INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

VAMPIRES INCORPORATED:

Self-definition in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles

Anthony N. Chandler
Department of English Literature
McGill University, Montreal
August 1997

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

Another hot one out on highway eleven
This is my life
It's what I've chosen to do
There are no free rides
No one said it'd be easy
The old man told me this my son
I'm telling it to you...
So suck it up and tough it out
And be the best you can
-John Mellencamp

Abstract

This thesis examines the use of orality as a means to self-definition in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*. The main contention of this thesis is that within the *Vampire Chronicles* orality defines the self through incorporation, and that the bodily incorporation of food through a sexual consumption leads the vampire to naturally evolve a sense of who he or she is at any given moment in time. It is in this manner that this article discusses how the body, sexuality, food, and the possession of financial capital define and limit the individual's notion of self.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'usage du oralité comme un moyen de déterminer l'identité dans les "Vampire Chronicles" du Anne Rice. La prétention principale de la thèse c'est que dans les "Vampire Chroncles" l'oralité défine l'identité par l'incorporation, et cette incorporation de la nourriture par le corps dans la consommation sexuelle permette le vampire de créer naturellement un sens de son identité chaque moment dans le temps. C'est par cette façon que cet article examine comment le corps, la sexualité, la nourriture, et la possession de l'argent définissent et empêchent la vrai connaissance de soi-même.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the product of many long nights squeezed behind a grandmother's chair, peeking at horror movies through pressed fingers. I am terribly indebted to my supervisor, Mike Bristol, for his support of a project that a lesser scholar might not wish to direct. I am sure that this was far from the "low maintenance" supervision I had promised, but that made it all the more worthwhile. Support from other professors such as Dr. Tony Futdje, Mette Hjort, Terry K. Pratt and the ever-present Sir Reginald Porter must also be mentioned. Also, I am especially grateful to Chris Holmes, Michael Szollosy, Faizel Forrester, Scott Godfree, and Tim Conley who pushed me to run past where I once stood. I would have been stranded without the criticism of my companion, Kelly Collins, whose love supported my move to Montreal from Charlottetown, and who spent many nights reading many drafts. I thank my parents and my family for their support of work not always understood, and often ridiculed. A special acknowledgement must also be made to Tripta Sood. Without her passion and encouragement this final draft would not mean what it now does, for she rekindled my faith in my work and in my self-worth. Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of my grandmother, Florence Chandler, who died while this project was just getting underway.

Contents

Short Titles List

IWTV	Rice, Anne. *Interview With the Vampire.* New York: Knopf, 1976.
VL	Rice, Anne. *The Vampire Lestat.* New York: Knopf, 1985.
QD	Rice, Anne. *The Queen of the Damned.* New York: Knopf, 1988.
BT	Rice, Anne. *The Tale of the Body Thief.* New York: Knopf, 1992.
MD	Rice, Anne. *Memnoch the Devil.* New York: Knopf, 1995.

Introduction and Critical Overview

Anne Rice is big business. She has revitalized the vampire in pop culture, and redefined the vampire icon into a marketable product. Her first novel, *Interview With the Vampire*, garnered $700,000 in paperback sales alone, while her most recent addition to the *Vampire Chronicle* series had a monstrous first printing of 759,000 hard-back copies in North America (Beahm 13-6). My title for this thesis, *Vampires Incorporated*, unquestionably acknowledges the marketability of Rice's creations, for Lestat and company truly represent Vampires Inc. The title also pinpoints the focus of my research: to examine the orality of Rice's vampires, and how their consumption of blood, and its subsequent incorporation defines a notion of self.

The present vampiric renaissance stems from Rice's ability to create something more than tales about vampires. Her novels contain characters who embrace the challenge of answering the question of what they are: Anne Rice writes about self-definition. The quest for finding one's self is the most predominant activity of North Americans in the late twentieth century. As James Redfield's *Celestine Prophecy* and the cult/new age/militia phenomenon sweep the United States, defining the self perhaps has displaced baseball as the North American past-time. At the close of the twentieth century, identification of the individual self tends to depend upon everything from which cereal one eats to the designer clothing one buys. A large-scale market exists for tools to aid us in the act of finding ourselves. But how does this relate to a series of novels written about vampires? What demarcates Rice's work from other similar fiction in the horror genre is that although Rice's vampire fits within Noël Carroll's definition of the monster as "an extraordinary character in our ordinary world" (Carroll 16). Its extraordinary feature lies in the impurity of their extreme humanity. In many ways Louis, Lestat and Armand are more human than the reader, and

this obviously should not be possible. Rice picks up on this possibility in an interview from 1992 where she states: "They would say, `This is a vampire novel.' And I would say, `Not really. This is a novel about us but all the protagonists are vampires'" (Crouch 5). Hence, I will argue that Rice's five-novel series is unique because her protagonists embark on a journey for self-discovery in what may be seen as ideal circumstances; that is in immortal, beautiful, super-human bodies. Yet, despite their preternatural differences the vampires in these novels are essentially human. This level of humanity allows Rice to conduct a discourse on human self-definition below the surface of the tales of her Byronic heroes. One might argue that such discourses on the self, dark or otherwise, have been achieved by an infinite number of sources from *Oedipus Rex* to Tim Burton's *Batman* films. However, what makes the *Chronicles*'s contribution to the process of self-definition so innovative and relevant for current academic study is that her protagonists define the self exclusively through the mouth. Self-knowledge for Rice's vampires is oral, or more simply "they are what they eat." Rice's vampires excrete no waste, are good capitalist investors, and most importantly they consume ad infinitum. Hence, the Ricean vampire is the ultimate consumer, and by current ideas of self-definition, the ultimate identity.

1.1 The Vampire: Literature Goes Public

Few other legendary creatures have been so well assimilated into twentieth century pop culture as the vampire. Much like Santa Claus, the vampire is a figure known by many names and who surfaces everywhere on certain nights of the year. Between these two figures a further association might even be made on the basis of archetypal connection to carnival and the grotesque body, a tendency to travel through the air at night and a penchant for red. But the point

to be made by this odd analogy is that the vampire is a popular modern mythic figure who has many names, faces and sources of origin. Indeed, I will argue that the vampire transcends the common boundaries of fiction and culture to materialize not only in literature, but also in our everyday lives.

In her study of the vampire culture phenomenon in North America, *American Vampires*, Norine Dresser explains how we have adopted the vampire as a part of our mythology through the power of media usage and interpretation. Dresser interprets substantial evidence on how the vampire has become such a celebrity and concludes that we learn about vampires at an early age. Her examples of vampire iconography in childhood media alone include everything from characters such as Count Chocula peddling cereal to a suspiciously-fanged Sesame Street regular, Count Count.[1] Dresser accounts for the currency of the vampire by proposing that "Sponsors feed the vampire. They spend money promoting his image because they know this symbol is a guaranteed attention grabber" (82). When an author like Anne Rice alters an icon through which millions of dollars are exchanged, then the opportunity arises for more money to be spent on the promoting it as something "new and improved." In a way, what this implies is that the public vampire, the vampire who represents everything from cereal to toothpaste, is a valuable commodity. The vampire means money to the large corporate firms who use its image to sell their products.

However, beyond the public vampire stands the literary vampire. The most famous and influential of this literary breed of vampire is Bram Stoker's Count Dracula. Stoker's creation is

---

[1] See also Twitchell, James B. "The Vampire Myth." *American Imago* 37 (1980): 83.

undeniably the book that represents vampire fiction to the public masses. While works by Lord Byron, Edgar Allan Poe, John Polidori and others preceded *Dracula*, and thousands of others came after it, Stoker's has been in continuous publication since 1897 (Dresser 112). Add to this the impact of Bela Lugosi's 1931 portrayal of the Count in Tod Browning's movie of the same title, and who could argue *Dracula*'s status in the genre? For the uninitiated, *Dracula* is a collection of journal entries by the human protagonists in the novel. Dr. Van Helsing, Mina and Jonathan Harker, Dr. Seward and others recreate the whole picture of what has happened through writing fragments--much like those of Robert Walton, Elizabeth Lavenza and Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. But unlike Frankenstein's monster, Dracula is never allowed to explain his motivation or to express his self, for he is stationed on the outside without a real voice. It is this lack of voice which has led recent literary criticism of this novel into anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and queer theory discourse.

Certainly, few who read *Dracula* can ignore the repressed sexual tension in the novel. To say that it is simply a product which reflects the repression of the Victorian period does not explain how Stoker achieves the tension and maintains it through the whole work. Certainly the phallic representation in Lucy Westenra's staking, the mingling of her bodily fluids with the transfusion given by three male companions, and Jonathan Harker's seduction by the three vampiresses in Dracula's castle are obvious to put forth as scenes charged with sexual tension, but what makes Stoker's novel seductive is its sexual power structures. Indeed, Stephen King, in his book on the horror genre, *Danse Macabre*, discusses the repression in the Harker scene and writes that:

> Harker is about to be orally raped, and he doesn't mind

> a bit. And it's all right *because he is not responsible.* In matters of sex, a highly moralistic society can find a psychological escape valve in the concept of outside evil; this thing is bigger than both of us, baby. Harker is a bit disappointed when the Count enters and breaks up this tête-à-tête. Probably most of Stoker's wide-eyed readers were, too. (King 74)

What King hits upon, but does not flesh out, is that the sexual repression in *Dracula* relies on power relations and the release of consent. As Michel Foucault explains in his chapter on repression in *The History of Sexuality*, "The manifold sexualities...those which, in a diffuse manner, invest relationships (the sexuality of doctor and patient, teacher and student, psychiatrist and mental patient)...all form the correlate of exact procedures of power" (Foucault 47). Ergo, the relations between doctor/patient (Seward/Lucy, Van Helsing/Lucy, Van Helsing/Mina), teacher/student (Van Helsing/Seward), and psychiatrist/mental patient (Seward/Renfield) all form unconscious sexual bonds. However, as all social bonds are among human protagonists, Dracula is left on the outside to attempt penetration of the human community. By the end of the novel, Dracula has remained powerless to do so because of his inability to adapt within the set-up system of power of the invaded community.

Dracula is a voiceless outsider, the Other, in his own book, and yet when the novel comes to the movie screen there is no denial of the vampire's screen-stealing presence. Thus, it seems a natural progression that as the vampire approaches the final quarter of a media-based century his or her story can finally be told. With the publication of Fred Saberhagen's *The Dracula Tape*

(1975), the Count's silence is lifted as he recounts the events of *Dracula* from his viewpoint, and the life and narrative of the vampire begins to unfold. It is an example of where the object becomes the subject, and where the Other becomes the Self. It is a change that will be seen repeatedly in the subsequent works of Anne Rice (*Interview With the Vampire*-1976), Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (*Hotel Transylvania*-1978), Suzy McKee Charnas (*The Vampire Tapestry*-1980), and even in Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 movie adaptation (*Bram Stoker's Dracula).* Perhaps one of the best examples contrasting Dracula's past with the current strain of vampires is illustrated in the graphic-novel, *Red Rain* (1991). Essentially a long comic book, *Red Rain* presents a confrontation between Dracula and Batman, where Dracula is aligned with evil and Batman with good. Nothing strange for the comics. But the innovation lies in the fact that Batman becomes a vampire. The battle between good and evil is not between human and vampire, but, just as in Rice's vampire community, between vampires. Strangely enough, Batman, a character long-associated with vampires, ends the novel as that which he sought to destroy, but repeats the novel's theme that "Vampires <u>are</u> real...but not <u>all</u> of them...<u>evil</u>" (Moench 87).

Nina Auerbach brings together these two vampires, the public and literary, in her work *Our Vampires, Ourselves.* She distinguishes between vampires and other monsters by asserting that "Ghosts, werewolves, and manufactured monsters are relatively changeless, more aligned with eternity than with time, vampires blend into the changing cultures" (6). Accordingly, what differentiates the vampire from other myths is that while it can evolve and blend into the surrounding culture, it also reflects the anxieties of its readers. The immortality of the vampire resides in the role it plays within the public sphere. It can conceivably exist, and does, if only in metaphor as a parasite of society.

I.2 Anne Rice: The Philosophy in Horror; or the Horror in Philosophy.

The works of Anne Rice (née Howard Allen O'Brien) have until the mid-1990s been much-read, but little studied. There are obvious reasons for the lack of scholarly attention given to Rice's seventeen novels. For most authors time must be allowed to pass before serious canonical study of their best work can occur. In Rice's situation her work must also throw off the negative connotations of the genres in which she writes. Science fiction, horror and soft pornography generally take longer to prove their worth, but that does not mean that they can or are dismissed by contemporary criticism. Despite these deterrents, many critics (such as Katherine Ramsland, Nina Auerbach, Ken Gelder, and Bette B. Roberts) have recently opened the door for an analysis such as this thesis and the forthcoming collections of scholarly essays—*The Anne Rice Reader* (1997) and *The Gothic World of Anne Rice* (1996)— provide.[2] The process of evaluating Rice's work has only seriously begun within the last five years, with the aforementioned published works coming out only this past year. The fact that two books of literary criticism on Rice's novels were published in 1996-97 denotes a sudden rise in her level of academic accessibility. Why the sudden shift now? Is there a renewed interest in the Gothic horror genre? I contend that the shift relates to the realization that Anne Rice is not only writing conventional horror novels, but also rather complex works that are metaphysical in nature.

---

[2]These collections are not to be confused with Jennifer Smith's *Anne Rice: A Critical Companion*, which was also published in 1996. Smith's work is part of a series that is self-admittedly geared towards secondary school educators. So while it is a valuable marker of Rice's acceptance into the academic community, Smith's work consists mainly of chapter summaries and not critical research.

The Vampire Chronicles have transcended horror-trash: the throw-away vampire novel. Bette B. Roberts remarks that one simple reason for Rice's *Chronicles*' surpassing other novels in the genre is that what one sees "in the Vampire Chronicles is Rice's establishment of a vampire community...and her consequent development of interrelationships among vampires rather than conflicts between vampires and humans" (Roberts 24). Such community and moral development simply are not present in the bi-monthly novels which comprise the bulk of what society knows as vampire fiction. Again, Roberts is quite right in stating that there are no humans attempting to annihilate Lestat and Louis in a tangible way. The great white hunter simply no longer believes in such prey. In Rice's America, faith rests in scientific notions and disbelief in the unexplainable.[3] Ironically for Rice, in Stoker's novel it is "an American" who so well defined the leap of faith that Van Helsing asks of his vampire vigilantes. Even when Lestat struts upon a stage in San Francisco, singing to an American audience of the horror which he represents, they do not believe. When chaos breaks out, the "rational mind had already encapsulated the experience and disregarded it. Thousands took no notice" (QD 217). Stoker's Van Helsing-type does not exist in Rice's postmodern, scientific world, as there is no one left "to believe in things that you cannot" (Stoker 249).

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noël Carroll hypothesizes that there are only two true horror narrative structures. The first and most common structure is "the complex discovery plot," which is comprised of four essential movements: *onset*, *discovery*, *confirmation* and *confrontation* (Carroll 99). These four movements may be rearranged or some may even be excluded, but the basic scheme requires that the monster arrives, the monster is discovered by

---

[3]It is also an America who reads the novels of Stephen King and religiously watches Chris Carter's *The X-Files*.

either the audience or a character, the monster's existence is confirmed and then the final confrontation takes place. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* epitomizes the complex discovery plot. As the novel opens, the reader is introduced by the onset of omens (baying wolves, concerned townspeople, the ominous coach driver, etc.) to the existence of some yet unknown evil. The plot proceeds to Harker's discovery that he is the prisoner of Count Dracula, then progresses to Van Helsing's confirmation procedures and finally culminates in the infamous chase-scene confrontation with the Count. Unlike *Dracula*, Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*, Joel Schumacher's *The Lost Boys*, or even *Jaws*, Rice's novels do not subscribe to this formula. What is missing from Rice's narrative structure is any valid discovery of the monster, let alone either a confirmation or a confrontation with the vampire.

Carroll's second plot structure is "the overreacher plot" (Carroll 118). This structure is used to discuss such works as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and Curt Siodmak's *Donovan's Brain*. Like the complex discovery plot structure, the overreacher structure also has four components: *preparation*, *experiment*, *boomerang* and *confrontation* (Carroll 118-24). In *Frankenstein*, for example, the preparation of the body parts, the actual experiment that brings the monster to life, the realization by Victor Frankenstein that he exceeded the laws of nature in his creation, and the final confrontation between monster and creator in the North fulfill the basic requirements of this structure. However, Rice's novels do not neatly fit into this category either. While there are elements of the overreacher plot in *Interview With the Vampire* and *The Queen of the Damned*, these elements of unlawful creation and world domination become obscured by the more important character relationships and their search for self-knowledge. So while Rice writes about

fantastical creatures she does so in a realistic fashion, and Carroll's recipe for horror is disengaged, thereby negating the horror emotive element in her novels. What this all means is that Rice's work moves beyond typical horror narrative structure, and thus presents something new to be studied in a literary way. In effect, what Rice enables is a warping of roles within the context of the horror genre.

I.3 The Definition of *Self*

"Self" is a term that varies greatly from one branch of philosophy or psychology to the next. But whose "self" is defined, and on what terms? For the purpose of my argument I will refer to Charles Taylor's definition in *Sources of the Self*.

> My self-definition is understood as an answer to the question Who I am. And this question finds its original sense in the interchange of speakers. I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out. (Taylor 35)

For Taylor, self-definition is all about placement, or rather from where one acts, speaks, relates and thus exists. The whole process stands as a method for sketching orientation within time and space, as one might use to mark his or her co-ordinates on a map. By illuminating the relationship between the spatial situation of the speaker and where those "defining relations are lived out,"

Taylor's substantial definition encompasses the area of the self with which this study deals. In *The Vampire Chronicles*, I will argue that the speaker is the vampire, the social space is the city landscape, and the defining relations revolve around oral consumption, communion, and communication. Taylor's definition ensues that Rice's vampires are not only defined by where they speak from, but also by where they eat from. Alongside the idea that Rice's vampires define the self by incorporating the world through the mouth, one must also consider what is produced from that same orifice: oral communication. Through the telling of their stories, beginning with Louis' *Interview With the Vampire*, Louis and Lestat give an image of what they see themselves as for their audience to judge.

Genealogy's importance to the process of self-definition cannot be overlooked, for genealogy is what Lestat and Louis always return to in their narratives. They cannot speak about anything unless they speak of where they came from, both geographically and genealogically. In this way, genealogy becomes the frame on which the vampire's oral narrative can be built. Taylor's inclusion of genealogy in his definition, or from where one has come from, points to an overlooked aspect of Rice's series. The perspective being that these novels are chronicles; stories collecting the history of those whose lives are kept within. This idea of a historical community returns to Robert's concept of the "establishment of a vampire community" (Roberts 24), for just as genealogy is the chronicling of a family's history, so are these five books[4] the chronicling of the individual selves within. The connection between the two types of chronicle is best embodied in the vampire Maharet, who first appears in *The Queen of the Damned*. Maharet's central role is as

---

[4]Soon to include two forthcoming novellas entitled *Pandora* (Spring 1998) and *Armand*. See http://www.annerice.com/ph_jul28.htm for source.

the family member who, through vast computer files, records her family tree, the genealogy of a vampire. Maharet assumes the mantle of a designee within the family. Throughout centuries she records the lives, names and histories of her human family traceable back to Egypt. Unlike other genealogists however, Maharet views her genealogy not as a descendant but as the ancestor, six thousand years from her own origin. It is a living legacy viewed by an un-dead ancestor, thus inverting the descendant/ancestor relationship.

The question of gender is also reflected in the *Chronicles*, because an individual's geography in social spheres certainly depends on the individual's sex. Unfortunately, any serious look at gender roles in the *Chronicles* would reach well beyond what I could possibly provide in this thesis. The reason for this, I must argue, is that Anne Rice imparts androgyny upon all of her characters, insofar as no vampire can be readily typed as definitely male or female. Edward Ingebretsen attempts to discuss such gender perspective in light of the Harlequin novel series. He bases his suggestion that *The Vampire Chronicles* are "horror written in a Harlequin mode" on the assumption that Louis is allotted the female position in the coven, whereas Lestat embodies the handsome and domineering male archetype. While this suggestion conveniently explains Louis' seduction by Lestat, a Harlequinized male figure, it seems to be an unfair reduction of Louis' complex relationship with Lestat and the other vampires. In principle, Ingebretsen's classification of Louis as holding feminine attributes is correct, but what he does not include in his argument is from whose perspective the body is engendered. In Louis' eyes Lestat is a lover. Perhaps Lestat is not a lover who is so clearly engendered as Ingebretsen would like us to believe, but he is a lover nonetheless. Arguably, Lestat could even be the more "feminine" of the two vampires, as Louis plays the part of the businessman, scholar and father, while Lestat takes on the trappings of the

person who needs someone to help furnish them with capital. Seen from Armand's position Lestat is a brat prince, while Gabrielle views him as a son, whereas seen from Claudia's perspective Lestat is both the mother and father figures. Truly, perspective is an unavoidable issue that must be qualified in any general statements, especially concerning gender in a novel filled with androgynous figures defining their selves by social relations. Moreover, in the twentieth century can gender position any longer be decided by who likes to kill, who likes to shop, or even sexual persuasion? Especially in the arena of current vampire literature where both gender and stereotypical social roles blur, such absolute reduction merely confuses issues. The obvious social dogma prescribed in the pages of *Dracula* no longer apply or prove useful to examine such works as Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* or Whitely Strieber's *The Hunger*. In these works, unlike in Stoker's, it is the female/feminine figure who provides for the male. In *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, critic Nina Auerbach writes that "Only in the 1980's were vampires defined by their origins rather than their plots" (Auerbach 172), and this is somewhat true. I think that Auerbach underestimates Louis' attempts to seek clues to his new genealogy as his means to self-definition. Perhaps it is only with Lestat's account of genealogy in *The Vampire Lestat* and subsequent novels, that the origin overcame the plot, but it cannot be denied that the seed for this change was planted in the mid-70s.

My first chapter begins by examining the construction and importance of the body as a vessel through which incorporation, and thus self-definition, takes place. Within the context of an orally derived self, incorporation takes the outside world into the inside world of the body, and makes that world part of the self. Chapter two contends that incorporation for the vampire is a wholly oral process. While the vampire may view, smell and touch the outside world, it can only

be known when it is orally incorporated. The vampire's oral consumption of blood defines the self through incorporation. What begins as communion ends in consumption and a displacement in moral space. The second section of chapter two discusses how incorporation situates the self within a space. The self's perceived placement results in an oral narrative which serves to place the self in relation to the Other. Whereas the first two chapters discuss how orality defines the self, the final chapter examines how the oral consumptive process and the subsequent incorporation of the outside world serves to position the self in an identifiable societal role. By *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Memnoch the Devil* Lestat's financial position in the leisure class permits him to evolve from a killer into a *flâneur*. This evolutionary process provides the subject with the aesthetic ability and opportunity to choose with precision what to incorporate into the body from the outside world, with the final result being an individual identity who has adjusted to its surroundings and defined its self wholly through orality.

1

The Body Defines: Orality and the Body

We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgement here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor... (*Macbeth* I.vi 12-14)

1.1 The Body and The Self

Subjectivity, or our sense of self, begins with an understanding of the body and its limits. Through the act of incorporation, the body takes the outside world (what is beyond the limits of the body) into the inside world (what is within the limits of the body). This chapter focuses on the process of defining the body's boundaries, and the body itself. In Anne Rice's literary milieu, the body defines the outside and inside worlds through its only pen orifice: the mouth. When those boundaries are defined, an image of what constitutes the self can be fostered, and a space for the self to operate from then exists. The body and an understanding of self cannot be separated, as the self is enclosed within the body's structure. Without the body, the self has no point of reference or way to keep the inside distinguishable from the outside. In effect, when there is no point of reference, there is no self. It is then no surprise that Rice's vampires obsess about the outer image of their bodies. Even when their figures become caked with grime, attention is paid to what condition the body is in, and just how that dirt presents itself. Even if one denies the importance of body-image, the body remains the vessel which permits the subjective self to interact with the outside world.

Lestat and Louis are preternatural beings who stand beyond the ordinary world. They reside in dead, individual bodies, with minds conscious of their past lives. The bodies they possess

are specimens of beauty, with long flowing manes of hair, and strength beyond human possibilities. The vampire body does not degenerate and decay with age, but rather improves and hardens. Reminiscent of Nietzsche's reference to "the blond beast at the core of all races" (Nietzsche 476-9), Lestat and Louis represent the select ones chosen to be predatory lions among the herds of humanity. But what does it mean when the genetics are changed, when the body is different and when the blond beast is placed in a weaker body?

In *The Tale of the Body Thief*, Raglan James leaves Lestat de Lioncourt trapped in a sick and dying body, and we see not only Lestat's body affected by the switch, but also the effect the change has on his self. He is no longer Nietzsche's predator at the core of humanity, but a frail, helpless invalid. His whole notion of self moves to a new position, because of the limits his new body sets upon his ability to incorporate. He cannot suck and ingest blood, or as Gretchen points out to Lestat: "'You only hurt people when you're a vampire,' she said simply, 'when you're in your rightful body. Isn't that true?'" (BT 217). Lestat mistakenly believes that it is his strength, his will and his refusal to give up that, as he tells Gretchen before meeting Louis,

> are the only components of my heart and soul that
> I can identify. This ego, if you wish to call it that,
> is my strength. I am the Vampire Lestat, and nothing...
> not even this body...is going to defeat me." (BT 253)

But this is a faulty presumption, because his lack of an immortal body is what essentially prevents him from being "the Vampire Lestat." Without the vampire body, there is no fanged mouth, no preternatural powers and no hunger to make him a vampire. What is essential to the concept of a vampire cannot be attributed to Lestat. Conversely, Louis correctly speculates that Lestat "Can't

become human by simply taking over a human body" (BT 108). The philosophical perspective from where Lestat views the world is beyond the scope of anything that could be called human. Therefore, a human body cannot be reconciled with a vampire mind to become "human." True, he is Lestat, but he is neither vampire, nor human. In the body exchange, Lestat's displacement from his vampire body also dislodges him from his place in the vampire community. Without the genes (power) that place him within his genealogical and social hierarchy, he becomes an outcast whom the others refuse to help. But deep inside Lestat knows that his whole concept of self is based on his body, for when he speaks to Gretchen about his vampire body he speaks about his "true self" returning to visit her when in his old body (BT 252). Lestat implies that his "true self" is inseparable from the body that encases it. In many ways what is produced is an aberration, much like his New World creations. Lestat is a vampire in a human body, whereas Louis is a human in a vampire's body and Claudia becomes an old woman in a child's body.

1.2 Mikhail Bakhtin: The Grotesque Bodily Canon

From the outset of the *Chronicles*, the mouth is the primary orifice through which the characters confirm their existence. Normal biological functions like eating, drinking, excretion of waste and genital arousal no longer occur after the physiological death of the human body, while the mouth realizes a new purpose. With the death of the human body, and its rebirth as a new species, Rice thus invokes Freud's first phase of infantile sexuality: the oral phase. However, unlike subjects in Freudian analysis, she situates her characters so that they may never progress beyond pregenital organization. This allows the vampire to proceed along a different course of psychological development, where there is no need to separate sexual activity from the ingestion

of food, because blood, and not mother's milk, is the food ingested. Both result in self-definition in relation to the Other. It is with the oral cavity that vampires begin to exercise their function as fledgling consumers. Here it is important to emphasize that the vampire, through constant consumption, develops into a mature aesthetic connoisseur. Within this progression to refinement Anne Rice builds a framework for oral trial and error by which the subject learns about what is outside by taking that world within its body through the oral cavity. But why focus on the mouth? What can be conferred by such an approach?

The literary criticism of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin plays a central role in an analysis of how the modern vampire, with its gaping mouth, stands somewhere between the grotesque and the classical canon of bodily representation. Bakhtin classifies the difference between the medieval grotesque bodily canon in the Renaissance and that of the modern canon, by the way each relates to the surrounding world. After the Renaissance, "the body was first of all a strictly completed, finished product...its apertures closed" (Bakhtin 29), whereas the grotesque "body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body" (Bakhtin 26). With the Ricean vampire, one sees a creature who epitomizes the grotesque gaping mouth which consumes in excess. It is a mouth that eats others into the throes of death. It is a mouth that must remain open to consume and at the same time, produce something from what it has eaten. Later, I will argue that the product of incorporation is an oral history with the purpose of redefining a body and a self, which are "ever unfinished, ever creating."

What Bakhtin refers to as the material bodily functions of the lower stratum do not apply

to the vampire. In this way, because of the absence of copulation, defecation, and pregnancy Rice's vampires resemble more closely the classical closed body. But the mouth, the grotesque mouth, bypasses convenient definitions in the *Chronicles*, thereby producing a vague area from which to work. Lestat echoes Bakhtin's discourse in the fourth installation of the *Chronicles*, *The Tale of the Body Thief*. In this novel, Lestat consensually switches his vampire body for that Raglan James, the body thief. While living within a human frame for the first time since the 1700s, Lestat complains that the "care of this body is a revolting nuisance; how do living people endure this endless cycle of eating, pissing, sniveling, defecating, and then eating again!" (BT 279). With Lestat's disgust for, and yet love of, the aforementioned processes, we see how Rice creates the void. Lestat no longer possesses his gaping mouth while in the human body, but only the consumption/elimination/reproduction processes. In the vampire body, those processes are lost, thus leaving only the mouth's oralism. The ideal situation for either canon cannot exist in the postmodern world; only one or the other.

While Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* primarily examines the literature of Rabelais, it also provides a definitive synthesis of Bakhtin's theories on the grotesque body, carnival and the spirit of laughter. Bakhtin's discourse on the open body of the grotesque, which is "Not the biological body, which merely repeats itself in the new generations, but precisely the historic, progressing body of mankind stands at the center of this system of images" (367), mirrors Taylor's genealogical component of the self. Taylor's concept of self relating to "where I speak from, in the family tree" might be improved, however, by acknowledging Bakhtin's "historic, progressing body" and looking at the family tree as something beyond ten generations of relations. Certainly this is the case in *The Queen of The Damned*, where the family tree becomes the Great Family

(QD 390), and in concordance with Bakhtin's assertion that the historic body is greater, for even "all the miracles of the immortals could not outshine this vast and simple chronicle. The Great Family" (QD 391). And it is the grotesque body's incorporation into the great human family which permits it immortality, whereas the modern closed body, without something like vampirism fades, dies and is meaningless.

Acts of incorporation establish the orality of Rice's vampires, and reveal how that orality serves to define a notion of self through the assimilation of the exterior world by an interior being. Incorporation becomes the final process of inclusion, wherein the body is unified with the blood and identity of the outside world. Secondly, incorporation denotes ties to the marketplace wherein business and private companies vie to consume each other. The bodies of Lestat and Louis are analogous to large conglomerate firms, who by their unnameable immensity become invisible predators in the commodity exchange. What they appreciate is incorporated into the whole, while what disgusts them is destroyed underfoot. Incorporation determines the logistics of body composition. Naturally, what we eat is broken down through the digestive process into energy and building materials. Whether those materials are derived from animal, vegetable or processed matter determines the strength of the body at any given point in time. However, while one may improve the body by incorporating the best materials available to it, what is available to the subject depends upon the inherent strength of the body competing with others in the marketplace. In a world where power is not given, but taken, there is no substitute for superior genetics which dictate the essential components of the body's structure.

Furthermore, the *Chronicles* lend themselves to this carnivalesque discourse via two distinct and unavoidable sources. The first source is the backdrop of New Orleans, a city infamous

for its Mardi Gras festival. The choice to base much of the series out of New Orleans should not be dismissed as an incidental inclusion of the city where Rice spent her formative years. The connection between the effectiveness of her gothic world and the atmosphere of Mardi Gras [Shrove Tuesday] has reverberating connotations for the reader, for it is the space from where her vampires speak. Mardi Gras is a time and space where "reveling, dancing, music were all closely combined with slaughter, dismemberment, bowels, excrement, and other images of the material bodily lower stratum" (Bakhtin 224). Could there possibly be a better place for sensualist, self-defining vampires such as Lestat and Louis to reside? The second source for carnivalesque discourse relates to the vampires' excessive consumption of everything in their path. The open mouth that consumes in gluttony has its roots in the gargantuan world of Rabelais that Bakhtin comments upon. Even when the novels move to Paris, Miami, London or New York, it is difficult to ignore the persistent echoes of the "New World" attitude towards gluttonous consumerism. For the vampire in Rice's novels, it is always carnival, always Mardi Gras and forever New Orleans.

1.3 *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*: Bodies of Horror

It is impossible, or at least not as profitable, to discuss Rice's achievement and innovations in the Gothic genre without some kind of in-depth study of other canonical works from that genre. Just as Louis cannot come to understand himself without acknowledging his origins, we cannot understand Rice without comparing her work to that of her precursors. For this purpose, I will engage the two most relevant Gothic novels, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, and compare their representations of the body with those of Rice. Rice's *Interview With the Vampire* bears a marked resemblance to Shelley's examination of Victor Frankenstein's moral obligations to his monster.

The relationship between the creator and the invention is the prime discourse found in the text of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; Or the Modern Prometheus*. In opposition to Louis and Lestat, however, Frankenstein's monster exists in a patchwork body of numerous corpses where he retains no memory of his past lives.[5] Frankenstein's monster represents the antithesis to Ricean vampires, in that his body consists of poor componentry which has neither aesthetic value, nor intrinsic beauty. While a powerful beast, Shelley's monstrosity cannot construct a meaningful self because of his inability to engage an Other, thereby becoming marginalized and adrift in social space. Frankenstein's creation remains unable to define an image of self, because he lacks all of the necessary ingredients for Taylor's subject to achieve self-definition. As the monster relates:

> Of my creation and creator I was absolutely
> ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money,
> no friends and no kind of property. I was,
> besides, endowed with a figure hideously deformed
> and loathsome. (Shelley 125)

What the monster acknowledges is that he could not form language, knew nothing of his genealogy or of his social and moral space, has no one to love, and his body does not have any significant opportunity to alter his condition. Of course, whenever the monster does attempt to engage others, his hideous body disgusts all humans he approaches in friendship. Even the monster's wish to have a female companion is confounded by his grotesque body, which

---

[5]In Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, the monster does retain some of its parts' attributes. By giving the monster a scholar's brain and a murderer's limb, Branagh accounts for the monster's intelligence and its desire to kill. The body parts, though incorporated into the whole, retain some of their intrinsic attributes.

Frankenstein worries may be reproduced if he is given a mate. The monster, therefore, cannot enter the marketplace, but must remain on its margins. Frankenstein's monster's anger is rooted in his inability to define his self. At least Dracula and Mr. Hyde have money to help in their schemes, but not Frankenstein's poor monster. No, he does not even have a name. What I mean to illustrate with this reference to Frankenstein's monster's misfortune is not only how important it is for an individual to define a self, but also that its body pre-conditions what kind of self can be possibly created. Such is not the case for the Ricean vampire, because, as I will argue, they are not hindered by deformed bodies, ill-suited to communicate and to earn capital. Anne Rice's protagonist is ideally equipped to enter the marketplace, to thrive, and begin to define the self almost instantaneously.

The title character of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, originally to be titled *The Un-Dead* (Stoker xxxi), exists in a state where his mind is quite active, and his body, with its rank stench and pale complexion, is quite dead. The same is true for many of his vampire kin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, if it were not true that these blood-thirsty revenants had a conscious mind would such characters be anything to build a story upon? Noël Carroll categorizes vampires, Frankenstein's monster, mummies and other such creatures as *fusion figures*, or rather creatures whose impurity lies in their combination of opposite attributes such as living/dead, inside/outside, and human/inhuman (Carroll 45-6). Such categorization is convenient when discussing a creature like Dracula, Frankenstein's monster or Mr. Hyde, but what happens when, as in the case of Rice's vampire legion, the creatures hold an allure instead of the normal repulsion? Rice herself makes the distinction between Carroll's normal art-horror creatures and her own creations when Louis and Claudia journey to Eastern Europe to find their origins. What

the two vampires find are rotting, mindless monsters who have neither secrets to reveal, nor stories to tell. Indeed, such unconscious revenants who act solely reflexively are of no interest to the two vampires. They are things to be destroyed, not listened to.

The killing of the revenant may be interpreted in light of Harold Bloom's theory on the anxiety of influence felt by authors.[6] In a Bloomian struggle against Stoker's influential archetypal character (Count Dracula), Rice posits her vampires as being antithetical completions of Dracula. Louis is far removed from the rotting, animated corpse which he and Claudia meet in the Slavic haunts of their famous precursor (IWTV 171). To write something new is the anxiety every writer faces when placing words upon the page, but Rice achieves this in her reclaiming of the vampire myth from Stoker. Certainly, the killing of the Old World precursors by the New World upstarts mimics a Freudian Oedipal complex situation. By plainly discounting Stoker's vampire mythology as "the vulgar fictions of a demented Irishman"(Jordan), Rice's anxiety about Stoker becomes undeniable.[7] The distinction Rice makes between her vampires and those of Stoker center on her representation of bodies. Dracula's body is decayed, impure and ugly, and this is a point that Rice wants to make clear. Anne Rice's vampires, as Lestat aggressively acknowledges, are far removed from "the big ape of the vampires, the hirsute Slav Count Dracula" (VL 436). The revenants represent the legacy of Dracula, the vampire with the rotting body, the vampire who never reveals his narrative. When Louis and Claudia kill the revenant it has as much to do with its lack of a beautiful body and inability to speak, as with a defence against the revenant's

---

[6] Harold Bloom's theory on the anxiety of influence hypothesizes that in order for an author's literature to rise above mere repetition, the author (ephebe) must struggle and kill his or her literary precursor.

[7] For further examples of Anne Rice's anxiety-ridden references to Stoker see: "Everybody was sick of Count Dracula." (VL 12), the alias David Talbot gives himself in *The Tale of the Body Thief* [Dr. Alexander Stoker] (BT 297) and the one [Renfield] Lestat wishes David to take to book rooms in the Olympic Tower (MD 27).

attack. And this difference in body, orality and morally motivated philosophy permits Rice's literature to transcend the standard horror plots previously set out by Carroll.

1.4 Re-invention of Body: Re-invention of Self

The dead body of the vampire is a unique point of reference for body image for they are in a body that cannot be permanently physically altered through means such as diet, liposuction, face-lifts or even hair cuts. Due to its body's rapid healing mechanisms, the vampire appears to be beyond conventional body anxiety. However, such is not the case. In fact, Rice's vampires are more concerned about how they look than your most obsessive teenager scanning fashion magazines. Throughout the Chronicles, the Ricean vampire concerns itself with body image, for it is the most accessible means to re-invention via cosmetic make-up, clothing and other such adornment. Invention, and subsequent re-invention, figures prominently in the *Chronicles*, as vampires must be invented or synthesized from an existing human body. Through the reciprocal oral exchange of a bodily fluid, blood, the living human body alters to become an undead vampire body. Rice has admitted her preoccupation in "that leap of the imagination into another order of being, the re-invention of self" and that her "work is filled with moments where people are shattered and broken and have to reinvent themselves" (Ramsland, *Reader* 66). Rice's representation of the vampire explores what happens when the body alters, but the mind does not. Memory, or those memories which Louis retains from his transformation from human to vampire, demands an initial re-evaluation of self due to a change in the body. How does the vampire deal with the change? The change itself begs for the need to re-evaluate the self. Hence, it is this process of acceptance of the new body which causes Louis his first problems.

Throughout the series, the characters reinvent their selves through attempts at altering their body's attributes. On a metaphorical level, the entire series of text is really about the plight of coming to grips with re-invention. Even the story Louis tells Daniel Molloy is a form of re-invention of a body of history, but on a physical level re-invention of the body constantly occurs. In *Interview With the Vampire*, the most obvious examples occur with Lestat's bestowal of the Dark Gift upon Louis and Claudia, and Louis' upon Madeleine. This change of body transforms the whole of the individual's genetic structure through cellular death, thereby creating a different substance while retaining the previous beauty of the former body.

In *The Queen of the Damned*, Akasha mistakenly does not see the possibility for change in bodies that never decay. In horror she exclaims to the twins that

> We are dead things, aren't we? We cannot live if
> it [the demon] departs. We do not eat; we do not
> drink, save for the blood it wants; our bodies
> throw off waste no longer; we have not changed
> in one singular particular since that awful night;
> we are not alive anymore. (QD 369)

What the others cannot understand is that change is necessary, possible and constant for those with the stamina to adjust to the extreme actions needed for renewal. Lestat, the most successful of all the vampires, achieves his progress by constant change in form. From his death in *Interview With the Vampire* to the story of his rebirth in *The Vampire Lestat*, Lestat is always in the process of becoming, and in this open process Lestat re-invents his self in accordance to Bakhtin's grotesque body. Lestat is, indeed, closer to the progressing body and "not the biological body,

which merely repeats itself" (Bakhtin 367). Lestat would never be so repetitive. Lestat will go to any extreme to become something new, to try on a new self, and to spur others to follow him in his struggle. As a vampire, however, Lestat must indeed go to great lengths to affect any change in either his body or his mind. A creature who, because of its immortality, can read all of literature, see all of theatre and wear all fashions, can only expand for so long before the newness of combination wears thin. So Lestat must resort to an escapade like altering his vampire body chemistry by drinking the blood of the hidden ancients, as he does in *The Queen of the Damned.*

In *Tale of the Body Thief,* Lestat goes so far as to plunge into the sun just to see if he will die. When the only lasting result is a suntan, he resorts to a complete body switch with the body thief, Raglan James. In *Memnoch the Devil* an eye is lost in exchange for his soul, but even that is restored to him in time. The recurring principle behind Lestat's need for change centers on the need for rebirth in death. The elder Marius admits to Lestat that "Those who don't go into the earth for periods of time usually do not last" (VL 329) and so affirms Lestat's intense instinct to move forward even if it is into temporary "death" of the body. When life proves meaningless, Lestat undertakes the process of burying himself in the ground to simulate death. During the time frame of the *Chronicles* this live burial of the un-dead occurs at least three times.[8] Each time the result is the same: a re-birth of the a more powerful, more complete body. So Lestat disproves the finality of Louis' statement to Daniel that "I was dead. I was changeless" (IWTV 291). Louis fears such a change, and perhaps does not need one, precisely because he adores to whine and be dissatisfied with life. Louis chooses not to displace his self and endeavor to resituate himself in the space of identity by the same means of re-invention as Lestat. His strength lies in his satisfaction

---

[8] See footnote 17.

with his dissatisfaction in his bodily condition.

Alternately, Claudia, the child vampire, cannot undergo any such re-evaluation due to her lack of self as a child. Only after sixty-five years does Claudia realize the predicament of her suspended human development: there can no longer be any evolution of her body. Like Kathryn Bigelow's Homer in the film *Near Dark*, arrested development creates an impasse for the child vampire whose body cannot mature despite mental growth. While successful because of their innocence, these children are ever unnatural aberrations in their own community. Their situation thus denies them the space necessary to define a self.[9] Without maturation of the body beyond at least adolescence the toll of immortality is too great. And all Claudia really needed from Lestat was "Six more mortal years, seven, eight" before the first body change and she "might have had that shape" (IWTV 235). But unlike Marius, who waited to create Armand, Lestat was too impatient. Even the vampire community acknowledges the aberration in Claudia when, in their Rules of Darkness, they deny Lestat's making of a child who cannot look after her self. In Lestat's mind breaking the rules allows for new rules from a new perspective. Lestat is a Relativist in many ways. Of course, there is certain irony in the vampire coven's denial of Claudia's right to live (VL 263). Lestat sees the paradox insofar as the strongest vampires, Enkil and Akasha, are also Those Who Must Be Kept, and yet they were allowed to live. The many references to Claudia as a child-like monster who, though beautiful, is an aberration, evokes a similar negative emotive response to what Mr. Utterson experiences upon meeting Mr. Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (Stevenson 8). What is created in

---

[9]Nina Auerbach argues that this innocence is what makes the child vampires decidedly perfect predators, and "the most successful vampires of all" (191). However, these are not the vampires which live on. In the end, it is Mae and Lestat who are successful, because of their ability to reinvent their bodies.

Claudia by Lestat's mistake is an unnatural monster, whose impurity derives from her inability to re-invent her body beyond adding a new bow to her hair or carrying a new doll.

The dramatis personae in *Interview* compares easily with that of Mary Shelley's short novel. Lestat is analogous to Victor Frankenstein, in that, he is the creator-figure, or in a term borrowed from Noël Carroll, Lestat is the *overreacher*. Lestat, like Frankenstein, is a flawed creator. However, Rice's twist in the *Chronicles* it is the body that is beautiful, and the monstrosity comes from within, whereas Frankenstein's abomination is a twisted cacophony of flesh, whose tragic flaw lies in its body and not in what is within. If Lestat is Frankenstein, then Louis is his monster. Certainly, Lestat behaves as irresponsibly towards his creation by denying him either knowledge or choice. Another key element of transformation that Lestat neglects to consider is the possibility of denial. While Lestat muses that he is going to give Louis the choice he never had, there is no real issue of consent. Much like a rape, Louis is given the "choice" between submission or death: Louis has no real choice. In fact, the reader is left to wonder if Lestat would not have proceeded to make Louis regardless of his response. Certainly, he gave Claudia no choice in the matter.

2

Section 1

They eat, they drink, and in communion sweet
Quaff immortality and joy. (Milton *PL* V. 637)

2.i.1 Devour to Define: Consummation Blurs Into Consumption

For humans, the self may be constructed through sexuality, eating, drinking and another oral activity that is similar to eating: verbal communication (Kilgour 8). For the vampire, however, food and sex become one in the drinking of the victim's blood. As such, blood consumption perfects incorporation of the Other by rejecting the temporality of sexual union. Verbal communication lends another perspective to the orality of the vampire's incorporation of the Other. By being the means through which the self comes to understand what it represents in an unending process of becoming, communication is the product of the blood's entrance through the mouth. In a human body, all that can be achieved is a partial identification with the Other. But in a vampiric body consumption of the Other allows, indeed necessitates, its complete incorporation. The fact that the human body has an approximate maximum life-span of one hundred and twenty-one years, somewhat limits our capacity to engage with the outside world through consumption (Guinness 57). Our mortality does not permit the time needed to explore the change provided by consumption over centuries. But in the vampire's frame, with its unquenchable thirst, consumption of the outer world may vary and evolve eternally. In this way, vampiric consumption is unique, insofar as it has the potential of being endless. The concept of consumptive variation over an immeasurable period of time indeed permits Rice's vampires to define themselves in this fashion.

While obviously present, the vampire's relationship between self-definition and eating is quite complex. Similarly, the relationship between eating and sexual consummation is equally engrossed in the blood drinking procedure, for "Like eating, intercourse makes two bodies one, though in a union that is fortunately less absolute and permanent" (Kilgour 7). As Rice's vampire drinks the blood of its victims, it incorporates not only the nourishing substance, but also traces of the victim's memories and identity.[10] The vampire orally experiences the outer world in a blurred frenzy of consumption and consummation, and it is from this position that he or she comes to know the self through union with another. Through incorporation of the victim, the vampire possesses perspective from another position. In the act of feeding, with all of its sexual valences, the vampire can temporarily view the self through human perspective, instead of through its own "vampire eyes" (Jordan). In this way, the vampire may position the self in space via the victim's incorporation. Quite literally, union allows a re-evaluation of the self's location from another's viewpoint. In *The Queen of the Damned*, Pandora affirms the sensation and the desire for union, as "She thought not merely of the blood itself, but of the momentary union with another soul" (QD 63). Clearly, when Lestat admits to have "felt the thirst define my proportions" (VL 437), he means that the thirst defines both the physical and psychological proportions of a self.

2.i.2 Vampires on the Couch: Oral Sex and Vampire Psychology

Human sexual intercourse ideally represents a consensual sharing of bodies with another living being. Obvious exceptions to this normative ideal, such as paedophilia, necrophilia and bestiality exist, but "normal" heterosexual (reproductive) intercourse involves penetration of the

---

[10] For examples of identity and memory consumption see BT 24-5 and MD 38-9.

female body by the male phallus. What is uniquely alluring in the practice of vampirism is the playing out of the cannibal fantasy, the desire of actual consumption of the Other without the feelings of guilt. In a vampire's body, hunger licenses the mouth to fulfil its needs for oral murder/rape without consent. So strong is the hunger that Lestat carries this license without consent over to his first post-vampiric human sexual experience (BT 188-9). Without the blood to feed Lestat's lust, he becomes quite disoriented and proceeds to rape the woman because "it wasn't enough" (BT 188) to stop at kissing. When Rice's vampires couple with a victim, the result is a consummation that quickly becomes a consumption. While in the human body provided to him by the Body Thief, Lestat compares the human and vampiric acts of union. This time his embraces are

> Not for killing, but for kissing; not for possession, but
> for this brief physical union that will take nothing from
> neither one of us... No thoughts came to me of blood drinking;
> no thought at all of the thunder of the life inside which I
> might have consumed...how sorry and sad that this union
> would be so partial, so brief. (BT 237)

Lestat wistfully recalls the blood drinking by conceding the incompleteness of the approaching human experience. And how could something so brief and incomplete as the human experience, in comparison, offer much to a vampire who has kissed so many others in his unique, complete fashion.

In *The Queen of the Damned*, Baby Jenks recounts an encounter similar to Lestat's human experience, but her report differs in that it comes from the vampiric perspective. Here, we are

told that as

> the blood came, it had been just fine, it was hamburgers and french fries and strawberry shakes, it was beer and chocolate sundaes. It was mainline, and coke and hash. It was better than screwing! It was all of it. (QD 42)

Baby Jenks describes the blood drinking experience by relating it to both the normal human experience of consumption and sexual intercourse. Undeniably, this is much different than Lestat's description of something "so partial, so brief" (BT 237). The distinguishing feature between the two acts of consummation is that the vampiric one, which ends in consumption, is complete, whereas the human act does not provide much for the self to work with. Obviously, an act that yields a sensation "better than screwing" is to be prized by the self capable of attaining that pleasure. The fact that such pleasure is linked to the fulfilment of a necessary function, consumption, only makes the need more sensational. Baby Jenks' associations also reveal how the act triggers the pleasures of food, drink, drugs and sex—all of which are releases from modern stress and what society strove for in the nineteen-eighties. On the level of reader response, it is not difficult to understand why so many of Rice's fans want to be vampires after reading a passage such as the one attributed to Baby Jenks. Rice's readers empathize with Lestat's cry that "it wasn't enough" (BT 188), and they too want to plunge deeper to find something more. There must be something more. To have all known pleasures of the senses made available to an individual in a single act is a utopic possibility, but to have that pleasure morally licensed by survival needs and have it readily available is irresistible.

The mouth is essential to sexual contact, as the kiss is the most common element in most forms of affection. Oral sex—fellatio and cunnilingus—while considered taboo in many parts of western society, mimics the act of penetration and envelopment experienced in human sexuality. Licking, biting, tasting and sucking are all acts where the mouth opens to facilitate the body's desire for sexual pleasure. Orality is central to the human sexual experience, and in the *Vampire Chronicles*, as well as in much of contemporary vampire fiction, sexuality and eating are synonymous. The most common grounds used to explain the connection between the vampire's blood consumption with sexuality comes from Sigmund Freud's discourse on infantile sexuality. Rice explores the association between eating and sex in the context of her vampire novels. For Rice's vampires, feeding becomes a metaphor for sexual union, a type of oral sex, if you will. Sigmund Freud hypothesizes on such a relationship between oral contact and sexuality in his essay, *Infantile Sexuality*. In the essay, Freud examines the transitional stages needed for a child to become a normal sexual adult. He explains that the

> first of these [pregenital organizations] is the oral or, as it might be called, cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The *object* of both activities is the same; the sexual *aim* consists in the incorporation of the object--the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an

important psychological part. (64)

Freud's explanation of the identification process, involving the object and the subject, supports my assertion that Rice's vampires relate to the Other and the outside world through the mouth. It also suggests that this relationship is not only sexual, but also that it cannot be separated from the ingestion of food. The parallels between Freud's analysis of the oral phase and Louis' depiction of the pleasures experienced with his birth into his vampiric oralism are clear:

> I drank, sucking the blood out of the holes,
> experiencing for the first time since infancy the
> special pleasure of sucking nourishment, the body
> focused with the mind upon one vital source. (IWTV 18)

Here Louis reiterates just how similar that the acts of blood-feeding and breast-feeding are. Blood-drinking serves as a means to not only nourishment, but also sexual expression and eventually self-definition.

Stephen King and countless other horror aficionados have already joined the Freudian oral phase of sexuality to the vampire's eating habits. King's analysis of the oral phase's presence in Stoker's *Dracula* supports a similar analysis of Rice's use of oral sexuality. King points out that

> Count Dracula (and the weird sisters as well) are
> apparently dead from the waist down; they make love
> with their mouths alone. The sexual basis of Dracula
> is an infantile oralism coupled with a strong interest in
> necrophilia (and paedophilia, some would say, considering
> Lucy in her role as the "bloofer lady"). (King 75)

As mentioned before, Rice's vampires suffer from an arrested development of their sexuality, which indicates that there is no separation from sexual acts and acts of incorporation: food and sex are one.

Two hypotheses provide the psychological basis for presence of the merged response within Rice's vampires. The first perception views the act of becoming a vampire as a death and rebirth, with the vampire being unable to separate sexual activity from oral consumption. In this situation, after re-birth the vampire never progresses beyond the infantile stage of sexuality.[11] The second possible explanation is that this cessation of the vampire's ability for genital stimulation necessitates to disperse its the sexual aggression out through alternative outlets. An unsuccessful attempt to redistribute the libido causes the subject to regress into the oral stage of pregenital organization. Either way, Rice's vampires undeniably interact with the world from a Freudian pregential stage, thus explaining how orality represents such a crucial element in self-definition for Louis and Lestat. Like a young child, the Ricean vampire sucks objects to identify them as either different or similar to itself. From an infant's perspective, if it is not a thumb or a toe, then it must be taken into the mouth and swallowed.

Seen in the context of Freud's theory on oral sexuality, the vampire's feeding behaviour embraces the object, identifies from it, uses it as a point of reference in space, and then incorporates it as a part-object. More specifically, the incorporation of the part-object (blood) represents an attempt by the consumer to morally detach himself from the consumed substance. By reducing blood to something less identifiable with its origin, Louis can stomach the blood.

---

[11] Louis's birth into the vampire community, like that of human infants, is heralded by a set of new teeth, and this certainly symbolically supports the claim of certain infantile status, but is inconclusive.

However, by nature the vampire cannot maintain communion, as it inevitably evolves into extremist consumption. This blurring of communion into consumption is visible in all of the vampire's transactions. It is not enough for Rice's vampires to take the "little drink" or to seek human companionship without endowment of the "Dark Gift." Lestat hints that Louis does not have to kill to satisfy his hunger, but rather can nibble and take "the little drink." However, much like telling an alcoholic to sip from a bathtub of gin, Louis is unable to refrain from transforming the communal relationship to consumption. And why should he? There are plenty of humans to consume. It is all or nothing for Rice's species of vampire. But if it were not in Louis' nature to consume instead of commune, then he would be able to merely drink instead of drain. Instead, it is the fundamental inseparability of Louis' blood-lust and his vampiric self that defines him. Consumption is intrinsic to Louis' definition of self and his orality. Therefore, oral consumption is the most obvious avenue by which to explore what that part of his nature signifies, and how it positions him in space.

2.i.3 Vegetarian Vampires

Louis Pointe du Lac orally defines his self through metaphorical acts of a heterosexual, homosexual, masturbatory and pedophiliac nature. The vampire turns to all of the aforementioned identification tactics in an effort to come to terms with the self within a never ending existence. After all, an eternal self must incorporate all sexual experiences and preferences if it is to be complete in an unending world. Metaphorical vegetarianism, where human blood replaces animal flesh while animal blood replaces vegetables, is a frequent habit for the modern

vampire.[12] Anne Rice's vegetarian vampire is Louis. From his first moments as a consumer of human blood, Louis appears to suffer from the negative emotions common to human vegetarians towards meat. His disgust at having to kill something he values, is completely understandable within this frame of reference. In the beginning, Louis adopts an Augustinian approach to calming his hunger by drinking the blood of rats, pigeons and other vermin. This act of restraint might even be traced to Louis' brother, whose religious fervor led him to stop taking meals altogether (IWTV 7). Indeed, before his transformation Louis had already begun to mimic his brother's ascetic self-discipline.

In her study, *From Communion to Cannibalism,* Kilgour asserts that "as you are what you eat,' eating is a means of asserting and controlling individual and cultural identity" (6). As such, the narrator attempts to control his individual identity by controlling what he eats. From the Bible to Rabelais the idea of transforming blood into wine is present. Lestat mocks the transubstantiation ritual:

> "Rats can be quite nice", he said. And he took the
> rat to the wine glass, slashed its throat, and filled
> the glass rapidly with blood . . . And then he sipped
> the blood as delicately as if it were burgundy.
> He made a slight face. "It gets cold so fast".
> "Do you mean, then, that we can live from animals?"
> I asked. (ITVW 29)

This scene is an epiphany for Louis, as he falsely believes that he may sustain himself with

---

[12]See the vampires Tanya in *Red Rain,* and Nick in Farhad Mann's *Nick Knight.*

something more morally acceptable to his past notion of self than human blood. At this point Louis becomes the selective eater/lover that St. Augustine defines in *Confessions*: "I struggle daily against greed for food and drink. This is not an evil which I can decide once and for all to repudiate and never to embrace again, as I was able to do with fornication" (Kilgour 49). This works rather well for a medieval saint, but what happens to the modern vampire, a creature whose food and drink is also his fornication? In Louis' narration to Daniel, we come to understand Louis' torturous feelings of guilt involving his brother's death. Louis leads the listener to believe that he is suffering from survivor's guilt/anxiety syndrome, but this is misleading. In fact, what Louis regrets is his realization that though he loved his brother, he would never surrender his family wealth to support his brother's religious works. Louis resents the favour God grants his brother by giving him a vision, and like many other brothers in literature,[13] Louis wants to supersede his brother, and subsequently wishes to be his brother. After his brother's death, Louis seeks to assume his brother's ascetic principles, to see his own visions and return to France. Strangely enough, the God that grants Louis his boon is not the Christ figure offering eternal life, but rather the vampire Lestat saying *drink of me and live forever.* Indeed, Louis does find life in death, sees the world's visions with newfound "vampires eyes," and leads the philosophical ascetic life. Unfortunately for Louis, blood is not an evil Louis can repudiate without death, for as Louis mentions, "Blood, I was to find, was a necessity itself" (Jordan 17:08). And while Louis may sustain himself on the blood of vermin, he cannot satisfy his hunger. It becomes a battle between sustenance and satisfaction. However, the blood of vermin cannot satisfy Louis' vampiric hunger. On the level of bodily nourishment it is similar to a failed attempt at vegetarianism. On a sexual

---

[13]For example Cain and Abel, Edgar and Edmund (*King Lear*), Claudius and King Hamlet (*Hamlet*).

level, Louis' attempt to avoid consuming human blood is similar to masturbation; desire is calmed but never satiated.

Sandra Tomc's recently-published article, "Dieting and Damnation," explores aspects of anorexia and dieting in *Interview With the Vampire*. In this article, Tomc insists that Louis' refusal to feed on humans stems from a desire to control his weight and it "resembles a constant vigil to keep from gaining weight" (Tomc 448). What Tomc interprets as anorexia may be better understood as morally selective consumption rather than as starvation to control the limits of the body, to maintain its thinness. For Louis, whose beauty is not debatable, the idea that he is worried about getting fat is implausible. Indeed, while Lestat and Louis worry about the quality of their clothing, their hair-style and other cosmetic choices, we never hear Lestat complain that he ate too much or that he will have to alter the waist size on his crushed velvet pants. No, Louis' selective eating habits in *Interview With the Vampire* have more to do with an inability to cannibalize what he still perceives to be his own kind. Cannibalism triggers feelings of nausea and guilt, not because of the size of the body, but rather because of a concern for the species of what is eaten. By the end of the novel, Louis has buried his past identity, becoming more pragmatic about his relationship with the food he incorporates. He no longer defines the self on human terms, but rather on a preternatural level. His surrender comes to a climax after achieving a metaphorically heterosexual union with Madeleine, a woman whom Louis transforms into a vampire to be a companion for Claudia. Louis tells Claudia that "What died tonight in this room is the last vestige in me of what was human" (IWTV 245). The vampire self has assumed the host human body and now begins to define itself.

The phenomenon of part-objectification occurs when, for the subject, "the part is all there

is to the object" (Hinshelwood 374). Hinshelwood's reference to part-objectification primarily refers to how an infant perceives its mother and the breast it feeds from, but an analogy might be drawn between Louis's oral consumption of blood and the manner in which western families purchase cellophane-wrapped pork chops from their grocer. In both situations, Louis and the consumer prefer to satisfy their carnivoristic needs by subscribing to the detachment that part-object consumption provides. This is much unlike Lestat, who according to Louis, liked to get to know his prey by sitting with them and talking. While such meetings abhor Louis, his attitude towards incorporation begins to change as he progresses from a human to a vampiric self. And Louis begins to alter his aversion to feeding from humans shortly after Claudia is born, as he was "transformed by Lestat's instruction" to kill "with some new detachment and need" (IWTV 87).

Before displacement of the human self Louis is disgusted with his need to incorporate blood from those whom he believes to be those of his own race. Louis mistakenly believes that he is breaking the law that you do not "kill your own kind"—let alone eat them (IWTV 222). However, as Louis' relation to his bodily hungers and new definition of self changes, so does his attitude towards them. The detachment is complete when the vampire realizes that it is no longer human. With this revelation, feeding ceases to be cannibalism. No longer is he disgusted with drinking human blood, for after two hundred years as a vampire, he is no longer killing "his own kind." Once the change is absolute, Louis loses his need to remain detached from his prey, and without the previous cannibalistic valences, Louis is able to engage his prey and look at them as something more than dinner. In the act of communion with Madeleine, Louis makes the final break.

After Louis' final break, however, the theme of cannibalistic incorporation comes to the forefront again in *The Queen of the Damned*. The consumption of one's own kind, cannibalism takes an ironic position in the *Chronicles*, in that it is revealed as the source of the vampire's origin. In *The Queen of the Damned*, the reader learns that King Enkil and Queen Akasha bring on the fury of a demon due to their contempt for another tribe's post-mortem incorporation cannibalization of "The brain, the eyes and the heart " of their families (QD 294). By harming the twin tribal shamans, the royal couple open themselves up to possession by a blood-thirsty demon. The irony in relation to the whole of the *Chronicles* is obvious. When Louis feels disgust for incorporating his kind, he feels the same disgust Akasha felt about Maharet's consumption of her kin, and yet both Louis and Akasha brought their vampirism upon themselves—one by his lack of respect for his own human life, and the other by her lack of respect for the rituals of others.

The ritual of cannibalism described by Maharet, seems to offer a response to Hamlet's speech of how a king may pass through the guts of a beggar (*Hamlet* IV.iii.31-2). By consuming the flesh of dead ancestors, one cheats death's degradation of rotting flesh, whose prime service is to feed maggots. The consumption of the tribal dead, thus allows the first incorporation after death to be spent upon living humans, instead of worms. To pass through the guts of an object the dead body had given birth to, seems like a more pleasant passage to the inevitable outcome of digestion, as well as conferring a sense of endless life upon the consumed corpse. In this way Bakhtin's cycle of endless becoming and immortality in the form of a collective humanity is re-enforced. And Maharet's logic behind this consumption relates the honour shown to the dead by incorporating their flesh, and not letting it be devoured by animals, to be burned in cremation or

to rot in the earth. Likewise, Maharet scorns the practice of incorporating the enemy, for who would want to have what you hate become part of you. Returning to Louis' initial queasiness about human blood consumption, one can now see how the revulsion relates to meat and blood being the link between the living and the dead. For in Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, meat is the dead animal consumed by the living, and blood is the living substance consumed by the dead.

2.i.4 Theatre of Consumption

In his film adaptation of the novel, Neil Jordan visually highlights the sexually erotic aspects of Rice's work. In the first scene after Louis' transformation into a vampire, Lestat and Louis venture into New Orleans to take part in the feasting and revelry (Jordan 17:08-18:52). Within the scene Lestat and Louis, played by Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, attend a festival where a play in the spirit of Commedia dell'Arte is the entertainment, and a Creole bar maid is the feast.[14] The viewer is shown flashes of a colourful play where the actors are openly rude, violent and sexual in their actions. It is a play of the grotesque. This scene demonstrates how the vampires consume the blood of their victim, incorporating it into themselves, as one might snack on potato chips while watching television. The consumption mimics the spirit of the play, and the sharing of food accords with the openness of the grotesque canon discussed by Bakhtin in its open and public nature. Indeed, no individuality can be found in the act, as Louis and Lestat share the feast (the maiden) in a *ménage à trois*. As sensual intensity increases, the audience observes the blur between the desire for consummation and the hunger for consumption. Hence, the point of

---

[14]See Francis, William A. "Part III: The New Orleans Setting." *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Eds. Gary Hoppenstand and Ray B. Browne. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 1996. p. 142. for reference to the film production of this and other scene production.

communion (where the victim and the victor both receive pleasure from the encounter) now becomes consumption. In this scene Louis, under Lestat's tutelage, plays out Kilgour's assertion that when the struggle is "between communion and cannibalism, cannibalism has usually won" (Kilgour 7). Arguably, the clip lacks Rice's authority because it differs from the novel, and even though Rice wrote the screenplay for Jordan's film adaptation it is difficult to confirm what is Rice's work and what is Jordan's interpretation. However, despite the concrete proof of authorship the scene still works on a visual level, linking kissing not only to consumption, but to consumption in a carnival mentality. Certainly, even if this is solely Jordan's vision of the scene, it demonstrates that there exists enough material for Jordan to connect Rice's work to carnival.

If the metaphor of blood drinking as sexual union holds true, then this act of blood consumption is a coming of age, a deflowering of the "virgin" vampire's identity. Lestat becomes Louis' experienced lover leading him in the act. As Louis' innocence is shed, he cries, "I will not take her life," but it is too late. From this point Louis questions his actions, his needs, his desires, and attempts to come to grips with his new identity: a vampiric self struggling to displace the old human self with all of its pre-established morals. It becomes necessary for the fledgling vampire to re-establish his placement of self, for moral space and orientation are breached the moment the dark gift is received. Louis spends most of the first novel attempting to reconcile his position in moral space with the space in which he finds himself. It is a space where the physical reality of his vampiric body contradicts the normatives of his human ethical position. To kill another human being is wrong. But what Louis cannot accept is that he is no longer human, and thus, in denial, he continues to use his fractured human moral framework (Waxman 89).

Louis and Claudia attend a performance of the second play within the film, one which is

detailed by Rice in novel form, at Armand's Théâtre des Vampires. The play seen this time, like the Commedia dell'Arte, has grotesque overtones with its vampires upon the stage openly and publicly sharing their food in a communal fashion. Like the play for Claudius within Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the presentation at the Théâtre des Vampires is Louis' mousetrap performance where the horror of his condition is played out on stage, and where Claudia's guilt is revealed to Santiago afterwards.[15] Upon the stage is placed a reflection of Louis's new nature, the vampire's oral nature that he refuses to acknowledge in totality. Communal eating is demonstrated by the older vampires at the Théâtre des Vampires as a single victim "was passed from one to another and to another, before the enthralled crowd" (IWTV 202).[16] This act of group consumption marks a transition between what Bakhtin refers to as the eating practices familiar to modern and grotesque bodily canons. While Louis and Lestat represent the more closed, individual body, Armand's Paris coven share their food in a more open, communal fashion.

2.i.5 Dating the Vampire: The Communion and Consumption of Women and God

The realities of exchange, financial or otherwise, are synonymous with communion; both involve beneficial reciprocity. Both food and sexual favours can be construed as valid commodities in the marketplace. Can a communal relationship exist between a subject and the object that it depends upon for nourishment? Certainly the narrator of Anne Rice's *Interview With the Vampire*, Louis, asks himself this question after his failure to commune with Babette Freniere.

---

[15]Note the similarity in the names of Claudia and Claudius.

[16]A second example of communal sharing of a feast occurs with Armand's boy servant (ITVW 206-7). Neil Jordan embraces these carnivalesque dining habits in his film adaptation.

In Babette Freniere, Louis finds his first opportunity to commune with a human being after Lestat's bestowal of the Dark Gift. The Freniere plantation and its female inhabitants enter *Interview With the Vampire*, at the point where the patriarchal figure who controlled the plantation's economy is about to be killed in a duel, but is killed by Lestat instead.

As Louis' first attempt at a communal relationship after his transformation from human to vampire, it should be no surprise that he falls for Babette Freniere. Babette represents the "girl next door" or rather she becomes the neighbor one falls in love with because she was there. The close proximity of the Freniere plantation to Point du Lac supports the argument that Louis fell for the first woman who passes by his vampiric eyes, but the true question is whether Louis falls in love or holds a perverse hunger for Babette. It is difficult to the distinguish Louis' motivation from his approach, precisely because of the social frame he operates from. Louis gains her confidence by providing sound financial advice and emotional support, with the obvious appearance being that he loves her from afar, but must remain away because his obvious affliction. In the interview, Louis feigns both attachment and detachment and again forces the audience to read between the lines. Even Daniel Molloy must ask Louis "But towards all this you had detachment, distance " (IWTV 39), and at the question Louis ponderously replies "Hmmm. . . " (IWTV 40), as if to say he is not so certain. Regardless of Louis' lack of initial commitment to Molloy's question, he does reveal an answer shortly afterwards in the interview. Louis quizzes himself on the concept of communion versus consumption:

> how could I truly ever come to know Babette,
>
> except...to take her life, to become one with

> her in an embrace of death when my soul would become one with my heart and nourished with it. But my soul wanted to know Babette without my need to kill, without robbing her of her of every breath of life, every drop of blood. (IWTV 56)

Although Louis uses words like *soul* and *heart* in his musing, these words are linked to consumption and not communion. What Louis speaks of is the physical nourishment of his heart, his body, and how the incorporation of her blood into himself will bring his heart and soul closer together. Even Louis can no longer distinguish between the blur of communion and consumption.

Louis' final talk of Babette returns to his detachment with the metaphor of the theatre, as he tells how he "watched the tragedy finally as one might from a theatre balcony, moved from time to time, but never sufficiently to jump the railing and join the players on the stage" (IWTV 116). Louis never truly loves Babette. At least not more than a really succulent cut of steak or a bottle of wine too good to ever actually drink. While Lestat and Louis allow their "loves"—Babette (IWTV), Gretchen (BT) and Dora (MD)—to depart without killing them or giving the Dark Gift, all three women suffer madness shortly after being left. It is a holy madness of women who believe they have met angels or devils. These three women appear to be separate from the general faithless population, insofar as they have faith in Christianity, and perhaps this is where "dating a vampire" in communion leads: to holy, spiritual consumption.

Indeed, Rice deals with her vampire's communion of God quite often throughout the *Chronicles* with the final statement coming with Lestat's consumption of the representative of Holy Communion, Jesus Christ. Through incorporation, Rice equates Lestat with Christ. Lestat

has taken the blood of Christ into his body and made it his own. As a leap into dense metaphorical jungle, Rice signifies thousands of possible equivocations with this gesture. Is Lestat now a saint? Has he found the "good" in himself, if only by incorporating it? Does Christ offer nothing more to humankind than blood to be consumed? Or is this scene to be read as an ironic mockery of the substantiation ritual? Like all metaphysical notions, the answers can only be as ambiguous as the questions, but what Rice pushes towards the reader is the possibility that God may be no more than a different manifestation of the supernatural or a type of vampire: one who feeds on the faith of His followers. The God that Memnoch shows Lestat certainly resembles the brat prince in his taunting Lestat with his blood on the way to the cross: "The Blood of God, Lestat," He whispered. "Think of all the human blood that has flowed into your lips. Is my blood not worthy" (MD 283)? As a fully-developed aesthete Lestat would be a connoisseur of the worth of the blood of God, and the absurdity of the question mirrors Lestat's own mocking attitude. After the incorporation of God's blood, Lestat does not gain the super powers that the blood of Akasha and the other elders provided. If Lestat cannot find salvation in the real blood of Christ, then how can humankind hope for better in the transubstantiation ritual? Perhaps the answer lies in the possibility that Lestat already held part of God within his body, as might be signaled in God's mirror-mockery; thus the incorporation had already taken place when Lestat was born as a human. Regardless, what Rice makes clear is that neither Lestat nor Louis can ever go back to a purely communal relationship, whether it be with women, men or God.

Section 2

> I resolved, at least, not to despair but in every way to fit myself for an interview with them which would decide my fate.
> (*Frankenstein* 136)

2.ii.1 Interviewing the Vampire: Tell Me Something About Your Self

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, both communion and consumption with the outside world occurs through the mouth of the vampire, but these are not the only forms of interaction the mouth partakes in. In the *Vampire Chronicles* the mouth also engages in a third form of orality: communication. A fascination with oral narration is present throughout the series. From Louis' interview with Daniel Molloy in the first novel to Lestat's discourse with Memnoch the Devil, oral communication dominates the characters' time. But how does oral communication relate to the placement and process of oral self-definition? According to the argument so far, orality is a means to map or situate the self in time and space. What oral communication in the narrative form provides is a method by which to share the self in a non- threatening and cathartic way. Literary critic Nina Auerbach points out in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* that "Rice's vampires are compulsive storytellers" (Auerbach 154). In fact, the reader of this series only knows these creatures through Louis' transcribed interview and the four later novels written by Lestat. Why do these vampires incessantly speak through the oral and written word? In this section I will provide evidence that verbal communication, or language originating from the mouth directed to a listener, is the second means by which Louis and Lestat attempt to define their selves. Louis' resort to verbal communication as a means to self-definition is not surprising for, as Kilgour indicates,

> Another oral activity that is similar to eating but

> offers a less physical model for exchange is verbal
> communication, rooted in the body and yet detached from it...
> Food is the matter that goes in the mouth, words the more
> refined substance that afterward comes out. (Kilgour 8)

The interview represents the "more refined substance" that can be accessed only after much of the world is incorporated by Louis. It is this refined substance of spoken words which reflects what is inside the limits of the subject's body. Through the confessional interview Rice permits her reader reader the intimacy of voyeur while reading Louis' oral narrative. Rice hits upon the empowerment that confessional interviews lend to the listener by making the confessor provide a map to his or her self in space. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis is built upon the concept that only through the telling of such a narrative to an analyst will the subject reveal his or her *true* inner narrative. By incorporating what we are not and making that a part of what we are, consumption affirms the existence of self, for when the outside world becomes part of ourselves, it is something we know to be a part within the self. However, mere incorporation can only represent the physical process of becoming. To truly understand the effects of the physical process, the vampire must speak to an Other to reflect what he is, allowing him to gain an understanding of what he is not. So while consumption accumulates raw material, and incorporation synthesizes that material, verbal communication interprets what has become of the material within the context of the body.

What Polly Young-Eisendrath and James A. Hall relate in their study on the self, *The Book of the Self: Person, Pretext and Process,* is that

> Although narrative structure cannot wholly account

> for the experience of a continuous sense of self,
> it does make an essential contribution to the sense
> of being a legitimate person. Without some adequate
> telling of one's development and place over time,
> a person will necessarily feel excluded or disoriented. (453)

This notion that there is a definite need to relate development and placement over time explains why Lestat and Louis talk about themselves so much. Without telling of their development they become lost, which necessitates either death or self-burial and resurrection if they are not to remain lost.[17] But why so much communication from Rice's vampiric duo, and why the change of emphasis from the spoken word (Louis' interview) to written communication (Lestat's diary writing)? Walter Ong indicates that "spoken utterance comes only from the living whereas written utterance can be communicated by the dead" (Ong 102). If we slightly misread Ong's passage and view "the dead" as the un-dead, perhaps things become more clear. Lestat and Louis are eternally the living dead, but they have the same needs for self-definition that most humans do. The difference lies in the fact that the human life-span is considerably shorter than that of the vampire. Humans develop to tell their story many times to a few select people throughout a lifetime. At the end of their lifetimes, odds dictate that their story still resonates in one living being who has heard it. Conversely, a vampire develops at an increased pace, and due to their immortal status, all of the humans selected to hear their oral narrative die rather quickly or go mad. Therefore, the written utterance is a more sensible fashion for the un-dead vampire to place themselves in narrative, whereas strictly verbal communication becomes a transient

---

[17]See self-burial in *The Vampire Lestat* (4, 312) and *The Queen of the Damned* (111).

method of "making notes" for the more permanent tome. So while I agree with Janice Doane that Rice's novel series "emphasizes oral pleasures, her novels are set up to be talked" (Doane 432), I must take up and argue against her statement that "speech is privileged over writing." I obviously must do so, because I assert that Rice seems to give legitimacy to Molloy's transcription of Louis' interview and Lestat's later four novels, if only because they are permanent markers to chronicle her vampires' lives. I think that there is much room to argue privilege versus emphasis, but what is essential to understand is that "Oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality" (Ong 8). In line with this, both written and oral utterance are forms of orality and both are used in the *Vampire Chronicles* to place the self in a narrative structure. Hence, it makes perfect sense that Rice's "novels are set up to be talked", if only because they themselves are forms of self-defining orality.

2.ii.2 Maternal Language

The placement of the self in narrative is the prime reason for language. Language exists to enable us to communicate to others who we are, where we come from, what we do, and how we do it. Louis tell his child companion, Claudia, that "We need our language, our people. I want to go directly now to Paris" (ITVW 180). Louis thereby begins to flirt with the identification of the self with familiar language. He feels a need, albeit it a human one, to hear words known to his ears. He attempts to use words to express his angst, to bring his struggle into accessible terms. This identification with a language and a people perhaps serves as a prelude to the interview he later wishes to conduct, for when he returns to New Orleans it is to a place he understands the language more than he thought he had when heading to Europe. Louis' search for his maternal

language also connects a search for his people, his family and his kindred. In this way, Louis' quest to Europe serves to fill a void not only in language, but also in genealogy. In relation to self-definition, genealogical kinship and the placement of the self in a community of other similar selves confirms Taylor's avowal that "One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (Taylor 35). Louis's self-examination confirms the human need to define the self in relation to others. By instigating an interview with a journalist, Louis not only commences a confession of his sins, but also contemplates his eternal vampiric self through the "vampire eyes" of the narrator. While the narrator admits to having come to terms with the sins of his immortal identity, it is only through placing his internal thoughts upon an external form of media that his notion of self becomes fully formed. In *Interview With the Vampire*, the need to justify the actions of the self for purposes of identity construction is answered by the blood-drinking narrator through verbal communication, the interview. It is not something that Louis instigates on a whim but rather, as he tells the boy who interviews him, "Believe me, I won't hurt you. I want this opportunity. It's more important to me than you can realize now. I want you to begin" (IWTV 4). At this point the reader is under the illusion that the interviewer is in control, but from the boy's first question, "How did it come about?", we see that Louis has his own agenda for the interview. His reply that "There's a simple answer to that. I don't believe I want to give simple answers . . I think I want to tell the real story . . ." (IWTV 4) sets the precedent that Louis is not being interviewed, but rather is giving an interview. What is the "real story" that Louis is trying to tell? It is simply a well-prepared statement where the audience must "Read between the lines" (VL 435) as Lestat suggests at the end of *The Vampire Lestat.*

Louis' interview is more than a simple confession. Louis intends to say, to quote T.S. Eliot, "'I am Lazarus, come from the dead\ Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all" (Eliot 94-5) The interview is Louis' method to justify his previous attempts to define the self through his struggle with consumption and consummation. When Louis realizes that the interview process has broken down, that one has settled a pillow by his head and said "That is not what I meant at all: that is not it at all" (Eliot 96), his self-definition recedes. "You don't know what human life is like!", the interviewer screams at the end of the interview. On the edge tears he says, "You've forgotten. You don't even understand the meaning of your own story" (IWTV 308). The interviewer is correct; Louis does not understand his own story. The communion ends. Louis attacks the interviewer and drinks his blood. Despite Louis' attempts to extricate a verbal definition of self, the interview proves inadequate to his needs. The finality of drinking the interviewer's blood becomes the only means to a true definition of self. This action is Louis' oral defense, a fanged reply defining the reality of what he has become: a modern vampire, an eternal being who kills what he once was in order to survive the madness and dislocation of time.

2.ii. 3 Lestat: The Never-Ending Story

Lestat's use of verbal communication does not find its source in an interview, but rather in his career as a rock star. In *The Vampire Lestat* and *The Queen of the Damned*, the oral narrative of the self to the Other is relayed through singing. Just as Louis created tapes in his interview with Daniel in the first novel, Lestat creates a multi-media package from which his story in written form will follow. Lestat's video/music/novel package is a comprehensive set to dazzle the senses in the same way that theatre presents a more complete experience. Lestat is no stranger to the

stage, so this is a natural progression from one medium to the next.[18] Through acting Lestat is able to try on new selves, and it is this unique assumption of new ontological statuses that keeps Lestat amused with life, and capable of withstanding the rigors of a continual and immortal state of becoming. Just as playing a character upon the stage allows Lestat to escape his true interior self and assume the self of Leilo, narration permits both Louis and Lestat the opportunity to create a exterior self through their stories. Oral narrative stands as a means to present a defensive façade to the outside world. However, as disciples of Freudian psychoanalysis would purport, the interior self leaves traces of itself within even the most carefully constructed narrative. Whereas it may be true that the "self speaks to know and to be known, to discover and proclaim its identity" (Glicksberg xxii), it is also equally correct to state that the self speaks to know and then protect its identity, by speaking falsely. So while Louis says he wants to give "the real story" instead of "simple answers" (IWTV 4), he really means that he wants to inversely tell a contrived story that vindicates his actions and rationalizes his moral agency. The purpose of Lestat's stage career is made clear when he demands that his "films are to be sequential. They must tell the story that is in the book I want to create" (VL 13). Consequently, the autobiographical narrative translates into the life he wants to create. Lestat's narrative results in art not imitating but distorting life. Even when in a high fever, Lestat must obsessively tell and re-tell his own tale/narrative. In *The Tale of the Body Thief*, on the brink of human death, he asks Gretchen if she would "Want to hear the whole tale?" (BT 213). In his need to tell his story, Lestat is like an alcoholic needing to have just one more drink before he can sleep. Lestat and Louis create a narrative to connect with the world in a temporal way. Their stories are confessional autobiographies. But they retain their

---

[18]See VL 56-65.

detachment from the crowd, because the crowd perceives the factual narrative to be fiction. In the next chapter, the discussion will move away from the vampire's detachment from the crowd to its immersion in it in the form of how the economy of financial world affects the self-defining process.

3

Vampire Economics: Class and The Flâneurian Marketplace

> **Oh, reason not the need; our basest beggars**
> **Are in the poorest thing superfluous.**
> **Allow not nature more than nature need,**
> **Man's life is as cheap as beast's** (*Lear* II. iv. 261-4)

3.1 Leisure Class Consumption

Economics affects the body, and thus the self, by dictating what clothing can be worn, what food can be purchased, and what kind of venues the body can gain access to. Without money the body suffers, and the mouth has nothing to consume. In the Gothic landscape of Anne Rice a direct correlation exists between financial success and success as a vampire, for it is with the appearance of its body that it hides from and lures in its prey. We are shown that the poor vampire at the Parisian Théâtre des Vampires, the vampire who scrounges in the graveyards, does not rival the wealthy vampire of the capitalist New World in its ability to acquire the prime component I argue is need for self-definition: food. Even in the vampire community, financial prowess signals prosperity in all other areas of existence, and thus creates a social class system within the group. In this chapter, I will argue that the vampire's association to economics directly feeds into the oral means to self-definition discussed in the previous three chapters of this work. If the vampires are to prey from within the human community, as do Louis and Lestat, then it is necessary that they conform to the capitalist approach to investment in the New World. The marketplace society in which we live dictates that to co-exist with others of our kind, we must participate in some level of commodity exchange. We exchange possessed goods for those needed to fulfil our daily living requirements. While we no longer participate in a barter system, where goods are traded for other goods of equivalent value, North Americans and Europeans still feel

the reciprocal obligations of our predecessors. Even in the present currency-based marketplace, some echoes of the old system cling to our unconscious perception of social and financial transactions. One such echo is gift exchange.

In the *Vampire Chronicles*, the marketplace enters the foreground through three distinct pathways: the demands of leisure class social consumption, the aesthetic consumption of the *flâneur*, and the practice of gift exchange among such members of society. The first passage enters via the domain of social demands placed upon those in the upper echelons of society, and situates the protagonists in a social space. It should be noted that both Lestat de Lioncourt and Louis Pointe du Lac cling to their status as bourgeois aristocrats well after their vampiric transformation, and thus belong to a social position that Thorstein Veblen distastefully referred to as the leisure class. Before his transfiguration, Lestat was the youngest son of a French Marquis (QD 21), thereby coming to understand all of the demands placed upon a man of his social status. Those demands included protection from invaders, personal conduct befitting a prescribed moral code and other contractual fulfilments concerning public works. However, in Lestat's generation the system was in a stage of decline and decay, and that while "The richest of the bourgeois couldn't lift his gun in my forests...he didn't *have*[19] to lift his gun. He had money" (QD 21). What Lestat alludes to, is the fact that while his father held the title of Marquis, Lestat could neither read nor write. Whereas the children of the bourgeois class were educated and had money to buy material goods. The injustice, from Lestat's perspective, is clear. Lestat must perform his life-threatening duty to hunt the wolves (VL 22) in Auvergne and to provide food for the table (VL 32), without reaping any of the material rewards received by the bourgeoisie Other. This

---

[19] Italics mine.

imbalance in reciprocity instigates Lestat's move to Paris, in the hopes of rising in the new context of the bourgeoisie. And rise he does.

In a fairy tale sequence befitting the Brothers Grimm, Lestat begins his new life in Paris. Lestat de Lioncourt rises through a small theatre's ranks, and finds momentary fame until it is stolen away in the night by a monster. Magnus, a mad vampire, makes Lestat an offer he truly cannot refuse and thus transforms the youth into a vampire. Once a vampire, Lestat's wish for improvement is facilitated by an inheritance left to him by Magnus, and his ability to steal money from his mortal victims. However, Lestat's success is more rightly attributed to finding a mortal financial advisor to invest in real estate, stocks and other areas of investment. Certainly, a human financial advisor makes sense as Lestat's unfamiliarity with the new system of affluence and his inability to count are humorously exposed when he cannot figure out how much to pay for a suit of clothes—for "I did my arithmetic, at which I am not so good, preternatural powers or no"(BT 59).[20]

The buying and selling of consumer economics is stressed early on by Louis who informs Daniel that "Lestat and I had to make money. And I was telling you that he could steal. But it was investment afterwards that mattered. What we accumulated we must use" (IWTV 37). The central point in this passage, that what is accumulated must be put into circulation, demonstrates how Louis and Lestat understand how to make the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Is this not the exact premise upon which our consumer economy is based? Indeed, without consumption there is no need to produce new commodities, and without production the economy is brought to

---

[20] Lestat's poor arithmetic skills supports my suspicion that vampires are notoriously poor mathematicians. One may cite *Sesame Street's* Count Count as an exception, but let us not forget that he seldom gets beyond the addition and subtraction of single digits.

a standstill. Lestat flexes his genealogical muscle to refute Louis' narrative which posits Lestat as no more than a money-grubbing peasant. Lestat blows the matter off, for Louis was only,

> after all, a discriminating and inhibited
> child of the middle class, aspiring as all colonial
> planters did to be a genuine aristocrat though he
> had never met one, and I came from a long line of
> feudal lords who licked their fingers and threw the
> bones over their shoulders to the dogs as they dined. (VL 434)

Louis, unlike Lestat, was the eldest son of his deceased father and the owner of a New Orleans plantation. Whereas Lestat signifies old world family money, Louis represents new world capital and investment, and it is a struggle between legitimacy (genealogy) and power (finance). But Lestat sees both the financial and oral opportunities in New Orleans, a city wherein a vampire could hunt in luxury and leisure, while making swift profit. New flavourful tastes could be indulged in New Orleans.

In his human youth Lestat's social obligations require him to be an aficionado of hunting wild animals, and of wielding the sword and the mace. The subject of vocation reverberates throughout his life. In *The Vampire Lestat*, he details how his aspirations to become a priest were thwarted by having "no money to launch a real ecclesiastical career" to make him into a bishop or a cardinal (VL 29). His hunting skills and the strength of his human body transform him into Lestat "the wolf-killer", but what Lestat truly loves is to play upon the stage. He is an actor *par excellence*, and this shows in his obsession to constantly don a new life, and with that assumption he gains a new method of discourse. So in becoming a vampire the progression from an actor to

an aesthete to a rock star to a *flâneur* is a natural progression. Lestat merely wears another mask, plays another role. As a vampire, Lestat recovers his social position by assuming a modified variation of the same social function. It is Lestat's *noblesse oblige* to become a connoisseur of his hunt in Paris. The hunter must know the hunting ground, and mass consumption serves as camouflage for his outings to survey the herds of humanity upon which he will feed. The powerfully rich have a license to prey, so Lestat assumes that role, as it is a role he naturally falls into. Mass consumption also becomes a way to mask one's self from the Other. If one surrounds one's self with enough material, then the shape of the true self is obscured. In the *Chronicles*, the Other is represented not only by the human masses, but also the members of the vampire community.

Despite all of their supernatural attributes, vampires still need money. Count Dracula required the coin of the realm to pay for his passage to England, to set up his various safe-houses and to pay off his mortal accomplices. Lestat, Louis and Armand are no different in their reliance upon the financial sphere. The reality of the human world dictates that for the vampire to move within a human context it needs to purchase temporality, or rather to purchase access to the *zeitgeist* of its surroundings.[21] Indeed, it is just such *zeitgeist* that Armand searches for in Louis when he asks Louis to act as his link to the nineteenth century (IWTV 256). Lestat is an elitist, and his survival depends upon his elitism. With large sums of capital Lestat is able to clothe himself in fine garments, gain access to all human domains, and buy all forms of consumer goods necessary to interpret the surrounding human world. As camouflage, the aristocratic façade serves the three vampires well. As Lestat relates, "We were the essence of that nineteenth century

---

[21]The term *zeitgeist* is taken from the German language. Translated literally, it means "the spirit of the times."

conception—aristocratically aloof, unfailingly elegant and invariably merciless " (VL 436). As both a true aristocrat and a vampiric one, it is Lestat's *noblesse oblige* to become a connaisseur of his hunt in Paris.

3.2 Blood Money: French Revolution

With the rise of the bourgeoisie after the French Revolution, financial capital became synonymous with mobility and choice.[22] On one hand, those who held and invested large amounts of capital gained access to a larger selection of consumer goods from which to construct their tastes. On the other, members of the nobility whose family fortunes remained intact after the looting of the French Revolution, but which lay dormant in disuse, quickly fell to decline and ruin within a generation.[23] I think it hardly necessary to mention that the institutions which held the power (the monarchy, noblemen, and the Catholic Church) before the Revolution were against such an outburst by the proletarian masses. The French Revolution signaled the beginning of the end of complete institutional control of funds, resources and manpower.

After the French Revolution and the subsequent installation of a consumer economy, the emphasis on the duties of the wealthy classes relocated from moral leadership to the conspicuous consumption of goods. In other words, in a consumer economy things must be consumed and wasted, and those who were in high society became obliged to conduct a certain amount of wasteful consumption. Not surprisingly, the first detractor against the Revolution we meet in the

---

[22] It is important to note that the French Revolution took place in 1789, just two years before where Louis chooses to begin his self-narrative in *Interview With the Vampire*. For an in-depth discussion of how Rice metaphorically represents the democratic state's triumph over Louis XIV see John Beebe...(*Reader* 203-4).

[23] Details of Lestat's own feudal family estate appear in *The Vampire Lestat*, where we discover that his family's loss of wealth is not due to decay, but rather revolutionary looting in France (VL 306).

Chronicles is Louis' brother, the religious fanatic. For a second time, the death of Louis' brother serves as the catalyst which either motivates or foreshadows Louis' later actions.[24] Indeed, his brother's walk beyond the gallery's French doors to a brutal fall may be seen as a symbolic end of French Catholicism, if not for the world, then at least for Louis' immediate present. The question of how the brother falls to his death, or rather who kills him, is never truly answered, but one obvious possibility is Lestat. Lestat, in his need for money and an investor (Louis), was undeniably capable of killing the aspiring priest. By providing the possibility of Lestat's culpability, Rice makes a clear statement that the church is dead to the vampire as the novel opens. When we compound the first encounter with the clergy to Louis' second meeting, then Rice's statement becomes more intent. As both Louis and Lestat are "born to darkness at a time when the practice of Christianity is losing its hold" and as vampires for a new age, they quickly dismiss the satanic aspirations of Armand's Parisian coven (Ramsland, *Companion* 67). Shortly after the death, Louis encounters a Catholic priest whose claim that his brother was possessed by the devil drives Louis to almost killing the holy man. But what is interesting about this encounter is that the priest attributes France's problems to Satan for "the Revolution had been his greatest triumph" (IWTV 11). Rightly so, for what devils, other than Lestat and Louis, are better suited to the financial tide brought on by the Revolution?

3.3 Gift Exchange: The Value of a Gift

The power of the gift in the *Vampire Chronicles* cannot be ignored. Historically, gift exchange was a process of trade wherein the recipient becomes bound by honour to return an

---

[24]See my previous discussion of this scene in relation to ascetic principles in Chapter Two (p.43).

equal, if not larger, recompense to the presenter. The size of the gift snowballs until one of the contributors is bankrupted by the debt, and is unable to return what is owed.[25] Since "The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it" (Mauss 65), it serves as a template to outline hierarchical relations. The importance of oral gift exchange in the *Chronicles* therefore lies in how it determines, through potlach and the debtor/creditor relationship, the hierarchy of the vampire community. Potlach refers to this final stage of consumption, where the bankrupt party loses not only his goods, but also his social stature.[26] So it is no wonder that gifts tend to strike fear among their recipients. Even today potlach occurs during such times as Christmas, Mardi Gras and on our birthday celebrations. When Lestat and the other vampires choose to bestow their Dark Gift upon another, the end result is immortality. The Dark Gift is wholly oral. The orality of the gift lies in the oral exchange, the trust placed in the Other that what is given will be returned. As Lestat sucked the blood from Gabrielle, Lestat is bound by honour to return that blood in another exchange. And the giver hopes not to be taken advantage of in his or her weakened state by the taker. As a metaphor, the oral exchange of the Dark Gift is a communion without consent, a choice between death or life, and, in many ways it is an act of rape. This is especially so when one realizes the sexual pleasures inherent to the act.

The price of the exchange is two-fold: the debt owed to the giver, and the cost of immortality. It is this reciprocal aspect of the Dark Gift that its receivers do not consider. There

---

[25] This sentiment is echoed in such literary phrases as:
"Let him give on till he can give no more" (Dryden, John. *Absalom and Achitophel.* I. 389)
"Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind" (Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet.* III.i. 101).

[26] Interestingly, as a verb, potlach signifies "to feed, to consume" (Mauss vi).

is no such thing as a free gift (Douglas ix). What does Lestat expect in return when he creates Gabrielle, Nicholas, Louis, Claudia, David Talbot and his other short-lived lackeys? Lestat expects deference to be shown him, as a vassal would confer upon his or her feudal lord. For creating his fledglings, Lestat expects courtesy similar to that shown him by the bourgeoisie shortly after he performed his duty of killing the wolves that were murdering the local sheep herds. When he was human he was given gifts of a fur-lined cloak and boots, so as a vampire who provides a more valuable gift, the debt would obviously be deeper. Like a feudal lord, Lestat expects his children of darkness to protect him from oblivion when confronting something like Claudia's murder attempt, the vampire covens' attempt to kill him at the San Francisco rock concert or Raglan James' theft of his body. The price of immortality is loyalty. But in each case, Lestat finds out to what extent that loyalty is reciprocated. Like the unseen gold coin at the bottom of a beer stein used to oblige men to go to sea with crafty captains,—"Sure, the beer is free, but you will have to owe up to the gold coin, Matey!"—Louis finds out that his gift was not what he bargained for. But at the same time, Lestat finds out that when the Dark Gift is realized to be a Dark Trick his crew of fledglings turn mutinous at the slightest provocation.

But is a gift not something one should be honoured by? Armand supports such a conclusion as he discloses in intimate conversation with Louis that he views his eternal life as a valued gift bestowed upon him by his maker (IWTV 255-6). Louis proceeds to ridicule Armand for not comprehending the reciprocity expected for such an exchange. In his confessional, but carefully constructed interview, Louis misreads Lestat's reasons for giving the Dark Gift to Louis. By pointing out that he was only "gifted him with eternal life...because the vampire who made me wanted the house I owned and my money (IWTV 256), Louis reduces his immortality to

commodity exchange. But Lestat did not usher Louis "into the preternatural world that he might acquire an investor and manager for whom these skills of mortal life became most valuable in this life after" (IWTV 35), as he already had Roget to manage his financial affairs. If anything, Louis' attempt to reduce the apparent value of the Dark Gift only reflects poorly upon him, as he appears to refuse engagement in reciprocity. Poor Louis does not understand that gifts are seldom asked for.

Nietzsche asserts in his *Genealogy of Morals* that God succeeded in giving the unrepayable gift, by giving us his only son's life so that we may enter heaven (Nietzsche 506-26). Alternatively, what Lestat offers is not an abstract, Platonic Immortality, but rather a concrete, in-your-face immortality. To members of North American secular society, there can be no denial which seems more enticing, if not paramount. The Dark Gift is a prime example of how gift exchange includes obligation. What is expected from Louis is similar to the obligations of either a son to his parents or vassal to his lord. When the obligations are not carried out Lestat attempts to sweeten the deal by creating Claudia. Claudia is Lestat's gift of renewal to Louis, something valuable enough to bind Louis to Lestat's company. However, Lestat does not uphold his duty owed to his progeny, which is another reason why he cannot reap the benefits of his oral gift. Ironically, Claudia enters the gift exchange by giving Lestat, her creator, a present that ends in Claudia's attempted murder of Lestat (IWTV 118). Conversely, when Louis gives Madelaine the Dark Gift, he expects to receive his release from the responsibility of Claudia's care. This gift exchange proves beneficial by enhancing solidarity and settling debts between the two parties, and as both parties honour their debts no form of potlach occurs. Lestat tries to cash in on his financial gifts to Armand by returning to Paris after his "murder" for badly needed blood. After

all, as Lestat muses, for the tower and the Théâtre des Vampires "did he not owe something to me?" (VL 438). This fails to lead to anything but the death of Claudia, and Lestat's to return to New Orleans where he could hide amongst his limitless supply of "coin of the realm" (VL 443). A final example of gift exchange presents itself in *Memnoch the Devil*, wherein Dora refuses Roger's gift of a copy of Veronica's veil (MD 35). It is a refusal not only of her father's gift, but also any bond that would be made by its acceptance. When Lestat has the real veil thrust upon him by Christ (MD 285), he enters into the exchange pattern with God. Of course, what Lestat unknowingly owes God is to give Dora the veil so that she may rekindle humanity's faith in the burden of its debt to God for the ultimate potlach. When Lestat unwittingly honours his debt, he is rewarded by the return of the left eye he lost at the gates of Hell. A token for services rendered (MD 320).

3.4 The Flâneur: Private Eyes in Public

In his discussion of Charles Baudelaire's poetry, Walter Benjamin uses the term *flâneur* to describe "`l'homme des foules" (Benjamin 48). It is just such a "man of the crowd" that Lestat becomes through the succession of the *Vampire Chronicles*, with the final product of his search for self culminating in *Memnoch the Devil*. By reading the vampire's actions through Baudelaire's prototype of the detached watcher within the bustling crowd, the reader gains an informative method for analyzing the final two novels of the *Chronicles*.[27] Australian scholar Ken Gelder

---

[24]Rice's familiarity with Baudelaire, especially *Les Fleurs Du Mâl* (*Companion* 36), is marked by her allusion to his poetry in the first draft of *Interview With the Vampire*. In Rice's biography, Katherine Ramsland indicates that "Louis and Claudia join him [Armand] and they all stand around in a circle reciting poetry from Baudelaire" (*Prism* 156).

briefly picks up the flâneurian concept in *Reading the Vampire* and similarly connects the terms to *The Tale of The Body Thief*:

> Indeed, to be a vampire is to *be* 'cultured'—that is, to have 'aristocratic' tastes—and also (these points are related) to be idle. Louis, Lestat and the other vampires do not work, although they do have investments and, with the help of financial advisers, are able to accumulate large amounts of capital. Their 'job' is, instead, to find out who they are and where they came from. (Gelder 119-20)

By going one step further than Gelder, and we must indeed do that to see how the *flâneur* masque and self-definition relate, we see that "In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going" (Taylor 47). Gelder does not connect the future with a recovery of the past for self-definition in the present. This connection with the future is vital to the vampire, as it is immortal and the future is something it knows it will have. Gelder also somewhat misreads the importance of this connection to Benjamin's flâneur. By reducing Lestat's flâneurism to a distorted view of Lestat as a queer detective merely searching for a body to inhabit (Gelder 121-2), Gelder focuses on his own theoretical agenda, and ignores the implications of such a connection. In *Interview With the Vampire*, Louis depicts New Orleans as a place where "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" (IWTV 36). The image of a gas-lit New Orleans closely

reflects Benjamin's description of the traditional flâneurian landscape, Paris, where "the appearance of the street as an *interieur* in which the phantasmagoria of the *flâneur* is concentrated is hard to separate from the gaslight" (Benjamin 50).

There are two pivotal reasons to appropriate the *flâneur* as a comparative model for Lestat. The first reason concerns the main argument of this work, that orality is the vampire's prime mode for self-definition. The second involves the vampire's moral struggle about killing innocent humans to feed his natural hunger. In relation to the *flâneur* model, Lestat maintains the previous oral connection to self-knowledge, because as a flâneur he is an educated browser in the human marketplace. As Lestat's education in consumerism progresses so does his ability to find nothing but the best products in the outside world to incorporate into his body: the inside world. An analogy might be drawn between Lestat and the educated shopper, who knows how to buy prime beef; both consumers walk the marketplace in a detached manner to find the ideal product.

The Tale of the Body Thief marks Lestat's change from the vampire who feeds wholesale to the vampiric flâneur who feeds with purpose, and in the act defines the moral agency of his self. Why the marked change in Lestat? He muses that

> I had been transformed into a dark god of sorts,
> thanks to suffering and triumph, and too much of
> the blood of the vampire elders....I loathed it.
> Without doubt I was grieving for my old selves—the
> mortal boy, the newborn revenant once determined at
> being good at being bad. (BT 4)

It is clear from the preceding passage that even Lestat must acknowledge his evolutionary

journey from one self to another. Lestat concedes that the distinction between his mortal self, his newborn vampire self and his present dark god self are definable transitions, marked by the oral incorporation of vampire blood. Hence, Lestat's transition from wolf-killer to fledgling vampire to aesthete to *flâneur* are catalyzed by a transition in his defined self. Such transitions occur due to what is orally incorporated into his body. Accordingly, Lestat's moral position, whether it be that of an evil killer or a dark-god flâneur, dictates what should be incorporated into his body.

The moral dilemma of being a killer from within the crowd who remains emotionally detached is solved by Lestat's assumption of the flâneurian role. Benjamin suggests that "If the *flâneur* is thus turned into an unwilling detective, it does him a lot of good socially, for it accredits his idleness" (Benjamin 40-41). The detached watcher, who delivers justice from beyond the edge of society is a popular archetype of the late twentieth century. Certainly, the transformation of Batman from a cute comic book hero to the dark knight found in the late 80s attests to a cultural trend moving toward complexity and to a blurring of good and evil. As mentioned in my introduction, Lestat may indeed be seen as a Batman-like figure, and vice versa. I think that in the past two decades both characters have built upon the other. Each detective walks the streets at night, and feeds his hunger through the destruction of undesirables in the Gothic city landscape. Both Lestat and Batman seek redemption from and revenge for the evil that attaches itself to their conception of self. Lestat in becoming such a flâneurian detective from the outset of *The Tale of the Body Thief* and into *Memnoch the Devil* thus forges a path to social goodness. For Lestat, flâneurism is an avenue to eventual moral salvation. Despite the fact that his moral anxiety stems not from his idleness, but rather from his vampiric hunger, Benjamin's statement still holds true for how Lestat's assumption of the role as the "unwilling detective" might serve as moral

reciprocity.[28] Lestat accounts for his predatory behaviour by killing murderers, rapists and other undesirables more morally corrupt than himself. Taylor might describe Lestat's flâneurian construct as a way to determine his relation to the good, and perhaps to move closer to it (Taylor 52).

Flâneurism is the aesthetic result of the high point of bourgeois taste. It is this "taste" which instructs the more corporal tasting of victims. The *flâneur* is both the educated shopper and the detached voyeur in the crowd. Such detachment is confirmed by Louis in the first novel when he describes his emotion. Armand marks his transition into the twentieth century with his desire to "enter this century in earnest" for "he understood enough about it now. He wanted 'incalculable' wealth" (QD 89). Armand's apparent misreading of the age enrages Armand's human companion, Daniel, who remarks that "You throw your clothes away after you wear them, you rent apartments and forget where they are. Do you know what a zip code is, or a tax bracket?" (QD 89). Perhaps, Daniel and not Armand, misreads the twentieth century, for if Armand has "incalculable wealth" does it matter if he knows how the postal system functions? Armand can purchase the services of those who hold such knowledge, while he attends to the more important process of identifying defining relations for the self. Where does Armand seek knowledge? Television, film, computers, and household appliances all become transitional objects for Armand. Like Linus' blanket in the popular Charles Schultz *Peanuts* cartoon, television is the crutch Armand leans on until he can break from the objects he finds comfort with.

Unlike Benjamin's flâneurian model, however, these vampires are not mortals and that

---

[28] A similar example of the vampire as detective arises in *Nick Knight*, a television movie (1989) starring Rick Springfield. Springfield played a vampire attempting to atone for his killing by assuming the role of a police detective. The movie later became a popular television series, *Forever Knight*, set in Toronto, Canada (Guiley 141).

affords them a much more genuine stance of detachment than other *flâneur*. To be of a different species to humankind, and yet walk among it affords an intensified sublimity. Louis comments upon this in *Interview With the Vampire* when he talks about how he could bear to see those around him grow old, suffer and die. He explains that "It was detachment that made this possible, a sublime loneliness with which Lestat and I moved through the world of mortal men. And all material troubles passed from us" (IWTV 35). As a *flâneur*, Lestat "refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd*" (Benjamin 48). Perhaps it is just such lonely sentiments which initially causes Lestat to create his coven of vampires. Nick, Gabrielle, Louis and finally Claudia come into being so that Lestat does not have to be alone in human terms. And as the *Chronicles* progress Lestat's need to be with his own kind lessens, as he prefers to watch from the outside. Lestat is truly a man of the crowd, because he feeds among them, and through incorporation, the crowd becomes him.

Conclusion

The idea of the vampire figures prominently in the post-modern identity. It has found refuge in such non-Gothic works as Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*[25] and Umberto Eco's *The Island of the Day Before,* and appears to be gaining credibility as a metaphor, icon and cultural lifestyle. My argument has always been that Anne Rice's imagination is the cornerstone supporting the vampire's rise to its current pedestal where it receives both academic and cultural acceptance. This thesis has examined how Rice has achieved the vampire's embrace through orality and incorporation. Oral processes such as communion, consummation, consumption and communication both limit and open wide the operation of self-definition. In Anne Rice's world, the vampire begins a journey towards defining not only its self, but also the universe that surrounds it. It is a quest to discover the metaphysical meaning of our lives through a procession wearing a thousands façades, elaborate costumes with carnivalesque flair. Appropriately, it is like a parade through the streets of New Orleans during Mardi Gras, except that the costumes worn are identities and the wearers are vampires. During the *Chronicles,* the reader enjoys Lestat's rattling upon the stage, his melodramatic agony, his unending laughter and his foppish obsession with food, clothing and style. Only after the *Chronicles* are complete, however, can the reader tie together the genealogical, aesthetic, moral and financial aspects inherent in the parade. The Rican vampire demonstrates how the self incorporates the defining relations of genealogy, consumption, communion, communication, social and financial status, and moral philosophy, and how the self re-positions once those elements are incorporated. Due to the chord their struggle for self has struck with readers, Anne Rice's creations have spawned hundreds of literary

---

[25]See Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses.* New York: Viking, 1988. pp. 52 & 182.

emulations, thousands of people who want nothing more than to be Lestat, Louis or Claudia. It is a case of where the great predator, the great consumer, eventually becomes consumed by the outside world into and purchased by the commonplace world known as Culture. In a final touch of irony, Anne Rice's incorporating vampires have, themselves, become vampires incorporated.

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Anne Rice. *Interview with the Vampire.* New York: Knopf, 1976.

---. *Memnoch the Devil.* New York: Knopf, 1995.

---. *The Queen of the Damned.* New York: Knopf, 1988.

---. *The Tale of the Body Thief.* New York: Knopf, 1992.

---. *The Vampire Lestat.* New York: Knopf, 1985.

Secondary Sources:

Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World.* Trans. Hélène Iswolosky. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968.

Beahm, George, ed. *The Unauthorized Anne Rice Companion.* Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1996.

Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet In The Era Of High Capitalism.* Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Verso, 1983.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry.* London: Oxford UP, 1973.

Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Castello-Cortes, and Michael Feldman, comp. "Birth and Life: The Human Being." *The Guinness Book of Records 1997.* London: Guinness, 1997.

Doane, Janice and Devon Hodges. " Undoing Feminism: From the Preoedipal to Postfeminism in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles." *American Literary History* 2:3 (1990): 422-42.

Dresser, Norine. *American Vampires: Fans, Victims, Practitioners.* New York: Vintage, 1989.

Eliot, T.S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." *The American Tradition in Literature.* Ed. George Perkins. New York:McGraw-Hill, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* Trans. Robert Hurley. Vol 1. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.* Trans. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, 1962.

Gelder, Ken. *Reading the Vampire.* Popular Fictions Ser. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Glicksberg, Charles I. *The Self in Modern Literature.* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 1963.

Gordon, Joan. "Rehabilitating Revenants, or Sympathetic Vampires in Recent Fiction." *Extrapolation* 29:3 (1988): 227-34.

Guiley, Rosemary Ellen. *The Complete Vampire Companion: Legend and Lore of the Living Dead.* New York: MacMillan, 1994.

Hinshelwood, R.D. *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought.* London: Free Association Books, 1989.

Ingebretsen, Edward J. "Anne Rice: Raising Holy Hell, Harlequin Style." *The Gothic World of Anne Rice.* Eds. Gary Hoppenstand and Ray B. Browne. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State UP, 1996

Jordan, Neil. *Interview With the Vampire.* Perf. Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Antonio Banderas and Kirsten Dunst. Warner Bros. 1994.

Johnson, Judith E. "Women and Vampires: Nightmare or Utopia." *The Kenyon Review* 15:1 (1993): 72-80.

Kilgour, Maggie. *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990.

King, Stephen. *Danse Macabre.* New York: Everest House, 1981.

Lupton, Deborah. *Food, the Body and the Self.* London: Sage, 1996.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason For Exchange in Archaic Societies.* Trans. W.D. Halls. London: Routledge, 1990.

Moench, Doug, Kelly Jones and Malcolm Jones III. *Batman and Dracula: Red Rain.* New York: DC Comics, 1991.

Morris, Pam, ed. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov.* London: Edward Arnold, 1994.

Nick Knight. Dir. Farhad Mann. Perf. Rick Springfield. CBS, 1989.

Nietzsche, Frederick. *On the Genealogy of Morals. Basic Writings of Nietzsche.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Modern Library, 1992

Ramsland, Katherine, ed. *The Anne Rice Reader: Writers Explore the Universe of Anne Rice.* New York: Ballantine, 1997.

---. *Prism of the Night: A Biography of Anne Rice.* New York: Plume, 1992.

---. *The Vampire Companion: The Official Guide to Anne Rice's The Vampire Chronicles.* Rev. ed. New York: Ballantine, 1995.

Rice, Anne. "Anne Rice: November 2, 1992." *One on One: The Imprint Interviews.* Ed. Leanna Crouch. Toronto: Somerville, 1994. 5-10.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. "Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Stories.* New York: Knopf, 1992.

Stephens, John Richard, ed. *Vampires, Wine & Roses.* New York: Berkeley, 1997.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus.* 1818. Berkeley: U. of California P., 1984.

Smith, Jennifer. *Anne Rice: A Critical Companion. Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of The Self: The Making of the Modern Identity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989.

Tomc, Sandra. "Dieting and Damnation: Anne Rice's Interview With the Vampire." *English Studies in Canada: ACCUTE.* Volume 22: No 4 December 1996.

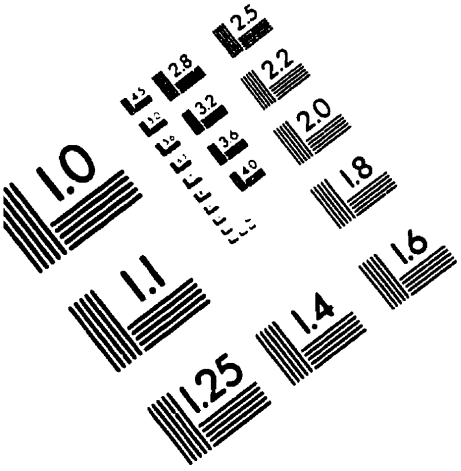
Twitchell, James B. "The Vampire Myth." *American Imago* 37 (1980): 3-92.

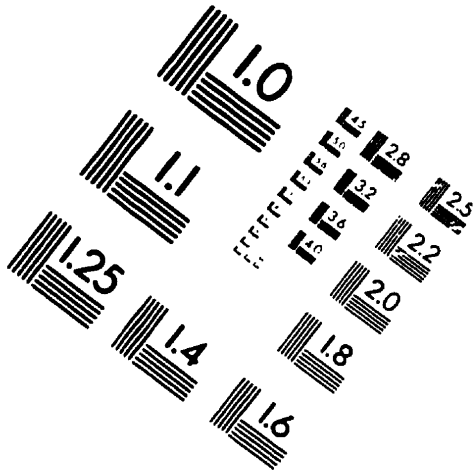
Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

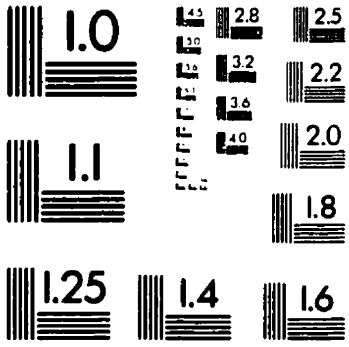
Waxman, Barbara Frey. "Postexistentialism in the Neo-Gothic Mode: Anne Rice's Interview With the Vampire." *Mosaic* 52:3.

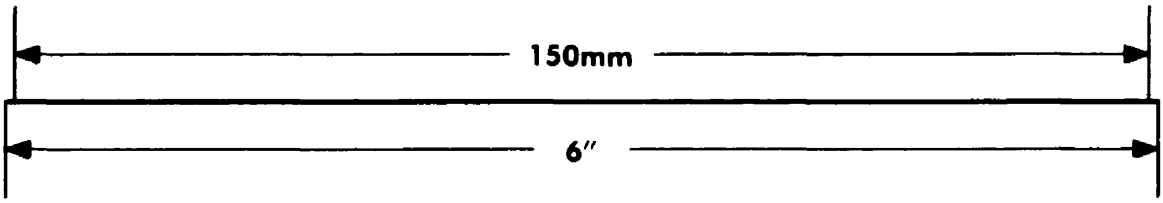
Young-Eisendrath, Polly and James A. Hall. *The Book of the Self: Person, Pretext and Process.* New York; London: New York UP, 1987.

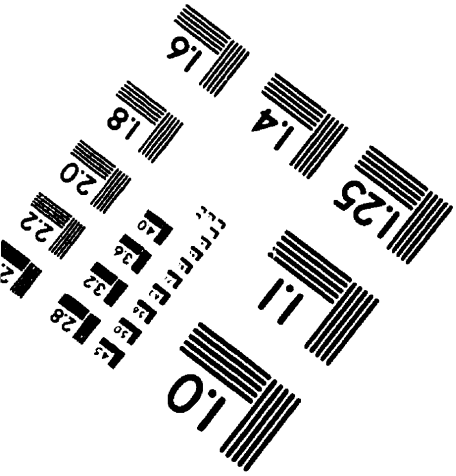
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

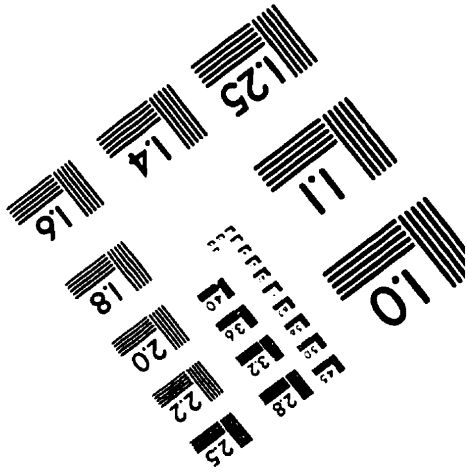












APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989