

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

BLOODY EROTICISM IN *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*: FROM  
LITERATURE TO THE AUDIOVISUAL DOMAIN

Dante Luiz de Lima

Dissertação de mestrado submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina para  
obtenção do grau de MESTRE EM LETRAS

FLORIANÓPOLIS

Dezembro/2007

Essa Dissertação de Dante Luiz de Lima, intitulada *Bloody Eroticism in Interview with the Vampire: From Literature to the Audiovisual Domain*, foi julgada adequada e aprovada em sua forma final, pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, para fins de obtenção do grau de

*MESTRE EM LETRAS*

Área de concentração: Inglês e Literatura Correspondente

Opção: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa

---

José Luiz Meurer  
Coordenador

BANCA EXAMINADORA:

---

Prof. Dr. José Soares Gatti Junior  
Orientador e Presidente

---

Prof. Dr. Fernando Simão Vugman

---

Prof. Dra. Anelise Reich Corseuil  
Examinadora

Florianópolis, 17 de dezembro de 2007.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There a lot of people who I would like to thank. First of all I would like to thank my father Pedro who did not have the same opportunities I had to study, but who is wise and acknowledges the importance of education. He gave me financial help and strength to follow my dreams. Other important people in my path are my sister Pure and her husband Jessé who lent me their beach house where I could stay and write my thesis in peace. They also always believed in me. Thanks for everything. I would also like to thank my two nieces Jeiza and Joara who were always there to help me; their help and love were of extreme importance. There also is a four-year-old little princess called Ana Luísa whose beautiful smile inspired me to continue. I dedicate this thesis to all of my family with love.

I am grateful for the help of my advisor professor Gatti, who was always enthusiastic about my study. His critics and praises were very important for the development of this study. Thanks. I cannot forget my friends Guga, Marcos and Malú who always welcomed me in their houses, and whose friendship is very important to me. I cannot forget to mention my lovely friends Rapha, Violeta, Carlos and Regina who always encouraged me during my writing process. Finally I would like to thank CAPES for their financial support during my research.

**Abstract:**

This study aims at investigating how literary texts are transposed to the screen. This investigation was done using the novel *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) by Anne O'Brien Rice and its filmic adaptation (1994) directed by Neil Jordan. The main aspect of the novel and the film analyzed during the research was the homoeroticism. In order to do the investigation the most important passages of the novel in which the homoeroticism is more evident were analyzed to support the hypothesis that Rice's male vampires are attracted to each other, especially the protagonists Louis, Lestat and Armand. Regarding the film, three scenes from it in which the homoerotic overtones are more evident were selected to show how film adaptors perform the transposition. It must be pointed out that the homoerotic content of the story diminishes drastically when transposed to the screen under Jordan's direction. The implications of the choices made by the adaptors are discussed under the light of film scholars. In the case of *Interview with the Vampire*, lots of characters from the novel were left out, the physical appearance of the main characters was changed and many other elements were subtracted and added. Thus this study will present theories of film adaptation to try to explain how the transposition takes place.

**Key Words:** Vampire, Homoeroticism, Adaptation, Cinema, Novels.

## Resumo:

Este estudo tem o intuito de investigar como textos literários são adaptados para o cinema. Esta investigação foi feita usando-se o romance *Entrevista com o Vampiro* (1976) de Anne O'Brien Rice e sua adaptação fílmica (1994) dirigida por Neil Jordan. O aspecto principal do romance e do filme analisados durante a pesquisa foi o homoerotismo. Para se fazer a investigação foram usadas as passagens mais importantes do romance onde o homoerotismo é mais evidente, isto foi feito para dar apoio a hipótese de que o vampiros do sexo masculino de Rice tem atração um pelo outro, especialmente os protagonistas Louis, Lestat e Armand. Com relação ao filme, três cenas onde o homoerotismo é mais evidente foram selecionadas para mostrar como os adaptadores fazem a transposição. Ressalta-se que o conteúdo homoerótico da estória diminui drasticamente quando transposta para a tela do cinema sob a direção de Jordan. As implicações das escolhas feita pelos adaptadores são discutidas com respaldo em estudos de estudiosos de cinema. No caso de *Entrevista com o Vampiro*, muitos personagens do romance foram excluídos, a aparência física dos personagens principais foi mudada e muitos outros elementos foram acrescentados e subtraídos. Portanto, este estudo apresentará teorias de adaptação fílmica para tentar explicar como a transposição acontece.

Palavras Chaves: Vampiro, Homoerotismo, Adaptação, Cinema, Romances.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	01
CHAPTER I 1. The Guilt-Ridden Vampire	10
1.1. Louis and the Boy	12
1.2. Louis and his Religion Brother Paul	16
1.3. Louis' Stormy Relationship with Lestat	19
1.4. Louis and the Priest	29
1.5. The Devastating Love Affair between Louis and Armand	32
1.6. Louis and the Women	37
CHAPTER II 2. The Bloody Eroticism of Interview with the Vampire Transposed to the Screen under Neil Jordan's Direction	39
2.1. The Art of Adaptation	40
2.2. It was a Vampire	44
2.3. The Dark Gift	50
2.4. The Final Encounter between Louis and Armand	59
CHAPTER III 3. Conclusion	66
REFERENCES	72

Number of pages: 75

Number of words: 23.306

MOON OVER BOURBON STREET<sup>1</sup>

Sting

There's a moon over Bourbon Street tonight  
 I see faces as they pass beneath the pale lamplight  
 I've no choice but to follow that call  
 The bright lights, the people, and the moon and all  
 I pray everyday to be strong  
 For I know what I do must be wrong  
 Oh you'll never see my shade or hear the sound of my feet  
 While there's a moon over Bourbon Street

It was many years ago that I became what I am  
 I was trapped in this life like an innocent lamb  
 Now I can never show my face at noon  
 And you'll only see me walking by the light of the moon  
 The brim of my hat hides the eye of a beast  
 I've the face of a sinner but the hands of a priest  
 Oh you'll never see my shade or hear the sound of my feet  
 While there's a moon over Bourbon Street

She walks everyday through the streets of New Orleans  
 She's innocent and young from a family of means  
 I have stood many times outside her window at night  
 To struggle with my instinct in the pale moonlight  
 How could I be this way when I pray to god above  
 I must love what I destroy and destroy the thing I love  
 Oh you'll never see my shade or hear the sound of my feet  
 While there's a moon over Bourbon Street

---

<sup>1</sup> This song appears on Sting's 1985 album called *"The Dream of the Blue Turtles, it was inspired by the character Louis of Anne Rice.*

Bloody Eroticism in *Interview with the Vampire*: From Literature to the Audiovisual Domain.

“Byron gave the vampire its spirit, Stoker its character, and Rice its conscience” (Kathryn McGinley, 89).

## INTRODUCTION

This study of adaptation will have as background the gothic novel *Interview with the Vampire* (1974) by Anne O'Brien Rice and its filmic adaptation (1994) by Neil Jordan. The title of this thesis was chosen because of the British expression “bloody hell”, which is used when one wants to express anger or emphasis. I have changed the word “hell” for “eroticism” due to the fact that eroticism is one of the main issues of this study. Eroticism can be seen as very problematic when analysing the sexuality of the characters in the novel *Interview with the Vampire*, thus the expression “Bloody Eroticism” suggested by this study seems to fit the problem to be addressed.

Another reason for the choice of the title is that, according to the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, the word bloody means: “1. Covered in blood or 2. Violent and involving a lot of blood and injuries” (73), which is also pertinent when analysing gothic characters who have their lives vitally connected with the pleasures and pitfalls of having to drink blood to survive. In order to acquire the elixir which is essential for their survival and self pleasure, Rice's vampires most of the time use violence, thus injuries to their victims are unavoidable. The act of transforming a human being into a vampire is also very violent and erotic. “Bloody Eroticism” conveys the idea that the eroticism depicted in Rice's novel is puzzling and intriguing, thus bound to a lot of interpretations. The reading given by Neil Jordan is a very important object of this study; hence there will also be made a study of the theories of film adaptation.



The adaptation of novels for the screen is nearly as old as the cinema itself. A great deal of films produced since the advent of the cinema do not have an original script, thus literary texts seem to have been of paramount importance as main source of inspiration for the scriptwriters over decades. One of the aims of this study is to analyse the way this transposition from the written text to the screen takes place. As is known, every time we leave the linguistic field to enter the audiovisual one, changes are unavoidable. An adaptation involves choices, and these choices lead the moviemakers to make options among various items. These choices might involve the cutting off of some characters and the adding of others, the erasing of sub-plots, a change of setting and many other elements.

In *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film*, Linda Seger points out:

By its very nature, adaptation is a transition, a conversion, from one medium to another. All original material will put up a bit of a fight, almost as if it were saying, "Take me as I am." Yet adapting implies change. It implies a process that demands rethinking, reconceptualizing, and understanding how the nature of drama is intrinsically different from the nature of all other literature. (2)

Thus, adapting is not an easy process; cinema has its own resources and ways of portraying the written word. Therefore, careful attention must be paid to the original written text in order to adapt it. Further details of theories of adaptation will be discussed in chapter II of this thesis. Before analysing the novel and its filmic adaptation I would like to point out a few facts about the writer Anne Rice, the character Louis, and Gothic Literature.

When Anne Rice wrote *Interview with the Vampire* in 1974 (published in 1976), she not only modernised the figure of vampire, but she also helped to revive gothic literature. According to Bette B. Roberts in the book *Anne Rice*: "Rice not only

recaptures the richness and dignity of the tradition but perpetuates its spirit of liberation in freeing the genre from its present insignificance and opening up new realms for the vampire” (25). Gothic Literature has suffered prejudice for a long time; the academy seems to have ignored it as if did not exist at all, Roberts points out:

Before the mid-1970s few doctoral candidates wrote dissertations on the novels of the Romantic period, and courses in the British Romantics seldom included writers like Ann Radcliffe or Mary Shelley. Early critical studies of the Gothic are sparse indeed. (107)

According to this statement by Roberts, the academy of the early twenty century has ignored the importance of the Gothic. However, after so many years, it seems that the academy has redeemed itself and has given the gothic its deserved status in the literary world and its importance in the study of human sexuality. George E. Haggerty in his book *Queer Gothic* remarks that:

It is no accident that Freud relied on gothic writing to help him articulate his notions of uncanny and various delusional behaviors. Gothic writers anticipated the work of Freud and other sexologists, and it seems to me that if we attend more closely to what they have written we may find that the history of sexuality is not as constricting as it has sometimes seemed. (5)

This remark made by Haggerty clearly shows that the sexuality has always been there, hidden between the lines of gothic novels. He also emphasises the importance of the gothic, not only for literature but also for other areas of science connected with the study of sexual behaviours.

It may be impossible to talk about *Interview with the Vampire* without mentioning Rice’s personal life. The novel seems to be a claim to a superior force or entity to give us human the understanding of life. Rice wrote her novel out of pain. In 1972 she was struck by a tragedy, her five-year-old daughter died of leukaemia. She had had a Catholic upbringing and she had been fascinated with all the mysticism of the Bible and she thought she believed in God. But her daughter’s death turned her world

upside down; she did not know what to do to overcome her pain. She nearly destroyed herself with alcohol and drugs, but all her suffering eventually led her to dedicate herself to full time writing, and this became her scapegoat. Bette B. Roberts in the book *Anne Rice* points that even Rice herself admits that writing *Interview with the Vampire* was “cathartic” (7).

Back in 1969 she had written a short story about a vampire so she decided to enhance it and transform it into a novel. This novel seems to have become a sort of revenge on the Catholic Church and God. The vampire who has always been afraid of religious symbols, especially in Stoker’s novel, become in her novel as sceptical as a human being with little faith. Through her main character Louis, she was able to challenge the dogmas of Catholicism. The blood, that in the mass through the ritual transubstantiation represents a new life, assumed other meanings in Rice’s novel. It became the birth to a new life in the world of darkness. We must bear in mind that her daughter had died poisoned with her own blood, which may suggest that for Rice blood could not mean life.

Blood for Rice’s vampires has many meanings: nourishment, the power to create new life—an immediate eternal life not like the one promised by Jesus Christ that people do not know if ever will come. And above all this, the act of drinking and giving blood become a way of experiencing a sexual orgasm. As known, sexual pleasure is something that has always been condemned by the church. It seems that Rice uses the sexual pleasure interwoven with religion beliefs to challenge religion. And to make it even more daring Rice created vampires who seem to have homosexual tendencies. As known, Rice is not the first one to connect the figure of the vampire with homosexuality and blood drinking with sexual intercourse, but she was the first one to write a best-seller in which we have the point of view of the vampire, and which the vampire does

not know if he belongs to Heaven or Hell, better yet, he even does not know if these places exist.

When I used the word best-seller I did not mean to emphasise that Rice's novel is good or bad, I just mentioned it to emphasise the fact that more readers and the academy became aware of the fact that gothic literature existed, and once again proved that most of the monsters depicted in gothic fiction are a great source of material for scholars. They are the reflection of the dark side of the human beings. This thesis is about male homoeroticism thus the fact that Rice might have created the character of the female child vampire, Claudia, in order to recreate her daughter is not relevant for this study, what is important here is how she uses the homoeroticism to challenge the established order.

Rice's innovative way of seeing the vampire has caused a lot of turmoil in the academy, causing an influx of studies about her work. In the book *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*, Kathryn McGinley points out that:

Anne Rice, author of *The Vampire Chronicles*<sup>2</sup>, was the first to write from the point of view of the vampires themselves. In doing so, she further modernized the legend, portraying as her protagonists the vampires Louis and Lestat, successively. These vampires are similar to the Dracula character in that they can be destroyed by fire and sunlight, and usually sleep in coffins, though they don't need to necessarily. But garlic, mirrors, and religious articles have no affect on these modern vampires. They are immune because they are no more or less sure of the existence of God than modern mortals are. To be harmed by religious articles would certify an evil, demonic nature, but the Ricean vampires do not have the luxury of this knowledge. Instead they are forced to struggle with questions of good and evil just as the rest of humanity must. (81)

According to McGinley, Rice made her vampires more human, and this causes people to feel more related to them and also more sympathetic towards them. The point of view of the vampire in *Interview with the Vampire* is given through the character Louis,

---

<sup>2</sup> *Interview with the Vampire* is the first book of a series called *The Vampire Chronicles*.

a frustrated and tortured vampire who cannot bear the pain of living. Louis is a vampire who questions his existence and the existence of God. He wants to know what the meaning of being alive is and the source of his guilt. He wants to know why he is the “Other”. Rice once said in an interview to *Playboy Magazine* in 1993, republished in the book *The Unauthorized Anne Rice* that:

The Chronicles are about how all of us feel about being outsiders. How we feel that we’re really outsiders in a world where everybody else understands something that we don’t. It’s about our horror of death. It’s about how most of us would probably take that blood and be immortal, even if we had to kill. It’s about being trapped in the flesh when you have a mind that can soar. It’s the human dilemma. (57)

This is a strong reason to believe that Louis, the protagonist of *Interview with the Vampire*, is mimicking the behaviour of an ordinary human being. In Louis’ case, in my reading, one of the strongest reasons for his unhappiness is his unwillingness to accept his sexuality. In order to get his pain off his chest the vampire lures a young journalist to an apartment in San Francisco to talk about his saga in the world of darkness. Louis’ need to tell his story becomes a way of relieving his pain from the guilt-ridden feeling he possesses. His story is poignant and scaring. Louis feels guilty about many things, but this study is going to concentrate on his sexuality.

Rice’s novel might be a reinvention of the myth of the vampire. According to Margaret L. Carter in her article *The Vampire as Alien in Contemporary Fiction*, published in the book *Blood Read*:

Where the vampire’s otherness posed a terrifying threat for the original readers of *Dracula*, however, today that same alien quality is often perceived as an attraction. As rebellious outsider, as persecuted minority, as endangered species, and as member of a different “race” that legend portrays as sexually omniscient, the vampire makes a fitting hero for late twentieth-century popular fiction. (29)

Rice has craftily used the traits added to the figure of the vampire over the decades and added her own to create her heroes, especially Louis, the protagonist of *Interview with*

*the Vampire*. Louis is more an anti-hero than anything else. He is a being lost in his eternity in search of answers. He is intelligent and physically strong, but life seems meaningless for him because he does not know why he is here for. Different from Stoker's *Dracula* he does know if God exists. He suffers because he does not even know if he is a sinner.

Why is Louis' story so fascinating? According to Nicola Nixon in her article *When Hollywood Sucks, or, Hungry Girls, Lost Boys, and Vampirism in the Age of Reagan* published in the book *Blood Read*:

What makes poor Louis so fascinatingly attractive and so appealingly pathetic - to both the other vampires in the narrative and the reader - is his moral dilemma, his contradictory need to kill to survive and his mortal unwillingness to relinquish his humanity and become truly evil. While Louis fights his hunger and tries to hold off from feeding regularly in order to convince himself that he has not quite lost his human qualities, he must ultimately succumb. (125)

That is why readers, especially gay readers, may feel so sympathetic towards him. He carries all the fears and hopes of a frustrated gay man. He aims at finding peace of mind, but in his conception being what he is that is impossible. Louis thinks he is unworthy and not deserving of a decent love life. His eagerness to find a meaning for his life, the dilemma of not being able to have a fulfilling relationship, the feeling of being the odd one out, the knowledge that society sees him as a freak of nature, the need of having to hide himself from the living of ordinary people, and his desire for being an ordinary person, in my reading a "straight man"<sup>3</sup>, are the causes of his torment. Thus he is the perfect metaphor for a "closet queen"<sup>4</sup>.

*Interview with the Vampire* was chosen for this study because it is a rich source of material for the study of homoeroticism in film and literature. In post-modern fiction

---

<sup>3</sup> Someone who is not a homosexual.

<sup>4</sup> A gay man who hides his sexuality from society.

the metaphor of the vampire as a gay person seems to be more alive than ever. Richard Dyer in his book *The Culture of Queers* endorses that:

The variation in the use of vampirism as homosexuality in contemporary lesbian and gay fiction do not exhaust the range of way in which lesbian and gay men inhabit their sexuality, but they do indicate that there is life in the metaphor yet. Or rather that it remains un-dead. In all cases vampirism represents something about homosexual desire that remains stubbornly marginal, unruly, fascinating and indispensable — the blood remains, as it was for Dracula, ‘the life’. (87)

According to these claims made by Dyer, it can be said that vampires are one of the tools used by writers to explore the human homosexuality. Rice has cunningly used this tool to create her characters. Gerri Hirshey, in his article *Flesh for Fantasy*, published in the book *The Unauthorized Anne Rice Companion*, has concluded that:

Louis, Lestat and other male bloodsuckers may not exchange bodily fluids in the customary fashion, but there is a startling homoerotic intensity to the way they love one another, stalk, suck and kill. (129)

The homoerotic element cited by Hirshey will be the springboard for the study of the character of Louis as a guilt-ridden vampire who is unwilling to accept his fate. Therefore, the main points of this study are: the adaptation of the novel *Interview with the Vampire* for the screen and the figure of the vampire as a male homosexual who is unwilling to accept his fate.

In order to carry out this study I have divided my thesis in two chapters plus my conclusion. The first chapter is entitled *The Guilt-Ridden Vampire*, and it is subdivided in 6 items: 1.1. Louis and the boy; 1.2. Louis and his religious brother Paul; 1.3. Louis’ stormy relationship with Lestat; 1.4. Louis and the Priest; 1.5. The devastating love affair between Louis and Armand and 1.6. Louis and the women. In this first chapter I will be working with the novel only. I selected the most prominent characters from the

novel that triggered Louis' sexual desires in order to investigate his sexuality and to backup my theory that Rice seems to compare Louis to a closet queen.

Chapter 2 is called *The "Bloody Eroticism" of Interview with the Vampire Transposed to the Screen under Neil Jordan's Direction* and it is subdivided in four items. In this chapter I will be working with the novel and the film. I selected two scenes of the film to analyse how the homoeroticism of Rice's novel is transposed to the screen and the relevant passages of the novel from which moviemakers took their ideas. I will also be analysing the introduction shots of the movie so as to call attention of the viewers for the clues left by Jordan that the story will have homoerotic content since the beginning of the film.

In the item 2.1. *The Art of Adaptation* I will provide the theoretical background of this study in the light of scholars who study film adaptation. In 2.2. *It was a Vampire* I will be analysing the beginning of the film and some choices made by the moviemakers to disguise the homoeroticism portrayed in the novel. In 2.3 *The Dark Gift* I will compare the passage of the novel in which Louis becomes a vampire to the adaptation made to the screen. The aim is not to check if there is fidelity to the novel, but to investigate how the transposition takes place. In 2.4. *The Final Encounter between Louis and Armand* my aim is to explain why the adaptors wrapped up together passages of the novel to create the scene of "almost a kiss" between Louis and Armand and how effective the scene of the film is. And in Chapter III: *Conclusion* I will comment on the outcome of my research.



## Chapter 1- THE GUILT-RIDDEN VAMPIRE

“Vampirism is not merely, like all our sexuality, private, it is also secret. It is something to be hidden, to be done without anyone knowing” (Richard Dyer, 78).

The sexuality of vampires has given room to a lot of interpretations over the decades. Scholars have studied especially the eroticism and the sexuality of the character *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, which was published in 1897. When nearly a century later Rice’s novel *Interview with the Vampire*, published in 1976, turned into a great success, many scholars became interested in the way Rice portrays the sexuality of her vampires. Is a vampire a being who possesses no sex or is s/he a fusion of all sexes? This study claims that Rice uses the figure of Louis as a metaphor for a homosexual who does not accept his sexuality, thus he feels guilty for having such non-hegemonic sexual behaviour.

Rice stated in an interview (1991) published in the book *The Unauthorized Anne Rice Companion* that:

Well, I like to write about characters who transcend gender and whose love transcend gender. It’s part the way I see the world, and I have a large gay audience. I think they like the way I write about characters and relationships that aren’t heterosexual or homosexual, that do transcend gender. (34)

What does Rice mean with transcendence of gender? Although Rice is a great writer of fiction she seems to be a bit confused when entering the field of theory. The contemporary definition of gender comes interwoven with theories of postmodernism. Thus Rice’s statement sounds too simplistic to define the way vampires inhabit their sexuality. Whitney Mitchell in her article *Deconstructing gender, sex, and sexuality as applied to identity – The Culture*, published in the BNET Research Center Page states that:

Our society commonly uses the equation gender - sex. This is a naive and oversimplified statement. It further categorizes individuals by way of

black-and-white, unrealistic standards. It is difficult for most people to understand that individuals exist who identify as men with vaginas and women with penises. Therefore gender and sex aren't interchangeable terms. The difference is as simple as that between the mind and the body. Where gender is a device used for identification of the mind and emotions, sex is about biology and comfort within one's own body.  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1374/is\\_4\\_62/ai\\_89431091](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1374/is_4_62/ai_89431091)

According to this statement gender is something that cannot be transcended. Gender is something that is socially constructed, which means that it has no boundaries to be transposed.

In the novel *Interview with the Vampire* it can be noticed that Louis, the protagonist of the story, Lestat and other vampires can satisfy their desire for blood with either males or females. It seems that is what Rice calls gender transcendence because as it will be shown later on, in the body of this thesis, the act of drinking and giving blood can be compared to a sexual intercourse. Sexuality becomes a burden in Louis' life. The novel suggests that he feels much more attracted to males rather than females and this causes his despair. Hence he decides to tell his story in order to get his suffering off his chest and talk about the things which torture him, and it seems that one of the things that make him most uncomfortable about his nature is his attraction to males. He does claim, throughout the novel, that he desires some females, but the attraction he feels for Lestat and Armand is undeniably much stronger. The homoeroticism is a constant in Louis' narrative. George E. Haggerty, in his book *Queer Gothic*, points out that: "The sine qua non with which Rice mesmerizes readers, however, is homoerotic desire" (185). But what is homoeroticism? According to Richard Dyer in his book *The Culture of Queers*:

Homo-eroticism (sic) tends to stress libidinal attraction without sexual expression, sometimes even at the level of imagination and feeling. While in some usages homo-eroticism can be a wider term which includes homosexuality, or can be a euphemism for homosexuality, it importantly indicates a sense of male pleasure in the physical presence of men, or even sometimes in their spiritually or ethically masculine

qualities, which cannot be contained by (or, discourses of homoeroticism would tend to say, reduced to) the idea of queerness. (3)

This explanation really clarifies what this study is about. Rice uses the homoeroticism in all these senses mentioned by Dyer. The protagonist of *Interview with the Vampire*, Louis, is a very complex character, and thus can fit in most of the usages of this definition

Hence, in this chapter an investigation of Louis' behaviour will be made in relation to the other male characters from the novel, in order to try to find clues that highlight Louis' homosexual desires. There will also be made a brief discussion of his behaviour towards the female characters. For these purposes only the novel *Interview with the Vampire* will be used. The homoeroticism of the characters transposed to the screen by Neil Jordan will be discussed in chapter II of this thesis.

### 1.1. Louis and the boy

“Make me a vampire now!” (365).

The homoerotic overtones of the story appear at the very beginning of the novel. Haggerty explains that: “*Interview with the Vampire* begins in the gay district of San Francisco, and the scene between the vampire Louis and the gay “boy”, who interviews him after they have met in a “bar”, is a straightforward parody of a queer seduction” (185,186). This encounter leads them to spend the night together. The journalist is only invited to listen and to record the vampire's story only, but after listening to the long story told by the vampire, the “boy”, as this is the way the interviewer is addressed in the story, begs the vampire to give him the “dark gift”. The “dark gift” is the exchange of blood between a human being and a vampire, by the end of this ritual the human being becomes a vampire forever.

When a vampire attacks or seduces his/her prey s/he has three choices. He can merely bleed the victim, and then leave him/her alive or kill him/her. His third option is to give his/her victim the “dark gift”. In order to accomplish that the vampire has to bleed the victim first, and then open a wound in his/her own body and make the victim drink blood from it. In *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, Mina drinks blood from Dracula’s bosom; Anne Rice chooses the wrist<sup>5</sup>. The macabre “dark gift” ritual of transformation is highly erotic in both Stoker and Rice’s narratives and, as we will see in Chapter II, in the movie *Interview with the Vampire* by Neil Jordan this ritual is depicted as one of the most erotic scenes.

The vampire does not do what the boy asks; he only bleeds him and leaves the room. This passage can be read as a typical one night stand, that is, uncommitted sex. But where’s the sex? Vampires seem not to have sexual intercourse the way humans beings do. According to Anthony N. Chandler in his MA thesis named *Vampires Incorporated: Self-definition in Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles* defended in 1997 at McGill University, Montreal: “For the vampire, (...) , food and sex become one in the drinking of the victim’s blood” (30). Thus, vampires have two reasons for feeding on humans, first because they need nourishment and second because the act of sucking blood is also a way of having a sexual orgasm. Vampires drink blood to satisfy two of the most basics necessities of human beings: food and sex. That is compulsory for them because their lives are dependent on that. Not doing that is suicidal.

Many articles have been written claiming that the act of sucking blood by the vampires is a metaphor for sex. Richard Dyer in his article *It’s in His Kiss! Vampirism as homosexuality, homosexuality as vampirism* states that:

---

<sup>5</sup> As the novel is full of sexual innuendoes, Rice might have chosen the hand due to its phallic shape and to intensify the sexual appeal of the act, as known some people do use the fist for penetration during the sexual intercourse. This practice is popularly known as “fist fucking”.

The vampire characteristically sinks his/her teeth into the neck of his/her victim and sucks the blood out. You don't have to read this as a sexual image, but an awful lot suggests that you should. Even when the writing does not seem to emphasise the sexual, the act itself is so like a sexual act that it seems almost perverse not to see it as one. Biting itself is, after all, part of the repertoire of sexual acts; call it a kiss, and, when it is as deep a kiss as this, it is a sexual act; it is then by extension obviously analogous to other forms of oral sex acts, all of which (fellatio, cunnilingus, rimming) importantly involve contact not only with orifices but with body fluids as well. Moreover, it is not just what the vampire does that makes vampirism so readable in sexual terms but the social space it occupies. The act of vampirism takes place in private, at night, most archetypally in a bedroom, that is, the same space as our society accords the sex act. (76)

Thus, what the journalist and the vampire had can be read as a sexual encounter. Louis did not want to give the boy the "dark gift" because in his understanding this gift is a curse rather than a blessing. In his mind the boy would become as miserable as he is. For Louis, being a vampire is a very heavy burden, being gay is also a very heavy burden for some homosexuals. My reading is that Rice compares Louis to a "closet queen", he is a vampire but he does not accept his fate, his life is an eternal struggle to accept his desires. The reason he did not let the boy go without bleeding him is because his nature did not allow it. He is a predator, resisting was almost impossible, thus to leave the "beautiful boy" go without tasting his blood would be quite impossible. He denied the boy the "dark gift" but did not deny himself the opportunity of eating and having a sexual orgasm. Although the boy did not receive the "dark gift", he also experienced the orgasm of being possessed by a vampire. Louis' attitude is the typical behaviour of "closet queens": they deny themselves their sexuality but in the end most of them are defeated by their inner instincts, and after that they feel guilty for having succumbed to their desires.

In the last chapter of the novel *Interview with the Vampire*, Rice describes the boy's desire like this: "Give it to me! said the boy, his right hand tightening in a fist, the fist pounding his chest. Make me a vampire now! he said as the vampire stared

aghast (365)”. The way the boy asks Louis to transform him into a vampire is the way some people ask for sex when they are highly stimulated. The boy’s words also sound like lines coming from a porn film or novel.<sup>6</sup> After these words the vampire has a fit of anger, he wants the boy to understand that being a vampire is to enter a world of suffering. After Louis’ fit the boy once again says: “I beg you...give it all one more chance. One more chance in me!” (366). The boy’s begging is too much for Louis to stand:

The vampire turned to him, his face as twisted with anger as before. And then, gradually, it began to become smooth. The lids came down slowly over his eyes and his lips lengthened in a smile. He looked again at the boy. “I’ve failed,” he sighed, smiling still. “I have completely failed. ...” . (366)

In my reading, what Louis calls failure is not being able to control his homosexual instincts. His anger becomes desire, although he is saying that he has failed, his expression changes from anger to joy, with a smile on his lips he possesses the boy. The description of Louis’ attack is wildly sensual and homoerotic:

And then he reached out for the boy so fast that the boy found himself grasping for something, pushing against something that was not there, so his hand was outstretched still when the vampire had him pressed to his chest, the boy’s neck bent beneath his lips. “Do you see?” whispered the vampire, and the long silky lips drew up over his teeth and two fangs came down into the boy’s flesh. The boy stuttered, a low guttural sound coming out of his throat, his hand struggling to close on something, his eyes widening only to become dull and gray as the vampire drank. And the vampire looked as tranquil as someone in sleep. His narrow chest heaved so subtly with his sigh that he seemed to be raising slowly from the floor and then settling again with the same somnambulistic grace. There was a whine coming from the boy, and when the vampire let him go he held him out with both hands and looked at the damp white face, the limp hands, the eyes half closed. (366)

Louis’s attack on the boy starts quite roughly, something that could be compared to a sort of rape. There is physical strength, there is pain, there is blood, but above all this there is a sort of speechless pleasure. It is as if the vampire were saying: “now you are

---

<sup>6</sup> Rice, under the pseudonyms of A N. Roquelaure and Anne Rampling, has published some erotic fiction between the years of 1983 and 1986.

going to get what you are asking for”, as he penetrates the boy. After the penetration Louis’ behaviour changes, he becomes a sweet lover, he seems to encounter the peace he longs for. Only by sucking blood Louis feels fulfilled and in peace with himself, although he will probably regret what he has done later on. Louis acts as a prototypical closet queen that lets himself surrender to his homosexual instincts and feels guilty afterwards. In my reading, Louis sees homosexuality as sort of a contagious disease; once you catch it you will never be able to get rid of it, and you will also pass it on.

## 1.2 Louis and his religious brother Paul.

“His blond hair brushed back from his forehead, his eyes closed as if he slept, his smooth fingers around the crucifix on his breast, his lips so pink and silken I could hardly bear to see them and not touch them” (160).

Having explained some of the reasons for the reading of *Interview with the Vampire* as a homoerotic novel and having explained the lust of Louis for the boy who interviewed him in 1.1, in 1.2 the relationship between Louis and his religious brother will be discussed. It might be impossible to discuss the novel *Interview with the Vampire* without mentioning its author. Having been a Catholic all her life, Rice uses the knowledge of her faith to build Louis’ brother’s character. This character does not have a voice in the novel, but he is the source of Louis’ dilemma. His name is Paul and he might be representing Catholicism in the novel. The church has often gained followers by making them feel guilty about their “sins”. Paul is the one who triggers Louis’ internal conflicts and is the pivot of Louis’ guilty mind.

In the beginning of the novel Louis explains that they were a well-off family of four members: Louis, Paul, their sister and their mother. Louis’ father was already deceased. Paul becomes obsessed with religion and wants to become a priest; Louis even builds an oratory for him. But Louis’ love for his brother seemed to be a kind of

abnormal one. “I didn’t think I could deny him anything, and I vowed that no matter how it would break my heart to lose him, he could enter the priesthood when the time came” (9) — confessed Louis to the boy. But Louis’ admiration for his brother seemed to go beyond a siblings’ love. When he describes his brother to the boy he seems to transport himself to the time when his brother was alive. Louis fixes his eyes on the window panes and says:

It happened when he was fifteen. He was very handsome then. He had the smoothest skin and the largest blue eyes. He was robust, not thin as I am now and was then...but his eyes...it was as if when I looked into his eyes I was standing alone on the edge of the world...on a windswept ocean beach. There was nothing but the soft roar of the waves. (9, 10)

There seems to be a homoerotic element in Louis’ description; a man would not describe his brother using such poetic language. Elements such as “handsome”, “smoothest skin”, “the largest blue eyes”, “robust”, and the poetic reference to a “windswept ocean beach” give away the feelings Louis had towards his brother.

Later Louis says: “I encourage him in his prayer and meditations, as I said, and I was willing to give him up to the priesthood” (11). Louis talks about giving up as if his brother belonged to him, he sounds like a lover giving up the love of his life. Louis was probably willing to let his brother go because he was a Catholic and he was probably afraid of the punishment he might receive for having incestuous thoughts. Louis says: “I was a Catholic; I believed in saints. I lit tapers before their marble statues in churches; I knew their pictures, their symbols, their names” (11). Later on he says he did not want Paul to be part of a sacred world: “Holy he might be, peculiar most definitely; but Francis of Assisi, no. Not my brother” (11). Paul also claimed that he had visions. If Paul was really having visions and talking to saints as he claimed, Louis’ sins would be even worse because he was not only desiring a person of the same sex as his, but he was also desiring a holy man. Louis’ guilt at this stage was already a huge burden. He was



feeling guilty of incest, paedophilia (after all his brother was only fifteen), and desecration. His guilty mind got worse after his brother's death.

Louis explains that Paul's death happened after an argument they had in Louis' bedroom. Louis says they argued about his brother's convictions regarding his visions and after that: "He simply walked out of the French doors onto the gallery and stood for a moment at the end of the brick stairs. And then he fell. He was dead when I reached the bottom, his neck broken" (12). This was the springboard for Louis' total depression. Besides all the sins mentioned before, he was now also feeling guilty of murder. "I could not forgive myself. I felt responsible for his death" (12). Louis' family and the police wanted to know what had happened in that bedroom before Paul's fall to death, but he never told them anything, the only person he would tell would be a priest later on.

Louis stayed for two days beside his brother's coffin until the body started to decompose, after that he moved to the town of New Orleans with his family. He became an alcoholic, he wanted to die but he was not brave enough to commit suicide. He says:

I lived like a man who wanted to die but who had no courage to do it himself. I walked back streets and alleys alone; I passed out in cabarets. I backed out of two duels more from apathy than cowardice and truly wished to be murdered. And then I was attacked. It might have been anyone—and my invitation was open to sailors, thieves, maniacs, anyone. But it was a vampire. He caught me just a few steps from my door one night and left me for dead, or so I thought. (14)

The vampire who attacked Louis was Lestat. This part of the story is very puzzling. Why did Lestat attack Louis only after his brother's death? Was Lestat following Louis' steps waiting for a time when he was most vulnerable? Could not Lestat be the one responsible for Paul's death? These are mysteries that are not explained in the novel, and we have to bear in mind that all we have is Louis' point of view. Thus, Louis might

not know the answers as well. The only thing that Louis knows is that Lestat caused a great impression on him.

### 1.3 Louis' stormy relationship with Lestat

“Rid yourself of all human waste in your body, and don't fall so madly in love with the night that you lose your way” (25).

Louis relationship with Lestat is a very complicated one. Louis has a relationship of love and hate with Lestat. Lestat seduces him with his beauty and wittiness. Lestat is a fierce killer. He has no scruples about having to kill to survive. Having been human once, he knows the weaknesses of human beings. Thus he uses this knowledge to seduce the feeble Louis. Taking into account Louis' history, it is not difficult to know what attracts Louis: beauty. Gerri Hirshey in his article *Flesh for Fantasy* claims that: “Her [Rice's] vampire books are metaphors for gay life and gay sex” (129). Hirshey has written that based on the clues found in the novels, although I think the novel *Interview with the Vampire* is not only that. However, it does contain a great amount of homoeroticism.

Lestat's first attack on Louis is discussed very briefly in the novel. Louis tells the boy:

Well, he drained me almost to the point of death, which was for him sufficient. I was put to bed as soon as I was found, confused and really unaware of what had happened to me. I suppose I thought that drink had finally caused a stroke. I expected to die now and had no interest in eating or drinking or talking to the doctor. (14)

As it can be noticed there is nothing special about Louis' first contact with Lestat, Louis did not even know what had happened to him. But his expectations of dying increased, and that made him hopeful of finding the eternal peace he anguished for. This first attack was the way Lestat prepared the terrain to seduce Louis later on. Lestat nearly

gave what Louis wanted desperately: death. Now he would have arguments to convince Louis that he could give a meaning to his miserable life. Lestat would be able to give him the desired death with the perks of being able to stick to the mortal life that he was fearful of losing.

Louis does not see himself as a person worth of being loved by anyone, thus he is sure that he was chosen by Lestat only because he was a wealthy person. “You see, he wanted Pointe du Lac, my plantation (16)” explains Louis to the boy. Although Louis thought like that he was not able to resist Lestat’s charm, he was spellbound by Lestat’s beauty. When Lestat came back to convince Louis of the wonders of eternal life, Louis describes him as a woman would describe a man she fancies: “He came in from the courtyard, opening the French doors without a sound, a tall fair-skinned man with a mass of blond hair and a graceful, almost feline quality to his movements” (16). This description shows how much Louis was attracted to Lestat, and the great impression Lestat’s appearance caused on him. Later on he says:

All my conceptions, even my guilt and wish to die, seemed utterly unimportant. “I completely forgot *myself* !” he said, now silently touching his breast with his fist. “I forgot myself totally. And in the same instant knew totally the meaning of possibility. From then on I experienced only increasing wonder. As he talked to me and told me what I might become, of what his life had been and stood to be, my past shrank to embers”. (17)

It is not known exactly what Lestat said to Louis, because as stated before we only have Louis’ point of view, but whatever Lestat may have said was enough to bewitch Louis. He may have flattered Louis to the point that he could not resist his enchantment. When Louis talks about possibility, he might be considering the possibility of having a relationship with a person of the same sex as his. After all, as pointed out by George E. Haggerty:

Rice is interested in male-male desire and uses the imagery of gay life to give characters substance and texture. She makes Lestat culture's prototypical gay predator, roving in the darkness with an insatiable appetite that is usually satisfied by the blood of a troubled but beautiful male. Rice has more than once expressed her attraction for this wildly transgressive hero, a super-human blond who moves with the grace of a dancer and takes his prey with a lusty abandon that fulfills—violates—every cultural taboo. (186)

Louis behaviour towards Lestat is like the behaviour of a teenager in a love crush. The only thing that matters is to be with the desired person, what comes after is not important. He compares the ritual of becoming a vampire to sex. When the boy asks him what it was like he answers: "But I can't tell you exactly, any more than I could tell you exactly what is the experience of sex if you have never had it" (18). Bearing in mind that this act happened between two males, we can only think of homosexuality.

Being very perturbed as Louis was, it was very difficult for him to decide what he wanted. He wanted to die, but he wanted Lestat at the same time. Lestat's enticement was too overwhelming to be resisted. "I refuse to look at him, to be spellbound by the sheer beauty of his appearance" (20). And Louis did not resist. Lestat is a very skilful seducer. When telling the boy about Lestat's words and movements, Louis makes it sound riveting and nostalgic:

'Now listen to me, Louis,' he said, and he lay down beside me now on the steps, his movements so graceful and so personal that at once it made think of a lover. I recoiled. But he put his right arm around me and pulled me close to his chest. Never had I been this close to him before, and in the dim light I could see the magnificent radiance of his eyes and the unnatural mask of his skin. As I tried to move, he pressed his right fingers against my lips and said. 'Be still. I am going to drain you now to the very threshold of death, and I want you to be quiet, so quiet that you can almost hear the flow of blood through your veins, so quiet that you can hear the flow of that same blood through mine. It is your consciousness, your will, which must keep you alive.' I wanted to struggle, but he pressed so hard with his fingers that he held my entire prone body in check; and as soon as I stopped my abortive attempt at rebellion, he sank his teeth into my neck. (22)

This homoerotic passage clearly shows what Louis felt. It resembles an encounter of lovers. Lestat's tactics of seduction are precise, he knows what to say and how to touch his lover-to-be's body. Louis can be compared to a person who is about to have sex for the first time with someone that he knows is the wrong person. He is aware that what he is doing goes against his moral values, but at the same time he is unable to resist. He subtly tries to impede Lestat, but the whole thing is too pleasant to be resisted.

Louis is a Catholic, and for Catholics eroticism is a sin. As stated by Georges Bataille in his book *The Tears of Eros*: "In the history of eroticism, the Christian religion had this role: to condemn it. To the extent that Christianity ruled the world, it attempted to liberate it from eroticism" (79). As known the Christian church condemns not only the eroticism, but also the sex without the purpose of procreation. In Louis' case it is even worse, because he is about to have "sex" with a person of the same sex as his, which makes his confused mind even more disturbed. Bearing in mind that this scene takes place in 1791, it can be imagined how much it would shock a Catholic like Louis, a person who believed in God, and who always abided by the rules of the Catholic church. Was it really a sexual intercourse what Louis was experiencing?

After becoming Lestat's prey Louis has the opportunity of feeling Lestat's virility only three times. The first time was when Lestat attacks and nearly kills him; the second time is when Lestat is about to transform him into a vampire. After the sinking of Lestat's fangs into his neck Louis tells the boy: "I remember the movement of his lips raised the hair all over body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion..."(23). And the third time was when Lestat gives him the dark gift. Lestat slashes his wrist and put it into Louis' mouth. Louis talks about the experience like that: "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” (23).

After these moments what Louis and Lestat would experience is a relationship of companionship, nothing else. Hence, Haggerty explains that: “They can only play at making house” (195). Louis and Lestat become a couple without being a couple. Or are they a couple? In relation to that Richard Dyer says that:

The genre requires this, of course, it is how vampires ‘live’, but as it retains its erotic charge, it also corresponds to widespread model of gay male coupledness where a stable central relationship and continued cruising and promiscuity are not to be incompatible. (86)

This maybe quite true in relation to Louis and Lestat. Right after Louis transformation, under Lestat’s clumsy tutelage, Louis will try to learn how to get hold of, and bleed victims in order to have nourishment and sexual fulfilment- of course that in the novel is not put as straightforward as that, but the evidences can lead the aware reader to think like that. The homoeroticism between Lestat and Louis becomes reduced to physical appreciation and the desire of love that will never be fulfilled. Summarising, it can be said that Lestat and Louis become the ultimate modern couple. They live together, but they will be allowed to have as many sexual partners as they wish, as long as by dawn they go back to each other. They are even able to produce offspring, but not in the ordinary way as normal human beings. Vampires reproduce without the aid of wombs, as explained before they have the choice of giving their victims the dark gift. Later on in the novel we find out that together they create a female child vampire, which becomes the right accessory to form the perfect nuclear family.

Although during the novel vampires can only have a brief sexual communion with the person they have chosen to be with, Rice insists on homoeroticism. As sexual organs are not mentioned during Louis and Lestat’s relationship, Rice uses other elements to convey the homoeroticism. For example: after Louis’ transformation, Lestat

tells Louis that he has not prepared a coffin for him, and for this reason they should spend their first night together in the same coffin. Louis did not know what to do, as he feels very uncomfortable about it. In his mind he probably thought that he had already done a daring thing, he had had sex with another man, but spending the night, (in his case the day) in the same bed (coffin) would be too much to put up with. He tells the boy: “I had no choice. I begged Lestat to let me stay in the closet, but he laughed, astonished. ‘Don’t you know what you are?’ he [Lestat] asked” (28). Rice once again speaks between the lines. Her comparison of Louis to a closet queen is quite undeniable at this stage. Now that Louis has experienced the forbidden fruit he wants to go back to the closet. Lestat’s question says it all; the question is an invitation to stir Louis’s thoughts. If you are attracted to males, and experience and **enjoy** sex with one of them what does it make you?

Louis experiences all kinds of feelings. He explains to the boy the way he felt when he had to lie down with Lestat:

‘Now, I’m getting into the coffin,’ he[Lestat] finally said to me in his most disdainful tone, ‘and you will get in on top of me if you know what’s good for you’. And did. I lay face-down on him, utterly confused by my absence of dread and filled with a distaste for being so close to him, handsome and intriguing though he was. And he shut the lid. (29)

Lestat is not very generous towards Louis, from the beginning he wants Louis to understand the meaning of entering the dark world. He is unable to understand Louis’ fears, so he makes fun of him. Louis in his turn feels the distaste of being so close to Lestat because he desires him, but he knows that he is about to accept something that is unbearable to him. He is sleeping with another man, and the worst thing is that he feels lust for him. He tells the boy: “But before I died, Lestat was absolutely the most overwhelming *experience* I’d ever had” (29). But this experience turned out to be Louis worst nightmare.

Louis' admiration for Lestat disappeared soon after his transformation. Lestat denies telling him the secrets of the vampires, and treats him in a very harsh way because Louis is always whining. Actually, most of the answers that Louis wanted Lestat himself could not give, but Lestat could have been more sympathetic. "I hated him and wanted to leave him; yet could I leave him?" (71) Explains Louis to the boy. One of the few things that Lestat tells Louis is that they could survive on the blood of animals. Louis was thrilled because he would not have to kill human beings to survive.

He tried to survive on rats and other animals but it was impossible. Chandler points out:

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 level, Louis' attempt to avoid consuming human blood is similar to masturbation; desire is calmed but never satiated. (39,40)

Louis tries to resist his sexual impulses, this "masturbation" pointed out by Chandler was not enough to satisfy him, and he ends up killing human beings again. He confesses to the boy: "I knew peace only when I killed, only for that minute; and there was no question in my mind that the killing of anything less than a human being brought nothing but a vague longing (...)" (97). This fear experienced by Louis of having sexual pleasure might have its roots in his Catholic upbringing. The church has always made sure that its followers knew that sex is sinful. Sex with a person of the same sex is abominable though. According to Haggerty:

Catholicism is not a vague feature of the background in most gothic novels; it is, rather, an active element in the romance of personal relations. The horrors of Catholicism play a more active role in the history of sexuality than has previously been acknowledged. (83)



As known the guilt state of mind caused by Catholicism is explored in a lot of gothic novels. Two good examples are *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Rice found in the gothic literature the breeding ground for her imagination. Bette B. Roberts explains that: “The repression and immersion into things spiritual that Rice experienced through Catholicism find expression in both her Gothic and erotic novels, where she emphasizes liberation from restraint” (5). *Interview with the Vampire* is a very good example of that.

Louis tries to avoid drinking blood from humans, but he ends up being defeated by his inner instincts and feels awful for having sinned. At this stage of the novel he is still questioning if there is a God or not. He is still wondering if his homoerotic desires will be his damnation. Certainly this is not explicitly told in the novel, but the homoeroticism in Louis’ narration is a constant. Is he a homosexual or only sexually confused? James F. Iaccino in his article *The World of Forever Knight: A Television Tribute to Anne Rice’s New Age Vampire* published in the book *The Gothic World of Anne Rice* claims that:

The homosexual tone of *Interview* is manifested in the earliest pages when the recently converted Louis sleeps face-down in Lestat’s coffin [As stated before]. Though there is a certain distaste for being so close to the one who made him, Louis is nevertheless attracted to the handsome creature. Louis’s first kill also happens to be a male slave - not the typical female who swoons at the vampire’s touch. While he is drinking from the neck of the victim, Louis becomes so hypnotized by the feeding ritual that he does not realize he is still draining the man’s blood until well after his death. This act is comparable to a communal ecstasy, of two same-sex lives becoming unified through the spilling of blood. (233)

As put by Iaccino, the choice of a male instead of a swooning female for Louis’ rite of passage from human to being a vampire is another clue of Louis supposed homosexuality. After all, this was his first extra marital “sexual experience” after his transformation. Louis explains that: “My teeth had only just begun to change, and I had

to tear his flesh, not puncture it; but once the wound was made, the blood flowed. And once that happened, once I was locked to it, drinking...all else vanished” (34). This explanation has overtones of loss of virginity and rape. Louis can be compared to a young male whose penis hasn't grown to its full length yet, but it is strong and hard enough to rape. This is Louis first sexual orgasm penetrating a person of the same sex as his.

Two slaves are killed during Louis' "sexual" initiation, Lestat has one and Louis the other. All the signs of homoeroticism and homosexuality are present when Louis talks about their preys. Lestat's victim is described by Louis like this: "He was naked except for the pants and the belt, a tall, strong-armed, sleek young man" (33). And when explaining the final moments of his own experience Louis says: "I ran my hands over his [the slave] chest, then grabbed at his wrists. I would have cut into his wrist if Lestat hadn't pulled me to my feet and slapped my face"(35). The orgasm felt by Louis is so intense that he has to be brought to reality by Lestat.

Actually, Lestat has chosen young slaves for Louis' first killing because Lestat himself seems to have a strong attraction for young beautiful men. Later on in the novel there is a passage in which Louis explains to the boy about Lestat's preference: "A fresh young girl, that was his favorite for the first of the evening; but the triumphant kill for Lestat was a young man. A young man around your age would have appealed to him in particular" (47). Lestat, contrary to Louis, had no remorse or guilt feelings for killing, and throughout the novel he kills lots of young men. One of them is Freniere, who lived on a farm up river from Louis' property.

Louis tries to impede Lestat from killing Freniere. We do not know if it was out of pity because Freniere had five sisters to look after or if it was out jealousy because Lestat desperately wanted him. At the moment of Freniere's killing Louis physically

fights with Lestat to stop him, but Lestat is stronger so Louis fails. “Even over all these years, I feel that anger for him like a white-hot liquid filling my veins” (51) adds Louis when commenting the episode. Louis lived a miserable life by Lestat, who was always mocking and making fun of him, but when Lestat realised that Louis would leave him eventually, he cunningly persuaded Louis into creating a daughter for them, and together they made a child vampire. Of course the situation that Lestat provoked gave Louis no choice, but create Claudia together.

Louis, Lestat and Claudia should form the perfect family. At the beginning Claudia was very fond of Lestat, but after sixty-five years she grew tired of his selfishness and arrogance. Like Louis, she wanted to know more about vampires. Being fierce and brave like Lestat she decided to kill him, and to do that she attacked Lestat’s weak point: young men. She used two small boys as bait whom she poisoned with absinthe and laudanum, and after drinking from them Lestat would be weak and then she would be able to kill him. The narration of the scene by Louis is quite disturbing; his voyeuristic description of the scene is intriguing and sickening.

In this part of the story Rice daringly goes beyond the field of homoeroticism and homosexuality to enter the field of paedophilia. Louis describes Lestat’s reaction like this: “And then I heard him let out a long, conscious moan, a perfect mingling of hunger and lust” (147). Later he says: “He [Lestat] had forgotten I was there or she[Claudia] was there, but he withdrew his hand and sat still for a moment, as though his desire was making him dizzy” (148). Louis talks about the boys with desire and passion: “Lestat had sunk down beside the darker one; he was by far the more beautiful. He might have been lifted to the painted dome of a cathedral. No more than seven years old, he had that perfect beauty that is of neither sex, but angelic” (147). The paedophilia element might have been brought up in the story to emphasise the detachment of the

conventions that vampires envisage. But even though, in a sick way, the homoerotic element is maintained because two boys are depicted in the scene rather than two girls.

#### 1.4 Louis and the Priest

“Bless me, father, for I have sinned, sinned so often and so long I do not know how to change, nor how to confess before God what I’ve done” (161).

After the supposed death of Lestat, Louis helps Claudia dispose of the body. But as expected, the day after Lestat’s death, Louis is already missing him. He tells the boy that he looked at Lestat’s closed coffin: “I had the compulsion to open it. I had the wish to see him there” (154). Louis was feeling really lonely now that his creator was gone. He had Claudia but it was not the same. Lestat was the one who had seduced him and made him, he was the man he unwillingly loved. After a touching conversation with Claudia he leaves the house and goes for a walk and, without thinking, he goes to the cathedral. He thinks of Paul, his brother. He remembers the events during Paul’s funeral. Rice probably brings Paul back at this stage of the story to remind the readers that the two men that Louis loved are dead, thus Louis is entering a new stage in his life. Louis feels the impulse of entering the cathedral, but before he does he wonders: “I had hesitated then, wondering if there were some secret Lestat had never told me, something which might destroy me were I to enter” (157). Louis is afraid of God; after all he is a sinner.

Louis enters the church. As pointed out by Kathryn Mc Ginley in her article *Development of the Byronic Vampire: Byron, Stoker, Rice* published in the book *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*:

Ricean vampires retain strong human emotions, including love and guilt, that take them a step beyond Dracula. Like Dracula, however, they are both heavily influenced by Catholicism. While traditional religious relics

cannot harm them, they agonize over the nature of good and evil in search of solace. (83)

Louis character is extremely influenced by Catholicism; his non-hegemonic sexuality condemned by the Catholic Church is the main source of his guilty mind. When he enters the church, his mixed feelings over his beliefs make him dream awake. He has a vision — he dreams that he throws the Body of Christ on the floor and walks over it, and gives Holy Communion to the dust (158). Later on he explains that:

Rats ate the Holy Eucharist and nested on the sills. A solitary rat with an enormous tail stood tugging and gnawing at the rotted altar cloth until the candlesticks fell and rolled on the slime-covered stones. And I remained standing. Untouched. Undead - reaching out suddenly for the plaster hand of the Virgin and seeing it break in my hand, so that I held the hand crumbling in my palm, the pressure of my thumb turning it to powder.(159)

This delusion that Louis experiences inside the church might represent what he would like to do with Catholicism and the decadence that the church represents. The images that he has are of disgust and hate. In his mind he might be thinking that if all these symbolic images were destroyed, he would feel at peace. Nobody would condemn him for being different. His delusion continues, and then he sees Claudia, his brother and Lestat, the people whom he loves, and whom represent forbidden love. They are the source of his guilty state of mind; he does not need the church on top of that. Then he spots a priest, he is real.

The priest asks Louis if he wants to confess and he says yes. He confesses that he has killed a lot of a people and that: “I am not mortal, father, but immortal and damned, like angels put in hell by God. I am a vampire” (161). The priest gets angry and wants to stop the confession. He probably thinks that Louis is a lunatic. As he is leaving Louis grabs him and says: “Do you see what I am! Why, if God exists, does He suffer me to exist!” (162). Going back to the theory that Rice is comparing Louis to a

closet queen, what Louis may be trying to ask the priest is why he is so different from other people. Were men not created in the image and likeness of God? Why is he different? And the expected happens, the priest tells Louis that he is the Devil, and tries to escape, but Louis bleeds him in front of the altar.

As stated before, Rice is interested in sacred things. Bette B. Roberts, using the words of Katherine Ramsland, explains that: “She [Rice] was also excited by the dark mysteries of the church that stimulated her imagination, particularly the transubstantiation that precedes Holy Communion during the ritual of Mass”(5). Louis’ communion with the priest may represent the breaking of his faith in God. As said before, the act of sucking blood may be read as a sexual intercourse. But there are two kinds of sexual intercourse, with consent and without, which turns out to be a rape. Rape has an unpleasant connotation. Louis says: “And then I grabbed him [the priest] on the very steps to the Communion rail and pulled him down to face me there and sank my teeth into his neck” (162). Louis can be compared to a soulless rapist who is rapes a person in a sacred place. He gets laid with a man in front of God’s eyes, he wants to challenge God, he wants to see God’s face. He wants to “fuck” the church. Louis needs to know if this act of desecration and provocation will make him feel better. The priest’s blood might also be representing Christ’s blood. The blood of transubstantiation which is now being drunk by a vampire. Louis might want to know if this blood really works to give him a new life as promised by Christ.

### 1.5 The devastating love affair between Louis and Armand

“For vampires, physical love culminates and is satisfied in one thing, the kill” (275).

After the disappointment caused by the relationship with Lestat, and the void left by him, Louis goes to Europe with Claudia in search of answers for the questions about their nature. While travelling in Europe he still thinks of Lestat. He tells the boy:

I wanted to forget him, and yet it seemed I thought of him always. It was as if the empty nights were made for thinking of him. And sometimes I found myself so vividly aware of him it was as if he had only just left the room and the ring of his voice were still there. (213)

This statement by Louis shows exactly the confused state of his mind in relation to Lestat. Sharing his life with Lestat was living hell, but living without him was even worse. Lestat was the man he loved, as this can be deduced by the poetic language Louis uses to talk about him. And deep inside Louis admired Lestat too. Hence, Louis was feeling frustrated and incomplete. He desperately needed a new love, and this happens when he arrives in Paris.

As soon as Louis met Armand he felt extremely attracted to him. In their first encounter he explains to the boy:

(...) and suddenly I found him pressed against me, his arm around my chest, his lashes so close I could see them matted and gleaming above the incandescent orb of his eye, his soft, tasteless breath against my skin. It *was* delirium.

I moved to get away from him, and yet I was drawn to him and I didn't move at all, his arm exerting its firm pressure, his candle blazing now against my eye, so that I felt the warmth of it; all my cold flesh yearned for that warmth, but suddenly I wavered to snuff it but couldn't find it, and all I saw was his radiant face, as I had never seen Lestat's face, white and poreless and **sinewy** and **male**<sup>7</sup> (247,248).

The description of Louis is very homoerotic; being that close Armand disturbs and excites him. In my reading the candle has a double meaning in this description, it might also represent a phallus, due to its shape and the warmth that it produces, and Louis is

---

<sup>7</sup> My emphasis.

eager for that warmth. The two adjectives that Louis uses to finish his description say it all, what he wants is a male partner and lover. Iaccino points out that: “Louis describes his longing for Armand in such strong terms that he can barely contain himself. All he can do is stare at the beautiful creature, basking in his glow, wishing his mentor Lestat could be as loving towards him” (233).

Louis is swept off his feet by Armand, he overcomes his fears and completely surrenders to his homoerotic desires. According to Edward J. Ingebretsen in his article: *Anne Rice: Raising Holy Hell, Harlequin Style*: “Though gendered male as a mortal, as a vampire Louis finds himself stripped of male prerogative; he functions as simulacrum, a copy and supplement of an unknown original” (97). Thus, even Louis does not know what to do with his desires. As pointed out before, the male body seems to be the source of his lust and Armand knows it.

In this first visit to Armand Louis is faced with temptation. Armand is a good host and wants to please his guest. An ordinary person would offer a cup of tea or coffee, but what Armand offers Louis is a very pretty and young mortal boy called Denis. The boy is a kind a delicacy that Armand has to himself and he seems to nibble the boy as often as he can, taking into consideration the marks on the boy’s neck; of course Armand must be careful not to kill the boy because he is a human being that could die from loss of blood. He is Armand’s personal voluntary slave; he lives with Armand because he wants to. The idea of having a slave boy is a very homoerotic one, after all Armand is a man.

The presence of the boy leads us to think about another behaviour often depicted in gothic writing: “sadoomasochism”. After all, the boy is human; being bitten by a vampire very often must be painful. Haggerty endorses that:



Like other expressions of transgressive desire throughout the eighteenth century, gothic fiction is not about homo- or heterodesire as much as it is about the fact of desire itself. And throughout these works this desire is expressed as the exercise of (or resistance to) power. But that power is itself charged with a sexual force - a sexuality - that determines the action and gives it shape. By the same token, powerlessness has a similar valence and performs a similar function. This creates an odd sexual mood in most gothic works, closer to what we might crudely label "sadomasochism" (a binary that critics too readily take for granted) than any other model of sexual interaction. (2)

Rice, through her writing, reinforces what is stated by Haggerty: the main issue of *Interview with the Vampire* is desire, especially homoerotic desire with overtones of sadomasochism. Bearing in mind that the analysis of this novel is being done from a Catholic point of view, the desire portrayed in it is a challenge to the conventions. Being crude or not, there is no other word other than sadomasochism to label Armand and Denis "sexual" practices. Armand exercises his power over Denis who "painfully" enjoys it.

The homoeroticism of Louis' desire has its climax in the passage where he possesses Denis:

Never had I felt this, never had I experienced it, this yielding of a conscious mortal. But before I could push him away for his own sake, I saw the bluish bruise on his tender neck. He was offering it to me. He was pressing the length of his body against me now, and I felt the hard strength of his sex beneath his clothes pressing against my leg. A wretched gasp escaped my lips, but he bent close, his lips on what must have been so cold, so lifeless for him; and I sank my teeth into his skin, my body rigid, that hard sex driving against me, and I lifted him in passion off the floor. Wave after wave of his beating heart passed into me as, weightless, I rocked with him, devouring him, his ecstasy, his conscious pleasure. (248)

In this passage Louis' two natures blossom, the vampiric and the human one. As a human being he mentions the hard sex of the boy, naturally he does not use words such as penis or cock; his "closet queen" nature would not allow that. Bette B. Roberts when commenting on this passage claims that: "Rice focuses here on the feelings of the

vampire over the human to elicit sympathy for the vampire's dilemma. She downplays the moral horror of vampiric murder, since the willing Denis lives to offer himself another day" (34). Hence, Louis possesses the boy arduously and in that moment he did not feel guilt. He is still connected to his human desires, especially the desiring of feeling a man's virility, which he seemed not to have done while he was human. (We know that he seemed to desire his brother, but we do not know if they ever had sex).

As known, Louis being a vampire, will never have sex again using his sexual organs. Actually, what he is experiencing with Denis is a vampire having the sexual fantasy of being human in order to have sex with another man; as explained before vampires satisfy their sexual needs in a different way. When commenting this passage Dyer highlights that:

In *Dracula* the act is revolting: thrilling but 'repulsive', animalistic, with 'churning' sounds and flesh tingling. When, later, Jonathan discovers the Count, his vampiric lust satisfied, he describes him 'gorged with blood' laying 'like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion'. Louis and his 'victim' on the other hand, are both clearly transported by their quite explicit sexual vampiric union - they experience 'passion', 'ecstasy', 'pleasure'; repeated reference to hardness and rigidity indicate male sexual; and there is even an aestheticising of the experience in the way 'the boy' 'offers' Louis 'the bluish bruise on his tender neck'. (84)

Louis bleeds Denis with eagerness and passion, especially because of Denis' conscious pleasure. For the first time Louis is having sex with a male human being who desires him, and can give him human carnal pleasure as well as a vampiric one. He is having the opportunity of feeling human and vampiric pleasure at the same time and all that drives him to the ultimate orgasm.

Louis thinks that Armand will be the one who will give him all the answers he wants. Louis believes that vampires are children of Satan, but he becomes disappointed to know from Armand, who has lived after four hundred years so far, that there is no Satan and there is no God either. Armand says to Louis: "How could you believe in

these old fantastical lies, these myths, these emblems of the supernatural?" (258). In this sense Rice's vampires are like human beings, they are in search of meaning of life, and they wonder about the whereabouts of their creator. Different from Stoker's *Dracula*, Rice's vampires have no fear of crosses or any religious articles and, like human beings, they do not know if there is a God or not. This was the most important discovery for Louis, after this his life takes a different turn.

If there is no God to judge him or a Devil to guide him, he would be free to be whom he really was, a homosexual. The second time Louis sees Denis he describes the scene like that: "A decanter of white wine stood next to him, and though he was feverish and weak from last night, his skin was florid and his heat and fragrance were a torment to me" (271). Although Louis is falling in love with Armand, he knows that certain kinds of pleasures he can only receive from humans, especially young men.

After the highly homoerotic episode with Denis, the novel is full of homoerotic moments, but this time between Louis and Armand. There are moments of flirting, moments of confessions and moments of passionate love. For example: "Armand sat opposite me, his large, beautiful eyes tranquil and seemingly innocent. When I felt them pull me towards him, I dropped my eyes wished for a fire in the grate, but there were only ashes" (272). In other passage he says: "And I felt a longing for him so strong that it took all my strength to contain it, merely to sit there gazing at him, fighting it"(275). Later in the novel Armand says to Louis: "I want you. I want you more than anything in the world" (305). And also: "I've had to wait and watch for you. And now I'll fight for you. Do you see how ruthless I am in love? Is this what you meant by love?"(309). And their talk of love goes on until Louis' surrenders: "You have me. I love you. But I'm mystified" (312), says Louis.

When Louis tells Claudia that he needs Armand, he explains like this: “He alone can give the strength to be what I am. I can’t continue to live divided and consumed with misery. Either I go with him, or I die” (316). And they stay together. Claudia and Madeleine, the surrogate mother that Claudia had found for herself, are killed by the others vampires who lived with Armand. Louis and Armand set off to see the world and after many travels they ended up in America. Louis never accepts his fate; eventually Armand gets tired of Louis’ whining and leaves him. Louis ends the story by himself.

#### 1.6. Louis and the women

“Can you picture it, this splendid domesticity, dim lamps, the vampire singing to the vampire daughter? Only the doll had a human face, only the doll” (217).

Although this study is about homoeroticism, the women portrayed in the novel cannot be left out. One thing that can be noticed throughout the novel is that all women, with whom Louis has some kind of sexual or vampiric desire for, end up dying. The first one is his neighbour Babette. When telling about her to the boy he says: “As I have told you, I loved her strength and honesty, the greatness of her soul. And I did not feel passion for her as you would feel it. But I found her more alluring than any woman I’d known in mortal life” (72). Why cannot Louis feel passion for Babette? So this is another clue that Rice wants the reader to see Louis as a homosexual. After finding out about Louis’ real nature Babette goes mad. She does not die physically, but mentally. Another important woman in Louis’ life is Claudia.

Claudia is the child vampire created by Louis and Lestat. Louis loves her and she loves him. But again, the erotic moments that Louis has with Claudia are disturbing and intriguing, after all Claudia was only a child who was doomed to be trapped in her child’s body for the rest of her life. Did Louis harass Claudia sexually just because he

was afraid of accepting his homosexual impulses? So, one probable answer is that Louis found in paedophilia a way of relieving himself. Claudia, being a child, felt seduced and also fell in love with him. But her end is also tragic.

As it can be noticed, all the women from the novel end up suffering and dying. It seems that vampires unconsciously enjoy this kind of misogyny, and this is depicted clearly in a passage in which Lestat tortures a prostitute. He puts her inside his coffin and tortures her physically and mentally. The woman ends up having a hysterical crisis out of fear. Louis out of pity feeds on her to end her suffering. Why has Rice chosen a woman to be tortured? Why not a beautiful boy? Probably she wanted to highlight that the focus of the novel is homoerotic desire, women are sheer characters who help to emphasise what she wants to convey.

Chapter 2 – The “Bloody Eroticism” of *Interview with the Vampire* Transposed to the Screen under Neil Jordan’s Direction.

The adaptor is much like the sculptor Michelangelo, who, when asked how he was able to carve such a beautiful angel, replied, “The angel is caught inside the stone. I simply carve out everything that isn’t the angel.” (Linda Seger, 2)

In chapter 1 I only analysed the homoeroticism portrayed in the novel *Interview with the Vampire*. I selected the relevant passages where Rice seems to compare Louis to a closet queen and I also investigated the most prominent male characters from the novel who stirred Louis’ sexual impulses. My conclusion is that Louis is really sexually confused, and undoubtedly his sexual drive is much stronger towards males. It cannot be denied that he felt lust towards some women, such as Claudia and Madeleine for instance. Bearing in mind that Claudia was only a five-year-old child when Louis vampirized her, this shows how disturbed Louis is, and in my reading this was just one of his attempts to try to rid himself from his thoughts of homosexuality, which his Catholic mind insisted on saying that they were sinful.

In chapter II I will work mostly with the movie *Interview with the Vampire*, and also with some parts of the novel, which are essential to explain how the transposition from literature to the screen takes place will also be used. The movie, released in 1994, was a blockbuster produced by David Geffen and directed by Neil Jordan. According to Alain Silver and James Ursini in their book *The Vampire Film*: “The film became the highest grossing vampire film of all time. This was balanced, of course, by the fact that it was the highest budgeted vampire film of all time” (216). In order to carry out my analysis I will explain the beginning of the film so as to guide the reader of this thesis, and I will also highlight the means used by the moviemakers to disguise the homoeroticism depicted in the novel. And two scenes where the homoerotic elements

are more visible will be analysed more thoroughly. The aim is to show how Jordan transposed the homoeroticism shown in the novel to the big screen.

Although, as I stated before, the homoeroticism diminishes drastically in the film under Jordan's direction if compared to the novel, Diana C. Reep, in the article *Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire: Novel Versus Film –Part I- Shadows in the Night: Characters*, published in the book *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*, claims that:

The reduction of homoerotic implications in both the characters of Louis and Lestat serves two purposes. It makes the film more acceptable and enjoyable to general audiences who may wish to ignore those implications, and it protects the leading-man status of Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise, both of whom have the responsibility of appealing to wide audiences in other expensive films. (128)

Either the reason mentioned by Reep is true or not, the homoeroticism was definitely decreased. I believe this is due to the homophobic policies of film production and marketing. That is why there are two scenes in which the homoeroticism is more visible. Before analysing the film itself, an explanation of the implications of adapting a novel to the screen under the light of some well-known cinema theorists will be developed.

## 2.1. The art of adaptation

“An adaptation is automatically different and original due to the change of medium”. (Robert Stam 3,4)

Adaptation is the process of selecting a desired written text and adapting it for an audiovisual domain, in the case of this study: cinema. This investigation does not intend to verify if the literary text was properly adapted for the screen. Fidelity to the original text is not the subject of this study. When book lovers discuss the issues concerning adaptations, most of them enter the field of fidelity. For some people an adaptation is valid only if it is loyal to its source. Scholars have been studying adaptations for a long

time and nowadays most of them agree that fidelity is not the main issue. According to Robert Stam in the book *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation*:

The conventional language of adaptation criticism has often been profoundly moralistic, rich in terms that imply that the cinema has somehow done a disservice to literature. Terms like “infidelity”, “betrayal”, “deformation”, “violation”, “bastardization”, “vulgarization”, and “desecration” proliferate in adaptation discourse, each word carrying its specific charge of opprobrium. “Infidelity” carries overtones of Victorian prudishness; “betrayal” evokes ethical perfidy; “bastardization” connotes illegitimacy; “deformation” implies aesthetic disgust and monstrosity; “violation” calls to mind sexual violence; “vulgarization” conjures up class degradation; and “desecration” intimates religious sacrilege and blasphemy. (3)

Therefore, a certain prejudice was created in relation to film adaptations, and this probably happens due to the fact the most scholars who are concerned with film studies were in the past only critics of literature. Nowadays they have two media to worry about. Adaptors are having a hard time to please some critics. Robert Stam points out that for some people: “A “faithful” film is seen as uncreative, but an “unfaithful” film is a shameful betrayal of the original” (8). Thus there is no way of making everybody happy.

In the book *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film*, Linda Seger deals with the choices available to directors to adapt a novel. The author claims that: “The adaptation is a new original. The adaptor looks for the balance between preserving the spirit of the original and creating a new form” (9). According to this claim it can be said that adapting a story is to try to recreate somebody else’s work in a way that the essence is preserved but the other domains are opened to be played with. Seger also writes:

Film is much faster. It builds up its details through images. The camera can look at a three-dimensional object and, in a matter of seconds, get across details that would take pages in the novel. Film can give us story



information, character information, ideas and images and style all in the same moment. (16)

Hence, one can understand why novels and films are utterly different. If the novel which is being adapted is rich in descriptions and not dialogues, the adaptor will probably have to create dialogues to make the film flows. Adaptation is also a process of creation.

What is adaptation? Robert Stam in the book *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation* talks about hypertexts and hypotexts to explain what adaptation is:

(...) “hypertextuality”, seems especially productive in terms of adaptation. The term refers to the relation between one text, which Genette calls “hypertext,” to an anterior text or “hypotext,” which the former transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends. (5)

Consequently, every time a text is transposed to a different kind of media, it suffers some kind of alteration. The adaptation made by Jordan, as any other kind of adaptations, has undergone changes in order to fit the screen. As the novel presents themes which are very polemic and not welcomed by some people, Jordan’s adaptation was apparently moulded to suit big audiences. He diminishes the homoeroticism dramatically, and he also leaves out characters which in the novel have minor roles like Lestat’s father, Louis’ mother, sister and brother, Louis’ neighbours and many others. Jordan also creates some new situations, like the killing of the poodles by Louis, and Lestat’s appearance in the end of the movie. He also uses other novels by Rice to enhance the movie, for example when Claudia’s hair grows back; this idea is taken from the second book of the *Vampires Chronicles: The Vampire Lestat*. This clearly shows how a hypotext, in this case the novel *Interview with the Vampire*, can be transformed to become a hypertext. Do these new hypertexts have the same value as their source novels?

The debate whether film adaptations can be put on the same level as literature studies is still quite polemic. A number of theorists have written and researched within this vast field of contradictions and some cases prejudice. In the book *Adaptations: from Text to Screen, Screen to Text* by Deborah Cartmell & Imelda Whelehan a discussion on this topic is raised. In the introduction of the book Whelehan says:

Although the study of literary adaptations on film and TV is becoming more common and indeed more “feature of English and/or Media Studies in higher education, it is still surrounded by knee-jerk prejudice about the skills such study affords, its acceptable” as an impact on the value and place of the literary “original” and the kind of critical approach it demands. (3)

According to Whelehan, dealing with two media which are very similar, and at the same time so different is not an easy task for scholars, especially in the case of literature and the audiovisual because for some people they are incomparable. For some scholars literature will always dictate its superiority.

Cartmell acknowledges that the study of adaptations is endless, and points out: “In fact the more we study adaptations, the more it becomes apparent that the categories are limitless” (24). She also tries to give a proper definition for adaptation:

Adaptation is, perhaps, the result of an increasingly post-literate (not illiterate) world in which the visual image dominates. Reaction to this idea range from the hysterical fear that the book is finished to the expectation that film and television will prove to be the natural successors to the literary text. (145)

Cartmell’s definition highlights the fear that some people have when it comes to the alleged disappearance of the written text. It is true that the new generations are being seduced by images and sound, which are getting more sophisticated every day. But it is also true new writers and new admirers of literature are born every day. Hence is quite likely that these two media will spend their existence helping each other. Novels and films either can survive by themselves or they can interact. The cinema can reward the

intelligence of those who think and console and make happy those who just want to see the images and the obvious part of the story which is being told.

## 2. 2. It was a Vampire.

Don't be frightened, I want this opportunity.  
(Louis says to the boy- IWTV – Neil Jordan, 1994)

The movie *Interview with the Vampire* and the source novel are very rich in themes, and homoeroticism is just one of them. Homoeroticism is present in great part of the novel and also in some parts of the film. According to Chris Jones in the book *An Introduction to Film Studies*: “homoerotic is a text — prose, poem, film, painting, photograph, etc. — conveying an enjoyable sense of the same-sex attraction” (259). Louis, the protagonist of the story as seen in the film, seems reluctant to feel this same-sex attraction, that's why the story ends up having some overtones of a gay tale of a closet queen.



**It is the intention of the camera-narrator to inform the viewer that it wants him/her to be aware of where the story takes place; an establishing shot is used for that.**

Like the novel, the film starts in San Francisco which is popularly notorious for its large population of gay people. As details in films have to be conveyed in different

ways, the film starts with a bird's eye view shot, still during the credits, showing the famous Golden Gate Bridge from different angles. After that the camera keeps gliding and goes over a big neon sign in which it is written *Port of San Francisco*. The sign suggests that it is the intention of the camera-narrator to inform the viewer that it wants him/her to be aware of where the story takes place. Thus two things are wrapped up together: the name of a city which is notorious for attracting gay people, and the port area which is a kind of area, all over the world, where a lot of people look for sex, especially uncommitted sex. These "sleazy" people who visit these areas are often seen as vampires, or vampires are seen as these people. They are in search of something to fulfil their immediate needs. Ports also trigger in the more fertile minds the image of sailors, and sailors have always had this strong connection with gay and straight sexual fantasies.

This sequence is shown with a powerful non-diegetic piece of music accompanied by a choir of angelical voices that prepare the viewer for the supernatural content of the story. The camera keeps gliding over the streets in a sequence of shots: one of them shows a busy street with typical dwellers of modern life. It shows ordinary people, beggars, and a man talking to himself (by the way he gesticulates it can be assumed that he is probably a lunatic preacher). This shot might be suggesting a contrast between modern times and old times. The moviemakers might want to show the spectator that material things change but the nature of human beings remains the same.

After going over the people on streets the camera in a low angle shows a medium long shot of the building where the interview is going to take place, the camera moves from the bottom of the building until it reaches the balcony where the vampire is standing contemplating the bustling street, his face is not shown, because of the use of back lighting, only half of his silhouette can be seen. In the following shot the vampire

can be seen from the back. A medium shot and three-point lighting is used to shape the silhouette of the vampire. There is also some extra lighting coming from the other buildings and lamp posts.



**A medium shot with three-point lighting (key light, fill light and back light) is used to shape the silhouette of the vampire.**

According to Silver and Ursini these initial shots are a strategy used by the moviemakers, which they explain as follow:

“The strategy for director and uncredited screenwriter Neil Jordan and his key collaborators-cinematographer Phillippe Rousselot, designer, Dante Ferreti, and composer Elliot Goldenthal — was to separate the two worlds which Louis inhabits” (217).

Their goal was achieved; they create a very clear distinction between present and past, which will be shown soon after the first brief dialogue between the vampire and his interviewer.

The room where the interview is about to take place has no glamour at all, it is simple and badly lit. The vampire, played by Brad Pitt, starts talking to the boy. As explained in chapter 1 the reporter is addressed as “the boy”. The vampire tells him that he is eager to tell the story of his life. The boy does not believe that Louis is a vampire, so Louis proves it by performing one of the tricks only possible to supernatural beings. Silver and Ursini explain that:

He [Louis] demonstrates his preternatural powers to the incredulous interviewer without special effects. The editing creates his movement to the light switch to illuminate the room “too fast for you to see.” Without music, the loudest sound is the scrape of the chair as the startled interviewer recoils. (217,218)

After this the boy starts looking at Louis with suspicious eyes; he realises that Louis is not an ordinary person. The boy lights a cigarette and the shot ends with a close-up of his puzzled face while Louis’ voice is heard as diegetic narrator saying: “1791 was the year it happened”

Louis starts telling his story. As Silver and Ursini explain, the transition from the present to the past happens in this way:

From the harshly lit, ill furnished room in present day San Francisco, where Louis begins his story, the cut back to a matte shot of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century delta spans several distances at once: between now and then, here and there, and real and imagined. Once in that world, the black and white textures and sparse decor of San are overwhelmed by the painterly aspect of the period setting. (216)



A matte shot of a period quay.

The first shot in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century is a magnificent one; it shows a period quay which looks more like an old painting than the real thing, and a beautiful sunset. The sunset is probably used to show the contrast between the real world and the darkness of the vampiric world. From this point onwards the differences between the novel and the

film, regarding homoeroticism, can be first seen. There are other differences but I will focus mainly on the ones connected to homoeroticism.

Louis as homodiegetic voice-over narrator tells the boy that in 1791 he had lost his wife and his child in childbirth, and after that he wanted to die, as explained before; in the novel, Louis was a single man who had lost a fifteen-year-old brother whom he loved dearly. In the book Louis seemed to have an attraction for his brother beyond a brother's love and for this reason he wanted to die so badly. This is the first choice made by the filmmakers to disguise the homoeroticism portrayed in the book. The decision of the filmmakers to swap Louis' brother for a wife might be a way of making the movie more appealing to bigger audiences, or to make the story more commercial. The relationship between Louis and Paul would probably cause a lot of controversy. Swapping Paul for a woman certainly avoided a lot of discussion over the problems of incest, paedophilia and gay sex.

Both in the film and in the novel Louis wants to die, but since he is not brave enough to commit suicide, he challenges his luck by going to dangerous places and meeting rough people, but it was a vampire (Lestat) who takes advantage of his weak state of mind. The first attack of Lestat does not receive much prominence in the novel, it is just mentioned, but in the film this attack is shown in an outstanding way. The shot starts with Louis walking alongside with a whore while he himself, as voice-over narrator explains that his invitation to be murdered was opened to anyone. The whore might once again be used to emphasise Louis' virility. The attack happens while this whore seems to perform oral sex on him. This act is interrupted with the sudden arrival of Lestat, played by Tom Cruise, who kills the whore and a man, who was probably the whore's pimp, and who was about to mug Louis. Afterwards Lestat attacks Louis without mercy.



O close-up supre as explicações.

They do not speak to each other. A medium close-up shows Lestat puncturing Louis' neck with his fangs. Louis grabs Lestat's clothes as a lover would grab his partner's clothes during a sexual intercourse. The scene of the biting is shown together with a non-diegetic sound of a powerful orchestra that rises its accords as Lestat flies up towards the mast of a ship draining Louis' blood. During the flight the camera in a medium close-up shows Louis's face; he seems to be enjoying the pleasure of having "sex" with a man for the first time. This scene depicts the narrative power of a close-up. In the book *A Experiência do Cinema* Hugo Munsterberg points out: "*O close-up supre as explicações*" (34). The use of close-up in this scene shows that the viewer has the choice of choosing his/her own understanding of the scene. The homoeroticism shown in this scene is hardly visible for the eye of the unaware viewer.



### 2. 3. The Dark Gift

“Now look with your vampire eyes”.  
(Lestat says to Louis after giving him the Dark Gift – IWTV  
– Neil Jordan, 1994)

After Lestat’s first attack, Louis is left half-dead. In the novel, a priest is called in order to get Louis’ confession, but Louis goes mad and nearly kills the clergyman, this is not shown in the film. After some time, both in the film and the novel, Lestat comes with his enigmatic powers and persuades Louis into becoming a vampire. Louis seems to accept it because he feels attracted to Lestat’s beauty and enticement. In the novel the passage where Louis receives the “dark gift” is overwhelming. It happens inside the farmhouse where Louis and his family used to live. Louis can be compared to a man who always wanted to have sex with another person from the same sex but never had the guts to do it, but now has found the opportunity.

After biting Louis’ neck Lestat slashes one of his wrists and puts it into Louis’ mouth. Louis sucks Lestat’s wrist eagerly, he almost kills Lestat with the vehemence of his thirsty for blood. The whole process can be compared to a sexual intercourse, there’s penetration, there is pleasant pain, there is desire and finally there is an “orgasm”, Louis describes the sensation of this supposed orgasm like that in the novel:

I saw nothing but that light then as I drew blood. And then this next thing, this next thing was...sound. A dull roar at first and then a pounding like the pounding of a drum, growing louder and louder, as if some enormous creature were coming up on one slowly through a dark and alien forest, pounding as he came, a huge drum. And then there came the pounding of another drum, as if another giant were coming yards behind him, and each giant, intent on his own drum, gave no notice to the rhythm of the other. The sound grew louder and louder until it seemed to fill not just my hearing but all my senses, to be throbbing in my lips and fingers, in the flesh of my temples, in my veins. Above all, in my veins, drum and then the other drum; and then Lestat pulled his wrist free suddenly, and I opened my eyes and checked myself in a moment of reaching for his wrist, grabbing it, forcing it back to my mouth at all costs; I checked myself because I realised that the drum was my heart, and the second drum had been his {Lestat} ( 23,24).

The sensation described by Louis shows how much he enjoyed the ritual of becoming a vampire and shows the amount of lust he felt for Lestat during this macabre “sexual” initiation. It is impossible not to think of homoeroticism while reading these lines. This powerful attraction felt by Louis towards Lestat in the novel had to be conveyed to the screen, so the filmmakers decided to make a few changes in order to achieve a more dramatic effect.



The props are a very important part of the mise-en-scene.

In the film, the scene of Louis’ transformation is introduced with a non-diegetic sound bridge from the previous scene where he says farewell to the sunrise. The music sounds like a funeral march that slowly turns into an eerie group of sounds when it reaches the shot where Louis is shown wondering in an old cemetery. The complete scene is composed of twenty-six shots, and according to William A. Francis, in the article *Anne Rice’s Interview with the Vampire: Novel Versus Film - Part III – the New Orleans Setting*, published in the book *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*, this scene caused a lot of headache for director Neil Jordan.

Louis’s transformation into a vampire is consummated in the family cemetery constructed on Oak Alley grounds. However, the three nights of filming in the cemetery were unproductive because the vampire makeup did not film well in the hot, humid night air, which was filled with annoying insects. Rather than continue the expensive filming,

Jordan had the cemetery props dismantled and shipped to London, where the scene of Louis's transformation was finally filmed. (140)

This comment shows the amount of trouble Jordan went through in order to achieve his desired outcome, and it also shows the pitfalls of the changing of medium. Jordan has also probably done that in order to be more in control of the mise-en-scene, which according to Bordwell and Thompson is composed of “setting, costume, lighting and staging” (175). They also claim that: “In controlling mise-en-scene the filmmaker stages an event to be filmed” (193). Thus in certain scenes like this one, to be in control is paramount to have a good result. The heat and the insects were beyond Jordan's control, this justify perfectly his decision of filming abroad.



The camera crabs to the left, and then the unfocused face of Lestat is shown.

The first shot of the sequence shows Louis walking slowly towards a tomb where he sits down. It is the tomb where his wife and children are buried. The cemetery looks old and full of dry leaves, which may be representing death or to reinforce the idea of the biological infertility of homosexual sex. The old tombs are used as prop, probably to represent the decadence Louis is about to engage. The mise-en-scene varies very little during the shots, we have lots of different camera movements and angles though. The second shot shows a close-up of Louis' beautiful face. The way he is framed reminds

us of a little boy waiting for his school bus; his countenance looks serene and thoughtful. As the camera crabs to the left from Louis' face, the unfocused shape of Lestat is shown on the background. As soon as Lestat speaks, Louis in a sudden movement gets up and Lestat's face is shown clearly. The third shot shows Louis puzzled face, he is not sure what is about to happen. Louis' face is shown very briefly because as soon as it appears on the screen Lestat attacks Louis' neck fiercely. The image of Lestat attacking Louis looks more like the image of a rapist attacking its prey; the only difference is that in this case there was a consent given beforehand. This shot is very powerful; the focus is given to Louis's face that contorts itself in horror, in pain, and above all things, with pleasure. The camera follows Louis' face while he is thrown to the ground of the cemetery by his possessor. The cemetery was probably chosen because it is one the components of the gothic settings used in novels and films. It is related to death, and what Louis is going through is the process of the death of his mortal body.



A medium close-up of the two supposed lovers.

The fourth shot in this sequence shows the two supposed lovers lying on the ground with Lestat whispering on Louis' ear if he wants eternal life. Louis, as if in trance of a sexual intercourse, answers with two "yes". His answer is like the moan of a person

about to reach the orgasm. In the fifth shot we have a medium shot of Lestat slashing his own wrist. The sixth shot shows Lestat dripping his blood on Louis's lips, which remind the viewer of the sperm released during an ejaculation. Attention must be called to Louis' lips; they do not look natural during this scene; it seems that they are swollen and they also look very girlish due to its vibrant pinkish colour, in this way increasing the androgyny of Brad Pitt's character. It even can be said that Louis's lips make his mouth look more like the female genital orifice than a mouth itself. The seventh shot shows an extreme close-up of Lestat's bleeding wrist, which also looks like a female genital organ, but this time menstruating. In the eighth shot the way Lestat's blood trickles on Louis' lips is very sensual and extremely erotic.



Louis sucks Lestat's wrist eagerly.

Louis in a sudden movement grabs Lestat's wrist and sucks it eagerly, while a non-diegetic piece of music is played reminding the viewer of the heartbeat described in the novel. The "sexual" pleasure of this bloody intercourse is conveyed through the face of the actors. Lestat played by Tom Cruise and Louis played by Brad Pitt. Reep points out that:

In spite of the initial controversy over casting, the actors in *Interview with the Vampire* successfully capture the essence of Rice's characters in the novel. In the film, the physical appearance of the actors proves less important than their reflection of the character's emotions and desires. (130)

Reep calls attention for the fact that Jordan did not give much importance to follow the detailed physical description of the characters given by Rice in the novel, he was more concerned with the psychological aspect of them<sup>8</sup>. There is not doubt that the film is able to capture all the suffering and guilty that Louis experiences in the novel and all the irreverence and lack of scruples that Lestat has.



A sloppy mistake of continuity, the blood disappears from Louis' cheek and reappears on his chin.

The scene of the sucking of Lestat's wrist was skilfully done and it is able to pass all the passion, fear and tension portrayed in the novel. In the ninth shot Lestat's face is shown in a medium close-up, his countenance shows pain and pleasure, reminding the viewers of the strong connections between vampiric love and sado-masochism. After this there is a medium shot of Louis sucking Lestat's wrist and also a mistake of continuity which was published in <http://www.moviemistakes.com/film656> - The dry leaves that got caught in Louis' hair in the eighth shot just disappear in the tenth shot, and Louis' hair looks completely brushed again. This mistake does hinder the flow of the scene, but it does show that adapting is not an easy process. A mistake when written

---

<sup>8</sup> Rice did not approve the choice of Tom Cruise to play Lestat because she thought he was unsuitable for the role, this led Rice not to participate of the filming. However, after watching the film for the first time she changed her mind. She apologised for her tough remarks and praised Tom Cruise for his outstanding performance.

is much easier to be spotted. Details like this are hardly visible when we watch a film, but in a novel we can analyse sentence by sentence if we feel like, and if a sentence does not make sense we can easily spot the mistake.

In the eleventh shot we have once again the close-up of Lestat's delirious face. His teeth still half covered in blood and his face showing that he is about to reach an orgasm. In the twelfth shot we have the image of Louis' face and Lestat's arm, Louis is struggling to keep Lestat's wrist in his mouth and suddenly as if he felt that he was about to ejaculate, he lets Lestat's arm go. In the following shot the two vampires move abruptly away from each other to enjoy the last minute of their "orgasms". Lestat seems brighter and delighted with the pleasure he has just experienced, sitting on the ground with his back leaned against a tomb. He enjoys thoroughly his orgasm; he laughs and moans as if he were in the middle of an ejaculation. The camera crabs following Louis who crawls towards the tomb of his wife not knowing very well what is going on, while Lestat is shown on the background. The idea of making Louis go in the direction of his wife's tomb is probably to show Louis' eternal feeling of regret. His first impulse seems to go back to his wife to apologise. He shows a mixture of pleasure and fear.

Again in the fourteenth shot there is another mistake of continuity also published in the site movie mistakes mentioned earlier:

In the scene where Louis is convulsing in the graveyard after taking blood from Lestat, in the background you can see Lestat trying to sit up in front of the tomb and makes it half way up, in the next shot he is getting up from being on the ground all over again.

Thus this again reinforces the idea that the cinematic language can be deceiving because our eyes cannot follow the speed of the images. The next shot is a medium shot of Louis desperate attempt to reach his wife's tomb; when he gets there he knocks over a vase on the tomb and, unable to support the weight of his body, he falls on his back on the

ground of cemetery. His fall is not completely shown. Here again it can be noticed another continuity mistake, the blood which was dripping all down one side of Louis' face disappears from there and reappears in his chin.  
<http://www.moviemistakes.com/film656>

In the next shot we see Louis' head hitting the ground and when it comes to a stop we hear Lestat's intradiegetic offscreen voice saying: "Your body is dying..." The interesting thing is that Lestat does not finish the sentence until the next shot, when we have a medium close-up of Lestat's face, he can hardly speak because he looks like someone who just had a very wild sexual intercourse, and he ends the sentence saying: "...pay no attention, it happens to us all". In the shot eighteenth Louis is shown from a high angle, he is trying to catch his breath and he looks scared. After this a medium shot of Lestat with a smirk on his face is shown.



**Make-up plays an important role in films. Like a new-born baby, the new born vampire has thin veins on his cheek.**

In the following shot the camera pans left on Louis' face, eventually frames it, and then zooms on it, and finally stops in an extreme close-up. His eyes look more like the eyes of someone who is high in drugs. His make-up is really outstanding, in the pale skin of the new born vampire we can see thin veins, they are like the ones we see new born babies. Then in a medium shot the camera tilts down following Lestat's body who



starts to bend down towards Louis. In the next shot Louis' head appears slowly in the frame, showing that he is raising from the ground. When his whole face fills the screen we hear Lestat's voice offscreen saying: "...Now look..." and again the sentence finishes in the next shot of Lestat: "...with your vampire eyes". In the following shot the extreme close-up of Louis is able to show all magnificence of the new creature he has turned into. The make-up of his pale skin, his veins and salient eyes are awesome. In my reading, when Lestat says: "Now look with your vampire eyes", this is the indication that Louis is now a different being: for ordinary people only a vampire, in my interpretation a man who has finally surrendered to his homosexual impulses.



A point-of-view shot.

A medium shot shows Louis and Lestat together, Lestat looks pleased because he has reached his goal, and Louis looks amazed and confused. He looks towards his wife's tomb. Then we have a point-of-view shot. There is a statue of an angel on the tomb who looks like a woman. She probably represents Louis' deceased wife. This woman seems to be protecting her breasts and her womb with her arms, which means that she may be trying to hide her femininity, and show her indignation for being swapped by a male. This idea of using a statue of woman as a prop fits perfectly the vampiric world of Rice. As put by Sandra Tomc in her article *Dieting and Damnation: Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire*, published in the book *Blood Read*, "Not only does Rice purge her

vampire community of all signs of women's sexuality, she avoids representing women characters, even human women characters, in her novel" (99). The angel might have been put there to make Louis feel even guiltier. This angel who seems to be made of plaster suddenly is granted human eyes. She looks at Louis rebukingly and enigmatically, as a mother would look at her child after noticing that s/he has done something very, very wrong. This suggests that the film is judgemental, in a way not exposed by the novel.

#### 2. 4. The final encounter between Louis and Armand

"Lestat must have wept when he made you"  
(Armand says to Louis – IWTV – Neil Jordan, 1994)

As explained before the homoeroticism depicted in the novel *Interview with the Vampire* diminishes drastically when transposed to the screen. The second scene to be analysed in the film is the one in which Louis (Brad Pitt) and Armand (Antonio Banderas) are on the verge of kissing each other. There is not such passage in the novel. Before starting the explanation of the cinematic devices used to create this scene I would like to go back to the novel to explore a bit more the love affair between Louis and Armand, so as to explain why the "almost a kiss" scene is justifiable. Attention should be called at this stage for the title of this thesis *Bloody Eroticism in Interview with the Vampire: From Literature to the Audiovisual Domain*. The term "bloody" is being used in this part of the thesis meaning—How annoying! How puzzling is Louis and Armand relationship!! Bloody Hell!!— As seen in chapter 1 item 1.5, Louis and Armand seem to have fallen madly in love with each other.

Once again I would like to call attention to the fact that it is not explained in the novel what Louis and Armand will do to consummate their passion. Louis tells his interviewer:

The love I felt. Not physical love, you must understand. I don't speak of that at all, though Armand was beautiful and simple, and no intimacy with him would ever have been repellent. For vampires, physical love culminates and is satisfied in one thing, the kill. I speak of another kind of love which drew me to him completely as the teacher which Lestat had never been. (275)

Louis says that what he wants in Armand just is a teacher. He wanted to know more about the nature of vampires, he wanted to know the source of their evil, and if there is a God and a Devil. Armand could not tutor Louis because Armand himself did not know the answers Louis was eager to learn. Thus the logical thing it would be to leave Armand and look for the answers he wanted somewhere else. What happens is just the opposite.

The passion between Louis and Armand seems to grow stronger after Louis' discovery. If physical love was impossible between them what they experience together might be the eroticism of a homosexual relationship that would never be fulfilled. Thus the scene of the film in which Armand and Louis nearly kiss each other summarises perfectly the vampiric love of Louis and Armand. Their love seems to be more like a mental masturbation than the real thing, and is it doomed due the constraint of their nature. The desire is there but for some an unknown reason it will never go beyond lust. Haggerty when commenting the boundaries of the homoeroticism in Rice's work acknowledges that:

Rice makes it immediately clear, however, that this world of male-male desire cannot be satisfying. For all the homoerotics of these volumes, Rice seems unable to create a bond between two men that is more than the symptom of a corrupt and corrupting culture. Even in creating moments of most intense intimacy of unbridled sexual attraction, Rice

insists on the repulsion that homosexuality regularly breeds in the minds of fundamentalist politicians and other members of extreme right. For all the sexual freedom that Rice's heroes experience, in other words, her novels work to ensure that her representation of homosexuality is culturally determined, as if it could be anything else. (196)

The paradox created by Rice makes her work look even more puzzling. The homoerotic vampiric universe created by her seems not to be free of prejudice because it has its basis rooted on the principles of the straight world of ordinary human beings.

Over a large number of pages of the novel the passionate love affair between Louis and Armand is conveyed with talks of love, touches, attitudes and looks. There is one passage in which Louis explains the effect that Armand has on him: "And though I felt drawn to him, more strongly perhaps than I'd ever been drawn to any living creature save Claudia, he excited me in others ways which resembled fear" (303). Is fear exciting? Fear of what? Would it be fear of his own sexuality?

Although, in the novel, Armand stays with Louis for a long time, they end up breaking up. Armand's last words are like the words of a deceived lover. His words show great sadness and at the same time a sense of failure because he was not able to make Louis love him as much as he loved Louis:

She [Claudia] never loved you, you know. Not in the way that I loved you, and the way you loved us both. I knew this! I understood it! And I believe I would gather you to me and hold you. And time would open to us, and we would be the teachers of one another. All the things that gave you happiness would give me happiness; and I would be the protector of your pain. My power would be your power. My strength the same. But you're dead inside to me, you're cold and beyond my reach! It is as if I'm not here, beside you. And, not being here with you, I have the dreadful feeling that I don't exist at all. And you are as cold and distant from me as those strange modern paintings of lines and hard forms that I cannot love or comprehend, as alien as those hard mechanical sculptures of this age which have no human form. I shudder when I'm near you. I look into your eyes and my reflection isn't there....(361)

Armand's words show that Louis never accepted their relationship, all the lust Louis felt for Armand was not enough to make Louis live their gay relationship without feeling guilty. It seems that deep inside Louis never came to terms with his homosexuality. In the novel they leave Paris together and travel around the world, they stay together for a long time, and it is Armand who leaves Louis because he cannot cope with Louis' resentfulness. The moviemakers wrapped up all the clues left in the novel about the homoerotic relationship between Louis and Armand and created the scene of the "almost a kiss", which is also the scene that marks Armand and Louis' farewell in the movie. This scene in the movie seems to have caught Rice's idea of the meaning of Louis and Armand physical relationship. The desire is there, but it will never reach the physical sexual proportions that it should achieve to become understandable for ordinary people.

The scene is composed of six shots, which starts with a long take of Louis and Armand entering a fairly narrow corridor of Louvre Museum. The only diegetic sounds we hear are the voices of the two vampires who are having a conversation as they walk along the corridor, and their almost inaudible footsteps. The first thing that catches the eyes of the viewers is the flamboyant and lavish clothes worn by the two vampires. Their outfits show that they are part of the upper class.

Armand looks impeccable in his black suit and his long, loose black hair. Louis wears a coat with a big fur collar, he looks quite androgynous. Dyer writes that:

Vampires are classically aristocrats and much of the development of a public face for homosexuality and/or decadent sexuality was at the hands of aristocrats — de Sade, Byron — or writers posing as aristocrats — Lautréamont, Wilde. (74)



A tracking shot

Vampires are supposed to show that they are part of the aristocracy, Louis and Armand in this scene perfectly portray this image. They look wealthy, elegant and fashionable. Thus their appearance fulfils the two roles mentioned by Dyer, they show that they come from aristocracy and that they are over concerned with their appearance, which is a trait generally attributed to young gay men. Although nowadays this kind of mentality is changing, metrosexuality does not seem to be only a fad.



Raft of the Medusa<sup>9</sup>

As they walk along the corridor we can see that there are only two other characters in this scene, they are sitting on chairs in a static position, which make them look more like statues than human beings. They are probably carers of the museum. Louis followed by Armand stops very briefly in front of the painting *The Raft of the Medusa*

<sup>9</sup> Picture taken from : <http://www.thompsondunn.com/newsletter2/page16.html>

by Gericault<sup>10</sup>. The painting portrays a group of people on a raft, their ship has sunk, and they are in the middle of a rough sea, some of the castaways show hope in their faces and others show despair. Of course this painting would call Louis' attention, this is probably how he feels. He is trapped between hope and despair in the middle of a stormy ocean, he is calling for help but there is no one to answer his plea.



The painting triggers Louis' memories.

As they advance towards the end of corridor we have the impression that they are walking towards the camera, which moves away as they approach, this is called tracking shot. In the second shot the camera does a dolly-out movement and Louis' face is shown. A non-diegetic sound starts to prepare the viewers for the depth of the scene. As put by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in their book *Film Art: An Introduction*: "The rhythm, melody, harmony and instrumentation of the music can strongly affect the viewer's emotional reactions" (325). The third shot shows Louis in front of painting of a girl who resembles Claudia due to her curly hair, after that his conversation with Armand gets rougher. The painting probably triggers on his mind the image of Claudia, who had just been killed by Armand's coven mates. Thus Louis sees himself between

---

<sup>10</sup> This information was taken from the script of the film published in: <http://lestat.de.lioncourt1.free.fr/IWTV8.htm> . In the film we see them stop in front of the painting, but it is not shown on the screen.

the two people who he thought he loved: Claudia and Armand. One of them is really dead and the other is undead.



The “almost a kiss” scene.

The camera crabs to the right Louis until Armand appears in the frame. While they talk the painting is shown on the background. They discuss their relationship and nearly in the end of the scene Louis seems to want to kiss Armand’s mouth. He touches Armand’s face with love and hate at the same time, and then he lets Armand’s face go. After that an over-the-shoulder shot shows Louis back and Armand’s enigmatic face.



An over-the-shoulder shot.

The fifth shot is very similar to the fourth, the only difference is that this time we see Armand’s back and Louis’ face. Louis tells Armand that he is leaving him for good.



Armand says he will die without him and Louis replies that he is already dead. A tracking shot is once again used to show Louis leaving the gallery and giving his back to Armand, making Armand's figure fade out in the background.



Louis leaves Armand for good.

### Chapter 3 - Conclusion:

After having analysed the homoeroticism portrayed in the novel *Interview with the Vampire* I have concluded that Rice's new breed of vampires, especially Louis, are creatures whose sexuality is beyond our understanding. Rice seems to use the principle that some mysteries are not meant to be understood or questioned, you just have to accept them. Bearing in mind Rice's religion upbringing it can be deduced that she might have borrowed this idea from Catholicism. The dogmas created by the church based on the Bible are subject to a lot of interpretations and most of the time unexplained. What does the transubstantiation really mean? Can it be connected with ideas of vampirism?

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (*Matthew, 26:27-28*)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952).

What is the symbology behind it? If you ask these questions to people from different religions who have the Holy Bible as their sacred book you will have lots of different answers.

Religion seems to be the main source of Louis' guilty state of mind in the novel. At this point some questions should be asked: Is the Bible really a sacred book written with inspiration coming from a superior being? Is not the Bible a political tool used to control the masses? Why is sex so sinful? How could a book like the Bible become the source of some people's happiness or other people's unhappiness? I guess all these questions have inspired Rice to write her novel. Louis seems to play the role of the spokesman of the people who feel that they are odd ones out and want to know why they are here for. Louis' fear takes him on a trip in search of knowledge and love fulfilment, but his catholic upbringing and his refusal to abandon the moral values he was brought up with, make his trip of discovery, a trip of pain and frustration.

In the beginning of the novel Louis thinks he is an evil creature, but he does not know if the Devil really exists. In order to try to understand Louis' questioning, and how Rice used the knowledge she has about the Devil to create the tortured Louis I was led to research how the figure of the Devil is presented inside the Biblical text. Lucifer's story is not well explained in the Bible. Questions such as: If God has omniscience why did he create Lucifer knowing that he would rebel against him? Did God create Lucifer because he needed an opponent? How could an evil creature such as Lucifer could develop his evil character in such perfect environment as heaven is? When God created the planet earth why did he not send Lucifer to populate it? Being a perfect creature Lucifer would be the ideal being to create a perfect new world.

Rice has probably used this void left in the Bible about the figure of the Devil to build the sceptical Louis, a vampire who is in search of answers. Answers that cannot be

even found in the Biblical text. Louis has fears and doubts like human beings have, especially those who feel that they are the odd ones out and do not have faith in God. On top of all this questioning about the existence of God and Devil, Rice used the idea imposed by the church over the centuries that sex is sinful. Creating beings with a non-hegemonic sexuality seems to be the way Rice has found to question the divine, the mysteries of the faith, the patriarchal society and the established order. The sexuality of the vampires is most of the time something unknowable. Everything concerning their sexuality is reduced to eroticism and, in the case of *Interview with the Vampire*, homoeroticism. As seen in the body of this thesis. I do not know if Rice's intention was to puzzle the readers or if she was also conforming to the idea preached by religion that sexual bonds between people of same sex is something not possible because it is against natural laws. Rice seems to want to challenge the system, but at the same she seems to play by its rules, taking into consideration that Louis homoerotic desire is never entirely fulfilled.

The novel *Interview with the Vampire* is definitely about guilt and suffering. Louis is extremely sexually confused and the evidences prove that he is definitely more attracted to males rather than females. His attempts to disguise his homosexuality through paedophilia only helped to make him feel even guiltier. His physical attraction for Lestat and his passion for Armand were not able to make him leave his closet. Being biased or not, Rice has superbly used the metaphor of the vampire as a gay man locked in a closet to create her vampiric fictional world. Although the novel is full of homoerotic passages without sexual fulfilment, the desire male-male hovers almost all of 368 pages of her novel.

Louis' quest for the source of his guilt mind and his hopes that a superior being (God or Devil) would answers his questions about the meaning of life puts him on the

same level as human beings. The source of the evil is unknown. The only thing that human beings know is that they will eventually die and, even that is denied to vampires. Rice's vampires will die only if someone kills them with fire or if they are exposed to the sun light, otherwise they will live forever. Natural death is not part of their lives. The mystery that makes vampires and humans alike is that they do not know where life comes from. Is there such a thing as damnation? Do we have souls? What is sin? All these questions cannot be answered; of course there are some human beings who claim that they know all the answers for these questions. Can they prove what they are saying?

To sum up, *Interview with the Vampire* is a novel that shows how difficult it is to live in this planet, especially when you think you are a "freak of the nature". Society has the necessity to persecute those who are different. In this study I analysed only a few aspects of Rice's novel. There are some many other themes to be explored for future studies. For example: How paedophilia is shown in the novel; how lesbianism is portrayed; the similarities between the Devil and vampires; the power of the religion on Rice's work; the evolution of the vampire in the literature over the centuries; the differences between Stoker's *Dracula* and Rice's vampires and some many other possibilities. Rice's universe is intriguing and full of mysteries; it is a breeding ground of possibilities.

Although Neil Jordan's adaptation of *Interview with the Vampire* follows the expected form of a mainstream Hollywoodian film, it is still quite daring. The homoeroticism, even if diminished drastically was not left out. His reading of Rice's main male characters, which are the object of my study: Louis, Lestat and Armand is done in way that it conforms to the propriety rules of a blockbuster, but it goes a bit further without being too pushy. The characters are never too prudish and neither too sleazy. Although they possess a non-hegemonic sexuality, which some of the general

public pretend to despise, they were able to bring many people to the cinema, which is the aim of most moviemakers. Actually, Jordan seems to appreciate the portrayal of non-conventional sexual behaviours in his films. Two examples of that are *The Crying Game* (1992), in which one of the characters is a transvestite and *The Butcher's Boy* (1997), in which a paedophile priest is shown.

Regarding the adaptation of novels to the screen in general, it can be said that there are a lot of studies in progress at the moment. Cinema and literature have a lot to contribute for the development of future generations. Either separate or together they are both rich materials for scholars of different areas of knowledge. Although some scholars claim that literature will always dictate its superiority because it is an older kind of art and for this reason it had more time to be enhanced. Cinema on the other hand has only a bit more of a century of existence and is still developing. It is part of the booming of technological inventions propelled by the Industrial Revolution in the end the nineteenth century and it was born slowly and probably with no intention of surpassing literature.

I believe cinema can be a very strong allied of literature because it gives physical proportions for the written word and, also rescues an older kind of transmission of knowledge, even older than literature, which is the orality. Many stories must have been lost in time before the invention of writing. Stories were told through the grapevine and could not be recorded because there were no means for that. The invention of writing filled this void. After that, stories could be read and imagined, but could not be physically seen. Cinema has come to play this role. It has become a complement for literature and also a way of recovering part of the magic of story-telling. Through the cinema, the written and spoken word gain physical existence.

In my opinion, literature was never the same since the advent of the cinema, literature reached dimensions that were never imagined by ancient writers. Since then books can be read and after watched on the screen or vice-versa. Sometimes the reading given to a novel by the moviemakers can reach proportions never imagined by the writer of the source novel. Saying that, I am not claiming that adaptations are always good, I am saying that we have the opportunity to experience the novel from a different point of view, and sometimes with a complete different reading. Cinema and literature are magical, exciting, rewarding, and above this: they grant us the opportunity of dreaming awake.

## 1.5. REFERENCE LIST

### Primary Sources

*Interview with the Vampire*. Dir. Neil Jordan. Geffen Pictures, 1994.

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire*. London: Clays Ltd, 1976.

### Secondary Sources

Aidar, José Luiz e Márcia Maciel. *O Que é Vampiro – Coleção Primeiros Passos*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1988.

Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampire, Ourselves*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Coústé, Alberto. *Biografia do Diabo*. Trad. Luca Albuquerque. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Rosa dos Tempos, 1996.

Bataille, Georges. *The tears of Eros*. Trans. Peter Connor. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002.

Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art : An Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Gill, 1997.

--- *Film Art: An Introduction*. New York: Mc Graw-Gill, 2001 – 6<sup>th</sup> edition.

Cambridge Learner's Dictionary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Carter, Margaret L. "The Vampire as Alien in Contemporary Fiction". *Blood Read - The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. Ed. Joan Gordon, Veronica Hollinger. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. 27 – 44.

Cartmell, Deborah, Imelda Whelehan. *Adaptation: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. New York: Routledge, 1999. 143-145.

Chandler, Anthony N. *Vampires Incorporated: Self-definition in Anne Rice's Vampires Chronicles*, Montreal: McGill University, 1997.

Diniz, Thaís Flores Nogueira. *Literatura e Cinema: da semiótica à Tradução Cultural*. Ouro Preto: Editora UFOP, 1999.

Dyer, Richard. *The Culture of Queers*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Francis, William A. "Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire: Novel Versus Film – Part III – The New Orleans Setting". *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Ed. Gary Hoppenstand, Ray B. Browne. United the States: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. 137-147.

Haggerty, George E. *Queer Gothic*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Hirshey, Gerri. "Flesh for Fantasy" *The Unauthorized Anne Rice Companion*. Ed.

- George Beahn. Kansas City: Universal Press Syndicate Company, 1996. 128 – 134.
- Iaccino, James F. “The World of Forever Knight: A Television Tribute to Anne Rice’s New Age Vampire”. *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Ed. Gary Hoppenstand, Ray B. Browne. United the States: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. 231-246.
- Ingebretsen, Edward J. “Anne Rice: Raising Holy Hell, Harlequin Style”. *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Ed. Gary Hoppenstand, Ray B. Browne. United the States: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. 91-108.
- Jones, Chris. “Lesbian and Gay Cinema”. *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Ed. Jill Nelmes. Great Britain: Routledge, 1996. 257-290.
- Lecouteux, Claude. *História dos Vampiros*. Trad. Álvaro Lorencini. São Paulo: Fundação Editora da UNESP, 2003.
- Lewis, Mathew. *The Monk*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Marcus, Jana. *In the shadow of the Vampire*. New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1997.
- McGinley, Kathryn. “Development of the Byronic Vampire: Byron, Stoker, Rice”. *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Ed. Gary Hoppenstand, Ray B. Browne. United the States: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. 71-90.
- Mayne, Judith. *Private Novels, Public Films*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988.
- Munsterberg, Hugo. “A Atenção”. *A Experiência do Cinema*. Trans. Teresa Machado. Org: Ismail Xavier. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1983. 27-35
- Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Nixon, Nicola. “When Hollywood Sucks, or, Hungry Girls, Lost Boys, and Vampirism in the Age of Reagan”. *Blood Read*. Ed. Joan Gordon, Veronica Hollinger. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. 114-128.
- Paz, Octavio. *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism*. Trans. Helen Lane. London and New York: Harvest, 1996.
- Reep, Diana C. “Anne Rice’s Interview with the Vampire: Novel Versus Film – Part 1 – Shadows in the Night: Characters” *The Gothic World of Anne Rice*. Ed. Gary Hoppenstand, Ray B. Browne. United the States: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996. 123-130.
- Rice, Anne O’Brien. *The Vampire Lestat*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1987.
- Roberts, Bette B. “Rice and the Gothic Tradition”. *The Unauthorized Anne Rice*



*Companion*. Ed. George Beahm. Kansas City: Universal Press Syndicate Company, 1996. 107 – 119.

---. *Anne Rice*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

Seeger, Linda. *The Art of Adaptation: Turning Fact and Fiction into Film*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc. 1992.

Silver, Alan. James Ursini. *The Vampire Film-From Nosferatu to Interview with the Vampire*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1997.

Stam, Robert. *Beyond Fidelity: the dialogics of Adaptation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

---. "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation". In Stam, Robert and Alessandra Raengo. *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005. 1-52.

---. *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation*. London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

---. Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis. *New Vocabulary in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000 ed.

*The Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952)

Virgets, Roonie. "An Interview with Anne: The New Orleans Experience". *The Unauthorized Anne Rice Companion*. Ed. George Beahm. Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1996. 29-36.

Whelehan, Imelda. "Adaptations: the contemporary dilemmas". In: Whelehan, Imelda And Deborah Cartmell. *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 3-19.

Electronic sources:

*Interview with the Vampire – Script* – Accessed: 18. Aug, 2007  
[http://lestat.de.lioncourt1.free.fr/Interview%20\\_With%20\\_The%20\\_Vampire.htm](http://lestat.de.lioncourt1.free.fr/Interview%20_With%20_The%20_Vampire.htm)

Media College.com – Accessed: 15 Oct. 2007  
<http://www.mediacollege.com/lighting/three-point/simulator.html>

*Movies mistakes*. Design and text Jon Sandys. Accessed: 20. Sep. 2007.  
<http://www.moviemistakes.com/>

The 'Grammar' of Television and Film.: Daniel Chandler. Accessed: 07.Jun. 2007 - <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/gramtv.html>

Thompson Dunn .*Psychology in Management*: Accessed: 12 Nov. 2007-11-21  
<http://www.thompsondunn.com/newsletter2/page16.html>

Whitney Mitchell. BNET Research Center. *Deconstructing gender, sex, and sexuality as applied to identity – The Culture War*. 2002 . Accessed: 10 Nov. 2007  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1374/is\\_4\\_62/ai\\_89431091](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1374/is_4_62/ai_89431091)

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.  
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.