

Social Mobility and Dialogism in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to uncover the profound transformation of the postmodern vampire archetype. Anne Rice, in *Interview with the Vampire*, presents a shift from a terrifying monster to a more relatable and compassionate figure. This transformation reflects the existential philosophy of a time marked by absurdity, sexual issues, religious crises, and the degradation of women.

Methods: The study analyzes Rice's novel through the lens of cultural materialism, focusing on the distinctive cultural influences of 1976 that shaped the transformation of the vampire archetype. This significant shift was driven by the cultural factors impacting Rice's life and work, offering new insights to the reader. To understand the reasons behind this transformation, the study applies Raymond Williams' concept of *social mobility* and Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of *dialogism*.

Results: Postmodern vampires are now depicted as sympathetic beings. They seek not just blood but also moral redemption, knowledge of their origins, and companionship in immortality.

Conclusions: This study highlights how Rice infused her vampires with affection, awareness, understanding, human qualities, and a distinctly sensual nature. Her choice to write from this perspective is rooted in her empathy for marginalized individuals in society who are often ignored, stigmatized, and silenced. By exploring the cultural environment of the 1970s alongside the concepts of *social mobility* and *dialogism*, it becomes clear that the vampire community mirrors postmodern society.

Keywords: Cultural Materialism; Sympathetic Vampire; Religion; Women; Social Mobility; Dialogism.

التنقل الاجتماعي والحواري في رواية أن رايس مقابلة مع مصاص دماء

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ملخص

الأهداف: تهدف دراستنا إلى الكشف عن التحول العميق للنموذج الأصلي لمصاصي الدماء ما بعد الحداثة. تُقدم أن رايس، في مقابلة مع مصاص الدماء، تحولاً من وحش مربع إلى شخصية محبوبة وأكثر رحمة. ينعكس هذا التغيير الفلسفي الوجودية لفترة اتسمت بالعيشية، والقضايا الجنسية، والأزمات الدينية وإهانة دور المرأة.

المنهجية: تُحلل هذه الدراسة رواية رايس من خلال منظور المادية الثقافية، مع التركيز على التأثيرات الثقافية المميزة لعام 1976 التي شكلت تحول النموذج الأصلي لمصاصي الدماء. كان هذا التحول الكبير نتيجة للعوامل الثقافية التي أثرت على حياة رايس وعملها، مما وفر منظوراً جديداً وتنويراً للقارئ. ومن أجل فهم الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذا التحول، نطبق مفهوم

التنقل الاجتماعي لريموند ويليامز، ومفهوم ميخائيل باختين للحوار

النتائج: يُصوّر مصاصو الدماء ما بعد الحداثة في الوقت الحالي على أنهم متعاطفون. إنهم لا يتوقون إلى الدم فقط بل إلى الخلاص الأخلاقي، ويبحثون عن معلومات حول أصولهم، ويرغبون الصُحبة في الخلود.

الخلاصة: تُسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على كيف أشبع رايس مصاصي الدماء بالمودّة، والإدراك، والفهم، والسمات الإنسانية، والطبيعة الحسية الواضحة. كما يُنبع قرارها بالكتابة في هذا الأسلوب ومن هذا المنظور من تعاطفها مع الأفراد المهمشين في المجتمع الذين غالباً ما يتم تجاهلهم وصيغهم وإسكاتهم. ومن خلال دراسة البيئة الثقافية لعام 1970 ومفاهيم التنقل الاجتماعي والحوار، اتضح أن مجتمع مصاصي الدماء يشترك في أوجه التشابه مع مجتمع ما بعد الحداثة.

الكلمات الدالة: المادية الثقافية، مصاص دماء متعاطف، الدين، النساء، التنقل الاجتماعي، الحوار.



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Introduction

The transition from Gothicism to vampirism was sluggish. Within the Gothic genre, a new literary subgenre called 'vampire fiction' has started to make an impression. The vampire persona enhances the inherent horror and fear of Gothic. There were such things as ghosts, devils, wicked spirits, and night stalkers; nevertheless, these were eventually replaced, often in combination, with the vampire figure.

The concept of the vampire in literature has a complex and varied history, with its roots and development spanning across different cultures and centuries. The term "vampire" first appeared in English in 1732, stemming from the German translation of Arnold Paole's case. Its etymology suggests a Slavic origin, possibly from the word "upir" or "upyr," which might derive from the Turkish word "uber," meaning "witch." This connection between witches and vampires in Eastern European folklore supports this theory.

According to Theresa Bane (2010), there is no universally accepted definition of a vampire since diverse things have always terrified different cultures of people in different places and at different times. The vampire has persisted in popular culture for a variety of reasons, but fear is a factor that unites almost all vampire incidents. Since it is the primary uniting force and, therefore, may be considered an essential component of the vampire's existence, this fear plays a crucial role in the survival of this figure (Beresford, 2008). So, the fear of its existence transcends the actual one.

Bloodthirsty and parasitic creatures who abhor sunlight, dwell in coffins, have a phobia of religious relics, and lack emotional or critical thought were the characteristics of early vampire figures, such as Dracula in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Postmodern vampire characters, despite occasionally sucking blood, distinguish themselves through actively pursuing moral atonement and salvation, as well as expressing amorous feelings and displaying humanistic traits. They also actively form friendships. The growth of the vampire as a character is gradual, yet it has seen certain changes over the centuries all over the world. One of the earliest examples of modern vampire literature is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's ballad "The Bride of Corinth" (1797), which tells the story of a young woman who rises from her tomb to drain her betrothed's blood. This ballad influenced Robert Southey, who introduced the female vampire to English poetry in "Thalaba the Destroyer" (1801). It is with Polidori's *The Vampyre, A Tale* (1819) that this character became the standard. There, Lord Ruthven exemplifies the Byronic hero who escapes capture and further causes death and destruction (Carlson, 1997).

In Germany, Ernest Benjamin Salomo Raupach's *Wake Not the Dead* (1823) tells the story of a nobleman who resurrects his wife, leading to a series of deaths as she prefers human blood (Ragnarsdóttir, 2011). In France, Théophile Gautier's "La Morte Amoreuse" (1836) explores a fascinating relationship between a courtesan and a young priest. The story explores the concepts of illegitimate romance and the act of drinking blood from humans (Carlson, 1997). Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy wrote "La Famille du Vourdalak" and "Oupyr" in 1841, in these works, he adeptly merged gothic allegory with the cultural practices of being a vampire from the Southern Slavic region. Western European literary traditions primarily shaped his literary creations, rather than the folklore of Slavic origin. *Varney the Vampire*, written by James Malcolm Rymer in 1847, greatly increased the popularity of vampires among English-speaking readers (Williamson, 2005).

Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* modernizes the vampire Gothic tradition. Ben Mears, the main character, revisits the haunting Marsten House and comes face to face with the vampire Kurt Barlow. King's story explores the conflict between contemporary logical and old supernatural malice, which is a continuation of themes found in previous vampire literature (Chaplin, 2011). Furthermore, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, Sheridan Le Fanu's novel *Carmilla* (1871) features a character who is both a vampire and a lesbian. The protagonist, Laura, finds it difficult to resist Mircalla's attempts to seduce her (Day, 2002). Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) introduces the idea of personal movement through the character of Dracula. The portrayal of him characterizes him as a disease rather than a curse or demonic ailment, highlighting themes of sex tension, blood and fatality (Hreinsdóttir, 2021).

"Every age embraces the vampire it needs," writes Nina Auerbach (1995) in her book, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (p. 145). Milly Williamson (2005) notes that as the twentieth century goes on, the vampire stereotype gradually changes. Instead of only appealing to readers' fears, this new and improved vampire evokes a range of emotions. Moreover, the

vampire genre takes a dramatic turn in the mid-to late-twentieth century when vampire figures are portrayed as narrators, providing readers with “otherness from the inside” (Williamson, 2005, p. 28). She adds that Dracula is not the primary figure in vampire fiction anymore. The new image of vampires, particularly of Rice, is portrayed as morally ambiguous, sympathetic, and suffering (Ragnarsdóttir, 2011). Anne Rice’s contribution has been essential in earning the genre proper recognition and respect. Her vampires are not the bloodiest, and perhaps not only philosophical. They are the most probable candidates to attain genuine immortality (Zimmerman, 1997). Furthermore, Rice changed the nature of vampires to existentialists who contemplated the mysteries of life and death (Beahm, 1996). Rice’s works evoke empathy and identification with dreadful characters, which can be dangerous compared to Stoker’s approach in *Dracula*, which aimed to instill terror and hate (Collings, 1996). In addition, engaging with immortal characters provided her with a secure refuge in which to contemplate the inevitability of mortality. Despite her enduring fascination with the vampire since her youth and its erotic qualities, the vampire she portrays in her writing also symbolizes archetypal terrors on a deeper level, endowing her monster with qualities uncommon in vampire fiction (Ramsland, 1994). The significant transformation in the portrayal of vampires, specifically in the work of Rice, brings up a major issue that requires careful analysis.

The current study examines Rice’s novel, *Interview with the Vampire*. The analysis is carried out using a ‘Cultural Materialism’ framework, which examines the cultural factors of the historical period that influenced the production of the text. The objectives serve as a guide for the audience to understand the later analytical section. They are as follows: to examine the impact of the author’s political, social, economic, religious, and personal life on her creation of this genre of fiction; to analyze the evolution of vampire characters in terms of their mobility from terrifying creatures to charming protagonists who communicate messages to readers. In addition, the study analyses two important notions: the *social mobility* of postmodern vampires, exploring the reasons and techniques that make their behavior closer to that of ordinary humans; *dialogism*, which reveals the contrastive worldviews and beliefs of vampires through their dialogues.

Literature Review

Vampires have been the prevailing focus of interest in popular culture. According to Debangana Basu (2018), contemporary vampire literature has evolved into a form associated with contemporary fantasy. Rice’s vampire tales have intrigued readers for years, providing a distinctive viewpoint on the eternal beings that inhabit an intricate and ever-changing universe. This literature review seeks to examine and analyze the research carried out on Rice’s vampire novels, with a specific emphasis on the subject matter and attributes that are referenced.

In his thesis titled “Vampires Incorporated: Self-definition in Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles,” Anthony N. Chandler (1997) analyzes the role of ‘orality’ in Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*, drawing connections to Sigmund Freud’s concept of the ‘oral phase’. The self is defined by the act of incorporating oral experiences, such as consuming food through erotic means. This process allows vampires to naturally develop a sense of their identity at any moment, enabling them to acquire knowledge about the world via their mouths.

While Kathleen Rout (2003), in her article “Who Do You Love? Anne Rice’s Vampires and Their Moral Transition” contends that Rice’s initial moral impartiality towards a captivating yet homicidal group of beings has progressively transformed into an explicit advocacy of non-violence and the pursuit of world harmony between vampires and humans.

Christina Marie Link (2005), in her “Vampires in Literature: A Postmodern Study of Bram Stoker and Anne Rice,” analyzes Stoker’s *Dracula* and Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* from a postmodern perspective, focusing on feminist, gender, and sexual themes. In postmodern thought, new concepts emerged which Nicole B. Tanner (2009) discusses in her thesis titled “Anne Rice’s Use of Conventions in The Vampire Chronicles” which examines three important conventions employed by Rice in her *Vampire Chronicles*. These themes encompass incest, portrayed by Tanner as a means for vampire women to assert power over male vampires and challenge patriarchal norms; cannibalism depicted as an effective act that restores the deceased and serves as a vital means of survival; and anti-Catholicism, viewed as a source of refuge for vampires who embrace religious artifacts rather than fearing them.

Moreover, in her thesis “‘I am the vampire for these times’: Representation of Postmodernity in Anne Rice’s The Vampire Chronicles” Antti Rinne (2013) analyzes Rice’s vampire novels from a postmodern standpoint. Rinne

emphasizes the novels' themes, such as the transformation of family-related structures, individuality, and the decline of conventional beliefs in favor of relativism. The concerns mentioned are analyzed using the perspective of New Historicism. Ultimately, Diana Alexandra (2016) wrote a thesis titled "Vampire in Literature: Piety and Sacrilege," she demonstrates, in Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* and Stoker's *Dracula*, how vampires simultaneously adhered to and questioned the traditional beliefs of European Christian society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by rejecting the notion of God's presence. This reflects her ambivalent attitude towards religion and challenges the traditional view of vampires as inherently bad beings.

Recent studies have mostly examined thematic concerns related to Rice's vampire narratives and the concepts of morality, religion, sexuality, love, gothic customs, and orality. However, few scholars have explored the underlying cultural factors that contribute to the vampire's ability to adapt and transform in contemporary vampire literature through their *social mobility*. The main contribution of this research is to highlight the influence of cultural factors on the portrayal of Rice's vampire. To effectively pursue this goal, Cultural Materialism alongside Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* is employed.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Materialism emerged as a result of the development of cultural studies in the last decade of the twentieth century. The term was coined by Raymond Williams (1977) in his book *Marxism and Literature*. He states that "we cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice in such a way as to make them subject to quite special and distinct laws" (p. 43). As a result, literary texts are inherently connected with broader cultural, political, social, and economic contexts (Bertens, 2008). Moreover, Graham Holderness, a British critic, characterizes this approach as "a politicized form of historiography" (Barry, 2009, p. 159). Thus, it examines historical material, like literary texts, within a politicized framework.

According to Williams' (1958) argument in the concluding part of his book *Culture and Society 1780–1950*, the establishment of a common culture is necessary. As the paper title suggests, this necessitates a process of change or mobility. So, as a result, Cultural Materialism essentially advocates for a political ideology that is positive about the natural development of society. It is characterized by a more positive outlook on the potential for change and is occasionally inclined to view literature as a repository of opposing values (Barry, 2009). Terry Eagleton (2000) explains Williams' concept of a common culture: it is a concept that is constantly recreated and reshaped through the interactive actions of its participants.

In *The Long Revolution*, Williams (2011) introduces the term 'deviation,' a significant concept that undergoes different interpretations with each passing century. He asserts that there are significant correlations between the nature of society and the character of its literature. These relationships may fluctuate by the evolving factual history. The social origins of an individual are connected to the educational system and lifestyle choices, which in turn influence a writer's decision to pursue avocation. It also impacts the literary growth and the nature of literature. It is necessary to examine the newly established institutions and structures developed by the larger social community to which the writer belongs, rather than just depending on the writer solely.

Williams (2011) utilizes the concept of *deviation* among three distinct extremes, taking into account the factual historical context and its immediate environment. He argues that in the eighteenth century, the middle-class social group, who were shielded by the elite, deviated from the established standards, leading to a decline in the quality of theater and the audience's preferences. At the start of the nineteenth century, a diverse group of writers with different social backgrounds emerges. They stray from the typical middle-class norms and create a sense of affinity with their audience. Thus, *Individual mobility* is emphasized, and works of literature portray a protagonist who conflicts with their circumstances: individuals either conform to the demands of the institutions and suffer "rapid personal deterioration" (Williams, 2011, p. 282), or they rebel against it. Moreover, "each individual would form a particular structure of feeling for he would sense life differently," according to Azhar Noori's (2014) article "Individual Mobility and the Sense of 'Deadlock': A Cultural Materialist Analysis of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*." Thus, Williams (2011) asserts that this

individual mobility is problematic.

Furthermore, there is a transition from *individual mobility* to *social mobility*, which is the real experience of mobility according to Williams (2011), during the twentieth century. He adds that as societal dynamics evolve, the literature produced by that society also transforms. Currently, a significant aspect of mobility is entire social groupings transitioning to new lifestyles. This entails not just individual advancement, but also societal transformation. Given the societal shift, the pressing matter at hand is the establishment of fresh and appropriate institutions. A society can effectively modify and expand its institutions, starting with education and then with means of communication, in order to establish a strong connection with the actual structure of the society. This will enable both writers and spectators to express themselves in their own terms.

In Rice's novel, *Interview with the Vampire* in particular, one can notice that there is a group of vampires who attempt to make a change and defy the norms of a society that does not accept them as who they are. That is why vampires are described as outlaws, outcasts who grapple through plenty of places without being accepted. Their *social mobility* is achieved but they make no real change.

Cultural Materialism, like other methods of literary analysis, encompasses its own set of ideologies and methodologies that are employed when evaluating a literary text. It posits that texts, similar to other forms of communication, play a role in influencing and being influenced by the historical and social factors that existed during their creation (Bressler, 2011). An essential methodology of cultural materialists is to assess the social, economic, and political aspects of a text by considering its historical context.

The literary text can be described as a dynamic representation of culture since it reflects the characteristics and values of its era and maintains connections to the contemporary world. William's concept suggests that within a specific culture at a particular moment, there might exist multiple subcultures. Hence, recovering the histories of the texts in isolation is very challenging due to their entanglement with other discourses. This is why cultural materialists adopt an approach that allows them to perceive the context of exploitation from which the text originated (Barry, 2009). This is their second approach to evaluating works of art and literature.

Given that a literary text holds significant cultural influence, Bakhtin is concerned with the necessity of cultivating a comprehensive perspective that combines many cultural elements to comprehend the fundamental nature of materialism in society. There can never be a truly monologic novel, according to Bakhtin. The social environment, the interaction between the speaker and listener, and the connection to earlier utterances are just a few factors that affect the precise intonation and meaning of each speech (Bressler, 2011).

Dialogism, devised by Bakhtin, is a cultural and philosophical phenomenon. The fundamental principle of this subject matter lies in its multitude of interpretations. The concept of the dialogic is essential to his critical theory. He asserts that language is essentially a dialogue, where a speaker and a listener establish a connection.

Dialogism, as a philosophy of language, acknowledges the presence of many meanings in communication. Ferdinand de Saussure's analysis of language is exemplary, as it centers around the concept of the sign. On the other hand, Bakhtin's dialogism is a philosophical approach that focuses more on the structure and meaning of individual sentences rather than the origins of language (Holquist, 2002). To comprehend the meaning, one must grasp the life cycle of dialogism as: *dialogue* that falls within *the context* and the reader determines what *type* is it in order to create *meanings* instead of one meaning which would make *constant interaction* and further create another dialogue, this would go on and on.

Postmodern Cultural Context

The period from the 1960s onward sought significant political, religious, and social changes, such as the counterculture, the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) of 1968–1969, which eventually became known as Feminism; and the crisis of Christianity. Each is remarkably manifested in the novel.

The 1960s counterculture sharply influenced Rice as a vital social and political influence. Young San Francisco youths, known as "hippies," moved to Haight-Ashbury to embrace a bohemian lifestyle, clashing with a repressive culture. They welcomed closeness and taboo sexual behaviors, experiencing a transitional state (Larkin, 2015). Moreover,

living in Haight-Ashbury and witnessing the emergence of gay populations at the time, influenced her. As the hippies exhibited sexual liberation and revealed inclinations so, in effect, she effortlessly and naturally portrays the erotic bond between her vampires as such (Ramsland, 1994). Youth culture embraced this phenomenon, and by the middle of the 1970s, it led to redefining cultural understanding of race, gender, experience, language, literature, religion, social issues, and economic status for both genders.

Women in the late 1960s focused on their rights and emancipation from the constraints of the patriarchal society as discussed in Jo Freeman's (1973) article "The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement." Two key events in the rise of feminist thought were the publication of Friedan's revolutionary book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and the inscription of the word 'sex' in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Both events spurred women, particularly the radicals, to challenge the existing state of affairs (Freeman, 1973). These ideas provided women with spiritual strength and authority. John Updike, for instance, "focuses on liberated women who carried quite radical ideas concerning their rights and demands," Noori (2015) notes in her paper "Witchcraft and Women's Spaces; A Cultural Materialism Study of John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick*" (p. 15).

This study will demonstrate how men's dominance prejudices women, preventing them from expressing their true desires or thoughts. Not only stereotypes are connected to "social practices like folk jokes, folk literature, press, movies, and social media," as noted by Nassier A. G. (2019) in his article "Woman Stereotypes and Patriarchal Hegemony: A Feminist Stylistics Analysis of Iraqi Folk Proverbs," (p. 68), but to vampire literature as well. According to Sabah Attallah Khalifa and Zaid Ibrahim Ismael's (2019) article "Barbara Kingsolver: Evaluating her Contribution to the Eco-feminist Novel," women also experience a type of "restrictive materialist environment" (p. 81).

Additionally, Hugh McLeod's (2005) essay "The Religious Crisis of the 1960s" explores the decline of Catholicism in the Western world, examining the perspectives of historians and sociologists, who attributed it to religious, cultural, or economic factors. The deviation was gradual, beginning from the Second Vatican Council to the Vietnam War in 1965 which the US became firmly dedicated to engage in, till the aftermath of the civil rights movements. From 1967 to 1974, religious and political discourse intensified, leading to lifestyle differences and a rise in counterculture. Western society lost faith in progress, and the American war in Vietnam exemplified corruption. This led to Christians losing interest in religion, as Protestants and Catholics faced crises in the late 1960s and beyond.

Postmodern Sympathetic Image of Vampires: Text Analysis

Interview with the Vampire is structured into four distinct parts. The novel unfolds in the present, yet it recounts the previous experiences of the protagonist, Louis, in psychological and mental agony. The novel's title alludes to the encounter between a human interviewer, called the boy and later Daniel, and Louis. Rice presents a challenging point of view to narrate her story. It utilizes two different perspectives. Rice's choice, considering her fascination with Louis' psyche and inner turmoil, would be a first-person point of view. This would allow the reader to experience the pain Louis has by being inside his mind. This decision would create a sense of detachment between the reader and the story but also offer the author greater flexibility to employ a more commanding narrative voice (Smith, 1996). She creates a sense of intimacy, vividly describes her inner states, and writes in a dream-like, yet controlled state evocative of unconsciousness (Ramsland, 1994). In addition, she wants the reader to experience the alluring fascination of the vampire, perceiving him as an outsider, a miserable pariah, both non-human and aesthetically pleasing.

Rice's writing style in *Interview with the Vampire* is intentionally embellished with an abundance of excess language to generate an environment that heightens the senses. Her writing is filled with the sensuality of the highest order. Her baroque style transformed her grief into a tale filled with metaphorical undertones (Beahm, 1996).

Four distinct parts organize the novel's plot structure. The characters undergo transformations in every part, while tensions intensify. The story's exposition portrays Louis' stable yet sad existence, burdened with self-blame for his brother Paul's demise. The pivotal moment occurs when Louis encounters Lestat, who bestows upon him the Dark Gift, forever altering the course of his existence. Louis grapples with profound inquiries about his newly discovered sense of self, prompting him to orchestrate a sequence of events to reconcile with it. This constitutes the rising action in the

narrative. During this phase, Louis has undergone such a significant transformation that he is unable to return to the previous life he used to have. The point of no return occurs when Claudia, a five-year-old child whom they have adopted, attempts to murder Lestat, while Louis, paralyzed and filled with immense terror, watches. Later, Louis and Claudia agree to travel to Paris, where they encounter Armand, an ancient vampire who holds authority over the vampire community in Paris. As the events progress until the finale, Louis eventually encounters Lestat and realizes that Lestat is not only the most formidable being that has ever been but also that his inquiries will remain unanswered. The resolution of the storyline implies that Louis must endure a solitary existence characterized by stability and isolation (Smith, 1996).

At the beginning of the novel, Paul, Louis' brother, is willing to carry out "God's work in France" (Rice, 1976, p. 8). His delusional beliefs about seeing apparitions of both St. Dominic and the Virgin Mary urge him to sell the plantation of Point du Lac severing his relationship with Louis. He acts as a religious messenger to awaken people. This shows that religion was once productive, but now, in the 1970s, it has lost its ability to reproduce or bear fruit.

Lestat and Louis experience moments of intimacy; as Rice (1976) describes:

'No listen to me, Louis,' he said, and lay down beside me now on the steps, his movements so graceful and so personal that at once made me think of a lover. I recoiled. But he put his right arm around me and pulled me close to his chest. (p. 18)

Becoming a vampire entails pushing the boundaries of one's experiences and venturing into unfamiliar and potentially unsettling realms, which can evoke feelings of fear and eroticism (Ramsland, 1994). The moments of erotica and radical transformation evoke images of the sexually liberated as they encounter like-minded others who share their wants. Vampires serve as a metaphor for certain individuals who coexist in modern society, in the 1970s during ongoing discussions over the rights of homosexuality (Čáková, 2012).

The presence of a vampire in the realm of human beings can serve as an indication of the existence of an aberrant creature that ought to be barred. Rice likely refers to individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds or those with varying sexual orientations. During the decade of the 1970s, when the novel was first released, these individuals attempted to protect their existence and entitlements. This indicates that *social mobility* is present during this period. Her human characters, such as Babette Freniere, likewise deny the presence of vampires, considering that they are unprepared for being unfamiliar with the supernatural realm (Čáková, 2012).

Tragically, Babette Freniere, a mortal character whose presence adds a human touch over Louis, is regarded as "the scandal of the neighbourhood" (Rice, 1976, p. 48). During the 1960s onwards, people perceived women as scandalous and believed they lacked the necessary skills or qualifications to perform tasks traditionally associated with men. Furthermore, it is evident from Huda Aziz Muhi and Nidaa Hussain Fahmi's (2021) statement that "man is being estimated and woman is being underestimated" (p. 21).

Rarely does one come across vampire fiction depicting vampires forming familial bonds. According to Rice, her vampire communities requires a united family. The plot develops as Rice introduces the story of Louis and Lestat adopting Claudia, a five-year-old child, into their family. The three of them attempt to achieve social mobility through different means. Louis and Claudia plan to get rid of Lestat and find other vampires in Europe, it is "time to leave him," Claudia asserts (Rice, 1976, p. 117). Lestat informs Claudia "stop searching in every alleyway for other vampires . . . I'm weary of arguing with you" (pp. 130, 131).

Turning a mortal into a vampire is the work of devils like Louis. He abstains from turning Madeleine in favor of Claudia's loneliness. She conveys to Louis that "your evil is that you cannot be evil" (Rice, 1976, p. 259), indicating that Louis possesses adequate compassion as a human being. In addition, Claudia expresses her vulnerability by stating, "I am frail you can crush like a flower" (p. 262). She is struggling to survive, like women in the 1970s who had to conceal their true identities.

The novel explores a variety of motifs that closely mirror the cultural landscape of the 1970s. The themes covered are immortality, unending struggles of good and evil, submission and dominance, isolation, eroticism, collapse of familial ties, and crisis of identity.

Immortality is the ability to have a long life. The motif of immortality is amplified by the city's everlasting nature (Ramsland, 1994). Vampires have a different interpretation of it. Louis views immortality as an endless cycle of solitary evenings, while Armand explains that the mortal psychological burdens of most vampires prevent them from fully embracing their immortality and experiencing life to the fullest over the centuries (Ramsland, 1993). As for Lestat, immortality is a cure for the restless.

Vampires increase "through slavery" (Rice, 1976). The concept of dominance and submission is exemplified by the depiction of slavery, as Lestat illustrates to Louis that the main reason behind one vampire turning another is to obtain a servant, a slave. One exercises dominance while the other assumes a submissive role (Ramsland, 1993). For instance, Lestat asserts his dominion over Claudia and she complies. However, she realizes that her inclination to submit causes her internal destruction, so she responds by killing Lestat on two separate occasions.

The story frequently explores the notion of eroticism, as evidenced by Lestat's statement to Louis that being close is necessary because "separate rooms mean separate security" (Rice, 1976). The bond between a vampire and its victim, as well as between vampires themselves, is inherently erotic due to the nature of the vampire character. The moment in which Armand presents Denis, one of Armand's fledglings, to Louis contains suggestive sexual undertones, creating anticipation and dissatisfaction commonly found in erotic literature.

The ties within the family are also declining. Louis and Lestat coexist as loosely linked individuals on the margins of society, until they transform the young Claudia into a vampire. After that, they establish an unusual familial unit. Collectively, they portray a dysfunctional family, united by both love and resentment. Within such family dynamics, the prevailing tension often leads to negative consequences for the well-being of the child. This is the situation with Claudia, who ultimately reaches a threshold where she can no longer tolerate it and tries to murder Lestat (Ramsland, 1993).

Ultimately, the novel detects a personal identity. If Louis persists in his relentless inquiry about his origins, it will bring "a tragic danger," if he get answers (Rice, 1976). His quest consumes Louis with bitterness. He is facing a hard existential predicament. Moreover, he is destined to endure a lifetime of aimlessly roaming in a state of extreme misery, thinking of the possibility of finding:

[T]hat primitive countryside the answer to why under God this suffering was allowed to exist—why under God it was allowed to begin, and how under God it might be ended. (Rice, 1976, p. 166)

The paper explores not only the concept of *social mobility* in *Interview with the Vampire* but Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* too. The former is achieved through examining the cultural background of the text, which it is devoid of vitality, where religious beliefs are diminishing, the voices of women are disregarded, and individuals are imprisoned by their mental submission. On the other hand, the latter will showcase how *dialogism* help arrive at meanings through the interconnected dialogues of characters.

In *Interview with the Vampire*, the presence of monologic voices is rare and diminishing. Since vampires work collectively to achieve their goals, they possess several voices known as dialogic. The major characters in the story establish dialogic interactions, which involve Louis with the interviewer, Lestat, Claudia, and Armand, as well as Lestat with Louis and Claudia. The context in which these encounters occur provides insights into their beliefs, clashing perspectives, and worldviews.

Louis de Pointe du Lac's transformation from a plantation owner to a vampire represents significant *individual mobility*. Initially, Louis is part of a privileged class, but his conversion to vampirism strips him of his human social status and thrusts him into a new, marginalized existence. This mirrors the transition from *individual* to *social mobility*. He expresses his fear after he and Claudia reach Paris at night:

Never in all the years I'd lived in our select family had I known the fear I'd experienced tonight, the vulnerability, the secret terror. And there was to be no sudden relief from it. No sudden sense of safety. (Rice, 1976, p. 160)

Louis' current state causes him to lose his place in human society. He becomes an outcast and grapples with the philosophical implications of his new existence, seeking to understand his place in a world that no longer accepts him.

This reflects the societal need for new institutions and communication methods that can accommodate such transformations.

As for Lestat de Lioncourt's character, he embodies a different aspect of *social mobility*. Unlike Louis, Lestat seeks power and influence. His actions symbolize an attempt to bridge the gap between vampires and humans, seeking a form of social acceptance and mobility that transcends the limitations imposed on his kind, he conveys to Louis:

Go out there into the streets. Rid yourself of all the human waste in your body, and don't fall so madly in love with the night that you lose your way. (Rice, 1976, p. 21)

God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and poorest, and so shall we; for no creatures under God are as we are . . . I want a child tonight. I am like a mother. (Rice, 1976, p. 88)

Furthermore, one can see Lestat's ambition to form a vampire family with Louis and Claudia as an attempt to establish new societal structures and institutions within the vampire world. This mirrors the idea that societal transformation requires the creation of new and appropriate institutions, as Williams suggests.

The third dynamic character, Claudia, offers a poignant critique of *social mobility*. Turned into a vampire as a child, her eternal youth traps her in a perpetual state of dependency, challenging traditional notions of growth and advancement. Her eventual rebellion against Lestat and her desire to find others like herself reflects a desperate attempt to create a space where she can belong. Her tragic end emphasizes the failure to achieve meaningful *social mobility* within the rigid structures of vampire society. Louis expresses a sense of shame following her death:

That passivity in me has been the core of it all, the real evil. That weakness, that refusal to compromise a fractured and stupid morality, that awful pride! . . . For that, I let Claudia become the vampire she became, when I knew it was wrong . . . it's over. (Rice, 1976, p. 304)

Armand, the oldest vampire in the novel, and the Théâtre des Vampires exemplify a vampire society that has developed its own cultural and social institutions. This group acts together to maintain its distinct identity and exert influence. It also offers a critical lens through which to examine the collective struggle for *social mobility* and acceptance. The Théâtre functions as a macabre theater troupe, performing gruesome plays for human audiences. This institution allows the vampires to interact with humans in a controlled environment. Around seven vampires of the gang gather around a beautiful woman with their grim reaper, who forces her to decide whether to take her life or the life of one of her kin:

[S]uppose the Grim Reaper [refers to himself] had a heart that could resist your beauty . . . to whom would he turn his passion? Someone must die in your place. Would you pick the person for us? (Rice, 1976, p. 220)

After he turns into a vampire, the interviewer notices a drastic change in Louis, asking, "[w]hat was this change?" (Rice, 1976, p. 13). Louis' response:

That ego which could not accept the presence of an extraordinary human being in its midst was crushed. All my conceptions, even my guilt and wish to die, seemed utterly unimportant. I completely forgot *myself*! (Rice, 1976, p. 14)

This demonstrates the depth of his existential dilemma and the profound reassessment of his principles and convictions as a vampire. Louis states, "I was to watch and to approve; that is, witnessing the taking of a human life as proof of my commitment and part of my change" (p. 16), exploring the ethical uncertainty and inner turmoil inherent in his character. Violence, dedication, and change highlight the intricate interaction between ethical concerns and personal development in the narrative. Louis's statement:

I had seen my becoming a vampire in two lights: The first light was simply enchantment; Lestat had overwhelmed me on my deathbed. But the other light was my wish for self-destruction. My desire to be thoroughly damned. (Rice, 1976, p. 17)

This emphasizes his personality's conflict and paradoxical aspects. The concept of "enchantment" implies a captivating attraction or interest in the paranormal, while the need for "self-destruction" reflects Louis's psychological anguish.

The *dialogic relationship* that exists between Louis and Lestat is highly intricate. As the creator of Lestat, Louis expresses his inherent doubt and inclination to question Lestat's power and wisdom, asserting, "[y]ou don't know everything yet . . . do you?" (Rice, 1976, p. 33). Lestat's response, "[y]ou don't know, for example, all the ways you can die," (p. 33) contains an implied menace and serves as an indication to Louis of the inherent danger and weaknesses that come with their vampire nature. It implies that Louis has a significant amount of knowledge to gain regarding the dangers and hardships associated with their eternal state. Louis then remarks:

There must be someone else in the world to teach me these things . . . Certainly you're not the only vampire! And your father, he's perhaps seventy. You couldn't have been a vampire long, so someone must have instructed you. (Rice, 1976, p. 33)

By expressing this, he questions Lestat's exclusive control over knowledge and implies the existence of other sources of knowledge and guidance beyond Lestat's deceptive dominion.

In a vampire family, profound *dialogic relationships* often develop. Louis bites Claudia, not out of a blood craving but because of a moral obligation to help her. Lestat, observing Louis's independence, extracts Claudia's blood to sustain the vampire family, believing he will become its master and guide. Claudia inquires, "[y]ou made us what we are, didn't you?" (Rice, 1976, p. 107). Fascination, anger, and a longing to understand her vampiric essence infuse her remarks. Lestat reacts in defence:

You could be dead by now if you were mortal! . . . Do you hear me? Why do you ask me this now? Why do you make such a thing of it? You've known all your life you're a vampire. (Rice, 1976, p. 108)

This demonstrates his effort to avoid accountability and justify his behavior. His comments convey a feeling of exasperation and eagerness as he struggles with Claudia's inquiry into the decisions he took on her behalf as her father. Like Louis, Claudia also has the right to know about her new vampiric nature. Abdullah (2022) states that "feminist ideologies of the modern age seek not only equal rights with men but also appeal to women's empowerment" (p. 49).

The first night Louis and Claudia spend at the theater, some vampires assemble on stage and start executing a human life-taking performance in front of a mortal audience. The aim is to demonstrate that the malevolence exhibited by human beings surpasses the level of evil perpetrated by vampires. For example, one of the vampires brings an elderly woman and begins to tease her, causing the crowd to burst into laughter. The dialogue opens with the woman's urgent pleas for assistance, articulating her dread of mortality by declaring, "Help me . . . I don't want to die!" (p. 108). This plea demonstrates the innate benevolence in the human longing for existence and fear of the unknown.

The compelling *dialogic relationship* between Louis and Armand intensifies the concepts of morality and immorality. Armand confidently declares his wickedness from the outset, claiming, "I'm evil, evil as any vampire who ever lived! . . . Why does that make you as evil as any vampire? Aren't there any gradations of evil?" (Rice, 1976, p. 233). His claim raises a philosophical discussion about the many degrees of wickedness, raising the question of whether evil is a solitary, unfathomable abyss or a range of moral obscurity. Louis acknowledges the great void and obscurity of evil, affirming, "Yes, I think it is...it's that dark, that empty. And it is without consolation" (p. 233). Armand challenges Louis' perspective on goodness and evil, challenging the justice of assigning different levels of goodness and viewing evil as absolute. Louis firmly declares, highlighting the vast difference between kindness and evil, adding, "No. But equally and infinitely different from evil" (p. 233). This sentence highlights the novel's focus on the theme of moral dualism and the underlying conflict between morality and wickedness within the human psyche.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rice's vampires evoke sympathy through various techniques. She portrays her vampires as heroes who reflect on their vampiric nature and explore many subjects relating to her society, demonstrating *social mobility*. Her characters form communities as a way to accomplish their goals of uncovering the truth about their origins and addressing existential inquiries. Rice's decision to write in this style and from this perspective stems from her empathy towards the marginalized individuals in society who are often overlooked, stigmatized, and silenced. She imbued them with affection, apprehension, comprehension, human attributes, and a distinctly sensual nature. By examining the cultural environment

of the 1970s and the concept of *dialogism*, it is evident that the vampire community shares similarities with modern society. The concept of *dialogism* illustrates the conflict between multiple viewpoints. They establish *dialogic relationships* and introduce contrasting worldviews. They generate a collection of ambiguous interpretations that can be better understood and elucidated by reusing the progression of *dialogue*.

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