods and the blood of their victims as sacrifice to the gods:

" . . . they must sanctify and contain what was done by mystery, or else Egypt might become a race of blood-drinking demons who would divide the world into Those Who Drink the Blood and those who are bred only to give it, a tyranny that once achieved might never be broken by mortal men alone.

"And so the good King and Queen chose the path of ritual, of myth They girded with the symbolic and the mysterious what could not be allowed to become common, and they passed out of the sight of mortal men into the temples, to be worshipped by those who would bring them blood."
(442-443)

The new religion Akasha and Enkil chose to resurrect was the cult of Isis and Osiris. As the legend dictates, Osiris and Isis were twins born of the deities of the earth and sky, and later became husband and wife. Osiris was locked in a casket and thrown in the sea by his brother, Typhon (Seth, to the Egyptians), but was found and revived by Isis. Typhon then cut Osiris into pieces, but Isis found all the parts of his body, except the genitals (which, as Lestat points out, the vampire does not use) and wrapped them in linen. Osiris was resurrected to become the King of the Dead and the Lord of the Underworld, symbolizing to the Egyptians "the power of Eternal life beyond the grave" (Ramsland 257). He was also known as the god of vegetation, the earth, the "floods which fertilize the flats," and the moon as well as the judge of the dead. Thus, "the worship of Osiris . . . lent form and substance to the hope of immortality" (Bleeker 56-57). Human sacrifice to the gods

of the moon was performed to ensure the fertility of the earth, with the assurance of life after death.

By this account, Enkil becomes the "Good Father" while Akasha becomes "the Good Mother". However, the mythology is developed further in QOTD to reveal a very different picture of the first vampires. Lestat questions Marius about the validity of the association of the first vampires to Isis and Osiris: "'But who are they?' I asked finally . . . 'Are they Osiris and Isis? Is that who they are?' 'I don't know'" (TVL 389). In the sequel, Maharet, a vampire of the First Brood, explains that they are a perversion of the myth of the good Earth Mother and Father and that, in fact, the adaptation of the myth served the purposes of evil rather than good. She describes Akasha as an evil self-enclosed ruler who perverts the myth to serve her own purposes. As a human, Maharet was a powerful witch, a power she shared with her twin, Mekare. Because of their fascination with the twin's power to command the spirit world, Akasha and Enkil brutally murder the mountain people with whom the witches belong in order to take them captive and learn their skills. Essentially, the massacre was prompted by Akasha because, as Maharet states, "**She was curious about us**" (QOTD 329). Akasha orders the execution of the witches when, in conversation with the spirits, they inform her that the spirits are simple pranksters, inferior to, but yearning to

please, humans, not the grand and powerful gods of her mythology. When the spirits react violently to the threat against their witches, Enkil persuades her to allow them to live. Instead, as an example of the power of the sovereign and the twin's lack of power, Maharet and Mekare are punished by rape before the court by the unwilling Khayman, the king's steward... Maharet paints a very different picture from the Elder's myth of the Good Mother. Akasha proves instead to be an evil queen because of her need of self-delusions:

"This Queen had no true morality, no true system of ethics to govern the things which she did. This Queen was one of those many humans who sense that perhaps there is nothing and no reason to anything that can ever be known. Yet she cannot bear the thought of it. And so she created day in and day out her ethical systems, trying desperately to believe in them, and they were all cloaks for things she did for merely pragmatic reasons." (330)

The demon, Amel, enters the slain king and queen partially out of anger at the savage punishment and rape of Maharet and Mekare. Maharet reveals that it was Akasha into whom Amel first entered and she who gave the blood to Enkil, making him a vampire, as well. Akasha's need for self-delusion only increases when she becomes a vampire. She cannot accept the accidental cause of her state, or the "evil" need to drink human blood, but must inscribe it with meaning:

'Advise us Mekare and Maharet,' [Enkil] said.

'For we would understand this transformation and how it might be used for good.'

'Yes,' the Queen said . . . 'For surely such a thing cannot happen without reason . . .' Then losing her conviction, she fell quiet. Indeed it seemed her small pragmatic view of things, ever puny and seeking for justifications, had collapsed utterly. (400)

Thus, she sets up herself and Enkil as the fertility gods, Isis and Osiris, the leaders of a new religion, bringing false faith to the Egyptians. They convince themselves that the immortal powers were meant to be bestowed on them to make them into gods. Mekare, however, points out that the demon "could very likely pass into anyone" (407), instilling in the King and Queen the fear that "others may try to take this from us" (407). Thus, the creation of a religion built around their new condition is also an attempt to protect themselves from the theft of their powers. Therefore, Akasha and Enkil explain to their subjects that the demon that had terrorized the court had been unleashed by the evil witches, but has been vanquished by their own gods, who had deified the King and Queen to battle it; thus they assert their own authority while providing justification for the elimination of the only people who know the truth of their demonic circumstances:

"In a quavering voice, she told her subjects that we were monstrous witches, and that we had loosed upon this kingdom the demon . . . But lo, the great god Osiris, oldest of all the gods, stronger even than the god Ra, had cast down this

diabolical force and raised up into celestial glory the King and Queen.

"But the great god could not look kindly upon the witches who had so troubled his beloved people. And he demanded now that no mercy be shown.

"Mekare, for your evil and your discourse with demons,' the Queen said, 'your tongue shall be torn from your mouth. And Maharet, for the evil which you have envisioned and sought to make us believe in, your eyes shall be plucked out! . . . And then at high noon tomorrow . . . you shall be burnt alive for all the people to see. . . ."

"For behold, no such evil shall ever prevail against the gods of Egypt and their chosen King and Queen. For the gods have looked upon us with benevolence and special favor, and we are as the King and Queen of Heaven, and our destiny is for the common good!" (410)

This story alone has mythological elements. Roberts observes that "Maharet's narration of Enkil and Akasha's persecution of Maharet and Mekare during pre-Egyptian times builds on the story of vampire origins begun by Marius in TVL and includes many of the happenings common to mythic experience: fertility ritual, abduction, rape, dismemberment, separation, and transformation" (64). Akasha takes the mythological qualities of vampires to a new level, building a religion around them. As Maharet says,

"Only much later, did I learn that the King and Queen made a great religion of their transformation; that they took upon themselves the identity of Osiris and Isis, and darkened those old myths to suit themselves. . . . 'God of the underworld' Osiris became - that is, the King who could appear only in darkness. And the Queen became Isis, the Mother, who gathers up her husband's battered and dismembered body and heals it and brings it back to life." (416)

The adaptation of myth to suit Akasha's purposes and inscribe an accidental situation with meaning exemplifies Rice's tendency to "show a combination of amusement and scorn over the human capacity for self-deception and even self-destruction" (Ramsland 267). In relating the myth to Lestat, it is Marius' intention to direct Lestat away from searching for the meaning of vampire existence toward acceptance and recognition of meaning that already exists in the beauty and savagery of the world around them. Vampire survival depends upon the ability to continuously discover new ways of feeling "intensely alive" (Roberts 55-56), which is found in interaction with reality and humanity rather than fantasy and illusion, an ability Marius identifies in Lestat:

" . . . you don't seek any system to justify [your nature] That's what I mean by innocence. You're guilty of killing mortals because you've been made into something that feeds on blood and death, but you're not guilty of lying, of creating great dark and evil systems of thought within yourself. . . .

"To be godless is probably the first step to innocence . . . to lose the sense of sin and subordination, the false grief for things supposed to be lost

"An absence of need for illusions . . . A love of and respect for what is right before your eyes." (TVL 381)

Maharet relates the events which became the myth to the community of vampires in order to sort out a means of defeating the self-deluded matriarch without killing them

all. All the myths relating to the vampires in Rice's system are matriarchal myths. The Druid community which creates the vampires Marius and Mael, worships a matriarch, "the Great Mother . . . she who is without visible form, but nevertheless present in all things, and the Mother of all things, of the earth, of the trees, of the sky overhead, of all men, of the Drinker of the Blood himself who walks in her garden" (TVL 407). Marius connects the matriarch of the religion with Mother Earth:

. . . the Divine Mother was also Death, the earth that swallows the remains of [her] young lover, [the Dying God, the one who grew to manhood as the crops grow, only to be cut down as the crops are cut down, while the Mother remains eternal], the earth that swallows all of us. (407)

Similarly, the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis is also a matriarchal myth. Marius notes the restoration of the dismembered Osiris by the Great Mother, Isis (407). Maharet's version of the story, however, Akasha is the false mother. She is a "perversion of Isis": Roberts points out that "Instead of a 'beneficent queen of nature' or a 'tender mother', as Isis is regarded in myth, Akasha is the terrible mother who ensnares and devours her offspring . . . to enhance her power" (65). Unlike the Good Mother Earth, who produces and supports, Akasha can only consume and enslave in the name of goodness.

The final link between vampirism and pagan myth is that

it, too, is a matriarchy. The events of QOTD reveal that Akasha was the first vampire and that all other vampires are directly descended from her. Ancient mythology is no stranger to the concept of the matriarchy, the importance of woman, but Rice makes a great shift in vampire literature from the nineteenth century concept of woman as either victim or monster. As a female writer, Rice invests her female vampires, and even mortals, with as much strength and wisdom as her male characters. Toril Moi points out that, as do Gilbert and Gubar, "The female textual strategy . . . consists in assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature" (59-60). It is this sequence which Rice reenacts in the Vampire Chronicles, beginning with Claudia in IWTV. In this first novel of the series, Rice assaults nineteenth century objectification and infantilization of women. She deconstructs that era's view of women as victims and reconstructs an image of strong, independent women who want to take care of themselves. This process of deconstructing the male myth of the weak woman and reconstructing the female vision continues to be developed throughout TVL and QOTD. Roberts points out that " . . . the majority of [Rice's female characters] exhibit unusual independence and atypicality, particularly the vampires: Gabrielle, Akasha, Maharet, and Jesse" (12).

As a human, Gabrielle is not exactly a conventional woman of her time. She is well-educated, able to read and write in several languages, knowledgeable in history, philosophy and caught up in intellectual pursuits. However, she is not the typical nurturing mother and submissive wife of the 1700s. Lestat says of her,

----- All my life I'd watched her read her Italian books and scribble letters to people in Naples, where she had grown up, yet she had no patience to teach me or my brothers the alphabet. And nothing had changed after I came back from the monastery. I was twenty and I couldn't read or write more than a few prayers and my name. I hated the sight of her books; I hated her absorption in them.

And in some vague way, I hated the fact that only extreme pain in me could ever wring from her the slightest warmth or interest.

Yet she'd been my savior. (TVL 37)

Gabrielle does, however, share her son's adventurous spirit and envies the freedom he has as a man. Thus, she defies her husband and aids Lestat's escape from the oppressive confines of his father's house. She cannot escape, so she must live vicariously through her son. It is her unhappiness in her restrictive environment, her oppression by the patriarchy, which makes her the 'monstrous' mother, and justifies her behaviour to Lestat:

She was Gabrielle.

And all her life came to her defense, the years and years of suffering and loneliness, the waste in those damp, hollow chambers to which she'd been condemned, and the books that were her solace, and the children who devoured her and abandoned her, and the pain and disease, her final enemy, which had, in promising release, pretended

to be her friend. (TVL 158)

The monstrosousness of her existence, her subjugation under the patriarchal standards which forced her into the restrictive role of child-bearer, is symbolized in her illness. The sickness is slowly draining her of life, just as the conventional role of woman as nothing more than mother drains her of her vitality and warmth.-----

Liberation from both sickness and convention comes in the form of vampirism. She is freed, by Lestat, from her restrictive life in the Auvergne. She truly embraces her new-found freedom from physical as well as social convention. In her new state, Gabrielle completely rejects all the restrictions of her human existence, beginning with her appearance. As Roberts observes, "Once she becomes a vampire, Lestat's mother becomes a completely new creature, Gabrielle, whose vampire identity nullifies and transcends her mortal role as mother" (45). She sheds the restrictive female role and dons the freedom and appearance of the masculine experience. She "cuts her hair, dresses like a man, becomes a colder, more ruthless killer than Lestat" (Roberts 46):

She was colder than I. She was better at all of it, I thought

She tore off the pink velvet girdle and skirts right there and put on the boy's clothes. She'd chosen him for the fit of the clothes.

And to describe it more truly, as she put on his garments, she became the boy

"But there's no real reason for me to dress that way anymore, is there?" she asked.
 . . . she was not really a woman now, was she? Any more than I was a man. (171-172)

Gabrielle blurs the distinctions between male and female, and asserts, instead, her own individuality.

Gabrielle comes to realize, however, that she can never shed the expectations of society. When she cuts her hair, it grows back, an unfortunate side-effect of vampirism. And Lestat is happiest when she is dressed as a woman, with her hair down long. She realizes that she can only take on a gender-free form in her own mind. To society, she will always be defined as a symbol of vulnerability simply by her "gender-specific appearance," thus she withdraws from society, and inevitably from Lestat, into nature which is already free of gender roles. As Ramsland observes, "Unable to avoid social expectations altogether, she moves away from society" (253). Gabrielle's rejection of social convention and her absorption into the Savage Garden, based on aesthetics and natural law rather than patriarchal restrictions, is symbolized by her daily return to Mother Earth:

She opened the gate and went out towards the trees.

"I want to see if I can sleep in the raw earth itself," she said over her shoulder

She went ahead into a thicket of old oaks, and kneeling, she dug into the dead leaves and damp soil with her hands

Then she rose and waved a farewell kiss to

me. And commanding all her strength, she descended as the earth belonged to her. And I was left staring in disbelief at the emptiness where she had been, and the leaves that had settled as if nothing had disturbed the spot. (319)

The one convention Gabrielle never tries to shed is her connection to her son, "lover", "father", Lestat. The moments of warmth and concern she exhibits in her mortal life persist in her vampiric undeath. She senses when Lestat needs her, and always returns to him, doing little things to make him happy, such as wearing her hair down. Most importantly, she gives up her solitude to be by Lestat's side and risks her own life to protect him from other vampires at his San Francisco rock concert. Similarly, when he is taken by Akasha, she joins the community of vampires at Maharet's Sonoma compound only to help her son. The observations of the other vampires at the compound reveal that

There was a pulling away in her, a desire to leave here, to go off alone. Nothing could have forced the others away from the table. But this one had made no such commitment to the meeting, it was clear She felt no allegiance to this group; she felt no allegiance to anyone but Lestat. (QOTD 279-281)

Her concern for Lestat supports the feminist notion that Gabrielle is an individual, free of gender-roles, but not at the expense of her role as the good mother. The monstrous mother in her oppressive mortal state becomes the good mother in her vampiric state, reversing the nineteenth

century view of women.

While Gabrielle blurs the distinction between masculine and feminine, becoming androgynous, Akasha embraces her masculinity and erases her femininity, and Maharet embraces the feminist notion of the bisexuality of existence, "that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways... according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex" (Cixous and Clément 85).

Akasha attempts to eradicate patriarchal oppression and erect in its place a matriarchal system, replacing the "centre" with the "margin". She informs Lestat of her plan for world peace by "creating a new world order" (Ramsland 299) headed by herself as matriarch. Her previous attempts to infuse her vampiric state with meaning have finally come to fruition. She places the blame for the oppression and subjugation of women solely on the shoulders of the patriarchy; hence her first act upon her revival by Lestat is to consume the Father, Enkil, who had for thousands of years oppressed her. Lestat notes this when he first sees her in her catatonic "imprisonment": "in her body was locked a mind still, an appetite, a blazing spiritual core whose heat had moved through me like liquid lightning, and without question Enkil had a deathhold upon her! . . . "he keeps her there! He keeps her prisoner!" (TVL 489-490).

Akasha's ultimate plan is to kill men, keeping one tenth of them alive for breeding purposes only, until masculine violence is replaced by feminine nurturance, at which point men will be slowly reintroduced into society. However, Akasha's notion of matriarchy is no different from the definition of patriarchy, except that women will be in power instead of men, and her plans for cultural and social change are to be brought about by traditionally masculine means, violence and destruction. As Cixous and Clément state, ". . . a woman warrior is not a woman; it is a woman who has killed the woman in her. Only through death does she return to femininity. To sexual difference" (118). By her own words, Akasha points out that by eradicating what she sees as destructive male tendencies through violence, she subscribes to the same behaviours and ideologies:

"Your limitations are a radiant as your virtues for reasons I don't understand myself. But more truly perhaps, I love you because you are so perfectly what is wrong with all things male. Aggressive, full of hate and recklessness, and endlessly eloquent excuses for violence - you are the essence of masculinity; and there is a gorgeous quality to such purity. But only because it can now be controlled." (QOTD 369)

Her description of Lestat could easily serve as self-description. Akasha fails to recognize the irony of what she says, for it is these same qualities she exhibits in killing off the males of the world. As Maharet later points out, "How is it possible . . . to break a cycle of violence

through more wanton violence?" (438).

Akasha sees only the hopelessness of the female situation and locates the solution in matriarchal religion. She does not recognize humanity's movement towards secular humanism as progressive, as do Marius and Lestat who recognize that:

This century had inherited the earth in every sense The Christian god was as dead as he had been in the 1700s. And no new mythological religion had arisen to take the place of the old.

On the contrary, the simplest people of this age were driven by a vigorous secular morality as strong as any religious morality I had ever known.

. . . the value of human life was greater than it had ever been before. (TVL 9-10)

Still in pursuit of the meaning of vampiric existence, Akasha continues in her self-delusion that she is a god and knows what is good for humanity, as she defines 'truth':

"I shall **make** the rhyme or reason,' Akasha said. . . . 'I shall **make** the future; I shall define goodness'" (QOTD 440).

Instead of allowing mortals to be governed by their own consciences, she seeks to subjugate and control them by creating a new religious system with herself as the grand matriarch. Ramsland suggests that Rice

tended toward the view that this century had demonstrated that religion, and even the concept of evil, was not essential to ethical behaviour and that love among people who recognize their kindred bonds can have a positive impact on the world. In fact, to her mind, Akasha represented the destructive power of religion on a massive scale. (307)

Akasha cannot accept that, as a vampire, she has no place among human society, that the godless twentieth century did not need her in order to maintain order. Thus, she creates chaos so that she may create order and enforce it on her own terms, just as patriarchal religions enforced order on masculine terms. Maharet points out to Akasha that her version of a matriarchal religion is not, and can never be, any different than previous patriarchal religions in its ideological abstractions, used to explain, give meaning to, and gain power over the accidents of nature, and the unknowable, essentially, "to justify acts of violence and oppression that benefit [oneself] or maintain [one's own] power" (Roberts 4):

" . . . look now at the ages since that dark and evil moment; look at the other religions founded upon magic; founded upon some apparition or voice from the clouds! Founded upon the intervention of the supernatural in one guise or another - miracles, revelations, a mortal man rising from the dead! Look on the effect of your religions, those movements that have swept up millions with their fantastical claims. Look at what they have done to human history. Look at the wars fought on account of them; look at the persecutions, the massacres. Look at the pure enslavement of reason; look at the price of faith and zeal. . . .
 "Don't you see? It is not man who is the enemy of the human species. It is the irrational; it is the spiritual when it is divorced from the material; from the lesson in one beating heart or one bleeding vein." (QOTD 448)

It is, in fact, Maharet who embodies the ideal Mother. While Akasha represents destruction (traditionally viewed as

masculine), Maharet personifies the ideal balance of wisdom (traditionally viewed as a masculine trait) and compassion (traditionally viewed as a feminine trait), or reason and emotion. Maharet, in fact, is remarkably similar in name and character to the goddess of the "firmament," or "feminine order," Lady Mahet, who represents order and righteousness (Luckert 50, 73). It is Maharet who draws together and organizes the vampire family, and she who preserves their lives when Mekare destroys the Blood-Mother, Akasha. While Akasha represents the false, or manufactured Mother, Maharet is the true matriarch, giving her blood only to sustain life. Akasha gives her blood to Lestat for traditionally patriarchal reasons, "only to increase her own stature and power through him," just as Dracula creates his female vampires to increase his power. Maharet gives her blood solely to her descendent Jesse in order to give her life, a maternal function (Ramsland 72).

Cixous suggests that

In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as national and world history She foresees that her liberation will do more than modify power relations or toss the ball over to the other camp; she will bring about a mutation in human relations, in thought, in all praxis. (313)

It is these qualities which make Maharet the true matriarch. She recognizes that Akasha's plan will only reverse the power positions of men and women without any progress

towards equality or change in human relations. She realizes instead that the only way to improve human relations is for the supernatural and the preternatural to keep from interfering in human interaction, to allow humanity to eliminate the ideological abstractions which arise from such encounters. As Maharet says to Akasha,

"It is you who have learned nothing. It is you who have not changed in six thousand years. It is your soul which remains unperfected, while mortals move to realms you will never grasp. In your isolation you dreamed dreams as thousands of mortals have done, protected from all scrutiny or challenge; and you emerge from your silence ready to make these dreams real for the world? You bring them here to this table, among a handful of your fellow creatures, and they crumble. You cannot defend them." (QOTD 447)

While Akasha acts on the pretence of supporting and liberating women, she is in actuality guilty of enslaving and oppressing women as much as the men whom she accuses have. She betrayed her fellow women when she encouraged the rape and mutilation of Maharet and Mekare, and she enslaves the women of the world when she subjugates them to her ideology, as her worshippers. She does not allow women to think for themselves and make their own choices, as Lestat recognizes when he describes her plot as "the subjugation of a century to one will" (359).

Maharet, on the other hand, fulfils her obligations to her fellow women. Cixous presents the feminist notion of

Woman for women. - There always remains in woman that force which produces/is produced by the other - in particular, the other woman . . . The mother, too, is a metaphor. It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself. (312-313)

Maharet remains faithful to this credo, giving her descendant Jesse "eternal-life-giving blood" (Roberts 72), but, more importantly, by giving her a matrilineal family history and the important position in that family of record keeper. Maharet's primary consideration is the preservation of the Great Family. As Roberts suggests, Maharet "exhibits nurturing traits of the good mother in wishing to protect the Great Family of her human descendants" (65). It is the need to watch over the Great Family which sustains Maharet for six thousand years without going underground, as most vampires need to do at some point, making Maharet the strongest of all the vampires:

Not a night has passed since those early times that I have not opened my eyes, known my own name, and looked with recognition upon the world around me, and reached for the thread of my own life.

But it was not that madness didn't threaten. It was not that grief did not embitter me, or that mysteries did not confuse me, or that I did not know pain.

It was that I had the records of my family to safeguard; I had my own progeny to look after, and to guide in the world. And so even in the darkest time, when all human existence seemed monstrous to me and unbearable, and the changes of the world beyond comprehension. I turned to the family as if it were the very spring of life itself.

And the family taught me the rhythms and passions of each new age . . . the family was my

guide through time and space. My teacher, my book of life. The family was all things. (426)

The Great Family is the best of Maharet, and it is the experience of this family that she gives to Jesse. Jessica's inheritance from Maharet is the history and progress of the progeny of the female line of the international family, essentially, the strength of all women: "I wrote in detail - of their accomplishments, and personalities, and sometimes heroism" (425).

Along with her complement, Mekare, Maharet preserves both her human family and her vampiric family. Akasha, as the unnatural mother, must be destroyed by the Good Mother. Maharet accuses Akasha of allowing her thought, "the pure idea" (448) to dominate her compassion, creating an imbalance in the bisexual nature of her existence. Thus, as Roberts suggests, "Appropriately, when Akasha is destroyed by Mekare, she is decapitated first. In other words, Mekare strikes out at the head, the real source of Akasha's evil" (66). Together, the twin sisters provide the counterbalancing anima to Akasha's evil shadow" (Roberts 65). Maharet provides the intellectual force of reason, as the one who has remained sane and civilized for six thousand years. Mekare provides the necessary violence of instinct, as the one who seems to have reverted to the natural animalistic state driven by vengeance against Akasha, the

destroyer of her family and her people. Mekare destroys Akasha by decapitation and Maharet preserves the vampire family by reverting to the ancient rituals of her matriarchal lineage. She has Mekare consume the brain ("the residence of the spirit") and heart ("the seat of conscience" [323]) of the Mother, substituting the human mother, whose funeral feast was interrupted by Akasha's soldiers, with the vampiric mother, bringing the story full circle.

Thus, the vampire's quest for the meaning of life and the purpose of his undeath unearths a mythology that stretches six thousand years back in time. Lestat unravels the complex genealogy to discover that, like the many myths to which vampirism is linked, the vampire family is a matriarchy. TVL and QOTD reveal that, as opposed to the solitary vampire of the nineteenth century, the key to vampire survival of the centuries in isolation from humanity is an interdependence between members of the family, all of whom are watched over by the Good Mother, who overthrows the false mother. Finally, Lestat realizes, through the battle against abstract ideologies, that the path to goodness rests in the policy of preternatural non-interference with the natural progression of the human condition:

Even I agree with that now. Maharet was right. No room for us; no room for God or the Devil; it should be metaphor - the supernatural - whether

it's High Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, or a
rock star pretending to be the Vampire Lestat.
(463)

But, then again, Lestat was never very good at obeying
rules, was he?

CONCLUSION

While late twentieth century neo-Gothic vampires draw much from their nineteenth century predecessors, modern writers have expanded the archetype in terms of personality, depth and mythology. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the first three novels of Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles: Interview With The Vampire, The Vampire Lestat, and The Queen of Damned. Whereas the earlier writers relied predominantly on the reader's suspension of disbelief that vampires do indeed exist, Anne Rice develops a detailed mythology explaining the existence and evolution of her vampires. The traditional vampire tale is, as Roberts suggests, "a human one with human protagonists desperately trying to destroy [the vampire]" (26). Rice's mythology, however, focuses on the vampire's own struggle, be it internal self-examination or an external battle with other vampires.

Nineteenth century writers restrict their vampires to a patriarchal order based on the Christian, specifically Catholic, concepts of good and evil. Rice attempts to dispel the traditional notions of the polarities of the Christian God and devil, by replacing the monstrous, animalistic vampire with a transformed human who retains human tendencies and philosophies. Religion is replaced by secular humanism. The oppositions of good and evil are

blurred and the existence of any God or Devil is denied. She constructs a mythology in which the vampire predates Christianity, observing the rise and fall of various religious systems through the centuries and at times exploiting the human capacity for self-delusion. Ultimately, Rice points to the fallibility of humanity's need for illusions to justify morality and sets out a vision of society in which each is governed by one's own conscience and mutual respect:

Interweaving pagan myths with vampiric images . . . lends credibility to the vampire, whose existence is no less fantastic than the primitive beings that earlier civilizations believed in to explain natural phenomena and mysteries and to impose order on their lives. This context tends to trivialize human-made religions and magnify the importance of facing realities and appreciating the beauty and violence of life as it is rather than finding false meaning in new religious beliefs. (Roberts 76)

Through the experiences of her "new" vampires, Rice both deconstructs patriarchal structures throughout history and constructs a matriarchy. Firstly, she develops a complex web of interlocking myths, from Egyptian mythology to Druidic legend, each of which worships the Good Mother, and links it to the matriarchal vampire mythology. However, rather than merely replacing patriarchy with matriarchy, she develops her vision of equal distribution of power. In favour of gender equity, vampires engage in a battle against the False Mother, Akasha, in order to foil her plot to

invert existing patriarchal power structures.

Secondly, unlike nineteenth century vampire literature which perpetuates the heterosexual male myth of the evil perversion and corruption of female sexuality, Rice's vampires do not differentiate between male and female, or even heterosexual and homosexual. There is simply androgynous aesthetic sensuality, the principle which governs the Savage Garden in which her vampires exist. While Ruthven, Carmilla, and Dracula are only attracted to women, Rice's vampires are not restricted by gender. Also, Rice's women are strong and independent in life and undeath, whereas nineteenth century women are depicted as submissive waifs in life and vicious monsters in undeath. Toril Moi cites The Madwoman in the Attic by Gilbert and Gubar (1979, 25) as suggesting that

. . . in the nineteenth century the 'eternal feminine' was assumed to be a vision of angelic beauty and sweetness . . . the ideal woman is seen as a passive, docile and above all **selfless** creature. . . . But behind the angel lurks the monster: the obverse of the male idealization of women is the male fear of femininity. The monster woman is a woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative . . . in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her. (57-58)

Rice rejects this male concept of femininity and constructs, instead, an image of the ideal woman as one who embraces her duality, the masculine and feminine aspects of her personality. Her women become monstrous only when they are

governed by patriarchal standards and deny their own natures.

These first three novels of The Vampire Chronicles firmly establish the new vampire archetype and mythology for this century. They reject and reform the ideas of the nineteenth century to produce a different view of vampirism as a metaphor for the human condition. Rice creates introspective vampires who spend most of their time debating issues that most mortals contemplate. As Ramsland observes, "They had a conscience and suffered from guilt, loneliness, ambivalence, and many of the numinous questions of their former mortality" (150). In the final two novels of the series, The Tale of the Body Thief and Memnoch the Devil, Lestat and his companions continue to move through society, adapting to new ages, and never ceasing to contemplate the existential questions that have baffled humanity for centuries. Throughout the series, Rice has proven that, in terms of vampire literature, it truly is a new age and that Lestat and his companions are indeed "the vampire(s) for these times" (TVL 228).

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