

5-2005

Full of Grace: Catholicism in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles

Joseph L. Howe

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/honors_etd



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Full of Grace
Catholicism in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles

by

Joseph L. Howe

Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

Dr. Rodger Payne

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Submitted to the LSU Honors College in partial fulfillment of
the Upper Division Honors Program.

May, 2005

Louisiana State University
& Agricultural and Mechanical College
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Full of Grace

Catholicism in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles

Acknowledgments

Many people played an important role in helping me shape this Honors thesis. Foremost, my gratitude goes to Dr. Rodger Payne for his constant dedication, hard work, and support from the very first day. His knowledge, suggestions, and encouraging words made this project the greatest learning experience of my academic career. Thanks also to Dr. Delbert Burkett and Ms. June Pulliam for sitting on my defense committee and responding with insightful and meaningful comments. I am privileged to have worked closely with these three professors throughout my time at LSU.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends for believing in me and being understanding of all of the time I spent working on this thesis.

Joseph Howe

Table of Contents

Introduction: In the Beginning 1

Part One: World Without End 14

Part Two: The Judgment of Eden 42

Conclusion: Amen 61

Introduction

In the Beginning

Anne Rice has long been recognized for creating vivid and engaging fictional worlds. At the release party for her fifth vampire novel *Memnoch the Devil*, Rice arrived in a horse-drawn hearse at the end of a full jazz funeral, rose out of a coffin in a white wedding dress, and was given an honorary plot in the historic New Orleans cemetery St. Louis No. 1. This extravagant production blending popular culture, history, and religious imagery is representative of the works that made Rice famous. Throughout her thirty-year career, readers have responded to Rice's provocative examination of religion and morality as well as sexuality and taboo behaviors. Her novels involve detailed symbolism and themes that reflect Rice's personal spirituality and worldview while allowing readers to form individual interpretations.

When examining the worldview of an individual, one must consider the culture and influences that steered that individual through formative times. Born in 1941, Rice was a member of one of the last generations for whom the Catholic Church provided a culture that was integrated into every aspect of a Catholic's life. In *The American Catholic Experience*, author Jay Dolan explains that this Catholic culture was comprised of four interrelating components that he designates "the Catholic ethos": authority, sin, ritual, and the miraculous. Each component was part of a greater Catholic culture in which all Catholics lived and participated daily. Outside of the Mass itself, Catholic schools and church programs continually reinforced this multi-layered culture in the lives of all Catholics. Until the Second Vatican Council in 1960s, the four layers of the Catholic culture reinforced each other so that each one had a strong and powerful hold that "...set Catholics apart from other people in the United States" (Dolan 221). As a people set apart, Catholics expressed and defended their worldview through art and

literature. Anne Rice's popular series *The Vampire Chronicles* is an example of this Catholic culture's influence on and expression through a Catholic's art. To better clarify this, each component of the Catholic ethos should be considered individually.

Because they are all interlocking and support each other, the four components of the Catholic ethos may be placed in any order. However, it is beneficial to consider authority first due to the fact that the Pope's authority was thought to come directly from God. This stresses the importance of the Church's clergy and their power. A major development in the authority of the Church over the lay Catholic's life occurred in 1870 when the doctrine of papal infallibility was promulgated. Catholics participated in the chain of command beginning with the Pope and ending with the priests that served in their churches. While the Pope was the ultimate power, the priests served as his agents within the parish and therefore were acting on behalf of his greater authority. "This view of the church, in which papal authority reigned supreme, soon became standard Catholic theology" (Dolan 22). This emphasis on the authority and absolute correctness of the Catholic hierarchy has been reflected in the work of Catholic novelists such as Anne Rice. "As apologists for American Catholicism, novelists stressed the authoritative position of Roman Catholicism, endorsing its claims to absolute and infallible authority in matters of faith and morals..." (Dolan 223). Living through not only Vatican II but also the socially turbulent sixties and seventies, Rice and her work represent one Catholic author's struggle to unite her religious upbringing with the harsh reality of loss and disappointment. *The Vampire Chronicles* often vilifies the Catholic clergy and hierarchy because of the promises they make but leave unfulfilled.

The church hierarchy used its authority to stress that the Eucharist and frequently attending Mass were vital in the struggle for salvation; in order to take part in these rituals one had to confess one's sins to a priest. Thus, the Church's authority propagated the second part of the Catholic ethos, the culture of sin. Sermons were used to inspire the guilt and fear that were only alleviated by confession. "Guilt was also a major theme in Catholic literature, and such concentrated focus suggests that it most likely influenced the way people thought and behaved" (Dolan 229). Two of the vilest sins were drunkenness and sexual impurity. For the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the battles against changing sexual morals and the social use of alcohol were perhaps the most important in the Catholic culture. Dolan argues that because of the firm stance of Catholics against sinful actions, "Catholic fiction continuously focused on the struggle between good and evil..." (Dolan 226). In rejecting the absolute authority of the church in favor of her own morality, Rice defines sin for herself. She confesses her own alcoholism through creating characters that live by drinking blood and feeling a drunken swoon as they do so. Also, her sexually ambiguous male characters serve as a provocative commentary on conservative Catholic ideas. When Rice reincorporates Catholic structures into her later life, she lessens her emphasis on this aspect of her characters. While later novels hint at her acceptance of homosexuality, her central characters only take part in heterosexual encounters of any kind, be they physical or symbolic.

Inspired by Catholic authorities' teaching about sin, the laity was driven to rely greatly upon rituals. This marks the third aspect of the Catholic ethos, in which ritual was the path to forgiveness and salvation. As previously stated, to take part in the necessary rituals for salvation, one had to confess to a priest. Through confession, church

authorities and their moral codes controlled access to rituals that defined one as a Catholic. “Like all rituals, they helped to define the meaning of being Catholic, i.e., one who was baptized in the church and went to confession and received Communion at least once a year” (Dolan 229). Participation in these rituals exposed Catholics to a more feminine aspect of religion. The rituals made one docile before God, who in turn was forgiving and loving. These qualities were thought to be the realm of women, and the imagery involved with rituals often portrayed effeminate males and a soft, loving Jesus. Responding to the Catholic emphasis on rituals, Rice blatantly uses vampirism as a metaphor for the Eucharist. Her vampires make good on the promise of eternal life when the Church cannot. Because vampires’ lives are centered on this ritualistic behavior, their androgynous qualities echo the androgynous saints and effeminate Christ that Rice saw in Church as a child. Rice often highlights her leading characters’ Christ-like qualities through actions that mimic the Catholic Mass or Biblical stories of Jesus.

The fourth component of the Catholic ethos is the mysterious and mystical. Catholicism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a very strong emphasis on the mysterious. This was partly because the Pope and priests were part of a chain of command that began with God. Also, Catholics believed the rituals sanctified one after a sin that offended God. These beliefs created an atmosphere in which God had an active role in Catholics’ lives. The immanence of the divine made the stories of mystical encounters at Lourdes and Fatima popular. Objects and symbols associated with these events rose in importance as well. “Also quite common was belief in the supernatural power of such objects as scapulars and relics” (Dolan 234). Twenty years after she lashes out at the Church in her first novel *Interview With the Vampire*, Rice uses relics and their

impact on humans to show that she has again accepted the Catholic Church. She also employs devotions to saints and the Virgin Mary, which were thought to build a personal relationship between the practitioner and the saint. “The linking of such temporal favors such as health, personal safety, and individual success with the rituals of devotional Catholicism was another reason for the popularity of these devotions among the people” (Dolan 235). Rice uses the mystic as a metaphor for her personal spirituality and piety. Each time one of her characters finds a source of ancient knowledge, the experience leads to more questions than answers. Over the course of the series, however, Rice’s novels incorporate increasingly more conventional views of mysticism and devotionism, representing her return to the use of traditional Catholic images, if not Catholic orthodox beliefs concerning these images.

The traditional Catholic ethos lasted until the 1960s when Pope John XXIII called for an “aggiornamento” or “updating” of the Church. The result of this was the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), which radically restructured Catholic life and practice. To begin with, the Mass was altered to allow the congregants greater understanding of and participation in the Eucharist. Instead of the priest speaking the relatively unknown Latin with his back turned to the worshippers, the Church began using the vernacular and facing the congregation during the Mass. However, this new level of understanding removed much of the mysterious – even magical – qualities of the priests’ power to offer the Eucharist. Further, Vatican II redefined the Church as the entire Christian community, or “the people of God.” More than this, the Council upheld religious liberty and officially recognized the right of human beings to choose their own religion. Through this movement, the Church entered a greater dialogue with other denominations

and even non-Christian religions. An increased recognition of the responsibility to act according to one's own conscience meant that Catholics were no longer easily influenced by threats of damnation, and the emphasis upon sin that priests had once used to ensure parishioners would return to Mass was relaxed. Finally, because the Church was so altered by the deliberations and actions of her very human leaders, the actions of the Council called into question the idea of the Church representing a divinely ordained and unchanging order. It is onto this still evolving Catholic culture that Rice grafts her own spiritual ideas in *The Vampire Chronicles*.

The influence of the developing Catholic ethos upon the life and work of Anne Rice could not be studied without the intimate disclosures made by Rice and those closely associated with her. In 1991, Katherine Ramsland published the preeminent study of Rice's life and the relationship between her lived experiences and her fictional prose. *Prism of the Night* is the only biography with which Rice or her family was personally associated, yet Rice "exerted no influence or control over [Ramsland's] artistic vision" (Ramsland xiii). Ramsland earned her master's degree in clinical psychology, yet went on to gain a Ph.D. in philosophy. The influence of her training is clear in her method for studying Anne Rice. "My approach," she states, "combines psychological interpretation with philosophical themes" (Ramsland xii). *Prism of the Night* is perhaps the best source for an outsider's look into Rice's psychology and philosophy. Although she worked directly with Rice herself, Ramsland does not shy away from dealing with deeply personal issues such as Rice's alcoholism and clinical depression. Her study is the most concise biography of Anne Rice up to 1991.

Perhaps due to her own personal involvement with *Prism of the Night*, Rice herself does not have extensive information of her past on her web site at <http://www.annerice.com>. However, this internet site is another valuable source for any researcher who wants to understand Rice's personal evolution and the current events of her life. Rice has made her political opinions, emotional struggles, and moral insights available for anyone interested in reading them. Also available as a source for Anne's reflection on her work up to 1996 is Michael Riley's transcripts of his conversations with Rice at her home. *Conversations With Anne Rice* reveals Anne's sources for and afterthoughts on *Memnoch the Devil* as well as her feelings towards criticism, the film version of *Interview With the Vampire*, and other authors.

When dealing specifically with *The Vampire Chronicles*, it is helpful to consult the only officially published guide to the series, entitled *The Vampire Companion*. Once again, researchers and fans owe a debt of gratitude to Katherine Ramsland, who created the encyclopedia-styled guide to Rice's most popular series. *The Vampire Companion* was extensively revised and reissued in 1995 to include the fifth novel in the series, *Memnoch the Devil*. The *Companion* features original and detailed summaries of the novels and also includes the original short story that later became the novel *Interview With the Vampire*. The guide goes much further, however, in giving background information on Rice's research and inspirations for *The Vampire Chronicles*. Ramsland includes the significance of cultural terms such as "Creole" and popular cultural figures such as Janis Joplin. Ramsland also includes works of art in an attempt to further explain Rice's allusions to historical artists. Most importantly to this study, Ramsland provides insights to the novels' themes and story arcs that connect the individual works.

Ramsland thoughtfully applies psychology and philosophy to Rice's themes of religion, death, and loss.

One final work of note is *Anne Rice: A Critical Companion*, which is part of the series *Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Authors* published by Greenwood Press. Jennifer Smith dealt with the works of Anne Rice, including the five novels of *The Vampire Chronicles*, in 1996. Smith's analysis is most helpful for those wishing to make literary criticism on the technical aspects of Rice's works such as plot, theme, and character development. However, Smith makes interesting contributions with her Freudian interpretations of both Rice's characters and Rice herself for *Interview With the Vampire* and *Memnoch the Devil*. Often lacking any analysis of philosophical development, Smith's study is nonetheless useful as a recap of the emotional and psychological development of Rice's vampires.

Using these sources, a reasonable assessment of Rice's psychological and philosophical development can be made. Because she was born and raised in New Orleans in the decade prior to Vatican II, Rice's youth was subject to the influence of Dolan's "Catholic ethos." From a very early age, Rice found conflict with this rigid system. Although named Howard Allen O'Brien to carry on her father's name, she quickly changed it on her very first day of school by informing the nun that her name was Anne. Her mother Katherine, who was determined to allow her children to express themselves and teach them maturity by treating them as adults, encouraged this independence at home. This somewhat unorthodox approach to parenting was countered with an unrelenting devotion to Catholicism. Despite Katherine's insistence that her daughters only read "proper" material, i.e. literature approved by the Church, Anne did

not find all the rules of Catholicism very convincing. Ramsland argues that “[a]lthough she did not question the authority or the rituals, the rules of the church did not seem to touch her very deeply” (Ramsland 21).

At a young age, Anne’s fascination with saints and angels led her to announce that she planned on becoming a nun. However, Anne O’Brien soon met Stan Rice in her Texas high school, and immediately fell in love. In college, the two married and soon after moved to Berkeley, California. Anne’s freedom had impacted her spiritual life greatly. She found herself walking into bookstores and desiring to read books that “...[a] Catholic girl doesn’t read...” (Ramsland 65). Her father, who was sure that the Church would remain a strong force in his daughter’s life, encouraged her investigation of philosophy and forbidden fiction. Rice’s faith faded, however, as she asked herself questions such as “[d]oes the priest really believe Christ is on the altar? Or is it just a matter of chalices and sacramental wine and the choir singing?” (Ramsland 66). Anne and Stan had a beautiful blonde-haired daughter named Michelle in 1966. Unfortunately, Michelle died of leukemia just before turning six years old. The grief and pain of losing such an innocent child shook Rice’s sense of “moral goodness.”

Her resulting depression caused Rice to delve into alcoholism, and to dwell on the blood disease that had killed her daughter. Not even the “blood of Christ” from the Eucharist had saved Michelle. By giving in to alcoholism, Rice compounded her guilt over not being able to save her daughter with guilt over giving in to a vice that had been condemned since her childhood. These thoughts caused Anne to write a short story titled “Interview With the Vampire.” Her grief was expressed through the male vampire Louis, and her daughter was given an eternally happy life as the child vampire Claudia. Rice

wanted to know what a vampire felt as he or she drank blood and what eternity in one body would be like. Most of all she wanted to emphasize the goodness of humanity by having strong, immortal creatures long for it. In reference to her vampire characters, Rice told Riley “[t]hey’re metaphors for us...” (Riley 262). However, Rice felt she had cheated by allowing Claudia, representative of her daughter, to live. She went back and expanded the short story into her first published novel. The story arcs and characters created in the novel *Interview With the Vampire* became Rice’s means for expressing her religious and moral doubts. As these opinions changed over time, she wrote these changes into four sequels and thus created *The Vampire Chronicles*. The series was not declared closed until after Stan’s death in 2002. Despite this, the original five novels constitute a complete series chronicling Rice’s abandonment of and return to the Catholic Church.

Although the evolution of her characters and images within each volume of the series reflects Rice’s psychological and spiritual evolution, the fictional background is best introduced in chronological order. The events of *The Vampire Chronicles* are set in motion in the second volume, released in 1985. *The Vampire Lestat* tells of Lestat de Lioncourt performing the almost impossible task of single-handedly killing a pack of wolves outside his village in pre-Revolutionary France. His efforts are scoffed at by all but his mother Gabrielle, prompting Lestat to flee with his one friend Nicholas to Paris. There they both live as actors until Lestat is kidnapped and made into a vampire by the immortal Magnus. Lestat brings Nicholas as well as his mother Gabrielle into immortality with him, yet they both leave him over time. Lestat never finds an immortal companion and is shunned by vampires he tries to help by dispelling old religious myths

claiming that vampires are demons. He becomes entangled with the vampire Armand, who blames Lestat for ruining these myths, which Armand has relied upon to structure his existence. He tells Lestat about his maker Marius, the oldest vampire Armand knows. Lestat searches for Marius, but it is Marius who comes to Lestat and shares the history of the vampires. He tells Lestat that the king and queen of ancient Egypt were transformed into vampires when a spirit invaded their bodies. Lestat defies Marius and awakens the slumbering queen Akasha. Her king, Enkil, is furious and Marius alone can calm him. For this transgression, Lestat is banished from Marius.

Lestat goes to New Orleans and makes a new family of vampires with Louis Pointe du Lac and an orphaned five-year-old named Claudia, which is told from Louis' point of view in the first volume of the series. Published in 1976, *Interview With the Vampire* climaxes when Claudia's resentment at being a woman trapped in a child's body finally erupts after seventy years. She attempts to kill Lestat and flees with Louis to Europe. They encounter Armand in Paris, where Lestat goes for help. Armand has Claudia destroyed by the sun and begs Louis to stay with him, yet Lestat, Armand and Louis all go their separate ways. Weakened by the trip to Paris, Lestat returns to New Orleans and slumbers until the 1980s, when he rises to join a rock group and reveal the secrets of the vampires to the world. He hopes to redeem the sins of his kind by frightening mortals into living better lives. However, his music awakens Akasha once again. In *The Queen of the Damned*, published in 1988, Akasha takes Lestat as her consort and begins a plan to destroy the males of the world to ensure world peace. The most ancient vampires, who want to give humanity a chance to correct its own mistakes,

finally stop her. Mekare and Maharet, twin sisters made into vampires after angering the queen with their knowledge of the spirit world, overthrow Akasha.

In the fourth volume of *The Vampire Chronicles*, 1992's *The Tale of the Body Thief*, Lestat feels drawn to humanity as a result of Akasha's attempts to destroy it. He tried to stop her by saying that all vampires want to be human again because it was their original state. To test this, Lestat switches bodies with a psychic mortal, yet he becomes ill and nearly dies. He is nursed back to health by a nun named Gretchen, who restores his faith in himself and inspires him to regain his old body. With the help of David Talbot, an elderly mortal who leads a society dedicated to researching the supernatural known as the Talamasca, Lestat is able to recapture his original body. Once restored, however, he is approached by the Devil, calling himself Memnoch. *Memnoch the Devil*, the fifth novel in the series and published in 1995, is the Devil's revelation of Heaven and Hell to Lestat. Memnoch, which is the name the Devil prefers, wants to convince Lestat to join him in Hell to purify souls and send them to God. After learning the truth behind the creation, the crucifixion, and life in Heaven and Hell, Lestat decides he cannot help the Devil. In returning to Earth, Lestat brings the Veil of Veronica and causes a wave of Christian fervor to sweep the world. Distraught and unsure of his own visions, Lestat sits unmoving and seemingly unaware of his surroundings on the floor of a chapel sanctuary. He becomes like a figure of a saint, staring at the cross on the altar.

Ultimately, the five original volumes of *The Vampire Chronicles* must be read together to fully reveal Rice's wandering from and return back to Catholic theology. Each novel reflects the influence of the Catholic ethos and her reactions to it, yet Rice's spiritual journey does not seem to be complete until *Memnoch the Devil*. In the one

subsequent volume of the *Chronicles* that is told by Lestat, he is a much less dynamic character. He has not only lost much of his original intensity, but he does not show any more comprehension of his spiritual adventure that is described in *Memnoch*. Therefore, the first five novels seem to stand alone as a testament to Rice's developing spirituality as reflected in the growth of her characters. In reading the novels this way, they may be further separated into two sets. *Interview With the Vampire*, *The Vampire Lestat*, and *The Queen of the Damned* reflect a struggle with depression caused by religious disillusionment. These novels are the darkest and contain no reverence for God. The last two novels, however, mark an ascent out of this spiritual depression and back towards Catholicism. The novels *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Memnoch the Devil* result from Rice's merging of Catholic teachings and beliefs with her own spirituality. Although grouping the novels in this way places the fictional narrative out of order, it reflects Rice's development through her use of characterization and symbols. To understand the novels and their reflection of the influence of the Catholic ethos Anne Rice's spiritual development, this study will examine each of the five novels in order of publication.

Part One

World Without End

The five original *The Vampire Chronicles* are independent pieces of literature bound together through common characters and themes. The seed of these novels lie in the tragic death of Anne Rice's five-year-old daughter Michelle due to leukemia. The senseless suffering of her child rocked the basis of goodness that Anne retained up until this event. Without these beliefs, however, Rice found herself without any anchor to her former religion. "Without religious codes, life was too uncertain, too much adrift" (Ramsland 135). After completing the story "Interview With the Vampire," however, Rice was unable to sleep and found herself falling deeply into obsessive compulsive disorder. Her therapist's final diagnosis was that Anne had avoided dealing with reality in her short story, and her mind could not rest until she no longer blamed herself for allowing the character Claudia to live when Michelle had died. These issues were not worked out until Rice had created a full-length novel out of the short story. The novel lashes out at the Catholic culture that had seemingly failed Rice at every turn. By attacking this Catholic culture, Rice addresses each of the issues Dolan considers part of the Catholic ethos.

Interview With the Vampire is the first person account of Louis Pointe du Lac, a Creole plantation owner from New Orleans who becomes a vampire through the coercion of another vampire named Lestat. In writing Louis' story, Rice relived her own past and unconsciously used it as material for Louis. Her biographer Katherine Ramsland writes in *Prism of the Night*: "Anne did not analyze what the story might mean or how events in her life might be fueling her words..." (Ramsland 143). Rice does not disagree with this psychoanalytical interpretation of her work. She recognized the link between her subconscious and Louis in a *TV Guide* interview. "Louis is based on the lack of strength

and will and faith I had while writing it” (Ginsberg 27). Through Louis, Rice dealt with her own loss of faith, the death of her mother and her daughter, and her struggle with her husband as they both sank into alcoholism. Rice, perhaps also unconsciously, structured her themes around the Catholic ethos that shaped her youth. Encoded within *Interview With the Vampire* are symbols of Rice’s frustration with the failure of miracles, the power-hungry clergy, the unrealistic sense of morality that she saw around her, and the inability of ritual to produce any tangible effects.

Louis’ tale begins with the failure of the mysterious and the mystical to save, a theme to which Rice will return in great detail almost thirty years later. Louis’ brother Paul claims to have been visited by the Virgin Mary and commanded to turn the family fortune over to charity. Louis refuses, even though he loves his brother dearly. In his distress, Paul kills himself by throwing himself down a flight of stairs. His death is the death of idealism, or the youthful innocence that believes miracles can change the world. Just as Paul’s miracle failed to alter his reality, Anne’s childhood dedication to the saints failed to save her from the harsh reality of losing her mother Katherine to alcoholism. “In a way Paul’s death was also the death of Anne herself: the intense person of faith that she had once been...” (Ramsland 144). The failure of the Virgin Mary to affect Paul’s existence in a palpable way is also Katherine’s failure to shape her daughters’ maturity. Mary moves Paul to change his life, but she does not show such a sign to others and thus leaves Paul to do the work alone. Rice herself suffered the same fate as Paul, for her mother died before being able to see Rice through her spiritual crises.

Louis’ inability to believe his brother’s visions erodes his own faith. Because he has been given no sign that God does exist and many reasons to doubt that a loving force

is at work in the world, Louis abandons Catholicism. Even though he does not accept the reality of God, however, he does accept the reality of malice. “People who cease to believe in God or goodness always still believe in the devil...[e]vil is always possible. And goodness is eternally difficult” (*Interview 13*). Rice uses Louis to express her frustration concerning her own doubts. Louis once believed in mystics and revelation, yet refuses to believe his own brother could be a part of these mysteries. Louis does not think that the divine is manifest in his own life even though he does accept stories about mystics in far away places. After Paul’s death, however, Louis feels guilt over refusing to believe his brother. When a priest tries to tell him that his brother was possessed by the devil, Louis gives up on his faith entirely. The enraged Louis nearly kills the priest while throwing him out of the house. He explains that “[h]is contemptuous attitude towards my brother reflected my own...his refusal to even entertain the idea that sanctity had passed so close” (*Interview 13*). Louis’ rejection of Catholic mystical teachings drives him into direct conflict with the authority of the church. By physically removing the priest from his home, Louis symbolically opens a door for a new authority to enter.

This new authority of Louis’ immortal life is Lestat, and Rice uses this character to embody her frustration with the Catholic clergy. Lestat superficially allows Louis to choose vampirism, yet Louis’ refusal would ensure his death. Lestat insinuates himself into Louis’ world by placing himself at the center of the new vampire’s experiences. Lestat’s steps to ensure his own place of centrality and power mimic the same actions made by the Catholic hierarchy. For example, Lestat theatrically gives Louis the choice of immortality. “Let me say,” Louis explains, “that when [Lestat had] finished speaking, no other decision was possible for me, and I pursued my course of action without a

backward glance” (*Interview 14*). This imitates the Catholic sacrament of confirmation. The choice Catholic children make between the Church and the threat of eternal damnation parallels Louis’ choice. Members of the clergy are in charge of initiating children into the church, at which point they will become dependent upon the local priest for life in the Catholic Church. Lestat uses Louis’ Catholic background to evoke the familiar sacrament and therefore establishes himself as the central authority over Louis’ new life.

Another scathing accusation made of the priests and clergy is that of greed for material wealth. Lestat claims to choose Louis for his beauty, yet Louis suspects that the vampire also covets his wealth. Tithing has always been a part of the Church’s income. In some parishes, one had to have a card to be punched upon receiving Easter communion-- one of the defining acts for Catholics. These cards were held hostage, however, by the priests until “pew rent” had been paid (Dolan 224). Lestat follows the pattern of the Church by using Louis’ power and wealth for his own gain. Lestat takes up residence with Louis, and uses Louis’ money to refurnish the plantation. Lestat disdains books and mortal scholarship, yet loves the extravagance of eighteenth century New Orleans society. “ ‘That’s mortal nonsense,’ he would say to me, while at the same time spending so much of my money to splendidly furnish Pointe du Lac that even I, who cared nothing for the money, was forced to wince” (*Interview 36*). Louis fears that refusing Lestat’s requests for money will anger him and cause him to withhold the knowledge he claims to have. This threat is again mirroring the threat of the Catholic authority that without full compliance, Catholics will not be admitted to the sacraments.

Not content to merely point out the problems with the clergy, Rice also attacks their claims to power. Lestat repeatedly reminds Louis that there are secrets that Louis must learn in order to survive, yet never does he teach the new vampire anything esoteric or special. “But in fact, the main part of what he did teach me was practical and not so difficult to figure out for oneself” (*Interview* 35). Louis’ direct questions are met with scorn and derision. In a New Orleans swamp, Lestat fails to tell Louis that no creature in nature can harm vampires. Lestat never volunteers information to Louis about the nature or history of vampires, and seems to enjoy watching him discover mundane facts about himself. “He laughed uproariously when I discovered I could see myself in a mirror and that crosses had no effect upon me, and would taunt me with sealed lips when I asked about God and the devil” (*Interview* 37). In a culture where being Catholic required submission to the clergy and “the authority of God as mediated through the Church” (Dolan 224), Rice’s inference that religious authority is built upon empty promises and threats seems to be part of her personal removal from the Catholic culture. This allowed Rice to explore a new idea of morality in *Interview With the Vampire*.

The traditional imagery associated with vampires lent itself to addressing the two most severe sins of Rice’s childhood. First, the cultural condemnation of sexual impurity that Dolan considers a huge factor in the Catholic culture of sin is clearly breached by the intimate nature of the vampire’s bite. Through expressing herself in Louis’ words and giving her personal experiences fictional outlets in Louis’ story, Rice creates a very effeminate hero. Drawing on the feminine aspects of Catholic devotionism, Rice constructs two androgynous leading men. Although Lestat’s androgyny is emphasized in later novels, *Interview With the Vampire* portrays Louis as the passive recipient of

Lestat's masculine presence. "Louis is feminized, manifesting traits such as passivity, sensitivity, compunction, compassion, and resentment" (Keller 16). Without directly stating it, Rice builds her novel around a homosexual couple and graphically parallels Louis' initiation into vampirism with a first homosexual encounter. "I remember that the movements of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion..." (*Interview* 19). The underlying symbolism of the physical and social union between Louis and Lestat caused *Interview With the Vampire* to become widely read in the emergent gay culture of the seventies and eighties. While she may have not intended to portray a homosexual couple, using her own life as inspiration caused Rice to ignore the conventional rules of morality and deal with one of the most controversial aspects of sexuality.

Alcoholism entered Rice's life at an early age when her mother died from the disease. Upon Michelle's death, Anne and her husband both began drinking heavily. Rice's vampires reflect this self-abandonment; Louis expresses her feelings of guilt over it. Louis and Lestat do not simply drink blood to feed, but enjoy the process of drawing human blood into them. The feeding process involves a swoon, or a state very much like an alcoholic buzz. "For vampires, this swoon is like the drunken swoon of an alcoholic, and the compulsion to experience it over and over again is like an alcoholic's addiction" (*Companion* 444). While Lestat revels in the kill, Louis is convinced by his mortal education that drunkenness is inappropriate. Louis attempts to feed on animals alone, thus forgoing the euphoric taking of human life. Louis' eventual surrendering to his cravings is indicative of Rice's personal descent into alcoholism. For Rice, the result of that descent is her first novel; for Louis, the result of his weakness is the child vampire

Claudia. Because Louis gives in to the temptation to drink from her, Lestat finds the two together and uses Claudia to bind Louis to him. This gives Louis a physical reminder of his transgression, which he comes to love. This love transforms his sin into something good. Similarly, Rice's first novel was centered on her own transgressions and pain, yet she loved it because it allowed her to move past those issues. "The writing eliminated the need for alcohol. I turned my pain into art" (Ginsberg 26). In other words, weakness may lead to something better, and one should not punish oneself for giving into temptation.

The vampire Claudia represents much more than Louis' salvation from despair. Rice grew up taking communion everyday, yet the events of her adult life showed her that immortality of the soul does not lessen the pain or reality of physical death. In her rebellion against the senselessness of her losses, Anne focused on the vampire's use of blood to grant physically what the Catholic Church grants spiritually. "The Church was unable to grant [immortality] in the flesh, but vampires could do it" (Ramsland 146). The embodiment of this belief is Claudia, the immortal child that is inspired by Rice's dead daughter Michelle. Michelle died at the age of five, and Claudia is frozen in her development at the age of five. When considering that Rice admits having nicknamed her daughter Claudia, it is clear that the character in the novel is a reflection of the author's feelings over her daughter's death.

Claudia is the physical fulfillment of a spiritual promise. When Louis discovers her in a shack in New Orleans, her mother is dead and the body has begun to rot. Clearly exposed to plague, the child is defenseless and hardly knows that is happening when Louis drinks from her. It is Lestat, however, who rescues the girl from a New Orleans

hospital and gives her his blood. The blood is offered to the sick Claudia on the verge of death, and she is given life everlasting. Louis says of Claudia that immediately after she became a vampire “[s]he sat composed, revived, filled with life, no signs of pallor or weakness in her, her legs stretched out straight on the damask, her white gown soft and thin like an angel’s gown around her small form” (*Interview* 91). The ritual of giving her blood turns Claudia into an angelic figure saved from weakness and harm, just as the Eucharist is meant to participate in a soul’s salvation. Her white dress echoes the white gowns worn by girls for their first communion.

In the pre-Vatican II Church of Rice’s childhood, the goblet of wine was often withheld from the congregation and consumed by priests alone. The denial of the blood of Christ in the Eucharist can easily be construed in a grieving mind as the fatal flaw that compromised one’s grace and brought heartache. Although Catholic doctrine officially teaches that the body and blood of Christ are present in both the bread and the wine, popular conception of the Eucharist conceives of the bread as the body of Christ and the wine as His blood. This division between body and blood becomes very important in the story arc of the first three *Vampire Chronicles*. Rice uses this Eucharistic imagery to denote a separation of the physical and the spiritual. Therefore, Rice’s characters live on blood, or the spiritual, while their flesh hardens and becomes a mere casing. The flesh is forgotten because it dies; blood is eternal when consumed by vampires. Lestat must correct Claudia before she consumes the mortal part of her victims. “She gnawed first, as if she meant to devour his flesh, and then Lestat showed her what to do” (*Interview* 92). Claudia is taught that the flesh, the part of the Eucharist offered to Rice’s childhood congregation, is useless. Her immortal life is symbolic of the power the Church does not

offer, and the results that it does not produce. The power of the blood, or spirit, over the flesh is symbolized in a vision Louis has in St. Louis Cathedral. "I looked up and saw myself...taking the Body of Christ and strewing Its white wafers all over the carpet; and walking then on the sacred wafers, walking up and down before the altar, giving Holy Communion to the dust" (*Interview* 142). Louis' vision confirms for him that the ritual of communion is useless and that God does not exist. To take the body and blood of Christ does nothing, but to take the blood of mortal victims sustains him forever. Rice gives an example of this when Louis terrifies his confessor and chases him down the aisle to the Communion rail. Louis takes the priest's blood and leaves his flesh to wither on the altar.

The complex network of symbolism within *Interview With the Vampire* climaxes with the creation of Claudia as a vampire. Louis and Lestat continue to live with her for seventy years, and eventually their family is destroyed and Louis is left alone in the world with only his misery to accompany him. Claudia is destroyed by the sun after attempting to kill Lestat. However, this is part of Rice's emotional catharsis that extends past the pertinent symbolism of her own religious struggle. While Louis encounters more authority figures and takes part in the passing of immortal blood one more time, nothing is dramatically different from the first time he takes part in these symbolic acts and relationships. The end of the novel finds Louis just as broken and depressed as he is the moment he realizes that his discovery of Claudia as a mortal child brought her into Lestat's clutches. The duration of *Interview With the Vampire* covers no new symbolic or allegorical ground. The evolution that fans longed to see in Louis would never come,

yet ten years later Rice would write more about her vampires, and once again return to the themes of the Catholic ethos.

The dark, desperate tone of *Interview With the Vampire* captured the devotion of readers, who called for a sequel. However, it was not until ten years later that Rice felt she had grown enough to return to the themes and metaphors raised in the novel. When Rice chose to continue the story of *Interview With the Vampire*, she felt she must change the voice and tone of the novel. When she published the second novel of *The Vampire Chronicles*, entitled *The Vampire Lestat*, Rice had evolved as a person through dealing with the pain and suffering of her past. For the sequel, Rice drew on her experience with fame and the disappointment she faced from her friends. Many of her previous supporters felt she had betrayed her art by publishing her work with a major publishing house. “Some of them hinted she had sold out; she’d compromised the artistic vision of the literary writer for crass commercial success” (Ramsland 173-174). Despite this, Anne moved on with her life. She and Stan had a baby boy named Christopher in 1979, and Anne published three other works before publishing *Lestat*. Connecting with a stronger and more positive side of herself, she let go of Louis and used Lestat as the main embodiment of her voice. “I wanted, consciously, to get into the mind of somebody who always *acted* no matter what happened, somebody who was very strong and who tended to move forward and to make a decision of some kind under any circumstances” (Riley 14). With Lestat as her voice, Rice set out to express her new opinions on the issues raised in *Interview With the Vampire*.

The Vampire Lestat presents a very different picture of the Catholic ethos that shaped Rice’s worldview. By focusing on the character of Lestat, Rice is able to address

the effects of the Catholic ethos on her adult life. If Louis symbolizes Rice's desperation, Lestat symbolizes her strength. Lestat does not lose his faith after the death of a loved one, but confirms his lifelong doubts of God when he realizes that his prayers will never be answered. Unlike Louis who follows his unkind maker waiting for revelations, Lestat is content to never have the answers given to him and never needs to be guided. Louis' heartache and guilt over breaking the moral code of his human life contrasts with Lestat's development of and working with his own sense of morality. Perhaps the most dynamic difference is in the use of rituals within the novels. The promise of the Eucharist is fulfilled for Louis with the creation of Claudia, yet Lestat places himself at the center of a Mass-like ritual and therefore fulfills his own goals and promises.

The Vampire Lestat begins with Rice's struggle with religious authority. Rice accepted her disappointment in the clergy and this outlook is reflected in Lestat. Rice describes Lestat as "someone who had never had a teacher and never bemoaned the lack of one" (Ramsland 246). The first confrontation Lestat has with such a figure is Magnus, the vampire who forcibly turns him into a vampire. Magnus gives Lestat immortal life, tells Lestat that only fire or the sun can destroy vampires, and then proceeds to destroy himself. "Now, live forever, beautiful [Lestat]," Magnus tells him, "with the gifts nature gave you, and discover for yourself all those most unnatural gifts which I have added to the lot" (*Lestat* 84). Magnus' role in Lestat's life is similar to the role of priests in Rice's Catholic life. Priests only serve the spiritual side, which often finds conflict with the reality of modern life. While Magnus told Lestat how to survive, he did not teach Lestat how to live a full life. Rice believes that it is up to the individual, symbolized by Lestat, to pick and choose which path to take in life and to defend that choice.

Lestat chooses to live a life void of religious beliefs that can lead to more disappointment. This makes Lestat a threat to any authority figure he encounters. No relationship better emphasizes this than that between Lestat and Armand. Lestat meets Armand when Armand leads the Children of Darkness, or vampires who think that God wants them to serve Satan in order to drive mortals to goodness. The structure of the “coven,” or organized group of vampires, is that of a Christian religious order. Armand is the priest who demands his rules be followed because “[s]ince the beginning of time...these mysteries have existed” (*Lestat* 196). Armand does not explain where his rules come from, thus referring to them as “mysteries” and disallowing any input or change. Lestat is the force that shatters these mysteries just as Rice’s research into philosophy and science shattered her own faith. By proving to the Children of Darkness that they can enter churches without being struck down, or withstand the Sign of the Cross, Lestat proves that their leader has been wrong all along. This destroys the faith of the entire group, and sets Lestat up as the one to lead them into a new existence.

“It is finished for my children” [Armand] said. “It is finished and done, for they know they can disregard all of it. The things that bound us together, gave us strength to endure as damned things! The mysteries that protected us here [are ruined].” (*Lestat* 197)

Lestat serves as a metaphor for the independent scholar that Rice saw in herself. He is disenchanted with the romantic ideas associated with older traditions. Lestat’s destruction of false ideas that control other people reflects Rice’s escape from Catholic teachings that she felt were incorrect. Rice’s disillusionment stemmed from her experiences in life, so she wrote similar events into Lestat’s history. Armand represents the people of faith whose beliefs are unsupported and crumble under scrutiny.

Armand cannot understand Lestat's iconoclasm because Armand has faith. Lestat is disillusioned with Catholicism early in his existence because God does not send him a miracle. The absence of the divine favor that devoted Christians are told to expect causes Lestat to turn away completely from the Church. Having been abducted by Magnus, Lestat realizes that his life is in danger. He gleans that his captor is not human by his appearance, and his fear inspires Lestat to pray for help, but he is not saved. "I *had* to believe in God now. I had to. That was absolutely my only hope. I went to make the Sign of the Cross" (*Lestat* 76). Lestat begs for help from the divine in his hour of need. Because invoking the name of God and making the Sign of the Cross does nothing to hinder the demon, Lestat concludes that "the devil reigns in heaven and heaven is hell" (*Lestat* 76). Lestat concludes that the divine, if it exists at all, is separated from the physical world. This belief remains with Lestat, and becomes much more important later in the novel. Most important in this scene, however, is Lestat's active testing of the mysterious powers of Heaven. He proves for himself that the Church is wrong in teaching that God will intervene with a miracle, thus accepting that he must take control of his own life.

Using Armand's maker Marius as a metaphor for God, Rice seems to blame God Himself for her rebellion against the Catholic Church and its rules. Lestat believes the god-like vampire Marius, the oldest and wisest vampire of whom Lestat has ever heard, will know the meaning of vampires' existence. Because Lestat seeks Marius in order to learn ultimate truth, Marius serves as a metaphor for the manifestation of the divine. No matter where Lestat goes, he cannot find any proof of Marius' existence or clues to his whereabouts. When Marius chooses to appear to Lestat, he is described as a god-like

figure so transformed by his age that he seems more than human. “What one of us could have such a face? What did we know of patience, of seeming goodness, of compassion” (*Lestat* 316). Marius offers him the secrets that he has learned over time, just as a mystic receives a sense of ultimate understanding. However, Marius’ stories do not give meaning to vampires’ existence, but merely reveal that a power-hungry spirit created vampires on accident. In other words, Lestat as a mystic learns that Creation was a random set of events and therefore has no order and no supreme authority. Through Marius, Lestat learns that “[t]o be godless is probably the first step to innocence...to lose the sense of sin and subordination, the false grief for things supposed to be lost” (*Lestat* 333). Marius can offer no true knowledge of God or the Devil, and he has no first hand knowledge of the vampires’ origins. Although Lestat succeeds in finding his “ultimate” truth, he is left with only more questions. Marius, like God Himself, fails to give Lestat ultimate truth, yet still imposes his authority upon him.

Marius assumes authority over Lestat because he is the first vampire Lestat has met that actually has answers about their origins. Marius tells Lestat that he has been the keeper of the queen and king of vampires, Akasha and Enkil. The one rule he sets forth, however, is that Lestat must not approach the subterranean chamber in which Marius has built a shrine around the sleeping monarchs. “Wander all the rooms. Only the sanctuary of Those Who Must Be Kept should not be approached. Do not go down those stairs alone,” Marius instructs Lestat (*Lestat* 418). However, Lestat is unable to follow this warning, and he goes into the temple and rouses the sleeping Akasha with his violin playing. When she stirs and gives Lestat her blood, Enkil threatens to kill the impetuous young vampire. It is only Marius who has the power to remove Lestat and placate Enkil.

For his transgression and the danger he caused, Marius forces Lestat to leave. Marius says to Lestat, "I want you away now so that you don't provoke him," (*Lestat* 428) but the real threat in Lestat's actions is his disregard for any rules that are placed on him. Lestat is willing to sacrifice esoteric knowledge for autonomy, stressing that autonomy is better than becoming a servant to the wisest teacher.

Lestat's autonomy forces him to construct his own moral code. Using her personal experience with alcohol, Rice creates scenarios in which vice is a choice one may make and experience without condemning one's soul. Lestat cannot act in a certain way merely because he believes he will one day be compensated or punished for it. Unlike Louis, Lestat's sense of morality is not shattered by his need to feed on humans, nor the pleasure he takes from it. As Rice states, she is most interested in Lestat because he "refuses to be bad at being bad" (Riley 14). Lestat spent many nights of his mortal life in a secluded room with his best friend Nicolas as the two drank wine and philosophized about the world around them. " 'It's a secular age, Monsieur,' he said, as he was filling our glasses from the new bottle of wine. 'Very dangerous' " (*Lestat* 41). This same sense of intimacy and pleasure are present when Lestat drinks from his victims, reiterating *Interview With the Vampire's* connection between the human blood of victims and the consecrated wine of the Eucharist. Careful not to violate his own sense of justice, however, Lestat drinks only from criminals. This ensures that his crimes fall into a greater scheme of events and he is not robbing an innocent person of life.

Rice's personal experience with the notion of "impurity" is encoded in the end of Lestat's relationship with Nicolas. Rice's friends, former professors, and colleagues rejected her success as a "sell out" to mainstream media. Television appearances and

interviews promoting *Interview* and later books brought accusations of greed (Ramsland 174). Coming from those she thought understood her position, Rice found herself feeling cast out. A similar feeling drove Lestat to finally divulge his vampiric nature to his mortal friend Nicolas. Nicolas' blandishments mirror the criticism Rice received from her friends when she wouldn't fund their endeavors with her personal money. "How could you keep it from me," Nicolas asks Lestat as he tries to convince the vampire to share his power. "I would have shared anything I possessed with you" (*Lestat* 207-208). It is interesting to note that while Rice never states that Lestat and Nicolas are lovers, their relationship continues the allusions toward homosexuality that produced much commentary in *Interview With the Vampire*. By setting Lestat and Nicolas in an intimate, homoerotic relationship, Rice has her characters make choices informed by their conscience. This defends her use of a corporate publishing house, for she made a private decision that she felt was right. Nicolas' cruel manipulation through guilt, a tactic Rice finds contemptible in the clergy, reflects Rice's shock and dismay at her friends' attempts to use her success against her. Therefore, Rice's moral code is entirely her own. She rejects the idea that others can condemn private, personal decisions, while it is the actions that influence and affect others that are open scrutiny.

In following her own conscience, Rice found herself in the middle of a publicity storm where fans would approach her and express their admiration for her work. This almost ritual-like performance is dramatized through Lestat's performance as the lead singer of a rock band called Satan's Night Out. His songs reveal that the world is inhabited and endangered by vampires. The concert represents Lestat's acceptance of his role as "[a] symbol, an outcast, a freak of nature-something loved, something despised,

all of those things” (*Lestat* 464). Lestat tries to use this adoration to show fans why they should despise him – in other words, because people love Lestat he can show them how evil and despicable he really is. “And so in *The Vampire Lestat*, he tries to show mortals through his music just how evil vampires are so that they won’t fall [into darkness]” (Smith 56). By trying to be a redeemer who is loved and hated at the same time, Lestat becomes a Christ figure, and his concert takes on symbolism of the Mass. This reflects the heavy and continual influence of Lestat’s, and therefore also Rice’s, Catholic upbringing. Even in rebellion, the symbol for morality and redemption is Christ. Because Christ and the Church fail to produce any tangible results, Lestat takes on the challenge of improving the world. Lestat’s refusal to believe that God or Christ exist can be read as Rice’s own doubt expressed in a fictional setting. Since Lestat does not believe that Christ will ever help humanity, he uses the belief that Christ was God Incarnate to bridge the divine between the spirit and the flesh. Harkening back to God’s failure to save him from Magnus, Lestat attempts to ensure that no other human will have to endure the same thing. Making himself a Christ figure and his concert a religious experience modeled on the Catholic Mass, Lestat reveals the far-reaching impact of this ritual on Anne Rice.

As she did in her first novel, Rice presents a living, physical being at the center of her imagery. Just as Claudia embodied the fulfillment of a theological promise, Lestat represents transcending reliance upon this promise. Lestat decides to take redemption into his own hands, and in so doing uses Christian images and concepts familiar to him. Under the heat of the lights, Lestat begins to sweat profusely, causing blood to run down his face. This scene is best described in a line from *The Vampire Lestat*’s sequel, *The*

Queen of the Damned, in which a mortal fan is watching Lestat from the base of the stage. “The blood ran in tiny rivulets down his white face, as if from Christ’s Crown of Thorns...” (*Queen* 204). Fans call Lestat’s name in such a way as to remind him of a “religious frenzy.” This frenzy is fueled not only by the appearance of Lestat, but also by the words he sings. Like the Bible, his songs are ancient mysteries being revealed only to those who participate. In a letter on her website, Rice states that her words are chosen very carefully, much as the words of the Bible are believed to be influenced by God and contain great importance (www.annerice.com). Lestat’s songs also correlate to the scriptures because both are trying to save the receiver of the message. In retelling the tale, Lestat recognizes the religious parallels when he says that those in attendance “were all with the gods” (*Lestat* 470).

The Vampire Lestat ends abruptly after Lestat’s concert. As he is falling asleep, a cold hand goes around him and he becomes aware that Akasha has risen and is with him. This marks a very drastic turn for Rice’s series. The first person singular is left behind in exchange for an omniscient voice that tells of the terrible events produced by Lestat’s concert. *The Vampire Lestat* serves as a testimony to Rice’s changed outlook on life, but someone more powerful and experienced than Lestat must answer the questions that arose throughout the course of the novel. Through Lestat, Rice argues that the Church’s belief in divine intervention is false, therefore the clergy cannot know the will of God nor impose any moral code in His name. Lestat therefore uses popular images associated with Christ and the Mass to redeem himself and other vampires, hoping to inspire goodness by demonstrating what true evil is. However, Rice’s argument allows freedom of morality. A reader must ask if any being with the power to influence humanity with

his or her religious images is free to do so. With this in mind, Rice promises the *The Vampire Chronicles* will continue. She keeps this promise with the next novel in the series, *The Queen of the Damned*.

Lestat is a character in the third novel and encapsulates the novel by writing the introduction and the conclusion, yet *The Queen of the Damned* is not his story. For the first time, Rice does not use one character to embody her beliefs, but instead discusses her abstract philosophical ideas through dialogue between multiple characters. In this way she is able to argue with her internal opinions and external influences. Having established her beliefs about the Church and its various teachings in the previous novels, *The Queen of the Damned* constitutes Rice challenging her anti-Catholic sentiments and philosophies. The novel is filled with accusations against the Church being lost in the spiritual realm and examples of how one may rise above that to unite both the spiritual and the physical. It is tempting to consider the title self-referential, yet a deeper examination of the text shows that Rice is damning only those who separate the spirit from the physical. Because of this, her forays into non-Christian philosophies end and she is left with no option but to reanalyze Catholicism.

In the years following the publication of *The Vampire Lestat*, Rice and her husband moved with their young son to Sonoma County in California. The family purchased a house built into the side of a mountain and surrounded by monstrous redwood trees, and Rice was so enamored with the home that she used it as a principal setting in *The Queen of the Damned*. While Anne found herself happy and at peace in the new home, her son Christopher felt that it was a place right out of the horror genre. Chris was frightened by what could be lurking outside in the forest. “His curtainless window

looked out into the forest...the things he imagined *out there* paralyzed him at times” (Ramsland 294). While Chris was upset that the house was, as he described it in reference to the popular teen horror series *Friday the Thirteenth*, “...a place Jason would dwell,” Rice found that the home inspired her work. However, the themes for her new novel were developing slowly. When Rice finally went to task to produce it, she found herself using current events from her life in the book’s storyline in order to analyze them on the page. Chris’ uneasiness and Rice’s desire to help him while doing what was best for her caused the author to answer the question of the last *Vampire Chronicle*. *The Queen of the Damned* deals heavily with the culture of sin and morality by considering what would happen to society if every person tried to redeem humanity in his or her own way.

In order for Rice to reflect her current opinions of the Catholic ethos, she needed to establish the sources from which her opposing moral codes would emanate. Playing with the conventional ideas of mystical unions, Rice developed two opposing moralities based on the way in which humans commune with the divine. Rice describes the journey of several characters to Lestat’s Halloween concert, with which she concluded *The Vampire Lestat*. By describing the Mass-like symbolism from the point of view of those in the audience, the concert takes on mythic proportions as a site of pilgrimage where participants have contact with something holy and supernatural. One such character is a mortal woman named Jesse Reeves. The Talamasca’s psychic detectives, who research the paranormal in all its forms, train Jesse and assign her to investigate the New Orleans townhouse where Lestat and Louis lived with Claudia. When spending the night there, she is visited by the ghost of Claudia and becomes convinced that vampires are proof of a

great supernatural power at work. She is driven to Lestat's concert as a way to validate her belief. "She would know then, in the physical moment, the answer to everything" (*Queen* 174). Lestat is a supernatural figure with whom people want to commune. This inspires the love and admiration of the crowd, who accept and are moved by his message, thus making Lestat "...Christ on the cathedral cross" (*Queen* 211). Jesse succeeds in touching Lestat and feeling his supernaturally hard skin. Her utterance, "Oh, God, real," (*Queen* 204) is a play on words, revealing not only her immediate shock at the feel of his "preternatural" skin but also shows her acceptance of the supernatural. Rice's reliance upon the term "preternatural" is indicative of the role Lestat plays in the mind of his fans. Literally meaning "above nature," the term places Lestat above the humans in the crowd, just as Christ is "above" in Heaven.

Lestat's role as a mystical presence in his fans' lives inspires them to turn their back on evil; he is not able to do the same quite so easily. A newly awakened Akasha takes him right after his concert. Since Akasha transcends humanity and cannot truly have a personal connection with an individual, she represents the danger of pure divine presence in nature. Because Lestat does not accept God's existence, his intimacy with Akasha is the closest he believes he can come to a transcendent experience. Akasha tells Lestat of her plan to right the wrongs of the human race. Killing all but one hundred men will allow women to be able to establish a peaceful and happy existence. In order to accomplish this, Akasha uses the mystical traditions of several different religions to influence the women of the world. The women to whom she appears perceive her as both the Virgin Mary and the ancient Mother Goddess.

That's what she was here. The Madonna, the Virgin....[The women] were witnesses to miracles; they had been spoken to by the Blessed Mother

herself. And she was the ancient Mother, the Mother who had always dwelt in the grottoes of this island, even before Christ, the Mother whose tiny naked statues were now and then found in the earth. (*Queen* 324)

Her powers allow her to come like the Holy Spirit upon mortals, producing ecstatic responses in her followers. Over the centuries, Akasha's flesh transformed into marble, symbolizing her loss of humanity as her supernatural powers grew to immense proportions (*Queen* 237). Similarly, the popular conception of the Virgin Mary changed over time so that she lost most of her human characteristics and became a marble image as she took on a spiritually superior role in Catholics' lives. This, Rice suggests, is the flaw of both Akasha's and the Virgin's union with humans. By losing all humanity, Akasha's power is not harnessed by anything, and thus is unable to alter the material world. Rice gives an example of this in *Interview with The Vampire* in her treatment of Paul's suicide after he cannot implement the mission the Virgin gives him. "One of the major themes in *The Queen of the Damned*," Rice says in *The Prism of the Night*, "is that the flesh teaches all wisdom and when we become too unanchored and get into abstract thinking that betrays compassion for the individual, that's where the real danger lies" (Ramsland 295).

Rice next faced some of her unresolved issues with the Catholic authority and its dogmas (Ramsland 304). To express her frustration over the Church's condemnation of the physical world and its worthiness, she ascribes similar feelings to the mortal Akasha. Akasha comforts herself with her belief in the divine, but she longs to have physical proof of the existence of her gods. "I perceived the war inside her, between the handmaiden of the goddess Inanna who

wanted to believe herself blessed, and the dark brooding soul who believed finally in nothing” (*Queen* 304). The queen’s longing for a theophany is the direct product of Rice’s own search for a concrete link to the divine. Her efforts to prove her religion introduce her to twin witches who prove that no gods exist at all. Ultimately, the queen’s search for concrete evidence of the supernatural destroys her faith entirely. Ramsland asserts that the passage detailing Akasha’s descent into bitterness modeled Rice’s own.

On the other hand, she was angry, and the rage she felt was against her parents and against her teachers, against the priests and priestesses of her childhood, and against the god she had worshipped and against anyone had ever comforted her, or told her that life was good. (*Queen* 309)

While this character development may have been cathartic for Rice, she had a very different response than the fictional Egyptian queen. Still, Akasha’s attempt to establish herself as a goddess reflects Rice’s desire to find her own spiritual truth.

The assurance that there are no gods drives Akasha to establish her own religion when she is made into a vampire. Now that she has power over mortals, she is convinced that she can fulfill the role of goddess. Moving beyond human attachments is easy for Akasha, for “[e]ven as a mortal woman she hated her limitations and consequently does not does not struggle to retain human compassion” (Ramsland 300). By making herself both a goddess and a priestess, Akasha’s abandonment of the mortal and physical for the eternal and spiritual is a caricature of the Catholic clergy. A priest must abandon the world of the flesh and forego sex, a very basic part of human nature, in order to be considered holy. Akasha similarly disposes of her innate human tendencies in order to gain more power. After the death of their mother, Akasha still badgers the witches with

questions about the nature of the gods, wondering “[c]ould [the twins] deepen her knowledge or bring her into closer understanding of what was divine” (*Queen* 301). Because she is so focused on the spiritual realm, Akasha is divorced from her human empathy. Once again, the separation between the flesh and the spirit is destructive. Rice intends this to reflect the separation between priests’ spiritual and practical knowledge. Though a priest can offer spiritual guidance, he cannot truly understand the complex relationships involved in physical and emotional relationships because he cannot participate in them.

The antithesis of Akasha’s priestly power is Lestat’s individualism. Lestat represents overcoming deep religious feelings that cause conflict in order to be one’s own authority. Lestat’s love for Akasha is as strong as any youth’s love for a spiritual role model. However, the philosophy she teaches him goes against every truth he has established for himself. “The price is unacceptable. It’s madness; it’s mass murder; it’s against nature” (*Queen* 333). In other words, Lestat disempowers Akasha by not believing in her teachings. Rice intimates that if one merely turns one’s back on the authorities that are teaching contradiction, one has overcome them. Akasha knows that she must convince others to help her, or else she will have no power base. Still, she threatens others into helping her instead of reasoning with them. Her threats reveal the contradiction and betrayal of human emotions as she threatens to kill Lestat for refusing to help her. “When I finish with this one I love, I shall kill all those you love...but who shall destroy me?” (*Queen* 411). Akasha’s question is answered by her last words before she falls to her enemies. “All against me, all of you, not a one who would come to

my side” (*Queen* 414). Akasha, symbol of the priesthood, is dependent upon others to give her power, and without them she fails.

Rituals lie at the heart of the relationship between Akasha and Lestat. Most of their time together is spent either performing Akasha’s ritual cleansing of the world, or discussing its benefits. Akasha’s ritual mocks the rite of transubstantiation, made evident when her words to Lestat echo Christ’s words at the Last Supper. Christ told his Apostles to come together and remember him through the bread and the wine that was his flesh and blood. In this case, the flesh and blood are combined to serve as a common link between all mortals and the divine. The Eucharist builds a community by using symbols that all humans share with Christ. Akasha destroys this when she tells Lestat, “You kill now in my name and for my cause and I give you the greatest freedom ever given man: I tell you that to slay your mortal brother is right” (*Queen* 267). Akasha’s inverts the Eucharist by making it a rite that separates the divine from the physical and destroys a community instead of building it. Because Akasha has transcended the need and use of her physical body, she uses the flesh to highlight the distance between mortals and the divine figure she understands herself to be.

Also, Akasha’s words invoke the imagery of the flesh and the blood involved in the transubstantiation. Lestat follows Akasha’s orders to kill but relies on psychic powers to do so. This murder does not require any physical action and is the result of unseen forces. Akasha instructs Lestat to “[s]trike for the tender organs; rupture them; make the blood flow” (*Queen* 267). Rice seems to draw this wording from the Eucharist, in which priests announce that the

congregation is to receive the flesh and blood of Christ. In both cases, physical reality has been changed without any visible proof. This is dramatized when Lestat tries to convince himself that he did not actually kill the men because he did not have any contact with them. “Dear God, I didn’t do it! Not me. I didn’t. And my hands, they are clean! Oh, but I had! And what am I that I could do it” (*Queen* 267). His internal argument comes from Rice’s own doubt over the power of the Eucharist. She tries to explain to herself how she can commune with Christ through a ritual in which she does nothing for herself but follow orders and believe what she is told.

Akasha is defeated through a ritual in which the physical world combines with the spiritual. This ritual begins with the arrival of Mekare, an ancient being who has lived alone in the jungles since she was made a vampire. Mekare can sense Akasha’s presence and treks across the globe to find the ancient queen. Dressed in rags and covered in dirt, Mekare clearly represents the earthly and the physical as opposed to Akasha’s representation of boundless spirit. The meeting of the two is the Earth Mother coming into contact with the Queen of Heaven, or the physical merging with the spiritual. Mekare takes Akasha’s power into her by consuming Akasha’s heart and brain, yet again referencing the Eucharist as a connection between the physical and spiritual. “Mekare lifted the brain to her mouth; [her sister] put the heart in the other hand; Mekare took them both into herself” (*Queen* 416). Akasha’s power, or spirit, is combined with Mekare’s, thus balancing the two. “Behold. The Queen of the Damned,” announces Mekare’s

sister as she presents Mekare to the other vampires (*Queen* 417). Mekare is the manifestation of the union of spirit and matter.

The battle between these two ancient women answers the question that began with *The Vampire Lestat*. Rice rejects the idea that each person should find his or her own form of redemption. That philosophy allows anyone to exercise moral control over other individuals. This was likely inspired by the battle Rice was fighting with herself during the creation of the novel. The dilemma over selfishly choosing what is right for herself but wrong for her son is echoed in Lestat's conversations with Akasha. Lestat asks what right Akasha has to impose her justice on the world, and asks in whose name the murder should be done. She answers him: "In the name of *my* morality." She goes on to name herself "the reason, the right, and the justification" for such acts (*Queen* 273). Here Rice clearly accepts the absurdity that the world may be run on a common system of right and wrong. Each individual, represented by Lestat, must deduce his or her own moral law. Just as Lestat rebels against Akasha in the end, so too must individuals stand up and deny the condemnation of any authority that tries to impose its morality and rules upon unwilling or unbelieving people. After completing *The Queen of the Damned*, the Rice family left the Sonoma County home.

Because Akasha represents a rigid system in which there is only one "correct" belief, Rice also uses this character to symbolize religious destruction and tyranny. By doing so, Rice destroys all the old rules and dogmas, such as prohibitions against alcohol, sex, and homosexuality. She embraces the physical

and the spiritual, calling for a belief system developed through experience and empathy. Because “Anne thought Akasha’s violence paralleled the AIDS epidemic in its focus on victimizing only males,” (Ramsland 301) the arguments given to Akasha in defense of men are arguments to God in defense of freedom of choice and expression on behalf of homosexuality. As Ramsland points out, Akasha also mirrors the devastation caused by Nazi Germany. Hitler serves as an example that one person’s philosophy must never be allowed to extend too far for fear it will try to control other people’s freedom.

Anne Rice presents a compelling argument against forcing people to follow any one moral code. Akasha’s destruction of human men is comparable to the death caused by religious wars. However, Lestat’s attempt to redeem himself allows the possibility for each person on Earth to become his or her own redeemer. As Akasha also shows, following a new form of religion can be as devastating as following a traditional path. Lestat loves Akasha deeply, just as Rice loved the alternatives to Catholicism that informed her move away from the church. Yet as the final scene between Mekare and Akasha suggests, the spiritual focus of Catholicism and the worldly focus of alternative philosophies must be combined to produce a working, complete theology. The first story arc of *The Vampire Chronicles* concludes with the first realization that Rice’s childhood Catholicism must be reintegrated into her life. This drastic shift finally began when she returned to her native New Orleans and her family’s Catholic traditions.

Part Two

*The Judgment of
Eden*

Anne Rice's return to the Catholic Church is reflected in her writings through Lestat's journey away from the godhood promised by Akasha and towards acceptance of God as an outside power. Lestat's journey to God may have been a result of Rice's journey back to her native New Orleans. After writing about New Orleans for years and visiting her family in the city, Rice decided to purchase a home there and permanently relocate. By returning to the city in which she grew up, Rice was once again in touch with the environment and culture that inspired her childhood devotion to Catholicism. This prompted Rice to return to the questions she raised in *Interview With the Vampire*. Through sustained contact and relations with family and friends who participated in the Catholic Church, Rice slowly began to accept the Catholic culture and ethos once again, although she did not return to Catholic orthodoxy. She sacrificed nothing of the spiritual beliefs and intellectual influences of the past few decades, yet began to reintroduce some important Catholic structures into her worldview. In the fourth and fifth volumes of *The Vampire Chronicles*, Rice reinterprets Biblical stories and Catholic teachings to better suit her personal opinions about good and evil. Although she clearly is not in complete agreement with the Roman Catholic Catechism, Rice does attend Mass regularly. The results of this contemplative period are recorded in the fourth *Vampire Chronicle*, *The Tale of the Body Thief*.

Rice uses the novel's plot structure to reflect her own reconsideration of some Catholic theology. Because of this, *The Tale of the Body Thief* symbolizes the traditional stages of Catholic Mass as well as the four elements of the Catholic ethos. In order for Rice to symbolize her syncretistic beliefs, she begins her novel with Lestat's attempts to find forgiveness by adhering to a traditional Catholic sense of sin. The anti-hero who has

thrived for hundreds of years on “being good at being bad” now feels that no good act can outweigh all the harm he has done in his long life. “But what good would one act of mercy be in the face of all I’ve done? I’m damned if there is a God or a Devil” (*Thief* 73). The ghost of Claudia fuels his guilt, constantly reminding him of the countless ways he sinned against her. He knows he must be made to pay, and so he goes to his one friend in the world, a mortal man named David Talbot. Introduced as the Superior General of the Talamasca and all its secrets in *The Queen of the Damned*, David fulfils the role of a priest to the penitent Lestat. It is to David that Lestat makes his final confession. Lestat admits that he is going to kill himself, saying simply “Don’t want to be alive anymore” (*Thief* 43). Lestat then goes to the Gobi Desert, where he plans to die in the fire of the sun, just as Claudia did. Akasha’s powerful blood, given to him in *The Queen of the Damned*, makes him entirely too strong to be destroyed by the sun, however, and Lestat admits that he did not believe he would die (*Thief* 47). This action is a self-punishment; it is Lestat’s confession and act of contrition. It signifies that he is still bound by other people’s concepts of sin, and he feels that he must conform to what others tell him is right and wrong, as well as endure the punishments concerning these matters.

After confession and penance, a Catholic may attend Mass in order to receive Holy Communion. Before the priest distributes the communion elements, however, he provides a sermon to the congregation. As Dolan points out, it is traditionally the sermon that appeals to each congregant’s inner guilt and ensures they will return the following week to repeat the ritual. The sermon often interprets the Bible into practical terms so that it reveals some truth in each listener’s life. This is mirrored in Lestat’ conversation with David, who Rice saw as representing a sage, or wise elderly man (Ramsland 449).

David reveals to Lestat what he has learned of the spirit world, and that once he overheard a conversation between God and the Devil. Unsure of exactly what he heard and unable to distinctly remember any images from the experience, David says he believes that God did not know what he was doing when he created the universe, and the Devil merely voiced his concern over the entire affair. This is a very individualistic and personal belief which represents Rice's quest to understand the nature and existence of evil. "God has made many mistakes. Many, many mistakes. As surely God Himself knows! And I suspect the angels tried to warn Him. The Devil became the Devil because he tried to warn God. God is love, but I'm not sure God is absolutely brilliant" (*Thief* 70). Despite its possibly heretical nature, David's message for Lestat retains a belief in and use of Catholic structures and teachings concerning creation and the Devil. Through this conversation, David also leads Lestat into a deeper understanding of himself. "I do think God exists. I don't like to say so. But I do. And probably some form of Devil exists as well. I admit--it's a matter of the missing pieces, as we've said" (*Thief* 77). David's talk with Lestat fulfils the goal of any sermon, and therefore reinforces David as a religious authority who still has power over Lestat.

Lestat becomes enamored with the idea of experiencing the human condition again after he pleads with Akasha to spare mortal men. He believes that he must be human to be truly forgiven for his sins. He cannot restore his own humanity, yet he meets a man named Raglan James who offers to switch bodies with Lestat for a twenty-four hour period. In order to work this miracle, James teaches Lestat to send his spirit out of his body and drive it into another human form. This is possible, James says, due to the two-part nature of the soul. "The larger part of [the soul]--identity, personality,

consciousness, if you will--this is what springs loose and travels; but a small soul remains" (*Thief* 122). The imagery of an invisible event which leaves the physical unchanged yet alters the spiritual involves the same imagery as transubstantiation. Lestat takes the body and blood of another in an attempt to find redemption. It also represents a reversal for Lestat. His custom has for centuries been to take life from others. Now, he sacrifices his own immortality in order to remember what humanity is truly like.

Significantly, this is reminiscent to God's incarnation as Christ. Lestat seems to be continuing his tradition of acting as his own authority; in this case, Lestat is attempting to be his own redeemer. His ultimate failure in this leaves room for Christ to reemerge as the image of redeemer. It is also important to note that another person ultimately affects this change for Lestat, yet his cooperation is needed (*Thief* 159). Just as a believer must cooperate in his or her own salvation through the sacraments, Lestat must cooperate in performing James' ritual. He believes he cannot save himself on his own, so he participates with others to try to redeem himself.

Finally, Rice uses sex to represent the temporary condition of mankind. Since Lestat blindly follows structured religious beliefs in his attempt to find redemption, his experiences are controlled by outside forces and Lestat does cannot achieve his goal. Lestat is miserable in the mortal body and finds himself disgusted at the simple things that he had forgotten. Daily mortal tasks such as relieving oneself, eating and drinking seem clumsy and dirty to him (*Thief* 171). Once he truly remembers the human condition, Lestat realizes he'd rather be an evil vampire and follow his own ways than be a mortal and controlled by nature. His ultimate union with the flesh comes when a kind waitress helps him home after he becomes drunk on wine. For the first time in hundreds

of years, Lestat finds himself being controlled by his carnal desires. “I wanted to finish. Nothing else mattered but finishing” (*Thief* 188). Lestat inadvertently wastes the one event that can bring him as close to a human as possible. When he becomes ill due to the harsh December weather, he teeters on the edge of death and is confronted once more with the vision of Claudia. She asks him if he would he make her a vampire again if he had the chance. Lestat decides that yes he would, and begins to combine his own philosophy with the rigid structures he has been following. This begins a new cycle of symbolic events that represent Rice’s acceptance of the Church on her own terms.

Lestat survives his illness thanks to Gretchen, a nun on leave from her South American mission. She hears Lestat’s delirious ramblings as he talks to Claudia in his hallucinations. Although he knows she won’t believe him, or perhaps because of this, he tells her his whole story as she nurses him back to health. Gretchen responds to Lestat as if she accepts his story, and she asks him questions to deepen her understanding of his emotional state. “ ‘Ah, but our fantasies are like our dreams,’ she said with a serious little frown. ‘They have meaning’ ” (*Thief* 221). This is a self-aware statement, showing that Rice is aware that her religious development is influencing her storytelling. This may explain why Lestat is only described in his sexual encounters with females. He begs David to have sex with him, yet David refuses and Lestat never experiences a homosexual union in mortal form.

This begins Rice’s new emphasis on Lestat’s bisexuality and sets the example for Lestat’s future relationships, all of which are with women. It is interesting to note that the Catholic Church does not officially condemn homosexual urges that are not acted upon. Lestat’s emerging interest in women seems to be a concession Rice makes to

Catholic morality. Heterosexual love seems to have risen in importance since Rice's first novel, for it is Gretchen's love for Lestat that allows him to forgive himself for his past transgressions. Lestat confesses that although he knew that he was erring in his past life, he never hated himself for it. "My greatest sin has always been that I have a wonderful time being myself. My guilt is always there; my moral abhorrence for my self is always there; but I have a good time" (*Thief* 233). Telling his life's story to Gretchen becomes another confession as Lestat discloses all the horrible things he has done. Claudia only disappears when Lestat "has finally accepted himself for what he is" (Smith 96).

Because Claudia has been haunting him as the embodiment of his sin, she disappears when he finds self-acceptance.

Claudia's disappearance is also part of Lestat's realization that he must once again be his own authority. Claudia is merely the voice of his conscience telling him that he needs to be punished. When his inner demons are quieted, Lestat realizes that he was the one punishing himself all along and others do not have that power. Deciding to reclaim his body from James, who has stolen it to use its immense powers for his own gain, Lestat freely chooses the life of a vampire for the first time. Lestat rebelled against Magnus when he realized what the vampire meant to do to him, and he later told Akasha that all vampires want to be human. These actions indicate a deep-seated longing to be able to control his own fate. "Over and over again, Lestat chooses his own path and boasts that he does so, yet in the back of his mind is always the knowledge that the greatest adventure of his life was begun by force and not by choice" (Smith 96). By choosing to return to his vampire body, Lestat fills the role initiated by Magnus and

symbolically initiates himself. Lestat begins a journey to find Raglan James and his own body, thus actively pursuing his fate and making his own choices.

Rice continues treating Lestat as his own authority by training him for and having him perform his own ritual. The central ritual of *The Tale of the Body Thief* is the body switch itself. Thus David Talbot, already established as a sage and priest-like character, instructs Lestat how to send his soul out his body and defend himself at the same time. This training is meant to impart special knowledge to Lestat so that he can work the switching of bodies on his own. Lestat protests, saying he hoped David could do the work alone. David replies most bluntly, “No, you must learn the trick as well” (*Thief* 306). James had to assist Lestat the first time, but now David helps him develop the spiritual discipline to control astral travel and take his body back. This claim to power is tested when the David and Lestat finally track down Raglan James aboard the cruise ship *Queen Elizabeth II*. James has been feeding at each port at which the ship docks, thus leaving a clear trail for David and Lestat to follow. Once inside the cabin where he rests, David and Lestat both attack James in the vampiric body. Lestat succeeds in taking his own body, thus completing the ritual for himself and reclaiming his body and his vampire nature of his own free will.

Even though Lestat cannot again have the same physical intimacy with another creature that he had with the waitress, the ritual he works does bring him a spiritual experience. David Talbot is Lestat’s one true friend, which is cemented in the joint effort to get Lestat’s body back when even Louis and Marius refused to help. When the two meet for the first time after the final switch, David begs to be made into a vampire. Once Lestat bites him, he realizes that it is Raglan James in David’s body. Lestat kills James

and searches for David in the body that both James and Lestat have inhabited before. When he finds it, David is alive and well inside, and Lestat finally decides that he must have David with him forever. David fights, refusing to become a vampire just as Lestat did, and also like Lestat he invokes religious imagery. “No, damn you, damn you into hell” (*Thief* 416). David is cast in the same role as Lestat was two hundred years before. Lestat echoes the actions of Magnus as he proceeds to transform his friend into a vampire. “Yes, fight me, fight me as I fought Magnus” (*Thief* 416). This is not just a union with David, which naturally includes the great swoon and the interconnection of the two beings. This is the truest ecstatic union Lestat believes he can have with any being.

This incident brings Lestat full circle. Beginning as a struggling mortal, he rebelled against authority and others’ rigid systems of belief. His growth, however, has led him to a place where he is the creator of his own authority, just as Magnus once was. Echoing Armand’s curse against Magnus as a heretic in *The Vampire Lestat* is Louis and Marius in the fourth novel, refusing to give sanction to Lestat’s actions by their participation. When Lestat fears that he has lost David’s love, he is assured that he in fact made the right decision. This alludes to Lestat’s own willingness to become a vampire, which symbolizes Rice’s willingness to blend Catholic traditions with her personal beliefs and create an individual spirituality. Her worldview is Catholic, yet informed heavily by secular philosophy. Similarly, Lestat again understands the human condition, but his vampiric blood augments his body and makes it stronger.

One more event in *The Tale of the body Thief* must be considered. Although it happens before the climactic scene in which Lestat turns David into a vampire, it

foreshadows the next *Vampire Chronicle* by questioning the images of the mystical. Not since *Interview With the Vampire* has Rice dealt with an actual manifestation of the divine. Because Rice doubted God's existence, she used other characters with whom her protagonist could have a transcendent experience. Lestat approaches Gretchen at her jungle mission to reassure her that she was not wrong in believing him. However, this revelation drives her into the mission's chapel to pray for God's protection. Others come to her aid, but even Lestat is stopped in his tracks when he realizes that she has developed the stigmata. "I saw her kneeling still, as they gathered around her, and I heard their soft reverent cries of 'Miracle!' and 'Stigmata!'" (*Thief* 354). Jennifer Smith reads this scene as Gretchen "...retreating into insanity, her madness driving her body to bleed from the palms..." (Smith 88). In *The Vampire Companion*, however, Katherine Ramsland argues, "[t]he event shows that Lestat has become, ironically, a symbol of God; by showing himself as a devil, he inspires great faith in people, who recognize that if there is a Devil, there must be God" (*Companion* 432). While the ambiguity of the event is a powerful part of the story, the influence of traditional Catholic devotionism upon Rice is never so obvious in the preceding novels. The presence of this miracle within *The Tale of the Body Thief* indicates that Rice herself is reconsidering and redefining Catholic structures and teachings, and incorporating them into her worldview.

After *Tale of the Body Thief* was completed, Rice took time to mourn the passing of her father Howard. Out of this bleak time emerged the idea for a novel entitled *A Dark and Secret Grace*. Modeled slightly on Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the novel was conceived as a journey of a mortal man into the realm of spirits. The protagonist would be educated and saved from his seemingly "irredeemable" life by the lessons he learned

and the things he witnessed. However, Rice felt unable to shape the novel as she originally conceived it. Drawing on the rich history she had already established within *The Vampire Chronicles*, Rice returned to the voice of Lestat to guide her story. Drawing on her previous explanation of evil, Rice has the Devil offer Lestat a chance to see Heaven and Hell. The Devil hopes that Lestat will choose to help him liberate souls from Hell and send them to Heaven. On this journey to Heaven and Hell, Memnoch recounts the history of Creation in an attempt to explain why he is against God and God's plan for humans.

The fifth *Vampire Chronicle* is the most theoretical in its treatment of the Catholic ethos. The time with her family in New Orleans and the synthesis of her personal philosophy with Catholic structures drove Rice to examine the nature of images within her own worldview. Because she often assigns a new meaning or explanation to Catholic teaching and practice, Rice felt the need to explore the truth behind these structures and images. The novel ultimately asks if appearances are deceiving even within religion. This calls into question the truth behind Catholic rituals and the symbolism priests use to suggest that the divine is present within the rituals. This jeopardizes the authority of the priests and their power to absolve sin. These questions are the final questions that any person of faith must ask him- or herself before that faith can truly be defended to another person. By looking at the abstract images and concepts of her religious convictions, Rice reveals a surprisingly strong Catholic influence for a woman who spent almost thirty years encoding images into her works that rebelled against the Catholic establishment. *Memnoch the Devil* serves as the culmination of Rice's religious and spiritual wanderings, in which she fully utilizes Catholic images and redefines them for herself.

While Rice's religious views are not completely congruent with orthodox Catholicism, she nonetheless demonstrates the profound impact that the Catholic worldview has on her life.

The first step Rice takes in questioning the truth of Catholic images is the appearance and nature of God and the Devil. It is necessary for her to deal with God first because He is the ultimate authority over His creation. If she found no reason to accept God, there would be no need to examine other images. However, Memnoch warns Lestat before entering Heaven that things will not truly be what they appear to Lestat. "Be prepared that the laughter you hear is not laughter. It is joy. It will come through to you as laughter because that is the only way such ecstatic sound can be physically received or perceived" (*Memnoch* 163). This immediately makes clear that earthly creatures, including vampires, cannot truly grasp God's nature nor understand His ways. This is highly significant because it allows God's image to be perceived differently by different individuals, thus allowing different religions to have equal claims to understanding reality. Still, the perception of the author is reflected in her character's experience of Heaven. In Rice's conception, Heaven is filled with the true nature of things on Earth, or the Platonic ideals of physical reality. This is a clear example of the way Rice weaves her personal ideas of truth into the Catholic structures of her youth. "I looked down at the ground and saw flowers of complete perfection; flowers that were the flowers that our flowers of the world might become" (*Memnoch* 166). When Lestat finally sees God Himself, he is astonished to see Him as a man filled with light. When God approaches Lestat, the vampire describes a very human form. "I saw the pores of his darkening golden skin, I saw the cracks in his lips, the shadow of the hair that had been shaved from

his face” (*Memnoch* 169). Rice’s use of a human form emanating light is a direct result of Rice’s return to belief in Christ as the incarnation of God. As Rice has Memnoch explain later, because He cannot be fully comprehended by mortals, God presents himself as a human to make it easier for humans to grasp His nature.

The importance of God’s visage is reflected in the importance He places on Memnoch’s appearance. The Devil’s image is meant to conceal his true angelic nature, thus drawing an important link between image and truth. As created by God, Memnoch and all other angels are invisible but do have definite proportions and boundaries. Memnoch makes it clear that Lestat is right in assuming that angels have immaterial bodies; his physical form is the result of drawing matter into his immaterial body. “It’s my body when surrounded and permeated with matter. In other words, it’s the logical result of my essence drawing to it all the various materials it needs” (*Memnoch* 175). This seems to say that material creation was necessary to complete the supernatural, restating Rice’s emphasis on equality of body and spirit in *The Queen of the Damned* with Biblical language. Memnoch shares this idea with Lestat, claiming that God does not know his own origins and watches creation, waiting to see if the earth will produce another being like Himself (*Memnoch* 176-177). The Devil can only use his angelic form in Heaven or Hell, however. On Earth, Memnoch must appear as a horrible beast as part of God’s punishment. “On the Earth, let them see you as the demon! The Beast God-- the God of the dance and the drink and the feast and the flesh and all the things *you* love enough to challenge *Me*” (*Memnoch* 292). Memnoch’s form is a reflection of his anger with God over the fate of human souls, whom God at first would not ever allow into

Heaven. God took Memnoch's challenge and came to Earth to enact the Dying God myth, thus using an image made by men to demonstrate his power and authority.

He said over and over to me, "Memnoch, everything in the universe is used...made use of...you understand?" And He came down, suffered, died and rose from the Dead to consecrate human suffering, to enshrine it as a means to an end; the end was illumination, superiority of the soul. But the myth of the suffering and Dying God-whether we speak of Tammuz of Sumer or Dionysus of Greece, or any other deity the world over, whose death and dismemberment preceded Creation-this was a Human idea! An idea conceived by Humans who could not imagine a Creation from nothing, one which did not involve a sacrifice. (*Memnoch* 289)

In this example, the God uses the images mankind has created of Him to manifest Himself. Through His presentation to an image perceived by humanity, God continues to reassert His authority. The Divine motivates humanity by making Its image vague enough to be interpreted in many different ways, yet powerful enough to motivate billions to believe.

Authority connotes rules and regulations, and infractions of a supernatural authority's rules are considered sins. Looking deeper at the matter of sin, Rice depicts sin and punishment as layers of images. Rice's Hell is a place for souls to be purified through suffering, which God says brings humans closer to Him. Memnoch comments that upon entering the realm of the dead that the souls "...were rather indifferent to my form, because they assumed that I had chosen it as they had chosen theirs, and some of them resembled men and women, and some didn't bother" (*Memnoch* 250). Souls in Hell, then, are allowed to choose their own form, which reflects each one's level of self-actualization. The souls that appear as they did upon death seem to be more content than those who chose to appear as younger, more "beautiful" images. The apparitions of others

challenge these images of self. Memnoch has each soul in Hell tormented by those it harmed in life. When a human being is confronted with all the suffering he or she has caused, he or she learns to accept that grief and pain is both given and received in life, thereby justifying why God did not intervene to make his or her life easier. Only when the soul understands that every act has its place in God's scheme of things can that soul be worthy of Heaven. Memnoch explains that when God gave him control of Hell, he changed it to teach the souls this lesson. "I created it and I run it to make whole again the souls of the just and the unjust, those who had suffered and those whose who had done cruelty. And the only lesson of that Hell is Love" (*Memnoch* 305). The weight of one's own suffering is released by the realization that one caused equal suffering to others.

This vision certainly challenges conventional concepts of Hell, which commonly follow Dante's theme of punishment for those who have offended God in life. However, with her renewed faith in the Catholic Church, Rice is not willing to argue that the Church is wrong. This is also the case with her presentation of sexual morals. Rice has Memnoch express to God the beauty of sex and the joys of the flesh. "Our hearts stopped together, Lord. We knew in the flesh eternity, the man in me knew that the woman knew it. We knew something that rises above all earthly expectations, something that is purely Divine" (*Memnoch* 242). God's answer to this comes when he descends to Earth as Christ and encounters Memnoch in the desert. Memnoch begs God to not validate suffering through martyring himself, and God retorts that Memnoch learned about life in bed, through sex and pleasure (*Memnoch* 278). Here Memnoch invites

God to experience sex with both men and women. God's refusal is not based on his rejection of homosexuality, but the inferior nature of sex in general. God says, "...when love is reached through suffering, Memnoch, it has a power it can never gain through innocence" (*Memnoch* 276). Rice makes clear that there is nothing inherently wrong with the act of sex itself, but acknowledges that in the eyes of God it produces a love that is untested and mostly physical. Rice maintains her argument against the impurity of sex, yet finds enough theological evidence to suggest that sex leads one to a simpler, more physical love than suffering, which produces a spiritual love. God's incarnation united both the physical and spiritual.

When God was crucified as Christ, He began the most important ritual for the Christian religion. The Passion denotes Christ's punishment by the Romans, carrying his own cross up Mount Calvary and finally being put to death. God Himself invites Lestat to witness the Passion, and Lestat reluctantly agrees. He is afraid to see such a violent and bloody event. God reveals the significance of the Passion to Lestat when Lestat cannot see past the exterior images of blood and pain. God Incarnate offers his blood to Lestat, eventually coaxing the frightening vampire into tasting His blood. "Think of all the human blood that has flowed into your lips. Is my blood not worthy? Are you afraid" (*Memnoch* 283). This comparison equates the vampiric drinking of blood with the Eucharist in a new way. Lestat is able to participate in the actual event that Communion, and by extension his own life-preserving actions, commemorate and replicate. The blood gives Lestat a vision of the truth akin to a mystical union with the divine. "Light

rising as it had risen over the balustrade of Heaven, and filling the world, and obliterating even this warm, solid, luscious glut of blood that sank into me. The Light, the light itself and the being within it, *In His Image*" (Memnoch 283). In this description, the Eucharist is a mystical encounter with God Incarnate.

Echoing her own doubts expressed in *Interview With the Vampire* concerning the nature of the bread and the wine used in the ritual, Rice now stresses the importance of looking beyond the physical images and embracing the spiritual.

The contact between physical and spiritual is embodied in the Veil of Veronica. Immediately following Lestat's encounter with Christ, he describes a now famous encounter between Veronica and the suffering Christ.

The white cloth, virgin and fine, she spread over His face...His profile clear beneath its whiteness for an instant, and then, as she meant to wipe gently, the soldiers drew her back and she stood, holding the veil for all to see. His Face was on it" (Memnoch 284).

Although not mentioned anywhere in the Gospels, Veronica has developed in the Catholic mythos as a woman who, out of ultimate compassion, offered her Veil to Christ to wipe away the sweat and blood streaming down his face. Upon removing the Veil, Christ's face was imprinted into it. For Rice, this religious icon defines the nature of ritual as something that transcends the earthly world and takes part in the ultimate truth. By placing Veronica at the Passion, Rice links her Veil to the central event and ritual of Christianity. This encourages meditations on Veronica's example when Communion commemorates Jesus' sacrifice upon His last night and day. The ritual testing of the icon symbolizes the powerful effect it has for Rice as a Catholic. Rice is aware that the word *veronica* comes from *vera-icon*, or true image. Even though she spent much time tracing

“...the evolution of our religious ideas” (Riley 283), Rice felt compelled to add the presence of a figure who is probably fictional.

Rice’s treatment of this figure holds much importance and goes far beyond mere literary device. First, the fact that she accepts the Veil as fact supports the argument that she has returned to the devotions of the Catholic Church. More than this, her literary treatment of Veronica reveals much about her acceptance of the evolution of religion. “The woman across the way blazed into visibility. Suddenly her voice rose above the babble and the cursing, the horrid cacophony of coarse and feelingless humans everywhere struggling to witness” (*Memnoch* 284). Veronica emerges as the personification of selflessness and compassion seemingly from nowhere, hinting that the author accepts that Veronica is not a historical figure. However, the fact that Rice includes Veronica in the Passion shows that Rice understands the importance of having Veronica as an image of compassion for Catholics.

Continuing the tradition of linking Veronica with the unnamed woman cured by Jesus of hemorrhaging in the gospels, Rice makes Veronica’s actions part of a cycle of transcending physical limitations and appearances. This is paralleled in Lestat’s return to Earth after escaping Memnoch in Hell. The Veil is revealed to the world, and ignites the devotion of Christians everywhere. The faithful put the Veil to the test of touching another cloth to it and seeing that the image transfers. “Someone else had no doubt touched a clean napkin to the Veil, and once again image had been transferred” (*Memnoch* 337). This ritual transferring of the vera-icon proves that it is holy, and by sanctifying the Veil it

also proves that Veronica had to exist in order to create the icon. The ritual of transference is itself a metaphor for the powerful effect an image and its meaning can have upon an individual. The figure may have sprung up as a personification of compassion, but Rice treats this as holy and good. The truth of human goodness is being remembered in the image of the Veil, which the ritual of transference proves and spreads.

The above rituals are both founded with one common experience: contact and communication with the Divine. This mystical union is at the heart of *Memnoch the Devil*, and Rice's treatment of the mystic brings the original five *Vampire Chronicles* full circle by completing the journey of the characters and the author. Lestat is brought into an entirely new worldview. He is torn between the two supernatural figures and overwhelmed by the truths that have been revealed to him. Lestat tells Memnoch, "I can't support this. I can't help this to happen! I cannot create this! I cannot endure this" (*Memnoch* 318). Lestat escapes Memnoch, but loses an eye in the process. When the Veil is revealed to the world, it causes the revival of religion and all of its disputes and condemnations. Just when Lestat thinks he is rid of his otherworldly visitations, he receives a letter from Memnoch containing his eye and a note of thanks for doing exactly as Memnoch hoped. What Lestat finally must face is that he cannot be sure if what he saw was real or not. Jennifer Smith believes that Lestat was tricked into helping the Devil encourage men to kill each other in the name of religion (Smith 112). This is a cynical interpretation and does not seem to consider Rice's theme of questioning the truth of images. While it appears that Lestat has helped the

Devil by causing strife and heartache, he has ultimately helped Memnoch by providing an icon that exemplifies human compassion and love. Thanks to Lestat, a greater number of humans have the chance to understand the truth behind the Veil's image and accept God's plan, thus not needing Hell to make them ready for Heaven. Since Memnoch ultimately wants the souls of the dead to be with God, Lestat has helped him and lessened his workload.

Still, Lestat's rage and despair shows the height from which Rice herself fell in the years leading up to the publication of *Interview With the Vampire*. Having finally returned to that place of faith, Rice and her alter ego have returned to the place of vulnerability that caused their original descent into doubt. This time, however, their faith is guarded with the ability to look past the superficial images of life and see the beauty of the truth that lies within. In this way, Rice is once again Paul at the top of the stairs of Pointe du Lac in the opening of *Interview With the Vampire*. The first time, Paul fell and died, symbolizing the death of her innocence. The visionary and mystic crumbled under the weight of disbelief and scorn from the outside world. Now, almost thirty years later, Rice has become Lestat and does not need to destroy her spirituality if no one else understands it. She is no longer concerned with the messages or the composition of her visions, for she has assimilated the inner truth of them and is prepared to share that with others when they are ready. A reader may finish *Memnoch the Devil* only to pick up *Interview With the Vampire* again to retrace the growth and development of Anne Rice's worldview and her connection to the Catholic ethos.

Conclusion

Amen

The Vampire Chronicles consists of ten full novels and is augmented by two novellas considered to be part of *The New Tales of the Vampires*.¹ However, the personal and spiritual development that informed the original five volumes is lacking in the subsequent publications. The only additional novel told from Lestat's point of view is the final volume of the series, entitled *Blood Canticle*. Lestat awakens from the sleep that begins at the end of *Memnoch*, and hints at having had more spiritual journeys that he will reveal in due time. His main concern for the duration of *Blood Canticle*, however, is to achieve sainthood. There is no growth or change in his desire, and *The Vampire Chronicles* closes on a rather stagnant note. This is, however, not surprising. The series was continued after *Memnoch the Devil* only to give Rice an outlet for the histories and stories of other vampires that appear in the original novels. The personal expression of the original novels is replaced by artistic and literary experimentation in later volumes. The widely divergent themes and styles that characterize the later *Vampire Chronicles* typically disappoint readers hoping for more of Rice's religious metaphors and symbolism. This is not, as some critics have claimed, proof of the disintegrating talent of the aging author. Rice feels that Lestat, her alter ego and the voice of her most intimate disclosures, left her after the fifth novel was finished. In *Conversations With Anne Rice*, Michael Riley notes that Anne commented immediately after the publication of *Memnoch*, "Lestat walked off on me...it was just like the wind. I felt it. It happened. I couldn't control it" (Riley 289).

This is perhaps the final psychological release from Rice's internal guilt that began with the short story "Interview With the Vampire." The religious and moral issues

¹ *The Vampire Chronicles* continue with: *The Vampire Armand* (1998), *Merrick* (2000), *Blood and Gold* (2001), *Blackwood Farm* (2002) and *Blood Canticle* (2003). *Pandora* (1998) and *Vittorio, the Vampire* (2001) are the only works in *The Tales of the New Vampires*.

produced in that story and the subsequent novels continued in Rice's mind until she finished *Memnoch*. At that point, she said "[i]t was as if [Lestat] left my imagination, my creative world, as if the person of Lestat waved good-bye and walked away" (Riley 290). Rice's sense of closure with the character brought with it a sense of completion to the *Chronicles*. *Interview With the Vampire* is a conscious rejection of what Dolan describes as the Catholic ethos, or the emphasis upon sin, authority, ritual, and the mysterious that worked together to create one large Catholic culture. Having come full circle, Rice is once again a practicing Catholic with a stable worldview and a sense of moral justice that is reflected in her life. Therefore the original five volumes of *The Vampire Chronicles*, published over a twenty-year period, document Rice's struggle with the Catholic ethos.

Interview With the Vampire is a testament to the depression the author was suffering at the time. Rice uses the events of her life as the cornerstones of the novel's plot structure. Through her characters and their way of life, Rice comments on the Catholic ethos that she rejected. The only character to have any direct experience with the divine kills himself in the first pages. This is clearly Rice's own abandonment of the Church after sensing God's absence in her life. Her resulting bitterness fueled the creation of Lestat as a priest-like figure who bore all the recriminations Rice harbored towards the clergy. His greed, arrogance, and detachment are accusations against priests. Unable to escape the imagery that surrounded her in her childhood, Rice used the vampire's connection to blood to insult the central Catholic ritual, the Eucharist. Her alcoholism and guilt over her daughter's death inspired her to create characters that redefine sin and therefore are not subject to Catholic morality. Any doubt over the connection between the novel and Rice's spirituality is eroded by the continuation of the

series. The themes from the Catholic ethos are repeated in the next four novels, yet each treatment of these themes presents a progression in Rice's thought.

The sequel to *Interview With the Vampire* brings Lestat's representation of clergy to the forefront. By describing the iconoclast's rise as his own redeemer, Rice is redefining herself and her responsibility for her own life in *The Vampire Lestat*. Rice consciously used Lestat because his character would enable her to take action, even if only in a literary sense. The novel, therefore, is Rice's explanation for her loss of faith that was detailed in the first novel. She directly links her rejection of the Church to the absence of miracles or divine intervention in her life. As a symbol for the clergy, Lestat's assertion of his own authority and attempt to use ritual to right past wrongs is a powerful development away from Rice's helplessness as embodied through Louis. The novel also demonstrates that the author is no longer sad about having lost her connection to the Church. This cements Lestat as the voice through which Rice expresses her changing attitudes toward religion in all its aspects.

The Queen of the Damned responds to Lestat's claim to be his own redeemer. This third volume is the only novel in which Rice immediately answers the questions raised in the preceding work. The main action of the plot is carefully structured to reflect Rice's inner debate over the role of authority in spirituality. Rice seems to fear that if people are allowed to atone for sins in their own way, then there will be no way to stop someone like Hitler from "redeeming" sin through murder. This begins Rice's journey back towards Catholicism. Through the events in the novel, Rice argues with herself over the possibilities of completely abandoning Catholic structures. The chaos of Akasha's massacres represents Rice's fear of abandoning the Catholic ethos even after

she left the institutional Church. Exploring these ties to the Church eventually led the author back to her childhood spirituality.

Through reconsidering the Catholic ethos, Rice began to merge her childhood beliefs with the lessons taught by her adult experiences. Representing another significant step forward in Rice's spiritual development, *The Tale of the Body Thief* is Rice's record of this time. Lestat's focus upon the nature of the soul and redemption from sin highlights the direct influence of Rice's reaction to the Catholic belief structure. She tries to explain what she believes to be true in language that corresponds to Catholic doctrine. Her concept of authority and its role in rituals shifts to a more conventional outlook when Lestat finds himself in need of someone to forgive him. Lestat's beloved nun Gretchen develops the stigmata as Rice's attempt to symbolize Catholic mystical beliefs and demonstrate her deepening connection to the Church and its devotions.

The capstone to the author's spiritual evolution is her return to the Catholic Church. *Memnoch the Devil*, in which both God and the Devil become characters in *The Vampire Chronicles*, is a direct result of Rice's personal religion. Just as the death of the mystic in *Interview With the Vampire* was Rice's way of expressing the loss of her religion, Lestat's transformation into a mystic symbolizes Rice's return to faith. She analyzes and confirms the devotions and images that she finds important to her Catholic faith. The story relies heavily upon the reality and holiness of Veronica's Veil, thus allowing Rice to express her interest in Catholic mysteries and miracles yet again. Rice reveals her acceptance of creation, the incarnation, and even the Devil by having the history of the world revealed to Lestat.

This detailed description of the spiritual realms represents the final development in Rice's spiritual progression. Her works reflect the depths of depression from which she rose and her internal struggle with spirituality. Rice used Lestat and his iconoclastic personality to express her most intimate thoughts. "Lestat has made it easy for me to say and do many things in writing" (Riley 291). Anne Rice would never voice her dissatisfaction with clergy or rituals in front of a priest, nor tell a devout friend that she didn't believe in God because He never produced a miracle in her life. She was able to express these feelings through Lestat. She concealed her anger and aggression behind literary devices and metaphors. Over time, however, she became aware that these emotions were fueling her imagery. This allowed Rice to discuss more openly her religious beliefs in *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Memnoch the Devil*.

Finally, her identification with Lestat is evidence that Anne Rice used his voice to express her spiritual evolution. Lestat left her after she completed *Memnoch the Devil* because he had fulfilled his purpose. Lestat became Rice's literary voice, her alter ego that underwent the same things that she did. "[Lestat] did become more than a character. He was a voice, a way of looking at the world, a person who I could automatically become" (Riley 292). His departure from Anne's imagination completes the spiritual journey she began when she chose to adopt his voice to bring her out of the darkness of *Interview With the Vampire*. Upon completing *Memnoch the Devil*, Rice had encoded her spiritual journey within *The Vampire Chronicles*. Thanks to the stability that the Church offered her, Rice no longer needed Lestat to voice her displeasure or confusion. Thus, the first five volumes of Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* constitute a great spiritual development on the part of the author. Rice's relationship with the Catholic

Church and the culture it provided her informed the stories and symbols of her novels.

The series is an ascent from spiritual depression to thankful salvation; *The Vampire Chronicles* are without a doubt full of grace.

Works Cited

- Dolan, J. (1985). *The American catholic Experience*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Ginzberg, M. "Interview with the 'Vampire' Author." *TV Guide*, 22-28 October 1994: 24-27.
- Keller, J. (2000). *Anne Rice and Sexual Politics*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co.
- Ramsland, K. (1991). *Prism of the Night*. New York: Dutton Books.
- . (1995). *The Vampire Companion*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Rice, A. (1976). *Interview With the Vampire*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- . (1995). *Memnoch the Devil*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- . (2004). *The Anne Rice Official Website*. Retrieved December 1, 2004, from World Web Web: <http://www.annerice.com>.
- . (1988). *The Queen of the Damned*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- . (1992). *The Tale of the Body Thief*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- . (1985). *The Vampire Lestat*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Riley, M. (1996). *Conversations With Anne Rice*. New York: Ballantine.
- Smith, J. (1996). *Anne Rice: A Critical Companion*. Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press.