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## **Descending into the Swamp**

*An analysis of the relationship between Louis and Lestat in Anne Rice's "Interview with the vampire" and the consequences of their unspoken love.*

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## Sammendrag

Tittelen på masteroppgaven min er *Descending into the Swamp: An analysis of the relationship between Louis and Lestat in Anne Rice's "Interview with the Vampire" and the consequences of their unspoken love*. Mitt utgangspunkt i denne oppgaven er konsekvensene av den urealiserte kjærligheten mellom de to karakterene og de ulike emosjonelle båndene som denne kjærligheten består av. De har en avhengighet av hverandre som har økt av disse båndene, en avhengighet jeg skal vise at delvis stammer fra en frykt for ensomhet, og at en urealisert kjærlighet har som konsekvens å skape denne ensomheten. En vampyr har potensialet til å leve for alltid og risikerer derfor å leve et liv hvor alle rundt ham eldes og dør. Eneste måten å unngå et liv hvor alle forsvinner er å skape evige bånd, altså ved å skape liv gjennom å gjøre andre om til vampyrer slik at de kan bevege seg gjennom årene i samme tempo, mens verden svinner hen rundt dem. Ser man bort ifra den potensielle ensomheten for Lestat og Louis, så ser man også flere praktiske grunner til hvorfor dette partnerskapet ble opprettet, som for eksempel finansielle årsaker. Min hypotese er at når dette partnerskapet tar form så ender de etter hvert opp med et langt mer komplisert forhold enn hva de originale motivene vil tilsi, men når disse emosjonelle båndene forblir utematiserte skaper dette konsekvenser – konsekvenser som har som resultat å skape det de prøver å unngå, nemlig ensomheten.

Gjennom denne handlingen, hvor Lestat innvier Louis til livet som vampyr, skapes et familieforhold. Deres blod veksler mellom kroppene og skaper en tilknytning. Lestat har kurert Louis og reddet han fra å dø av alderdom, og det vil for alltid være Lestat som har gitt ham dette livet. Han blir både forfører og far ovenfor den nyskapte vampyren. Og senere blir de felles foreldre gjennom en ny skapelse når de, i ledelse av Lestat, forvandler en foreldreløs jentunge.

Selv om Lestat driver et manipulerende maktspill og Louis vil løsrive seg fra denne avhengigheten, så later det til at begge er uegnet for et liv alene. Og via denne avhengigheten, når en splittelse er nær ved å ta sted, skapes det en emosjonell reaksjon hos begge parter. Allikevel blir disse følelsene usagte, noe som hindrer en mulig forsoning og eventuell tematisering og realisering av kjærligheten. Resultatet blir at de lever separate liv ved romanens ende, med ulike syn på det å være alene og varierende grad av tilpassing i deres liv fra hverandre. Så mitt spørsmål er: Hvilket forhold kan utvikles gjennom frykten for å være alene og hvilke konsekvenser har et slikt forhold?

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## **Introduction:**

### **The vampire in fiction:**

Vampire based literature and movies are not a rare phenomenon these days. Many would perhaps consider the more recent Twilight saga by Stephenie Meyer as a revival of the vampire myth in fiction and perhaps, to an extent, that is true in regards to the newer generation of people. Still, there has never been a lack of vampire fiction for those interested in the genre. The last couple of decades have been far from fruitless as far as vampire stories go; both as written words on a page, as well as on the screen. Everything from Anne Rice's vampire chronicles dating back to the mid-seventies and perhaps more recently, Joss Whedon's TV-show *Buffy the vampire slayer* featured in the late 90s and early 2000s, have contributed to the promotion of vampire-related entertainment. In the USA, there have even been pop-culture college courses in which you can delve deeper into the Buffy-verse. Another example would be *The Vampire Diaries*, a TV-series based on a book series under the same name written by Lisa J. Smith's, where two vampire brothers fall in love with a human who is a doppelganger of someone they once knew and who is later turned into a vampire herself. Looking beyond the aforementioned visual and written stories, where vampires and relationships are themes, we shouldn't forget characters such as Blade, the daywalking part-vampire who spends his days taking down bloodsuckers and is the main character of several films as well as a TV-series, and then there is Joe Pitt, the vampire main character of Charlie Huston's supernatural noir thriller novel-series *Joe Pitt Casebooks*. All of these works have been integrated into our pop culture understanding of vampires.

Still, where does it all come from?

Jennifer Smith writes in *Anne Rice: A critical companion* (1996):

(...) it's necessary to go all the way back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was then that writers developed a fascination with the modern ideas of the supernatural. These writers, the Romantics, rejected the idea that everything could be explained by science and instead insisted that there were many things unexplained and unexplainable, including the individual human spirit. Romantic literature emphasizes strong ties to nature as both wild and true, an acceptance of the supernatural as a real force in life, an appreciation for passion over logic, and a rejection of conventional rules or rituals. (Smith: 9)

Bram Stoker's work, *Dracula*, which was based upon the 15<sup>th</sup> century Romanian prince, Vlad Tepes – nicknamed Vlad the Impaler – was published in 1897 and is perhaps the most known vampire throughout the world. However, approximately 80 years prior to Stoker's work, in 1819, Dr. John William Polidori's story, *The vampyre*, was published. In Christopher Frayling's book *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* from 1992 describes Polidori's *The vampyre* as *the first story successfully to fuse the disparate elements of vampirism into a coherent literary genre*. (Frayling: 108) Interestingly, *The vampyre*, is said to stem from the same writing contest in which Mary M. Shelley produced her literary work, *Frankenstein*, that was based on a nightmare she had had. It is also said to have been inspired by a fragment of Lord Byron's writing. It is the tale of Aubrey who sets out on a journey with a man he meets, called Lord Ruthven. Ruthven is a manipulative person who enjoys seducing young ladies, and this behavior causes Aubrey to separate from him on his trip. Later in the story we see Ruthven's return and as the story unfolds we are made aware of that Ruthven has become a vampire.

Vampires have also been featured in supernaturally themed poems and Lord Byron produced such a poem called *The Giaour*. Wherein he describes a curse where when you awaken after death, you are doomed to go after the people closest to you in life, which seems to be very much in accordance with the vampire myth. I point this out as *The Giaour* was written prior to Polidori's story, in 1813. Though *The Vampyre* may be considered the first modern vampire story, the concept of vampires, stem further back than that through poems and folk-tales, where vampires have been blamed for the slaughter of cattle and people etc.

It is also important to note that a great deal of vampire fiction include some form of romance or eroticism, and even homosexuality – at least as an implied part. In Polidori's *The vampyre*, there is no direct homosexual tension, yet Lord Ruthven appears to have a close and unfortunately malicious bond to Aubrey, where the human becomes the main focus for his manipulations.

The act of feeding from a person's neck is both an act of physical closeness and potential intimacy. Also, the act of turning someone into a vampire is, traditionally speaking, done by an exchange of bodily fluids. Mind you, that by bodily fluids I, in this case, am referring to blood. In the past, vampirism was blamed for non-diagnosable diseases due to the fear that arose from poorly understood medical conditions, spreading panic much like how AIDS

(Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) sent waves of fear through society when it came to be. The symptoms of AIDS also have certain similarities with what we accept as part of the vampire disease in how it is a blood-borne disease where each victim has the possibility of passing it on, creating more victims, through sex or blood-letting. Despite these similarities though, the endgame is quite different. While AIDS weakens the body and its immune system, the vampire disease gives eternal life and is generally thought to keep you from aging physically, making it a more desirable affliction. The downside being that your new liquid diet will most likely end in death for the chosen person/juice-box.

However, AIDS is not the only disease which has been linked to the vampire myth. Porphyria has been dubbed the vampire disease for several reasons. There are different types of Porphyria, all involving a problem with production of heme, which is a component of hemoglobin – the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen from your lungs to all parts of your body. Those suffering from Cutaneous Porphyria are sensitive to light, and exposure to sunlight or occasionally even artificial light, may cause blisters, redness and burning pain to mention a few<sup>1</sup>. So, not only does this disease stem from a problem in the blood, but the ones inflicted with this disease are hurt by the sun. Sunlight, is after all, considered the main weakness of vampires.

Getting back to the more intimate side of things; there have been many works of literature in which there is a sexual component present, both between heterosexual and homosexual pairings. Though how blatantly this is portrayed varies, as much of it is found in the subtext of the literary work. An author who has done so quite successfully is Anne Rice.

### **Anne Rice and the Gay Movement:**

Anne Rice was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1941 and was raised in a catholic home, both her place of birth and her upbringing has an impact on several of her books. However, her birthname was not Anne. Her parents had named her Howard Allen O'Brien as a means of giving her a strong start in life, yet on her first day of school she announced that her name was Anne, something her parent didn't mind. (Smith: 1) Her novel

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/porphyria/symptoms-causes/dxc-20340616>

*Interview with the Vampire* primarily takes place in and around the New Orleans area. The French quarter being prominently featured. Her catholic upbringing, though she early on identified as an agnostic, is also shown in this novel through Louis and his own conflicts with religion, in accepting what he is and accepting the downfall of his brother. She went on to study at the San Francisco State University and holds a Master's degree in English and Creative writing, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Political Science.

Over the years, Rice has written over thirty novels and is most known for her book-series The Vampire Chronicles, of which *Interview with the Vampire* is included, and The Mayfair witches. Her first novel, *Interview with the Vampire*, was published in 1976 and has become a bestselling novel with a great mainstream, as well as cult, following. Nearly two decades after its publication the novel was adapted into a motion picture released in 1994, featuring stars such as Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, Kirsten Dunst and Antonio Banderas.

I chose Anne Rice's *Interview with the vampire*, not because it is her first novel which has garnered her a lot of attention, but because of the homoerotic subtext evident in scenes – such as when Lestat uses seduction to manipulate Louis into doing as he wishes, by seducing him into becoming a vampire and to kill.

Having first read this novel as a young teenager, these were the scenes that stood out the most to me, though I didn't quite know why. I was left with a feeling that there were a lot of unspoken emotions between the two main characters, Louis and Lestat – yet exactly what those feelings were, I couldn't properly identify. When I re-read the novel as an adult. I was surprised seeing more layers of the story that I previously hadn't been aware of. The first thing that struck me was the intense sexual tension of the novel and through close reading, discovering even more layers of intimacy and affection, and seeing how dependent the two major characters are of each other. The fact that the novel was written at the height of the gay rights movement in the USA also seems to reaffirm what I am discovering when analyzing Rice's novel.

The fight for gay rights was well on its way prior to Rice's publication of *Interview with the Vampire*, and there had been two 'movements' up until that point that were fighting for gay rights which are discussed in Annamarie Jagose's book *Queer Theory: An introduction* from 1996. The first was the Homophile Movement. The earliest recorded homophile organization

in America was the 1924 charter of the Chicago Society for Human rights which was sadly disbanded in 1925 after members of the party were arrested by police without warrants and on barely any evidence. Still this organization provided a template for later organizations founded in the 1950s such as the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis. However, while the Homophile Movement worked to alter the public's opinion of gay and lesbian people, they were also preoccupied with not being labeled as actual homosexuals and instead advertising themselves as an organization for those interested in homosexuality. Katz (1976) referred to in Jagose (1996, p.27) states that they even went so far as to dissociate themselves from drag queens and butch women. As a result, the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis never became mass movements. The repercussions from potentially being labeled as homosexuals, made political organization difficult. However, in 1969, there was a significant event which changed the fight for gay and lesbian rights forever. The Stonewall Inn was a gay and drag bar in New York. When police raided the bar, they were met with resistance which culminated in a weekend of riots. This was dubbed the start of a new movement know as Gay Liberation. No longer did they try to hide, but stood up for their identity with a new self-determination. No longer was the message that homosexuals were the same as heterosexuals. As D'Emilio (1983) is referred to in Jagose (1996), they no longer focused on '*appearing respectable to a society that defined homosexuality as beyond respectability*' In a sense, it became the beginning of Pride. Pride in being gay. (Jagose: 24-32) The Stonewall riots also happened the same year as Anne Rice began writing her story, in 1969 (Smith: 21) and was originally written as a short story. At this point, Anne Rice was living in San Francisco and while this is not the same city as where the Stonewall riots happened, it is a city renowned for its gay community that would also be impacted by the Stonewall riots and be a recent issue during the time Rice was writing.

However, there were also other things happening around her at the time of her writing that have impacted her novel. Her family. Anne Rice had a daughter, named Michele who was born in 1966 and who was diagnosed with leukemia in 1970. Michele never recovered from her illness and passed away in 1972. After this, Rice struggled with alcoholism and she turned to writing as a means of therapy. (Smith: 3) Unable to let go of her characters, Rice returned to her short story and kept working at it, rewriting it and extending it into a novel. This also strengthens an analysis with family in mind as Rice herself has very much identified herself with Louis and his despair. She has also admitted that she modeled Lestat after her husband after his controlling nature during their daughter's illness. (Smith: 40) And of course, knowing

this, we can also deduce that Claudia becomes a representation of her daughter. This meaning that in *Interview with the Vampire*, we have a representation of Rice's own family unit – Anne, her husband and her daughter. This can also explain the ambivalent homoerotic tension between Louis and Lestat in the novel, as represented by Anne's love for her husband, despite her resentment for him. Of course, there is no openly expressed love between Louis and Lestat. However, it is worth noting that Louis later in the novel becomes more officially, romantically involved with a male vampire, Armand. This allowing homosexuality to be a valid point of interest when looking at Louis and Lestat's interaction prior to this new relationship.

Furthermore, Anne Rice has also been published under the pseudonyms: Anne Rampling and A.N. Roquelaure, in which her focus has been on erotic and erotic BDSM fiction, which have included acts of homosexuality. This only strengthened my desire to analyze her work, with the emphasis on intimacy and affection, as I am a writer of erotic romance fiction myself, where my main body of work consists of exploring gay, male relationships. Of course, the vampire is not exempt from family simply because of his sexuality or because he has passed into a second life. In Candace R. Benefiel's article *Blood Relations: The Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire* from *The Journal of Popular Culture* (2004, volume 38: issue 2) She adds James B. Twitchell's words from *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (1985) to highlight the vampire's role as something greater than just that of a monster:

"Clearly the vampire . . . has more going for him than just being the resident demon in Christian folklore. For the last few generations he has also served to explain the dynamics of human social and sexual behavior. And it is here, especially as a paradigm of suppressed interfamilial struggles, that the vampire has become a central figure in popular culture" (Benefiel: 263)

### **Interview with the Vampire:**

The novel itself is a self-reflective novel, presented in the form of an interview which fits well with an analytical approach inspired by psychoanalysis, where there is a subject being interviewed and tells the story of his life. The interview is revealed to be taking place on Divisadero Street, a street in San Francisco – The same town Anne Rice was living at the time

she wrote this novel – and from ‘*the passing beams of traffic.*’ (Rice: 3) we are assured that the interview is taking place in modern times, in contrast to the story being told which start in 1791, New Orleans. A young boy interviews and tapes a vampire; named Louis de Pointe du Lac, who is explaining his motives and admitting his sins, and having them documented as a deterrent for others not to let themselves be seduced by evil. In my analysis I am focusing on the way Louis presents himself in this interview, highlighting the way his monologue – as he is rarely interrupted – both reveals and also conceals important aspects of his vampire existence. Consequently, I will read it, at least partly, as a psychoanalyst reads his patient, looking for clues and symptoms for his troubles that are revealed through his monologue. What matters to me is to analyze, in detail, key aspects of his narrative, in order to throw light on the emotional aspects of his unspoken love towards Lestat and what consequences have come from the suppressed nature of this love.

The vampire being interviewed, then, is Louis de Pointe du Lac, and the interview is centered around his over two-hundred years of living, with a primary focus on his relationship with the man who turned him into an immortal being. However, it is not just an interview, but it is also a taped session. This gives us an entirely new presentation of the book’s story and it is through Louis's narrative we learn of his life with Lestat. Two things in particular come of this. Firstly, we aren’t just witnessing the interviewer’s interpretation of Louis’s words, but we are able to ‘hear’ it from Louis directly. Secondly, the way that this is set up, with the exclusion of Lestat, the reader is distanced from him. Still, we are hearing Louis’s interpretation and observations of Lestat. Here the tapes are especially important. Occasionally, the interviewer has to pause Louis in order to change out the tapes and continue recording. This pause brings the story back to the novel’s present and allows the reader to reflect upon what has transpired so far in Louis’s tale. Additionally, it allows the interviewer to process what he is being told and discuss this with Louis in order to get a better understanding of things. Louis also appears to be quite entuned with Lestat, knowing him in a way which is only possible through years of cohabitation. Additionally, Louis has great observational skills, allowing the reader to analyze what he brings forth, revealing things he himself may be unaware of – as a result of his own barrier of self-preservation when it comes to his true feelings for the vampire who created him.

Louis starts off talking about his human life and soon after, about how he came to be a vampire in 1791, after crossing paths with another vampire, Lestat de Lioncourt, at a time

when Louis was still reeling from the death of his brother. Taken in by the physical beauty of Lestat, as well as the promises of a new life not ruled or dictated by human desires, Louis agrees to become a vampire. For a long time, they live at the plantation owned by Louis, along with Lestat's father. However, when the slaves working at the plantation start suspecting what the two pale men might be and Lestat's father passes away, they flee. Their life together is far from idyllic, where Lestat comes across as a self-serving narcissist whose main motivation for sticking with Louis appears to be financially based. Louis on the other hand, holds on to his humanity and sense of morality by primarily feeding on animals instead of humans. Coming to terms with the fact that Lestat will never tell him what he wants and needs to know, Louis decides to leave Lestat, but is again subject to Lestat's seduction in which he manipulates Louis into feeding on a young, orphan child. Before her life fades completely, Lestat turns the child into a vampire, using her as leverage to keep Louis from leaving, stating that the child is now their daughter as the two 'created' her together. For a time, this is successful. Louis loves their daughter, Claudia, but as her mind matures she comes into conflict with Lestat. Trying to manipulate Louis to leave with her and abandon Lestat, Claudia eventually decides to murder Lestat instead. However, her attempt is unsuccessful as he later turns up again. Together, Louis and Claudia flee, unsure if Lestat has succumb in a fire from their latest encounter. Eventually, travelling to Paris, France, Louis and Claudia encounter vampires from the Théâtre des Vampires who eventually sentence them for the attempted murder on Lestat when he catches up to them. Claudia dies, and Louis shuts down emotionally, while Lestat, already struggling with his own emotions, breaks down, knowing that his part in Claudia's death means Louis may never forgive him. Decades later when they meet again, we see the outcome of their breakdowns, which in the end leaves them both alone. Though Louis appears to prefer it, while Lestat's survival on his own seems doubtful without help. Still, Louis is too affected by Lestat's dismal state to risk ending up in the same situation as they once were in.

I have chosen three elements in this story to focus upon that will provide insight into the various bonds shared between Louis and Lestat, as well as the consequences of this. Transformation, Family and Consequences. In the first part, I will be focusing on Louis's transformation and how he deals with becoming and being a vampire. Here I will also look into how his "humanity" and emotions translate into his new life where his remaining humanity is at stake. The second part, which focuses on family, relates to Louis and Lestat establishing their own make-shift family with the introduction of Claudia, whom they make

their daughter – a decision made solely by Lestat, yet was done through a shared experience. Continuing on, this chapter also includes Louis and Claudia's violent separation from Lestat which causes a dissolution of the family unit – both in regard to their relationship with Lestat, but also between Louis and Claudia. The third part of my thesis will focus upon the emotional stability, or rather lack thereof, of Louis and Lestat, by first looking into the sentencing and execution of Claudia and the consequences of this in the mental health of Louis and Lestat, and trace back the origins of when Lestat became capable of showing or at least accepting his emotions, as he previously has been considered cruel, and withdrawn from expressing any proper affection. A newfound ability stemming back to the attempt on his life and the disposing of his body by being submerged in the swamps. I will also explore the long-term effect of these breakdowns by considering their reunion after years of separation.

These are the most important aspects of Anne Rice's novel to display a reliance and connection between the two main vampires, as well as the struggle associated with their relationship – a relationship largely hindered by their unspoken affection and love for each other, which results in them living lives of solitude – emotionally, as well as physically. As reflected in the title of this thesis *Descending into the Swamp*, by using an important symbol from the novel – namely the Swamp, where Lestat's body is dumped - there is a connection between their feelings and a sense of being submerged in water. Of drowning, or rather, a desire to *drown out* the emotional chaos. Thus, I read reference to this swamp as a symptom of the complexity of their relationship. I will show that love is the defining factor in their relationship and we will see its consequences unfold. And in my thesis, I will show that love is not one single emotion, but a colloquial term for many forms of affection, several of which are relevant in their relationship.

### **Theories of Love and Intimacy**

«Så levde de lykkelige alle sine dager», heter det til slutt i eventyrene. Hva lykken består av sier eventyrene ingenting om. Heller ikke romanene på 700 sider handler om den lykkelige kjærligheten. De handler mer om sjalusi, lengsel og konflikt, misforståelser, svik, lidelse og oppofrelse – alt annet enn to mennesker som lever harmonisk sammen. (Refsum: 9)

The quote above is how Christian Refsum starts off his introduction to his book *Kjærlighet som religion*, (2016) which is a book that focuses on passion and longing in film and literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite Anne Rice's novel predating the 21<sup>st</sup> century by a handful of decades, a lot of what Refsum discusses is relevant to my own understanding of *Interview with the Vampire*.

Just by looking at Refsum's first paragraph, I could be convinced that he was talking about the exact same novel that I've chosen to work with, because no matter how you twist and turn Rice's novel, there is no happily ever after for Louis and Lestat within her story. Still, that doesn't mean their dysfunctional relationship is void of passion or longing, alongside the other factors Refsum mentions, such as jealousy, conflict and betrayal. All of which are prominent features of so-called *romantic* literature. Going by this, it seems authors of these kinds of novels tend to shy away from what can be seen as a problem-free love.

Da jeg forberedte denne boken, skjønte jeg derfor at jeg ikke kunne skrive om «Kjærlighet i nyere film og litteratur», slik den opprinnelige planen var. Jeg fant ut at det var bedre å skrive om det bøkene og filmene faktisk handler om: lidenskap og lengsel, og tro og håp på kjærlighet: *Kjærlighet som religion*. (Refsum: 9)

Like Refsum, I had to slightly change direction of what I had initially planned for this thesis. I wanted to write about love in the relationship between Louis and Lestat. Instead, I found myself having to tweak my topic to make it more relevant and shifted my focus to envelope several emotional bonds, to focus on emotional needs and explore the consequences of the main characters unmet needs. Love, in and of itself, is simply too broad a subject to simply use that as a single element. Of course, by shifting my focus, I am not excluding love from my thesis. On the contrary, I am instead delving deeper into the different aspects of love, that aren't separate from it, but part of it. Because as Refsum says:

Refleksjonen over kjærligheten bør forholde seg til hele aksene av menneskelige relasjoner, fra ensomhet til større sosiale og politiske fellesskap. (Refsum: 11)

Now, I will not dwell on the fact that Refsum specified human relations in the quote above, since I am writing a thesis on the relationship between two vampires. These vampires were after all human once. Still, whether regarding humans or the undead, my thesis, at the root, is very much still about love. Only, I'll be exploring a range of emotions attached to the concept

of love. However, to find the relevant parts for my analysis we first have to identify different kinds of love.

Refsum starts off his chapter “Hva er kjærlighet?” by listing four Greek words that represents different sides of love: *Eros*, *Agape*, *Filia*, *Storge*.

The first of these, *eros*, represents erotic, physical love and is named after the Greek god of love. Though, the Greeks also connected the god Eros with spiritual love, a physical component is always present when discussing *eros*. This however, isn't always the case when we move on to the second concept, *agape*. Refsum refers to *agape* as Christian love, where love is not attached to any erotic desires. Listing Simon May as his source, Refsum includes how *agape* can be seen as problematic if its interpretation is restricted to unconditional spiritual love, in contrast to erotic love, as the word *agape*, in the old testament, refers to different kinds of attractions, care and thoughtfulness for other people. The third word listed by Refsum is *filia* which stems from Aristoteles, referring to a special kind of love shared by equals. A friendship based on mutual respect and recognition. In this case an erotic component *can* be present, but not necessarily. In contrast to *agape* where love is unconditional, a relationship based in *filia* can end if one party decides the other has become unworthy of their love and respect. The forth, and final, word that Refsum has included in his initial list of different types of love, is *storge*. The author C.S Lewis wrote a book titled “The Four Loves” where he addressed the four aforementioned Greek words. He began with *storge* and translated it into “affection”. In this case, love doesn't need to be equal. It can grow through exposure and habit. This love can relate to close family, beloved pets or even items and places. Their presence providing comfort and joy to the one who loves them. (Refsum: 30-35)

To summarize, Refsum has outlined four types of love – an erotic love, an unconditional love, a conditional love and an affectionate love. Within Rice's novel there are examples that can relate to all of these. From the physical intimacy and sense of pleasure derived from the act of transformation as Louis is turned into a vampire, to Louis's affection for his family, especially his brother in his human life and his daughter Claudia in his vampire life. However, love is so encompassing that simply dividing it into four parts will never be enough, especially not with the amount of theories circling around the subject. Therefore, Refsum continues his exploration into what love is with a selection of three theories surrounding the matter.

Summarized the three theories can boil down to this: Alain Badiou explains love as an event between two people that changes their perception of the world, while Simon May sees in love a desire of belonging. Zygmunt Bauman is concerned that the leading ideas of love, as well as the modern market of love, may paradoxically contribute in making us more isolated. This being problematic as he considers both the individual and society's need for solidarity and community. (Refsum: 35)

Of the three theories above, I can, for the most part, look away from Bauman's thoughts on love as what he is talking about concerns more modern times in which technology becomes a deciding factor, and something that is not relevant for my analysis of Louis and Lestat's relationship. The other two are more relevant and not restrained to any fixed point in time.

Badiou betoner sannhetserfaringen: Man ser *verden* slik man aldri ville ha sett den hvis man ikke var sammen med den andre. (Refsum: 39)

This quote is an undeniable fact in the relationship between Louis and Lestat. By becoming a vampire, Louis is faced with a new life. A life where he quite literally sees the world through new eyes. In a way which would have been impossible without Lestat who changed him.

Continued, Refsum sums up May's thoughts on ontological rootedness as such:

Kjærligheten er en opplevelse som inspirerer et håp om ontologisk tilhørighet. Den kan ikke gi ubetinget trygghet og følelse av å høre hjemme, men den inspirerer et håp om at en slik tilhørighet er mulig. Og selv om dette håpet ikke representerer en endelig redning, blir vi lykkelige av å oppleve det. (Refsum: 39-40)

Throughout Anne Rice's novel we see examples that seem to coincide with Simon May's theory. I believe Louis has experienced this hope, but also great sadness as he slowly comes to the conclusion that it may be too late for this hope to be fulfilled. Louis longs for the man Lestat could have been and the relationship they would have had, had Lestat not been so closed off to him. An emotional barrier is set between them, probably stemming back to Lestat's childhood, where Lestat's father pulled him out of school and burned his beloved books. (Rice: 55) A love of books could have been something that Louis and Lestat could have shared in their vampire life, so that Louis would have been able to feel a sense of belonging with him, instead of it being a reason for Lestat to resent him. Simon May's theory

of rootedness – referring to a sense of belonging - doesn't just pertain to people. It can be recognized in all relationships, even in one's affective connection to a specific location.

So where does this leave Louis and Lestat?

The creation, and the courting process beforehand, when Louis is transformed into a vampire is a starting point, one which is both sensual and carnal. It is what I will call an *intimate* act which can cause a ripple effect, and considering Louis and Lestat are immortal beings, these ripples can go on for years upon years, in which there is an attempt to reclaim the pleasure from his transformation. It also creates a family bond between the two – a blood connection through a process of rebirth into a life as a vampire. To further explore what these emotional and physical connections are and what they lead to, one first has to answer the question of what love is and also what intimacy is. Everyone has a certain understanding of the two words, but when you start breaking the terminology down, what does love really entail? Through Refsum, we have gained an understanding of love and how it can be broken down into pieces, depending on the nature of a relationship and how the love is being directed and at whom. So where can we see evidence of love in the relationship between Louis and Lestat, and to what degree does this affect their lives? I've mentioned some examples of affection between them above, directly related to the theories of love presented by Refsum, and arguably, there is a certain amount of intimacy implicit in all of these. However, what really is intimacy? Is it, or can it be, separate from love?

Is every kind of intimacy necessarily linked to all types of love, or are they two sides of the same coin? To get some insight into this I started by looking through several online dictionaries. Intimacy, as a noun, is defined similarly on these pages and below you can see how it has been defined on <sup>2</sup>Dictionaries.com:

- 1) the state of being intimate.
- 2) a close, familiar, and usually affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person or group.
- 3) a close association with or detailed knowledge or deep understanding of a place, subject, period of history.
- 4) an act or expression serving as a token of familiarity, affection, or the like: to allow the intimacy of using first names.
- 5) an amorously familiar act; liberty.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/intimacy>? (14.02.17 – kl. 12.00)

- 6) sexual intercourse.
- 7) the quality of being comfortable, warm, or familiar:

Looking at the explanations listed above, we can see that many of them correlate with the things listed by Refsum in his chapter “Hva er kjærlighet?” So why do I feel the need to repeat these things by going a bit deeper into the world of intimacy? When we put love and intimacy next to each other, isn't intimacy a more active part? We can love from afar, never letting the object of our affection know of our harbored feelings. Yet, when it comes to intimacy, it seems to imply a certain amount of duality. Something that must be shared. This aspect becomes very important when considering that the love between Louis and Lestat does not become a thematised love. It is an unspoken love and therefore one must look at other aspects in order to locate an intimacy and discern what kind of love can be drawn from that.

When I am reading about Lestat and Louis, I don't feel that love is a good enough word to describe their relationship. Love is there, but it needs to be broken down in order to fully appreciate the nuances of Louis and Lestat's relationship. Intimacy and affection are displayed through rare, raw acts, and sometimes even subtle, almost hidden acts of affection. It seems that love calls for more than Louis and Lestat may be willing to accept, or at least willing to admit even to themselves, leaving them emotionally jumbled. There is intimacy, affection and fear between them. The fear of what losing that connection might mean. As I continue on in this thesis, I will pay special attention to the things in Rice's novel that reveals what relationship Louis and Lestat have, rooted in Louis transformation and their establishment of a family unit, and the consequences of how they choose to process their emotions within these bonds. In other words, I want to answer – What is *their* love and what is its consequences?

Anne Rice and *Interview with the Vampire* have been analyzed before with varied emphasis. Candace B. Benefiel wrote an article of the Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family (2004) and Pete Remington writes in his essay of Anne Rice's vampires being Indices of the Depressive Self in Peter Day's *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (2006). While Jennifer Smith wrote a critical companion to her works. (1996) There have also been written doctoral dissertations, in which Anne Rice's characters have been analyzed. Such as in Anna M. Sonser's dissertation «Subversion, seduction, and the culture of consumption: The American gothic revisited in the work of Toni Morrison, Joyce Carol Oates, and Anne Rice»

(1999) and Brian Mitchell Peters's dissertation «Monstrous Desires: Homosexuality and the Gothic in twentieth-century American literature» (2002).

What makes my approach to analyzing *Interview with the Vampire* stand out, is that I am not limiting myself to the eroticism of the transformation or the unholy aspect of the vampire family that emerges. I go deeper into the bonds that tie Louis and Lestat together and see that we are faced with two characters reaching out to one another, unable to get past their barriers of self-preservation. Their downfall is a consequence of their unspoken love. Their fear of being alone, crossed with their fear of emotional vulnerability has kept their love unspoken, making loneliness their fate.

# Chapter 1: Transformation: Blood, Death and Rebirth

## Ch. 1.1

### Becoming a vampire through seduction and death

Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, is a self-reflective novel and as the title suggests it is written as an interview. There are, in fact, two narratives present in this novel. That of the interviewer and that of the vampire, Louis de Pointe du Lac, who retells the story of his life, starting with how he became one. This retelling takes most of the place in the novel, but does in fact function as a story within a story. The interviewer's part is mainly to be there and observe Louis and ask questions that allows Louis to reflect even further on his life as he tells it. Smith also makes this observation in her book *Anne Rice: A critical companion* from 1996, where she also likens the interviewer to the reader: *This interviewer is like the reader in every way, ignorant of the ways of the vampire, fascinated by and fearful of the dark figure before him, and finally seduced into the lure of the Other.* (Smith: 24) With this, there has already been a demonstration of seduction in the novel. As we will see, fascination and fear are, alongside seduction, important aspects of Louis's relationship to Lestat.

Prior to encountering Lestat, Louis is lost after the death and possible suicide of his delusional brother. Louis is consumed by guilt and despair for his own part in his brother's death. Unable to cope with this, he drowns himself in alcohol and roams through dark alleyways at night, alone. This becomes a dangerous act when he crosses the path of someone who has turned his back to humanity.

I lived like a man who wanted to die but who had no courage to do it himself. I walked black streets and alleys alone; I passed out in cabarets. I backed out of two duels more from apathy than cowardice and truly wished to be murdered. And then I was attacked. It might have been anyone – and my invitation was open to sailors, thieves, maniacs, anyone. But it was a vampire. (Rice: 11)

Of all the people who could have possibly taken his life, he ends up in the path of the vampire Lestat. Targeted not just for his recklessness, but also for his wealth, Lestat attacks Louis and nearly kills him. This is a violent act where Louis's blood is taken without his permission, but despite being helpless in Lestat's grip, this is not when Louis is transformed. Instead he is

found and cared for by his family and a physician trying to heal him, but is almost killed a second time when the people who care for him bleed him to try and restore balance in his body. A severe treatment for someone who has already been nearly completely drained by a vampire.

However, it is when Louis is still ill that Lestat begins his seduction of Louis, as he aims to turn Louis into a vampire. It appears that simply turning Louis is not enough. Lestat requires consent. Having turned Louis when he first bit him, would have been a violation where Lestat would not have the same control over Louis, as he would have with Louis himself agreeing to the transformation. The first attack can almost be considered an attempted rape, upon where the attacker changes his mind. While Lestat has penetrated Louis's skin with his fangs, he has not provided him with release – a release from his humanity. Still, Louis has been marked by him with the vampire equivalent of a hickey. Marked for transformation or marked as prey, Louis is definitely targeted by Lestat. Having first been exposed to Lestat's violence in their first encounter, Lestat now shows him the opposite through a courting process. Lestat's seduction can be considered both a physical and a mental seduction. There is an instant attraction when Louis is faced with Lestat's flawless appearance – not having seen his appearance when Lestat first bit him. Lestat is described as someone who is clearly not human, but who is all the same breathtaking. It is the first step towards Louis's transformation, but it is clear that it has also caused a sense of awakening in Louis, a homosexual awakening spurred on by his attraction to Lestat. An awakening probably made easier by Louis's weakened state from his substantial blood-loss. As Lestat continues explaining his existence and the things he has lived through to Louis, makes Louis's past seem insignificant in comparison and he can't help being drawn further into Lestat's presence.

From then on I experienced only increasing wonder. As he talked to me and told me of what I might become, of what his life had been and stood to be, my past shrank to embers. I saw my life as if I stood apart from it, the vanity, the self-serving, the constant fleeing from one petty annoyance after another, the lip service to God and the Virgin and a host of saints whose names filled my prayer books, none of whom made the slightest difference in a narrow, materialistic, and selfish existence. I saw my real gods... the gods of most men. Food, drink, and security in conformity. Cinders. (Rice: 14)

Louis sees humanity clearly in comparison to what Lestat tells him, seeing the truth of man's selfish ways, thus becoming a vampire seems a better alternative. He has already come into

conflict with the church, from how his brother's religion based delusions were criticized by the priest Louis confessed this to, a priest who exclaimed that Louis's brother must have been possessed by the devil. (Rice: 12) Louis reacts badly to this and in his fevered state almost beats the man to death – showing that he does possess a violent side. Becoming a vampire will allow Louis to live a life not governed by the catholic church, where some trespasses can be forgiven with the simple act of prayer, while others are condemned for things that are out of their control. Becoming a vampire will provide Louis freedom from the things he finds unjust, as well as provide him a freedom to be himself. Giving him a freedom where his sexual attraction to Lestat is beyond the church's reach. In Jagose's *Queer Theory: An introduction* (1996), she explains that the term 'homosexuality' wasn't coined before 1869 by a swiss doctor, Karoly Maria Benkert (Jagose: 72) and Louis meets Lestat in 1791 which is long before the term came into being. Jagose also uses Foucault's *The history of sexuality* (1981) to address the early perception of homosexuality in law and religion, before the term existed:

Foucault argues that although same-sex acts were condemned in both religious and civil law before 1870, they were regarded as temptations to which anyone might succumb. Sinful and illegal, those forbidden acts were not understood to constitute a certain kind of individual. After 1870 same-sex sex acts began to be read as evidence of a particular type of person about whom explanatory narratives began to be formed: 'The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species' (Jagose: 11)

Louis has an attraction to Lestat, but without a term to explain this attraction, he is left without a specified sexual identity. Yet, he is justified in his supposed sin as far as it was a temptation believed to be able to happen to anyone. And to Louis, Lestat is a temptation. Not just a physical temptation, but one who tempts him with a new life. To him, Lestat has overshadowed what Louis used to put his fate in – an easy feat with Louis's already damaged view of the catholic church, which has made him that much more vulnerable to Lestat's seduction. Being so low in his life, Louis is almost relieved in his meeting with Lestat, knowing that there is something more out there than what he has had to live through so far in his human life. (...) *before I died, Lestat was absolutely the most overwhelming experience I'd ever had.* (Rice: 25)

But what is it that Lestat is offering him? What is this transformation? It is a promise of a new life, freed from human's corrupted needs, but what is the physical ramification of becoming a

vampire? Is vampirism a disease that instead of tearing down the host's body, gives seemingly eternal life or is it the result of some supernatural curse? Lee Edelman includes something surprisingly fitting to this in his book *No Future – Queer Theory and the Death Drive* from 2004. From Jean Baudrillard, *The Final Solution* (2000) Edelman quotes:

"There is something occulted inside us: our deaths: But something else is hidden there, lying in wait for us within each of our cells: the forgetting of death. In our cells our immortality lies in wait for us. It's common to speak of the struggle of life against death, but there is an inverse peril. And we must struggle against the possibility that we will not die. At the slightest hesitation in the fight for death – a fight for division, for sex, for alterity, and so for death - living beings become once again indivisible, identical to one another – and immortal." (Edelman: 61)

It seems it may be the forgetting of death that Lestat is offering Louis by, in fact, fulfilling Louis's death drive shown when Louis was drinking his sorrows and roaming dark alleys – presenting himself as a willing prey for any killer that might come across him. To get to the point of transformation in Rice's novel, we know there needs to be an exchange of blood with one already infected or cursed by vampirism. For the transformation to take place, Lestat drinks from Louis's neck until he is teetering on the brink of death, before feeding him his own blood. This very act, embodies what Refsum referred to as eros. It is a physical act which comes across as being erotic and pleasurable, and requires a penetration of the body, as well as the exchange of bodily fluids. It presents itself much like a sexual act – one that results in Louis's new life. The excerpt below portrays this closeness during the ritual to cause the change.

"Now listen to me, Louis," he said, and he lay down beside me now on the steps, his movement so graceful and so personal that at once it made me think of a lover. I recoiled. But he put his right arm around me and pulled me close to his chest. Never had I been this close to him before, and in the dim light I could see the magnificent radiance of his eye and the unnatural mask of his skin. As I tried to move, he pressed his right fingers against my lips and said, "Be still. I am going to drain you now to the very threshold of death, and I want you to be quiet, so quiet that you can hear the flow of blood through your veins, so quiet that you can hear the flow of that same blood through mine. It is your consciousness, your will, which must keep you alive." I wanted to struggle, but he pressed so hard with his fingers that he held my entire prone body in check; and as soon as I stopped my abortive attempt at rebellion, he sank his teeth into my neck." (...) "Listen, keep your eyes wide," Lestat whispered to me, his lips moving against my neck. I remember that the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion...." (Rice: 18-19)

The penetration of Lestat's fangs can very much be compared to the penetration during intercourse and the blood he then feeds to Louis can be considered a form of controlled ejaculation. The reason why I draw these parallels is because the transformation of Louis is a form of reproduction, and the new life begins in an orgasmic release. A release that is the fulfillment of Louis's death drive by essentially killing him and freeing him from a human society. By exchanging blood, Lestat is creating a new vampire, taking Louis's human life only to give Louis a whole new one as a vampire. Essentially, the intimate nature of this process of transformation makes Lestat and Louis lovers, but as a result of a successful coupling, Louis also becomes the vampiric offspring of Lestat. Benefiel makes this observation of the transformation process in her article "Blood Relations - The Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire": *As the vampire turns its lover into its child, the relationship is oddly incestuous, a configuration that carries over into the portrayal of the vampire family.* (Benefiel: 263) Lestat's blood being part biological matter giving life to a child and part mother's milk as the vampire part of Louis awakens. Even Louis recognizes this connection as he recalls drinking Lestat's blood.

He pressed his bleeding wrist to my mouth, said firmly, a little impatiently, "Louis, drink." And I did. "Steady, Louis," and "Hurry," he whispered to me a number of times. I drank, sucking the blood out of the holes, experiencing for the first time since infancy the special pleasure of sucking nourishment, the body focused with the mind upon one vital source. (Rice: 20)

They now share a familial bond - a blood-bond, as a result of the necessary blood-exchange. The transformation also comes across as an act between lovers, through the pleasure derived from the process – through the release from death and the feasting of blood, which sates their most basic need as vampires. Together they share many bonds already, past that of partners sharing this passionate pleasure – Father and son, creator and creation, as well as that of companions. *I was infinitely closer to him than I had been before the death of my body.* (Rice: 25)

What Louis fails to take account of, however, is the continued needs of a vampire life. Even before being turned had to prove himself worthy of eternal life and separating from his humanity, by witnessing the taking of a life and help dispose of the victim. This challenges Louis in many ways as he is considered a moral being. He does not wish to kill, but in his wish of separating himself from the human world, he is willing to die so that he may live

again as a vampire. Yet, the transformation frightens him. Lestat requires Louis to tap into his inhumanity to prove his commitment to leaving the mortal world and its rules behind.

Edelman follows Lacan's thoughts of Freud's perception of "love one's neighbor" from *Civilization and Its Discontents* and this seems to correspond with Louis's newfound relationship to Lestat if we consider Lestat as a symbolic representation of the neighbor:

Freud, having noted with understatement that "men are not gentle creatures," questions the imperative to "love one's neighbor," since, for most human beings, in his view, "their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him." (Edelman: 84)

Lestat is the corruption of Louis. Using his ethereal appearance to persuade Louis, he aims to have Louis sever his connection to his humanity by destroying it in someone else through murder. Allowing Louis to discover the pleasure of breaking the rules of his own morality and finding pleasure in inflicting harm upon others by being part of the murder of an arbitrary victim. Thus, proving that he will be able to handle the vampire lifestyle, where murder is commonplace. It shows that Louis is prepared to live a life detached from the rules of the human world. And by successfully luring Louis to cross that step, he ensures that Louis will lean on him in his changed world when he becomes a vampire, because he must pay Lestat back for the freedom he is providing him, and he'll need Lestat to guide him.

As we beat the body bruising the face and the shoulders, I became more and more aroused. Of course, you must realize that all this time the vampire Lestat was extraordinary. He was no more human to me than a biblical angel. But under this pressure, my enchantment with him was strained. 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. This was the open door through which Lestat had come on both the first and second occasions. (Rice: 17)

There is a sexual component to this murder, caused by Louis's conflicting emotions. He is feeling a sexual release by tearing himself away from human rules and inflicting death – something he craves for himself. It seems fitting that orgasm is often dubbed *La petite mort* or the little death, which according to Oxford Dictionaries Online means the brief loss or weakening of consciousness and specifically the sensation of orgasm as likened to death; an

orgasm.<sup>3</sup> Louis, still enchanted by Lestat who is leading him into this new life and promising him a continued release separate from judgement and laws, is weak to his advances. And Louis is discovering a correlation between murder and pleasure. A sadistic pleasure, spawned from a masochistic desire. Edelman brings to light the subject of masochism and sadism in *No Future* as a manner of explaining an internal pressure of self-destruction and uses Freud's thoughts from his *New Introductory Lectures*:

"masochism is older than sadism, and that sadism is the destructive instinct turned outward." To which Freud then goes on to add: "It really seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves, in order to guard against the impulsion to self-destruction." (Edelman: 52)

Louis fears what he will become, but he is aware of his own self-destructive nature which has led him down this path. At the same time, this relates to Lestat as well as he appears to be turning his own sadistic and destructive nature outward onto Louis by making him kill, and also by killing him through the transformation process. All of this is done under the guise of preparing Louis for his new life. In fact, it may be that Lestat *needs* Louis to do this, in order to prevent the threat of self-destruction taking him down. Later in the novel, Louis makes an observation about himself as a vampire and we must consider that Lestat too has had a similar realization:

I knew it when I first took a human life to feed my craving. It was my death. And yet I would not accept it, could not accept it, because like all creatures I don't wish to die! (Rice: 336)

Here, Louis gets it both right and wrong at the same time. No creature wants to die, but this is not the first death. Not the first life he took, because the first life – even before he was required by Lestat to witness the murder of the overseer without intervening – was his own. Despite Lestat being the one to physically change him and cause the death that resulted in his rebirth, Louis is himself responsible for ending up in the vampire's path when he, drunk and distraught from his brother's passing walked the alleys welcoming death. Louis put himself in that position and it was he who accepted Lestat's offer of eternal life in exchange for his mortal one. A life of living death. Considering the catholic beliefs for most of his human life, this 'suicide' already condemns him – meaning living forever is his only safe haven from

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<sup>3</sup> [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/petite\\_mort](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/petite_mort)

being condemned by God, but at the same time his vampire life leaves little or no room for redemption. Still, Louis begins to fight for his life when Lestat sets out to change him, despite it being what he has agreed to, for fear of death, only to surrender to Lestat's will, knowing he has already died from his choices. Lestat comforts him and guides him through what he has to do, while physically restraining him – using his body and assertive words to seduce Louis into letting the final step of his change take place. A change he has found pleasurable. In the quote below, upon being asked by the interviewer of how he was changed, Louis replies:

“I can't tell you exactly,” said the vampire. “I can tell you about it, enclose it with words that will make the value of it to me evident to you. But I can't tell you exactly, any more than I could tell you exactly what is the experience of sex if you have never had it.” (Rice: 15)

Even here, Louis draws lines to a deeply intimate and erotic act, displaying through his association of sex that he felt a carnal pleasure in the act of his change. And with the sexual nature of the change itself and the pleasure derived from it, this now becomes eternally associated to Lestat. There has been a sexual satisfaction through the transformation process, but it is not actual sex that transpires. In a manner, it is similar to that of losing one's virginity and feeling the pleasure of ascending to a stage beyond that virginal innocence, but that also means that it is a pleasure that can never be replicated. Louis can only become a vampire once. He can reach a similar sensation by feeding on humans which sates his bloodthirst, or possibly through sex which would sate his hunger for physical intimacy, yet his transformation is essentially a one-night-stand that has changed his entire life.

“I saw as a vampire,” said the vampire, his voice slightly detached. It seemed almost distracted. Then he drew himself up. “Lestat was standing again at the foot of the stairs, and I saw him as I could not possibly have seen him before. He had seemed white to me before, starkly white, so that in the night he was almost luminous; and now I saw him filled with his own life and own blood: he was radiant, not luminous. And then I saw that not only Lestat had changed, but all things had changed. (Rice: 21)

Louis had already been taken with him when Lestat came to him, with the intention of swaying Louis into become a vampire. And with the transformation process he experienced several forms of pleasure – the pleasure associated with sex as well as the pleasure associated with that of a being a newborn child sating its hunger. Now that his senses are heightened, and already having a strong attraction to Lestat, witnessing him with his enhanced sight only

serves to strengthen the visual impact that Lestat has on him. This rebirth resonates with Alain Badiou's theory of love, where love is considered an event between two people that change their perception of the world. When it comes to Louis, the introduction of Lestat into his life has made this a reality. By being turned into a vampire, Louis has literally had his entire world changed and is seeing through new eyes that are seeing so much more than he ever had before. Yet some of the enchantment has faded now that Louis is a vampire as well. Louis is attracted to Lestat, but he does not want to be under Lestat's control and wants to be his equal. Like with Simon May's theory of love, Louis has a desire to belong, but he also needs to feel like he is on a level plane with Lestat. He needs there to be an element of *Filia* between him and Lestat – a relationship of equal respect. Going from being a human to a vampire has served to shorten the distance between the two, having elevated Louis from his human life to his immortal one, but Lestat is still the one with all the knowledge. Knowledge that he is not interested in sharing, which distances him from Louis. Louis's transformation and the pleasure he associates with that is a one-time event - and with Lestat's enchantment on him fading, now that he is no longer a naïve human – Louis's emotional expectations are not met. With this, Louis appears to withdraw from any physical connection, though he can't prevent himself from becoming flustered whenever being faced with being up close and personal with Lestat. We see this later in the novel as Lestat uses seduction as a means of getting Louis to do as he wants, but one scene in particular stands out when the interviewer asks him about coffins – in the time before Louis acquired one for himself, and had to share with Lestat.

“And you did get into the coffin?”

“I had no choice. I begged Lestat to let me stay in the closet, but he laughed, astonished. ‘Don’t you know what you are?’

(...) ‘Now, I’m getting into the coffin,’ he finally said to me in his most disdainful tone, ‘and you will get in on top of me if you know what’s good for you.’ And I did. I lay face-down on him, utterly confused by my absence of dread and filled with a distaste for being so close to him, handsome and intriguing though he was. (Rice: 24-25)

We've already seen displayed Louis's attraction to Lestat, but this can be attributed to when Louis the human was overwhelmed by an otherworldly creature. Now that Louis is an otherworldly being himself, he can no longer use that as an excuse for being drawn to Lestat, and everything about the scene above seems to indicate that Louis is in fact a closeted homosexual. He is no longer restricted by human rules, but he still fights his feelings even though Lestat appears to be enlightened of his situation. His question about Louis not

knowing who he is, being a question with two possible answers – vampire and/or someone with a sexual attraction to a same-sex person. Louis realizes that he is vulnerable in Lestat's presence and that prolonged physical contact with Lestat might force him to out himself. To come out from his hiding place and face his true feelings of being attracted to a man. Being a vampire gives him more freedom to express this part of himself and accept the erotic nature of his transformation, without having to confront his homosexual feelings, by essentially blaming it on vampirism – both his and Lestat's. Yet, his attraction to Lestat is still there and that is not something he is about to confess, in fear of Lestat having something more to hold over his head or worse to be ridiculed because of it. Essentially, Louis has exchanged his closet for a coffin. A coffin designed to keep him safe from the sun's deadly rays and keep him safe from Lestat – at least after he gets a coffin of his own. However, hiding this side of himself – even as a form of perceived self-preservation is damaging. Jagose (1996) quotes an Australian gay newsletter *Gay Pride Week News* from 1973:

We believe that it is so important to remind everyone you are a homosexual – COMING OUT – for yourself so you won't be subjected to anti-homosexual acts against yourself, and so other homosexuals who haven't come-out [sic] or are not confident of their homosexuality can realize other people are homosexuals and that they enjoy it. (Jagose: 38)

While Lestat may suspect Louis attraction, his question of Louis knowing what he is, is left unanswered and unconfirmed. Louis attraction to Lestat is unspoken, preventing an emotional foundation between them to solidify. An issue that as a newborn vampire is put on hold as Louis adapts to his new life.

## Ch. 1.2

### Humanity – the root of how to live life after death

When a baby is born all that it has ever known is the safety and warmth of its mother's womb, and everything else the child must learn. From walking and speaking, to math and history.

When being turned into a vampire, a new life is created, and many things are new, and many things must be learned, but on a different premise than that of a human child. When Louis is changed into a vampire, he has already lived a human life and has learned how to walk, speak, write and much more through that stage of his life. In a way, by choosing death and entering into a life separate from that of humans, he has shed himself of his humanity. However, his humanity and all the things he learned as a human are still key factors in his vampiric 'afterlife' because they provide the basis of how he processes the facets of his new life.

In Pete Remington's essay *"You're Whining Again Louis": Anne Rice's Vampires as Indices of the Depressive Self* from Peter Day's *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (2006) Remington makes this observation about vampires:

The majority of the vampires' characters demonstrate a remarkable continuity with those of their mortal lives. As the vampire Khayman puts it: "...we do not really change over time; we are as flowers unfolding; we merely become more nearly ourselves." Thus, while all warm-blooded mortals have the potential to become vampires, their vampire existence is to a large extent moulded by their mortal socialhistorical positioning. The triggering life event is an encounter with another vampire, a second parent, whose donation of 'mutant' blood releases the mortal's potential for full-blown vampirism. (Day: 236)

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, seduction is commonplace in vampire literature and Louis too is enamored by Lestat's appearance and promises of this. However, even after being turned into a vampire, Louis holds on to his morality that he has amassed through his human life, as this is all he has ever known. While he turned his back on the church, even before he became a vampire, he still clings to what he himself believes to be right and wrong. Yet, if what he wanted was a new life, why hold on to the laws of human morality? Edelman, using *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens – the story of Scrooge as he is visited by the spirits of Christmas past, present and future, shows how the spirit of Christmas Yet to Come presents Scrooge with a life-denying black hole – determining that there is no future for him. He may provide help for Tiny-Tim which is the moral thing to do, but that doesn't excuse Scrooge of

his own future which is the grave. *"Whoever attempts to submit to the moral law," Lacan informs us, "sees the demands of his superego grow increasingly meticulous and increasingly cruel."* (Edelman: 46) This illustrates that even though Louis is clinging to his morality, Louis cannot escape his own damnation, and as moral as he tries to be, he will eventually fail. As a vampire he may live forever, but for as long as he clings to his humanity, he will also be subjected to what he understands from his human life as human emotions.

Louis has become a vampire to escape the rules of society, because society has let him down. Let his brother down. However, he does not fully commit himself to being a vampire by holding on to his human morality – Going so far as to live off the blood of animals, instead of humans, for a number of years. What this proves though is that vampires are very much in control of their own behavior. They are the ones that decide whether or not to let go and be the monsters of horror stories. It also shows that becoming a vampire doesn't mean shedding your humanity completely. After all, it is the things we have been through, our experiences and emotions that molds us into the people we become. While Louis can be said to have been reborn as a vampire, all he's ever known before his second birth, is humanity and in his vampiric infancy that is all he can lean on without the guidance of another vampire. Considering that Lestat is unwilling to impart all of his knowledge of vampires, Louis is even more dependent on what he knows from his human life, because that is all he has ever known and the only thing he has to fall back on. This also causes a gap between them over time, as Louis realizes he will never be allowed to become Lestat's equal. Still, Lestat looks down on Louis for his attachment to his human self. Lestat considers it a futile attempt to recapture the human life that Louis has already signed away - as Lestat accuses in the following quote:

You are like an adult who, looking back on his childhood, realizes that he never appreciated it. You cannot, as a man, go back to the nursery and play with your toys, asking for the love and care to be showered on you again simply because now you know their worth. (Rice: 82)

However, Edelman, as he speaks of the death drive, brings forth that there is a sense of nostalgia to the death drive, to something before that can explain Louis dependence on his human life:

"The death drive, according to Freud, is precisely this nostalgia for a state before the appearance of individuality and sexual differentiation, a state in which we lived before we became mortal and distinct from one another" (Edelman: 61)

As a vampire though, how is the death drive adapted? Usually the end of every life is death, but as a vampire he has the potential of living forever, which means in order to fulfill this death drive, a second time, he must cave to the masochistic drive of self-destruction and put himself in a situation which can end his life. Peter Remington makes a similar observation in his essay about the extreme measure needed for a vampire to act on his death-drive if he becomes overwhelmed by depression:

*The Vampire Chronicles* abound with expressions of the vampires' experience of the passage of time as interminable torment. They are immortal but not invulnerable. Although endowed with superhuman strength, they may be destroyed by daylight, fire, and the scattering of their body parts. In effect they may only fall victim to other vampires, and to themselves. Hence the 'cure' of choice for their despair is one they share with many serious sufferers from depression: that of physical self-destruction. (Day: 232)

For Louis, ending his vampire life won't bring with it the little death of pleasure that he experienced with Lestat, and he is still seeking satisfaction and belonging. In a way, Lestat holding back information about vampires – more specifically, how vampires can be killed, serves to protect Louis from any residual death drives from his human life as well as it keeps Louis dependent on him for this information. However, it is not just *Louis's* human life that needs to be accounted for. Lestat as well has been affected by his own human life and has been molded accordingly, though he appears to have at least tried to turn his back on what remains of his humanity. Despite both characters having a need for each other for various reasons, Lestat is actually the one who comes across as having the strongest needs. At least if we judge by the sheer amount of effort he puts into his manipulation. He goes above and beyond to keep Louis by his side and one might argue that this stems from a financial need. This is certainly part of it at the start of their relationship, as it is likely to have been the main motivation for Lestat to want to turn Louis to begin with. It is also shown that Lestat has become accustomed to the finer things in life, with no intention of dialing it back. It seems to indicate that Lestat is trying to make up for past lacks or losses and does not hesitate in securing the things that he wants, no matter how he has to go about getting them. Louis, is no exception. Lestat needs him for his land and his money so that he himself can be well off, but Louis's caring nature also seems to affect him. However, Lestat also has a secondary reason for securing these things, namely so that he can take care of his blind and elderly father. Essentially, Lestat is using his vampire nature to change his situation. Like Louis, Lestat is

not fully detached from his humanity by still caring for his father. Except, Lestat still chooses to satiate his needs through blood and luxury, while Louis is living off animal blood and unsuccessfully seeking out love and goodness, without denying that he in fact is a monster who lives off of blood. The interview shows that Louis has a greater understanding of Lestat, from not only his years living with him, but the things he learned from Lestat's father. One of the losses Louis feels when it comes to Lestat, is the man that Lestat could have been.

I was thinking at that moment, wordlessly and rather deeply, how sublime friendship between Lestat and me might have been; (...) how we might have known each other, had he been a man of character, a man of even a little thought. The old man's words came back to me; Lestat a brilliant pupil, a lover of books that had been burned. I knew only the Lestat who sneered at my library, called it a pile of dust, ridiculed relentlessly my reading, my meditations. (Rice 1997: 62-63)

It is reasonable to think that Lestat's experiences from his human life will have affected him in how he deals with being a vampire. By looking at Lestat's more predatory and egotistic nature, we see that his human experience must have been quite different than that of Louis's human experience. We also learn that by the evidence of Lestat's living father, that Lestat is far from being an ancient vampire. Nevertheless, he has more experience than Louis and therefore an advantage. Having been raised by a strict father who denied him the things he loved, makes it easier to accept the manner of which Lestat treats Louis – that is, when there isn't anything specific he needs to seduce Louis into doing. Opening up to Louis will mean becoming vulnerable and he has already been hurt in his human life by someone supposed to care for him. Lestat's relationship to his father, though he appears to loathe him, is what initially lets us know that Lestat is something more than just a narcissist. His father is blind and dependent on him, and considering Lestat's carefree nature when it comes to killing, one has to wonder why he hasn't simply murdered the old man – especially when considering what he did to Lestat as a child. This I see as evidence of Lestat's need for personal connections. He has a bond to his father - a relationship based in *Storge*, which is described by Refsum as an affection that doesn't need to be equal between the two involved, and is often related to family connections.

In Edelman's *No Future* (2004) he speaks of 'Compassion's compulsion' and states: *that every hardening of the heart against compassion's knock presents itself as heard-headed reason intent on denying false compassion to keep the way clear for the true.* (Edelman: 67) In Lestat's case, where he harbors resentment towards his father, he feels compelled by a son's

compassion towards his father, to care for him. However, he keeps the expected compassion between father and son at a distance, to leave a clear path for true compassion at a later time. Edelman follows up his thought of compassion by adding in Kant, who insists that compassion's logic *may hang on the formal abstraction of compassion's tender touch until it becomes the vise-like grip of duty's iron fist*. (Edelman: 68) I take this to mean that Lestat's compassion for his father has transformed, not into hatred, but into a duty which compels him to take care of him, and he does. And it seems that Lestat requires an anchor of sorts so that he has a purpose. Having burnt his son's much-loved books and taking him out of school, which were things the young Lestat enjoyed greatly, it is shown that Lestat's father still loves him and regrets how he treated him. At the end of the old man's life, he craves nothing more than Lestat's forgiveness, which appears to be the one thing Lestat is incapable of granting him, or at the very least uninterested in giving him as he no longer feels compassion for him – only a sense of duty. Having experienced such things at an early age would be enough to alter his personality and maybe even help him justify the way he behaves as a vampire. Becoming a vampire, to Lestat, may have been a release from his father in very much the same way as Louis was released from the church's oppression. Though being a vampire doesn't prevent Lestat from taking care of his father and Louis being separated from the church doesn't mean that he gives up on living a moral life, even if a fully moral life may be beyond him as he has given in to temptation and found pleasure, not just in death, but in violence.

I believe Lestat fears loss more than anything. Not the loss of his father, whose death does not seem to concern him much at all and instead signals a release from his duty to him. No, I believe he fears losing something, or someone, he genuinely cares for and therefore distances himself as a way of protecting himself from connecting. Admitting to Louis that he feels a connection to him, would leave Lestat faced with the very real possibility of rejection.

## Chapter 2: Family: The rise and blood-soaked fall

### Chapter 2.1

#### Establishing a family unit

Despite the general perception, particularly in vampire film, of the vampire as a solitary predator, many texts have sought to portray the vampire as a part of a family grouping. The figuratively incestuous family of vampires can be traced in rudimentary form to Stoker's *Dracula* (it would seem that everything in vampire fiction descends from the grand old man of the genre); *Dracula* is first presented in his Transylvanian castle with three brides/daughters, who are barely restrained from bringing the visiting Jonathan Harker into the fold (Stoker 71-73), an image carried over from the novel into the 1931 film. Anne Rice, however, expanded on this considerably in *Interview with the Vampire*, making the nuclear family of vampires a major theme in her novel. (Benefiel: 263)

The above quote is from Benefiel's article in *The Journal of Popular Culture* (2004: vol. 38, no.2) where she addresses what she calls the perversion of the nuclear family. The bonds between vampires, especially when one has created the other, are many. Lover, parent/child and possibly also spouses, in which becoming a vampire can be seen as a ritual of marriage. With Lestat and Louis's bond being cemented through Louis's transformation, we can look upon this as an unholy union between the two, with the penetration of Lestat's fangs into Louis's neck becoming a symbol for marital consummation. And if we stick to the marital theme we can also consider Louis's wealth as a form of dowry in this union. Of course, a relationship based on a financial gain is bound to meet friction at some point if any emotional attachment is not tended to. At this point in the story Lestat comes across as one who is financially motivated, while Louis, with his initial physical attraction to Lestat appears to be more emotionally motivated and seeking a tangible connection.

“He was desperate for the money, for your houses,” said the boy. “Or was it that he was as afraid to be alone as you were?” (p.76)

The quote above – a question asked by the interviewer – is quite telling as to what might be the actual root of Louis and Lestat's relationship, even beyond that of financial or emotional gain. There appears to be a certain amount of co-dependency between the two, which might be expected in someone who shares a bond similar to that of a marriage. It seems to illustrate what I earlier listed about Simon May's theory of love in which there is a desire for belonging

– of rootedness. When Lestat first approached Louis with the intention of turning him into a vampire, it appears to solely be for the sake of his properties and wealth, but even when they are forced to leave, Lestat still keeps Louis by his side. Of course, Louis never signs over any of his land or wealth to Lestat, so the vampire will need to keep Louis close to be able to spend his money. Yet, Louis is also dependent on Lestat, as a result of Lestat's reluctance to share his knowledge of vampires.

Louis fears being alone because he does not know all that being a vampire truly entails. What he does know about being a vampire is rather basic, such as sunlight can kill him and that he needs blood to survive – both things that he could have learned for himself through own experiences, such as the physical need for sustenance and by being exposed to sunlight. One thing he learns from Lestat though, that Louis takes advantage of, is that vampires can live off the blood of animals. For four years, Louis lives almost exclusively on animal blood after having discovered that this will sustain him, though it is not as enjoyable as human blood. Despite animal blood not being as fulfilling as human blood, Louis endures it as he still values human life and is clinging to what remains of his human morals.

While living together and watching Lestat with his careless and gluttonous approach to killing, Louis is eventually persuaded that despite his fear of the unknown, he needs to leave before he ends up being just like him. However, Lestat is not willing to lose him. Still, the way in which Lestat prevents Louis from leaving is intriguing to say the least.

The point where Louis made his final decision to leave, was right after he himself fell off his no human diet and was caught in the act, by Lestat, as he fed off a five-year-old girl whose mother had died, presumably from the plague. This is a turning point for Louis, who begins to realize that he might be turning into Lestat and is losing a part of himself which he has stood by through these first years as a vampire. Turning his back on his morality goes against his basic beliefs and he is ashamed of himself for what he has done, and now wishes to withdraw himself from what he considers Lestat's bad influence. Lestat is not surprised by Louis telling him that he wishes to leave though, as he is already convinced that Louis is too caught up in his humanity.

‘Louis!’ he said. ‘You are in love with your mortal nature! You chase after the phantoms of your former self. Freniere, his sister... these are images for you of what

you were and what you still long to be. And in your romance with mortal life, you're dead to your vampire nature!"

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

So far in their life of living together, they have been each other's constant and without Lestat's father to serve as Lestat's center or his anchor, then Louis leaving him will leave him completely without a holding point. And unlike Lestat's father, Louis has done nothing to Lestat that would make him lose favor in his eyes – perhaps with the exception of threatening to leave - making it a far more difficult separation, goading Lestat to take action to prevent this from happening. To thwart Louis's plans, he first tries to dissuade him from searching out other vampires – warning him that they are all vicious creature and killers.

'You talk of finding other vampires! Vampires are killers! They don't want you or your sensibility! They'll see you coming long before you see them, and they'll see your flaw; and, distrusting you, they'll seek to kill you. They'd seek to kill you even if you were like me. Because they are lone predators and seek for companionship no more than cats in the jungle. (Rice: 83)

It is difficult to know if Lestat is being truthful here and is indeed fearful for Louis's life should he find these other vampires, or if he is simply aiming at keeping Louis from leaving. As this course of action fails though, Lestat returns to a stage of seduction. Because as Louis admitted to in the quote where Lestat accuses him of wanting to be mortal – Louis found his appreciation for human life in taking it, by drinking blood. This gives Lestat the opportunity to play on Louis's blood-lust and encourage Louis to accept his own nature, his nature which he so very much wants to learn more about.

I am interested in my own nature now, and I've come to believe I can't trust you to tell me the truth about it. You use knowledge for personal power,' I told him. And I suppose, in the manner of many people making such an announcement, I was not looking to him at all. I was mainly listening to my own words. But now I saw that his face was once again the way it had been when he'd said we would talk. He was *listening* to me. I was suddenly at a loss. I felt that gulf between us as painfully as ever. (Rice: 80)

With Louis feeling this distance between them so painfully, he latches on to Lestat's words as he lulls him into a sense of security, telling him everything will be okay. Lestat convinces him that he is a vampire and therefore a killer, and he can only feel happiness and relief by drinking from humans and taking their lives. " *'I can't bear it, Lestat,' I said to him. You chose your companion badly.* " *'But Louis,' he said. 'You haven't even tried!'* " (Rice: 87) Similar to when Lestat first came to him with the message that he was to become a vampire like him, Louis becomes enthralled as Lestat tries to convince him of the pleasure of giving in to his true nature as a blood-drinker. To give in, with Lestat. To live a life separated from morality's guilt. The way Lestat approaches the situation also seems to indicate that Lestat is aware of Louis's physical attraction to him, and that this makes Louis weak to his advances.

"He led me quickly through the street, turning every time I hesitated, his hand out for mine, a smile on his lips, his presence as marvellous to me as the night he'd come in my mortal life and told me we would be vampires. (Rice: 88)

In a way, Lestat is bringing back the romance and seduction from the courting phase of their relationship. Lestat wants Louis to stay. In other words, Lestat is trying to prevent a divorce between the two of them, and as a misguided husband about to lose his spouse might think – he believes the answer to saving the relationship is by adding to the family, by having a child. We can see Lestat using his sexual presence in his seduction of Louis as an attempt to lower Louis's guard, and potentially prompt a sexual interaction between the two similar to their initial consummation in creation of a new life.

"We are immortal. And what we have before us are the rich feasts that conscience cannot appreciate and mortal men cannot know without regret. God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we; for no creature under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms. I want a child tonight. I am like a mother... I want a child!"

"I should have known what he meant. I did not. He had me mesmerized, enchanted. He was playing to me as he had when I was mortal; he was leading me. He was saying, 'Your pain will end.' (Rice: 88-89)

By comparing vampires to that of God, Lestat is giving more power to his own ability to create, while simultaneously placing vampires above humanity. This again showing that vampires operate outside of human norms and social conventions, giving them more freedom, as well as the ability to rewrite certain human laws.

Lestat singles out the little girl that Louis had fed upon after having found her alone with the body of her dead mother. The same child who made Louis decide to leave Lestat in the first place. And with Louis being under the spell of Lestat's words and power, he is swayed to feed on her a second time.

But he wasn't mocking me now: he was confusing me. 'You want her, Louis. Don't you see, once you've taken her, then you can take whomever you wish. You wanted her last night but you weakened, and that's why she's not dead.' I could feel it was true, what he said. I could feel again that ecstasy of being pressed to her, her little heart going and going. 'She's too strong for me... her heart, it wouldn't give up,' I said to him. 'Is she so strong?' he smiled. He drew me close to him. 'Take her, Louis, I know you want her.' And I did. (Rice: 91)

We see Louis is at his weakest when he is in physical contact with Lestat. When he started to reject his own transformation in the beginning, being pulled into Lestat's arms was part of why he surrendered, coupled with Lestat's seductive words. With Louis giving in to join Lestat for his hunt after having announced that he plans to leave, is also highlighted by Lestat leading him by the hand, keeping this physical connection to prevent him from straying. And the above quote, as he urges Louis to feed upon the young child - it is in Lestat's arms that Louis finds strength to sink his fangs in her, still unaware of Lestat's true intention. In all of these examples there is also a focus on Lestat's lips. With Louis's transformation, it is Lestat's lips moving against his neck just before he penetrates his skin, while the two latter examples portray Lestat smiling. And this kind of softening of Lestat's demeanor makes it easier for Louis to give in, seeing the contrast to the otherwise cold and self-absorbed vampire who seems distanced from compassion altogether, thus reinforcing Louis's desire for a stronger emotional connection with him, as well as showing a longing for this physical contact.

And suddenly, as I went on and on, the instinctual part of me waiting, waiting for the slowing of the heart which would mean death, Lestat wrenched me from her. 'But she's not dead,' I whispered. But it was over. (...) Lestat was snatching her up, talking to her, saying a name. 'Claudia, Claudia, listen to me, come round, Claudia.' He was carrying her now out of the bedroom into the parlor, and his voice was so soft I barely heard him. 'You're ill, do you hear me? You must do as I tell you to get well.' And then, in the pause that followed, I came to my senses. I realized what he was doing, that he had cut his wrist and given it to her and she was drinking. (Rice: 91-92)

Louis has been seduced into forgoing his morals and repeat his mistake of feeding on a child. However, with Lestat stopping Louis before the child dies and feeding her his blood, they are

creating a life through the same type of transformation that Louis faced when he entered the vampire world. In this case, Louis as the penetrative force can be considered Claudia's father, while Lestat who makes the transformation happen by letting the child nurse on his blood, as a substitute for mother's milk, is the symbolic mother. Just as the earlier quote predicts when he states that he is like a mother, wanting a child.

In Edelman's *No Future* (2004) he speaks a lot about the Sinthomosexual – someone with no interest in the future of humanity because of one's non-heterosexual – and therefore non-reproductive – sexual orientation. The word itself is a combination of Sinthome, which means symptom, and homosexual. Yet, in Rice's novel we are presented with a same-sex couple that are in fact capable of creating a vampire child together. Much like how becoming a vampire and the bond that results in, can be seen as a marriage, we can consider this alternative grouping as a family. Unlike human homosexual pairings, Louis and Lestat defy what François Abadie – former mayor of Lourdes and former senator aligned with France's Radical Left – articulated in *Le Nouvel Observateur*: "*those I call the gravediggers of society, those who care nothing [for] the future: homosexuals.*" (Edelman: 74) Louis and Lestat, as vampires, transcends what is otherwise considered a genetic dead-end. They are able to create life without someone of the opposite sex and when they do create a life, it is from a deliberate decision – despite Louis not having had a choice in this particular situation. Edelman also adds from an issue of the *New York Times Magazine* in 1998, the words of Dan Savage:

"Gay parents," he wrote, "are not only making a commitment to our political future, but to the future, period.... And many of us have decided that we want to fill our time with something more meaningful than sit-ups, circuit parties and designer drugs. For me and my boyfriend, bringing up a child is a commitment to having a future. And considering what the last 15 years were like, perhaps that future is the ultimate status item for gay men." (Edelman: 75)

Like with traditional procreating, there are two parents in this case who have both had a hand in the creation of their vampire daughter. This makes this creation extra special as there isn't an actual need for both of them to be involved. Instead, Lestat makes sure to make this a shared event, so that they have an equal importance in her vampiric upbringing. However, there are also other bonds that can be added to this situation. When Louis was born, in the vampire sense, Lestat was both mother and father in his creation – through penetration and sustenance. However, this also means that while Claudia is Louis's daughter, she is essentially also his half-sister and as the transformation is rather carnal, there is an element of

incest that can be brought into this, as well as pedophilia considering her young age. Here is where being a vampire truly makes its mark. They are not governed by human rules, making it possible for two men to become parents through a seemingly sexual act. Still, during the 1970s, intergenerational sex was a debated subject and questions about if children possessed a sexuality were regularly brought up. Jagose mentions in her book that this topic was heavily discussed in gay communities:

Variouly referred to as intergenerational sex, child abuse, man-boy love and paedophilia, even the semantic continuum of terms used to describe the concept evokes a variety of positions in a debate structured overwhelmingly by such issues as consent, power and the legal definition of childhood. The association of paedophiles with gay men persists (in spite of evidence to the contrary) in homophobic culture, which is doubtless why the mainstream gay movement would be reluctant to countenance any official discussion of this matter. But the issue of intergenerational sex continues to be debated vigorously in many gay and lesbian communities. The protection of children is deemed by some to be ethically crucial to the development of gay identity, but is dismissed by others as 'erotic hysteria' (Rubin, 1993:6). What is the status of different, and arbitrary, age-of-consent laws? Do children have a sexuality and a right to sexual agency? (Jagose: 70-71)

Louis never intended for the child to be turned and Claudia as well had no choice in this matter. Louis still violated her by penetrating her skin though, but he never intended for her to live a life frozen in the shape of a child. Lestat turning Claudia is a transgression of her rights, but also of Louis's rights. Pete Remington writes: *The transgressive crossing of bodily boundaries frequently presents itself as a search for meaning or for control of the depressive eternal present.* (Day: 234) Lestat as a force of creation is making these decisions, to keep Louis by his side, so that he will not have to face loneliness, while regaining control of Louis at the same time by providing Louis with someone to love. Claudia has a fleeting position in this new family with so many different bonds and though her primary function is identified as daughter, there was a sexual component to her creation and as Louis, she must have experienced this 'little death'. In a way, this creation can be viewed as a threesome, but also as an act of adultery if we consider Louis and Lestat the primary couple – in which Lestat completes Claudia's transformation without Louis's consent. A transformation bringing with it the pleasure associated with it. If we compare it to Louis transformation where we have a form of marital consummation, it is fair to consider a similar bond taking place in the creation of their vampire daughter. Still, she is primarily identified as their daughter, making this her primary position in their family threesome. However, Claudia didn't become their daughter simply because Louis and Lestat wanted to expand their family. Louis is stunned by Lestat's

decision to change her and is infuriated with him, realizing that Lestat has destroyed her life in order to keep Louis from leaving him behind.

Now Lestat stood up and scooped her from the floor and came towards me. 'She's our daughter,' he said. 'You're going to live with us now.' He beamed at her, but his eyes were cold, as if it were all a horrible joke; then he looked at me, and his face had conviction. (Rice: 93)

To Lestat, Claudia is more a tool than a daughter, but by turning her he has assured that Louis will stay, as the alternative is to leave the young child alone in the lacking care of Lestat. After decades together, when she begins to move past her childish youth, Claudia comes to realize her role: '*He made me then... to be your companion. No chains could have held you in your loneliness, and he could give you nothing.*' (Rice: 118) Yet, more than just a means to an end of Louis's attempt to abandon Lestat, Claudia also serves as a reminder of Louis's lapse of morality when he first fed off of her which led to Lestat targeting her. He has a great deal of guilt for what he has done and feels responsible for her. Despite his guilt though, Louis can't deny the fact that he is fascinated by the child.

I was mesmerized by her, by her *transformed*, by her every gesture. She was not a child any longer, she was a vampire child. 'Now, Louis was going to leave us,' said Lestat, his eyes moving from my face to hers. 'He was going to go away. But now he's not. Because he wants to stay and take care of you and make you happy.' He looked at me. 'You're not going, are you Louis?' (Rice: 94)

With Lestat's success, he has now established them as a family unit and given Louis a reason to stay – a reason, and obligation, that transcends his desire to detach himself from Lestat's side. Louis now has to put aside his issues with Lestat, in order to be a good parent. Still, Lestat hasn't just given Louis a reason to stay, but he has provided him an opportunity of having his emotional needs met. In *Queer Theory; An Introduction* (1996), Jagose uses John D'Emilio's thoughts from *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics and the University* (1992) to illustrate that the family unit itself has gone through a transformation in which emotional satisfaction has become its main objective.

D'Emilio focuses on the ways in which the family or household became decreasingly self-sufficient in terms of its patterns of production and consumption. No longer primarily a self-contained economic system, the family came to be thought of as an affective unit, that is, as 'an institution that provided not goods but emotional satisfaction and happiness' (Jagose: 12)

By introducing another person into their family, Lestat has provided Louis with someone for him to focus his love and emotions on, with Lestat still being a relevant part as the 'mother' of their child. However, as it is a family unit established through transgressions, it is built upon a dangerous foundation that will end up back-firing on Lestat.

## Chapter 2.2

### Leaving the nest and breaking the foundation

As it is with most new families, there is a period of adapting, and as time progresses it is expected that the family grows and matures – eventually reaching a point where the child or children of the family prepare to leave the nest in order to start a life of their own. As it stands, there are in fact two vampire children in the offspring of Lestat. Besides Claudia, there is Louis, who is not just a child and spouse of Lestat, but who is Claudia's half-brother and parental figure. However, growing up and leaving this family unit becomes problematic when the members of the family are all unable to age. Louis, Lestat and Claudia are all trapped in their bodies, that have ceased to age from the moment they became vampires. With Louis and Lestat this doesn't pose much of a problem as they've stopped aging at an appropriate physical age, while Claudia is trapped in the body of a five-year-old. Being a vampire gives her a distinct advantage, being stronger than the average human and having an innocent and helpless appearance, helps her in hunting down her prey. Still, she is unable to do without an adult if she is to have a proper life. She needs someone by her side to keep from being questioned about where she belongs and where her parents are, no matter her actual age as she will forever look like a child.

"She was to be the demon child forever," he said, his voice soft as if he wondered at it. "Just as I am the young man I was when I died. And Lestat? The same. But her mind. It was a vampire's mind. And I strained to know how she moved towards womanhood. She came to talk more, though she was never other than a reflective person and could listen to me patiently by the hour without interruption. Yet more and more her doll-like face seemed to possess two totally aware adult eyes, and innocence seemed lost somewhere with neglected toys and the loss of a certain patience. There was something dreadfully sensual about her lounging on the settee in a tiny nightgown of lace and stitched pearls; she became an eerie and peaceful seductress, her voice as clear and sweet as ever, though it had a resonance which was womanish, a sharpness sometimes that proved shocking. (Rice: 101-102)

One of the consequences of having turned Claudia, beyond Lestat giving Louis a reason to stay, is that Louis now has a family bond with two vampires. A form of family affection or Storge, where Louis has a closer relationship to Claudia than to Lestat. However, there is also a link between Lestat and Claudia, from which Louis feels a certain amount of jealousy. Lestat displays a sense of pride over their daughter and the way she takes to killing by targeting an entire immigrant family, whom she killed one by one.

Lestat was impressed, overcome. What a picture he made of her, the infant death, he called her. Sister death, and sweet death; and for me, mockingly, he had the term with a sweeping bow, Merciful Death! which he said like a woman clapping her hands and shouting out a word of exciting gossip: oh, merciful heavens! so that I wanted to strangle him. (Rice: 104)

Clearly, they both have a connection to Claudia through her transformation. Despite Lestat having used Claudia as a means of keeping Louis from leaving, she shows great promise as a vampire and proving herself as much of a killer as Lestat himself. At this point she is equally theirs – loving to read like Louis and kill like Lestat. However, as Benefiel points out in her article:

Even vampire children whose bodies do not age grow up, however, and this is the crux of the conflict within Lestat's little family in both novel and film. The point is hammered home repeatedly in the novel. As Claudia matures psychologically, she becomes more and more Louis's lover. Louis describes their strange, incestuous relationship explicitly. He calls her and himself "Father and Daughter. Lover and Lover". They have spent years sleeping away their days together in the same coffin, and it is a sign of her growing dissatisfaction with her life when she alters the arrangement. (Benefiel: 269)

What she is referring to about Claudia changing their arrangement, is when Claudia request a coffin of her own. With her growing older, while still trapped in a body of child, she is prevented from properly being allowed to step into her next stage of life, of stepping into an independent adulthood. Acquiring a coffin becomes a symbol for her growing up and moving out of her childhood. She begins to think for herself and requiring more out of her vampire life and begins seeking out knowledge. Much like how Louis had his issues with growing up as a vampire and wanting to learn more about the true nature of vampires, Claudia has even more reason to want to understand her existence and this is when she comes at a crossroads in her relationship with Lestat.

"But there was no quarreling. We kept to ourselves. We had our adjustments. Books filled our long flat from floor to ceiling in row after row of gleaming leather volumes, as Claudia and I pursued our natural tastes and Lestat went about his lavish acquisitions. Until she began to ask questions." (Rice: 104)

Claudia starts displaying the same inquisitiveness as Louis in the time leading up to when he wanted to leave and find the truth of his vampire nature elsewhere, without Lestat, and her

interrogation of Lestat signals a similar conclusion. However, unlike Louis, she has fully embraced the killer in herself, much like Lestat. Louis, in contrast, is a much weaker opponent than Claudia, because she doesn't have an underlying sexual attraction to Lestat like Louis does. Additionally, she is much more emotionally connected to Louis as the caring parent, than she is of Lestat.

She grew cold to Lestat. She fell to staring at him for hours. When he spoke, often she didn't answer him, and one could hardly tell if it was contempt or that she didn't hear. And our fragile domestic tranquility erupted with his outrage. He did not have to be loved, but he would not be ignored (Rice: 105)

In this situation, Louis is forced to step in-between the members of his family as they begin to clash. In many ways, Claudia and Lestat are the same. Violent killers and manipulative when it comes to their kills and Louis. Yet, where does the difference lie in their relationship with Louis?

The main difference in these relationships is that Louis's relationship with Claudia is a product of a realized love. Having been turned at such a young age and Louis being a caring influence in her life, he has become the emotional support in her upbringing. In return, Claudia has provided Louis with a closeness he has craved from the very beginning of his vampire life. A closeness he craved from Lestat, who is unable to let down his guard to provide said closeness. This has caused Louis's affection for Claudia to be even stronger as she fulfills his emotional need. *I loved her so completely; she was so much the companion of my every waking hour, the only companion that I had, other than death.* (Rice: 105) To completely disregard Lestat as a companion in the last quote tells us how alone Louis has felt. Despite having lived together for years, even having lived together for years before Claudia was inducted into their vampire family, Louis disregards this because Lestat has not met his need for an emotional bond, not even a bond formed in filia. There is no apparent relationship of mutual respect and certainly not one set in eros, with the exception having been in the initial transformation and the few situations when Lestat has seduced Louis into doing what he wants. This makes this threesome family unit somewhat lopsided, but is Louis's emotional attachment to Claudia real or does she simply symbolize a receptacle for him to displace the feeling he has towards Lestat into?

In her book, Jagose uses Jan Clausen's essay entitled *My interesting condition* from 1990, which is about Clausen's decision to become 'passionately involved with a man' after being in a monogamous lesbian relationship that lasted 12 years. In the essay Clausen questions lesbian feminism as well as bisexuality:

Moreover, she questions the assumed mutual exclusiveness of heterosexuality and homosexuality and understands bisexuality not as a taxonomic solution to her impasse but as an identity that is not one, an identity that undermines the foundations of identity politics: 'bisexuality is not a sexual identity at all, but a sort of anti-identity, a refusal (not, of course, conscious) to be limited to one object of desire, one way of loving' (Jagose: 69)

I include this due to the conflicted nature of the relationship between Louis and Claudia. A seemingly heterosexual combination, which also teeters on the edge of pedophilia and incest. This relationship brings about the question of bisexuality, as Louis is connected with Lestat through a same-sex desire. A relationship which has led to Claudia's introduction to the vampire world. By considering what Clausen says about bisexuality being a form of anti-identity, I would like to suggest that Louis relationship with Claudia can be considered a symptom of Louis's attempt to repress his homosexual desire for Lestat. Earlier – in the transformation chapter when I discussed Louis exchanging a closet for a coffin in regard to his repressed homosexuality – I used a quote from Jagose's book (1996). It was from an Australian gay newsletter, about the importance of coming out so not to be subjected by homophobic acts made by oneself. It seems Claudia has become another means of repressing his desire for Lestat, and by committing himself to this relationship, Louis is harming himself by repressing his true feelings towards Lestat even further, with the excuse of Claudia meeting his emotional needs in a way Lestat is seemingly incapable of. I ask again, can this relationship between Louis and Claudia be considered a genuine love or does she simply represent an emotional outlet for Louis? In 1961 Rene Girard published *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*. I've used the English translation called *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. (1976) In it we are introduced to what he refers to as a "triangular" desire. This is based on a 'mimetic desire' which essentially boils down to people imitating other people's desires. Girard uses Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1615) to illustrate this, by showing how Quixote's desires are determined by him imitating the desires of the knight Amadis of Gaul, whom he idolizes.

The disciple pursues objects which are determined for him, or at least seem to be determined for him, by the model of all chivalry. We shall call this model the *mediator* of desire. Chivalric existence is the imitation of Amadis in the same sense that the Christian's existence is the imitation of Christ. (Girard: 2)

What is proposed then is that the desire is present because it has been suggested of a third person – the mediator. However, if people imitate each other's desires, they may wind up desiring the very same thing or person; and if they desire the same, they may easily become rivals, as they reach for the same objects. In this case, Louis is the common denominator between Claudia and Lestat, which brings us to Girard's theories regarding 'triangular desire'.

In most works of fiction, the characters have desires which are simpler than Don Quixote's. There is no mediator, there is only the subject and the object. When the "nature" of the object inspiring the passion is not sufficient to account for the desire, one must turn to the impassioned subject. Either his "psychology" is examined or his "liberty" invoked. But desire is always spontaneous. It can always be portrayed by a simple straight line which joins subject and object.

The straight line is present in the desire of Don Quixote, but it is not essential. The mediator is there, above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object. The spatial metaphor which expresses this triple relationship is obviously the triangle. (Girard: 2)

The three parts of this theory include a subject, an object and a mediator. If we consider Claudia as the object of desire, we can speculate that Lestat, by bringing in Claudia, tells Louis that he should desire her. Louis does desire her, because Lestat tells him he should – thereby implying that Louis will not receive fulfillment of his desires by pursuing Lestat, but he can by loving Claudia. However, with these designated roles, we find a flaw – because Lestat does not desire Claudia in the same way as Louis does. To him, she is merely the glue that has prevented Louis from leaving – though she has shown promise as a vampire in her kills. However, if we change the roles in this threesome, in which Louis becomes the object of desire, things change drastically. Considering Lestat's effort in keeping Louis by his side and the ease of which he seduces Louis when he needs something, we can ascertain that Lestat has genuine feelings towards Louis. Lestat also has a form of seniority in a relationship with Louis, making him the mediator of desire because when he introduces their daughter to Louis – he is telling her that she should love him and is essentially shining the light upon him as described in Girard's quote above. Now this is a precursor for trouble, as by doing this Lestat risks losing Louis to Claudia because she is capable of providing Louis with affection. This is where a rivalry begins to take place – yet with Lestat being more or less detached from Louis

and Claudia in their everyday life, Lestat doesn't discover the severity of this until it is too late.

The mediation begets a second desire exactly the same as the mediator's. This means that one is always confronted with two competing desires. The mediator can no longer act his role of model without also acting or appearing to act the role of obstacle. (Girard: 7)

In Claudia's burgeoning rebellion against the current family status, Louis is also faced with her increasingly reckless behavior, which includes murdering two maids in their employment. A reckless move that may lead to them being discovered. Now that Claudia has turned from Lestat and is doing these things, Louis is put in the position of cleaning up after Claudia's messes to prevent Lestat from ending her life – this time permanently.

However, Louis and Claudia's relationship is not that of equal affection. As Claudia turns away from Lestat, she also turns from Louis. Louis and Lestat are together in her alienation, but with two different perspectives. Lestat is cautious and suspicious, while Louis suffers emotionally from her estrangement.

He was pensive, suspicious, drew close to me constantly to ask where Claudia was, where she'd gone, and what she was doing.

" 'She'll be all right,' I assured him, though I was estranged from her and in agony, as if she'd been my bride. She hardly saw me now, as she'd not seen Lestat before, and she might walk away while I spoke to her. (Rice: 110)

This separation puts Louis in the situation of being alone again, taking him back to a state of vulnerability. Claudia keeps her distance until she gives up on Lestat telling her the truth of how she was made, not remembering her own transformation after all this time. When even her books fail to give her any answers, her attention turns to Louis. Here we see her displaying the same strategies as Lestat. Becoming seductive, in trying to get Louis to do as she wishes, to tell her all he knows. *'Kill with me tonight,' she whispered as sensuously as a lover. 'And tell me all that you know. What are we? Why are we not like them?'* (Rice: 111) While she doesn't hide what she wants out of their outing, she does what Lestat did and entices Louis into coming with her on a hunt – sharing a special moment so that Louis will be more pliable to tell her what she wants. Except, learning the truth of how Louis and Lestat took her life, damning her to a life as a child, causes her to harbor resentment towards the two of them. She even exclaims to hate them both. At this point in her life she has reached the

same stage as Louis did and wants to leave. Except she doesn't. One reason is the fact that she looks like a child, but as Louis explains in the following quote, there is more than that that keeps her from leaving – that keeps Louis from leaving:

But that's not why she didn't go. Something in her was as akin to me as anything in her could have been. That thing in Lestat was the same. We could not bear to live alone! We needed our little company! (...) 'Locked together in hatred,' she said to me calmly afterwards. (Rice: 116)

They are dependent on each other and it appears that solitude makes them weak. Louis, when he feels himself being alone and separated from the others, becomes easy to manipulate. Claudia decides that she hates Lestat more, for his part in her changing and therefore seeks out Louis to be her companion away from Lestat. Like the others, she doesn't want to live alone, but is more than comfortable with leaving Lestat behind.

I no longer find him charming. And you never have. And we've been his puppets, you and I; you remaining to take care of him, and I your saving companion. Now's the time to end it, Louis. Now's the time to leave him. (Rice: 118)

Claudia takes charge and decides for the two of them that it is time to leave. And Louis can't turn her down, because if he does, he risks losing her and again finding himself without anyone to reciprocate his emotional needs.

"I hadn't thought of it, dreamed of it in so long; I'd grown accustomed to him, as if he were a condition of life itself. I could hear a vague mingling of sounds now, which meant he had entered the carriage way, that he would soon be on the back stairs. And I thought of what I always felt when I heard him coming, a vague anxiety, a vague need. And then the thought of being free of him forever rushed over me like water I'd forgotten, waves and waves of cool water. (Rice: 118)

Louis is torn with the decision to leave Lestat behind, but with Claudia by his side, he is compelled to take this step. However, the quote above seems to indicate that Louis no longer has an issue with Lestat, at least not like he had before. He has accepted Lestat as part of his family, even with his flaws. Louis also admits that he still feels a vague *need* when he hears Lestat coming, meaning that Claudia and his love for her is not enough to fill the void in his heart. He still requires something from Lestat and in the end, Claudia is only a band-aid or a substitution for what he truly desires. However, this confession of his needs seems to indicate that he is forever reminded of them every time he hears Lestat approach, preventing him from

moving on, or at least preventing him from any kind of temporary reprieve from the feelings he is suppressing. This makes escape a pleasant alternative and with Claudia's transformation having been brought back to the surface, along with the horrible circumstances surrounding the matter, it makes it easier for Louis to remember Lestat's cruelty. He still fears that their plans will be discovered by Lestat, but also makes sure to make arrangements for Lestat's wellbeing after they leave.

he would have his own money and need come to me for nothing. For all these years, I'd kept him dependent on me. Of course, he demanded his funds from me as if I were merely his banker, and thanked me with the most acrimonious words at his command; but he loathed his dependence. I hoped to deflect his suspicion by playing to his greed. (Rice: 119)

Much like in a divorce, the finances are being divided up between the two and Louis is taking custody of their child. Something Lestat is still not aware of. However, with the secrecy of this impending separation, it becomes more similar to that of a spouse and child running away from an abusive husband than an actual divorce. Louis plans his escape carefully and cautiously, while Claudia *was flirting with disaster* (Rice: 119) and keeps up her tireless questioning of Lestat about vampires. It is in one of these conversations, where Lestat intentionally burst out, after an endless strain of questions from Claudia, in confirmation that yes as Claudia suggests, *we must live with the knowledge that there is no knowledge*. (Rice: 120) To Lestat, this is a dangerous confession – that there might not be any knowledge for him to impart to his companions at all – and now, properly, begins to feel suspicious of the situation surrounding him.

"He was silent. She was silent. He turned, slowly, as if I'd made some movement which alerted him, as if I were rising behind him. It reminded me of the way humans turn when they feel my breath against them and know suddenly that where they thought themselves to be utterly alone... that moment of awful suspicion before they see my face and gasp. He was looking at me now, and I could barely see his lips moving. And then I sensed it. He was afraid. Lestat afraid. (Rice: 120-121)

Lestat has always used his knowledge as power, holding it above their heads, just out of reach. Now he has all but admitted that he has no final answer to what a vampire truly is, and he blames Louis for having infected Claudia with his search for the true nature of his being. Though I doubt it is Claudia he is the most worried about. By Claudia being so inquisitive, it led to Lestat's confession, which leaves him with little leverage to keep Louis from leaving

him, especially now that Claudia, despite her small frame, has proved herself fearless in confrontation with Lestat. It is as if he has suddenly realized he is already alone, that Louis and Claudia belong to something that Lestat is no longer a part of and it frightens him. And Lestat has all reason to be afraid. With Claudia now certain in her quest that Lestat is of no use to her and deciding that he must have killed the vampire who turned him into a vampire to keep from being his slave, she decides that leaving him behind is not enough. She wants him dead. A decision Louis finds horrifying.

'Claudia,' I gasped, turning away from her.

" 'And why not kill him!' she said now, her voice rising, silvery and finally shrill. 'I have no use for him! I can get nothing from him! And he causes me pain, which I will not abide!' (Rice: 123)

The things Claudia is saying reflects the things Louis has not spoken out loud to anyone other than the boy interviewing him. There is a frustration in Louis stemming from his lacking relationship with Lestat. He can't get the emotional attachment he craves with his maker – cannot reclaim the passion of his own transformation at his companion's hands. While Claudia has inherited Lestat's temperament, she has a more hands on way of dealing with this unfulfillment. Though she may not crave the same connection with Lestat as Louis, she despises him for turning her and being unable to provide her the answers she feels entitled to. She has outgrown her need for Lestat and is ready to be rid of him. There is a certain homage to the Oedipal complex in this, which boils down to a desire to take the place of the same-sex parent and entering into a sensuous relationship with the parent of the opposite sex. Girard in regards to his theory of mimetic desire and the triangle of desire, interprets Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex as a form a mimetic desire, in which the child mimics its same-sex parent and thereby acquires this desire for the opposite-sex parent by essentially copying the same-sex parent's desire for that person – making the opposite-sex parent the object of desire.

<sup>4</sup> In Benefiel's article, she adds from Doane and Hodges (1996) that: *To be turned into a vampire is to return to the mother. The vampire, the monstrous, is ultimately maternal, and the experience of initiation is pre-oedipal* (Benefiel: 268)

While in this particular family unit there are two male parents, Claudia mostly resembles Lestat in her potential for cruelty and violence. Therefore, Lestat is the one targeted for

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.iep.utm.edu/girard/#H2>

elimination, while she uses her love as a means to manipulate and seduce Louis. And while Louis tries to get her to change her mind, she tells him that if he dares to interfere, Lestat will kill her and he will be the one to blame. For a while, this halts him, because he can't handle the thought of losing her, whom he has such a strong connection to. However, Lestat is not always the distant, coldhearted companion as shown in the following quote when he asks Louis to join him and go see a musician that Lestat has become fond of:

He was positively friendly, in one of those moods when he wanted my companionship. Enjoyment could bring that out of him. Wanting to see a good play, the regular opera, the ballet. He always wanted me along. I think I must have seen *Macbeth* with him fifteen times. We went to every performance, even those by amateurs, and Lestat would stride home afterwards, repeating the lines to me and even shouting out to passers-by with an outstretched finger, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow!" until they skirted him as if he were drunk. But this effervescence was frenetic and likely to vanish in an instant; just a word or two of amiable feeling on my part, some suggestion that I found his companionship pleasant, could banish all such affairs for months. Even years. (Rice: 128)

It seems ominous that this is the play that Lestat is so fond of, considering the similarities to what is happening around him. With Lestat representing the king, Louis and Claudia become the representations of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, with Claudia urging Louis to take Lestat's life. Louis is torn between his affection for Claudia and his need for affection from Lestat. These fleeting moments where he can be in and is wanted in Lestat's presence, makes it all the harder to allow Claudia to go through with her plans of murdering Lestat because it brings back the hope that they might eventually have something deeper. Claudia, having sensed she will receive no help from Louis in the actual killing, has to an extent secured herself by not telling Louis when and how she will strike, and informing him that he will be directly responsible for her death should he interfere with her plan. This leaves Louis without a timeframe for when he officially needs to make up his mind, and for as long as Claudia has not gone through with her plan, Louis believes he still has the chance to make her change her mind or that she will decide not to go through it on her own. For in this situation, they live outside human society and are not bound by their laws. They should live within the laws of a vampire society. Except, they live without knowing. And the only support they have is each other, because Louis and Claudia have never met any vampires outside of their makeshift family. This doesn't exactly leave them any options as far as family-therapy goes either. Eventually, the time comes for Claudia to go through with her plans. Luring Lestat into her trap by the pretense of ending their strife. " *I came to make peace with you, even if you are*

*the father of lies. You're my father,' she said. 'I want to make peace with you. I want things to be as they were.'* (Rice: 132) She claims to be tired of their fights and they must end before Louis gets tired of it and leaves them both. Offering Lestat a gift of reconciliation, in the form of two young boys for him to feed on, she waits until he has drunk from one of them. Lestat soon feels the effect of absinthe and laudanum, which is opiates dissolved into alcohol. Lestat, in his weakened state is helpless as Claudia comes after him – ignoring Louis's pleas for her to stop – with a knife, slitting his throat and stabbing him. *And now, suddenly, she flew at him and clamping both arms about his neck, bit deep into him as he struggled. 'Louis, Louis!' he gasped over and over, struggling, trying desperately to throw her off.* (Rice: 137) Lestat repeatedly calls out for Louis, begging for his help, but he is losing too much blood and Louis is frozen in his hesitance to go against their daughter. The one family member who is giving him some semblance of emotional satisfaction, one who professes her love for Louis.

"He had ceased to move. He lay now on his back. And his entire body was shriveling, drying up, the skin thick and wrinkled, and so white that all the tiny veins showed through it. I gasped, but I could not take my eyes off it, even as the shape of the bones began to show through, his lips drawing back from his teeth, the flesh of his nose drying to two gaping holes. But his eyes, they remained the same, staring wildly at the ceiling, the irises dancing from side to side, even as the flesh cleaved to the bones, became nothing but a parchment wrapping for the bones, the clothes hollow and limp over the skeleton that remained. Finally the irises rolled to the top of his head, and the whites of his eyes went dim. The thing lay still. A great mass of wavy blond hair, a coat, a pair of gleaming boots; and this horror that had been Lestat, and I staring helplessly at it." (Rice: 137)

Louis is horrified by what he sees. The beauty that entranced him when they first met face to face, when Lestat came to him in order to sell him on the idea of becoming a vampire, is gone. On repeated occasions, Louis has fallen victim to this handsome vampire, allowing himself to be seduced by his words and is now seeing his companion, his metaphorical spouse, deteriorate so horridly and grotesquely in front of him. Lestat was portrayed as inhumanely beautiful in his vampire life and now his beauty is gone. Louis and Claudia witness the horror of Lestat's death before them, in what they perceive to be Lestat's demise. Louis – a widower. In the hands of Claudia, Louis has escaped from divorce. However, faced with the finality of Claudia's actions, Louis loses something. He loses the hope he had of ever connecting to Lestat on a deeper level. A hope that jarringly blossomed when faced with Lestat's invitation to join him that previous evening and probably also when he begged for Louis to save him. Calling out to him, again and again, in his weakest hour. Then again, as it

later turns out, this isn't Lestat's end, but it is the moment where, spearheaded by Claudia, they relinquish themselves from Lestat. This is them growing up and leaving the nest. Yet, it is a different ending for the both of them. Claudia believes them free, while Louis only feels the guilt of his inaction and his disapproval of his daughter. Claudia's actions have caused a tear in their relationship, but Louis still feels obligated to care for her.

'He deserved to die!' she said to me.

" 'Then we deserve to die. The same way. Every night of our lives,' I said back to her. 'Go away from me.' It was as if my words were my thoughts, my mind alone only formless confusion. 'I'll care for you because you can't care for yourself. But I don't want you near me. Sleep in that box you bought for yourself. Don't come near me.' (Rice: 139-140)

Despite his anger towards her, he is reluctantly drawn back to her by her sobbing and apologies and declarations of love. As much as he was torn about the attempted murder of Lestat, he is now torn in his relationship with Claudia. They only have each other now and rejection means being utterly alone. It still leaves him apprehensive of her though, and after they have disposed of Lestat and the two young boys Claudia had poisoned, parts of a poem – *The rime of the ancient mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1798) – comes to mind that suddenly reminds Louis of her:

*Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold:  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold.* (Rice: 153)

Something has cracked in the façade of the innocent image Louis had of Claudia. While Lestat was deemed the source of their unhappiness in their family unit – his death has not solved anything. Louis is not happy, but his problems are temporarily pushed back because of his fear of being alone and his fear of what will happen to her if she is left on her own. And when Lestat returns alive, they flee. Sticking together for safety, not knowing if the flames that erupted during Lestat's apparent resurrection when he returned to them finally ended him for good, or if they were still being hunted by him - an enraged father and lover.

## Chapter 3: Consequences of an Unspoken Love

### Ch. 3.1

#### Emotionally shattered and cut deep

Clearly, both Lestat and Louis have issues with emotions. Louis's needs are not met and Lestat is unable to accept it when Louis admits that he enjoys spending time with Lestat. In this chapter I will look at the complex and fatal consequences of the love that is never spoken in their relationship. As we will see, this is a story of depression, of loss of humanity and of the death-drive – but also of the purest intimacy. What is it that makes Lestat and Louis so dependent on each other – even afterwards? And how does their loneliness show itself? The events leading up to Louis and Claudia's betrayal of Lestat could have easily been averted, had Lestat been more caring and emotionally available towards Louis. Benefiel says this of the vampires as an alternative family:

The family group of *Interview with the Vampire*, as well as subsequent iterations of the vampire family, allows the reader to explore issues of alternative family structures and incestuous attraction within the family, and to play out the consequences for good or ill of these imagined scenarios. (Benefiel: 270)

As shown by Claudia's attempted murder, we have seen how the dynamics changed in their family unit and that Lestat faced the brunt of the consequences. Louis, despite his love for Claudia, was always looking for a special connection with Lestat, or else he wouldn't have cherished those moments when Lestat wanted his company. With Claudia now having transgressed against Louis's suppressed need for Lestat, this has caused a rift between them. Louis is a lover of art and literature and any artistic outcome which allows him to feel closer in understanding humanity. Lestat may have a different appreciation for the arts, but as far as operas, ballets and the theatre, this is something they both enjoy and the time when Louis is closest to Lestat is when they share this. There have been moments when they have seemingly been closer – beyond that of Louis's transformation – and those were the times Lestat seduced Louis to do things he was reluctant to do, and those moments were tainted by Lestat's betrayal and manipulation. These cultural shows however, have been withheld from Louis as a form of punishment if he has uttered any form of enjoyment in being part of them with Lestat. This seems to indicate that Lestat cannot handle this form of validation and shows a certain

emotional immaturity and an inability, or at least a reluctance, to accept and process them, because we see how Lestat enjoy these moments together with Louis. As a result, this emotional blockage in Lestat, which if not present would have allowed him to deal with his feelings for Louis, ends up with a near-fatal consequence with Claudia's attempted murder – that she felt justified in going through with due to Lestat's cold and cruel demeanor. Had Lestat been able to forgo this barrier, he might not have secluded himself from emotional attachments – an isolation where enjoyment is only acceptably portrayed through the acts of murder and feasting on blood, or perhaps through the occasional Shakespearian play. In Pete Remington's essay on Anne Rice's characters as indices of the depressive self, he adds from Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon: An Anatomy of Depression* (2002) that "*Depression is often occasioned by isolation.*" (Day: 233) and suggests that: "*Many depressed men are not diagnosed because they tend to deal with feelings of depression ... by withdrawing into the noise of violence, substance abuse or workaholism.*" (Day: 233) This, to me, seems to illustrate Lestat quite well. We can consider the murders and the feeding as representing all of three things Solomon mentions in the above quote. Lestat has to procure victims in order to feed, so that he is fed and stays healthy – killings which are seldom swift. Additionally, he has been described as gluttonous in his killings and certainly feeds more than necessary. It seems his dedication to his livelihood, so to speak, is a form of workaholism and substance abuse, in which he is essentially dosing himself on human blood. Dedicating his time to this, to avoid emotional entanglement. And because he is distanced from these emotions, he has succumbed to a depression in which enjoyment can only be derived from the blood. Still, he has put significant effort into keeping Louis by his side, even though he has otherwise withheld any significant affection towards Louis. And the consequence of being emotionally detached goes much further than something as simple as Claudia's attempted murder.

When it comes to Louis and Lestat, they both end up suffering emotional breakdowns that affect their emotional states. Louis's breakdown causes him to shut down and lock away the remaining parts of his humanity, while Lestat becomes more emotionally aware and finds himself being crippled when forced to face his emotions and the consequences of having repressed them for so long. It is during these breakdowns we truly begin to see the consequences of Louis and Lestat's unspoken love. And it is these consequences which set their ability to deal with their emotions spinning. Below is a quote by Lestat, as we see him beginning to break down as soon as things begin to slip out of his hands.

“ ‘I’ll give you back your life!’ he said, his eyelids quivering with the stress of his words, his chest heaving, that hand going out again and closing impotently in the dark. ‘You promised me,’ he said to Santiago, ‘I could take him back with me to New Orleans.’ And then, as he looked from one to the other of them as they surrounded us, his breath became frantic, and he burst out, ‘Claudia, where is she? She’s the one who did it to me, I told you!’ (Rice: 296)

Having followed Louis and Claudia to Paris, Lestat realizes, that by involving other vampires from the Théâtre des Vampires in his revenge on Claudia, for attempting to murder him and perhaps also for taking Louis away from him, might mean the death of Louis. With this becoming more and more a likely outcome, Lestat appears to suffer from something akin to a panic attack. We see Lestat's anxieties begin to overwhelm him as he fully realizes his actions have consequences and that he does not have control of the situation. Lestat is used to being able to manipulate the people around him, but by involving Santiago and the other vampires, that power has become useless.

“ ‘She did it to me, Louis. She did it to me. You didn’t! She has to die!’ said Lestat, his voice becoming thin, rasping, as if it were an effort for him to speak. ‘Get that thing away from here, he’s coming home with me,’ he said furiously to Santiago. And Santiago only laughed, and Celeste laughed, and the laughter seemed to infect them all.

“ ‘You promised me,’ said Lestat to them.

“ ‘I promised you nothing,’ said Santiago. (Rice: 297)

Unable to stop the vampires from taking Louis and sealing him in a coffin and walling him in a tomb, Lestat crumbles. He manages to get a hold of Armand, the vampire who is considered the leader of the Théâtre des Vampires and who has fallen for Louis. Armand rescues Louis, but Louis refuses to leave without Claudia. Unaware that it is already too late and Claudia is dead.

“Lestat’s grey eyes seemed to regard Armand with wonder, and his lips struggled to form a word. I could see that his eyes were filling with tears. ‘Yes ...’ he whispered now, his hand struggling with the thing he concealed beneath his black cloak. But then he looked at me, and the tears spilled down his face. ‘Louis,’ he said, his voice deep and rich now with what seemed an unbearable struggle. ‘Please, you must listen to me. You must come back...’ And then, bowing his head, he grimaced with shame.

“Santiago was laughing somewhere. Armand was saying softly to Lestat that he must get out, leave Paris; he was outcast.

“And Lestat sat there with his eyes closed, his face transfigured with his pain. It seemed the double of Lestat, some wounded, feeling creature I’d never known. ‘Please,’ he said, the voice eloquent and gentle as he implored me.

“ ‘I can’t talk to you here! I can’t make you understand. You’ll come with me... for a little while... until I am myself again?’ (Rice: 302)

Lestat has come to the realization that Claudia’s death may just be what alienates Louis from him forever and it is in fact this which is the direct cause for Louis’s own breakdown.

Noticing that Lestat is clutching a dress which used to belong to Claudia, Louis realizes he is too late to save her. Seeing Claudia’s remains, despite already having distanced himself from her and having made preparations to leave her, is what finally breaks him. In Benefiel's article about the perversion of the nuclear family she says this about Louis's downfall:

Anne Rice's creation, the vampire Louis de Pont du Lac, loses his mortal family, and later, his immortal family, when Claudia and Madelaine are killed in Paris in a replay of that ancient trauma. After that, he loses what had remained of his humanity, what might be termed his soul. The need for family, in whatever configuration, remains constant. (Benefiel: 270)

Louis has lost his family. Both his human and immortal family. Lestat remains, but how can Louis forgive him when he has caused Claudia's death, or does that even play a part? Does Claudia's death overshadow the fact that Lestat is guilty in her destruction? After all, it is the vampires of the theater that executed her.

But the child, the ancient one, my Claudia, was ashes.

“A cry rose in me, a consuming cry that came from the bowels of my being, rising up like the wind in that narrow place, the wind that swirled the rain teeming on those ashes, beating at the trace of a tiny hand against the bricks, (Rice: 304)

Louis first becomes violent towards Santiago and the other vampires, but when he begins to lose consciousness from the emotional stress he’s suffering from, he is carried out by Armand as they flee from the other vampires, with Lestat attempting to follow them. Louis can’t accept Claudia’s death. He appears to have lost his mind, with his thoughts not connecting properly until something appears to resonate with him.

“And then I conceived of everything too clearly. We were walking now, a belligerent, blind sort of walking that men do when they are wildly drunk and filled with hatred for others, while at the same time they feel invincible. I was walking in such a manner through New Orleans the night I’d first encountered Lestat, (Rice: 305)

This flashback of sorts, in which Louis recalls the time when he first met Lestat seems to signal a second death for Louis. His death-drive has returned to him as strongly as when he

first lost his human brother. Again, Louis experiences a mind-numbing loss. Edelman in his book *No future* (2004) adds from Suzanne Barnard her thoughts on distinguishing between the subject of desire and the subject of the death-drive:

"While the subject of the drive also is 'born' in relation to a loss, this loss is a real rather than a symbolic one. As such, it functions not in a mode of absence but in a mode of an impossible excess haunting reality, an irrepressible remainder that the subject cannot separate itself from. In other words, while desire is born of and sustained by a constitutive *lack*, drive emerges in relation to a constitutive *surplus*. This surplus is what Lacan calls the subject's 'anatomical complement,' an excessive, 'unreal' remainder that produces an ever-present jouissance." (Edelman: 10)

His loss of Claudia causes in him an emotional death. In his first death, Louis became a vampire and was no longer bound by his humanity, but he still had respect for human life and his morals were still intact. This second death sheds Louis of his remaining sense of humanity as a response to the many losses he's suffered. Why preserve the good in life when he longer considers himself good?

'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 myself become the thing I am, when I knew it was wrong. For that, I let Claudia become the vampire that she became, when I knew it was wrong. For that, I stood by and let her kill Lestat, when I knew that was wrong, the very thing that was her undoing. (...) Well, I tell you I am no longer that passive, weak creature that has spun evil from evil till the web is vast and thick while I remain its stultified victim. It's over! I know now what I must do. (Rice: 307)

A final act of revenge seems to be the last of Louis's passion as he sets the home of the Théâtre des Vampires on fire and makes sure to kill all the vampires residing there. Remington includes in his essay from Styron who *links rage to "incomplete mourning," which has been characterized as a life event contributing significantly to depression.* (Day: 233) This downward spiral that Louis is experiencing has led to a need to complete his mourning, through a violent act of revenge. Louis warns Armand to stay away from the theatre, which he does, without warning his fellow vampires – as he treasures Louis far more than the vampires he once lived with.

After that night, Louis feels strangely apathetic, not fearing any vampire who might have escaped or who may not have been at the house when Louis set it on fire. He also has no

desire to pursue any who may have escaped. All in all, Louis feels numb and distanced from his own feelings and appears even to appreciate its distance.

What mattered was that I was more utterly alone in the world than I had ever been in all my life. That Claudia was gone beyond reprieve. And I had less reason to live than I'd ever had, and less desire.

“And yet my sorrow did not overwhelm me, did not actually visit me, did not make of me the wracked and desperate creature I might have expected to become. Perhaps it was not possible to sustain the torment I'd experienced when I saw Claudia's burnt remains. (...) I wondered vaguely what it would be to feel this loss, this outrage, and be justified in it, be deserving of sympathy, of solace. I would not have told my woe to a living creature. My own tears meant nothing to me. (Rice: 314)

Despite considering himself more alone now than ever before, he still has Armand who comes to him, with no ill will towards Louis, despite him having murdered his supposed friends. Louis finds himself comforted by Armand even as he has begun to numb from his emotions, yet he still has a new clarity about himself as a vampire, a creature who he now accepts wholly as evil – a creature he can seek refuge as now that he has accepted that he is a creature who can live without answering to his guilt. He is aware of his emotions and though they have cut him deep, he now perceives these wounds as insignificant.

“And then I finally surrendered. I turned to Armand again and let my eyes penetrate his eyes, and let him draw close to me as if he meant to make me his victim, and I bowed my head and felt his firm arm around my shoulder. And, remembering suddenly and keenly Claudia's words, what were very nearly her last words – that admission that she knew that I could love Armand because I had been able to love even her – those words struck me as rich and ironical, more filled with meaning than she could have guessed.

“‘Yes,’ I said softly to him, ‘that is the crowning evil, that we can even go so far as to love each other, you and I. And who else would show us a particle of love, a particle of compassion or mercy? Who else, knowing us as we know each other, could do anything but destroy us? Yet we can love each other.’ (Rice: 316-317)

Louis, though seemingly having turned his back on his humanity, becomes aware that even as an evil thing – because he now considers vampires to be inherently evil – they have the potential to feel love or at the very least recognize its presence. And while Louis may have become numb to his passions, he is still aware of his feeling of Armand, though he does not feel it as strongly after shutting down and locking his emotions away. He accepts Armand's love, but is no longer the passionate man he was. Another symbol of this is shown in his desire to visit the Louvre before they leave.

Before, all art held for me the promise of a deeper understanding of the human heart. Now the human heart meant nothing. I did not denigrate it. I simply forgot it. (Rice: 318)

His appreciation for art was directly linked to his desire to learn and understand human nature, but now he has turned his back on all the things that made him human despite having cherished his morality for years upon years. He has shut himself down – rejecting his emotions that have only caused him pain. With this, I see Louis switching places with Lestat – becoming the same distant and emotionally unapproachable character that Lestat once represented. However, with Louis taking Lestat's place, where then does that leave Lestat?

## Ch. 3.2

### Descent into the swamp.

As mentioned in the previous part, Lestat – in being faced with the repercussions of involving the vampires from the Théâtre des Vampires – is showing signs of anxiety. He has somehow managed to tap back into his humanity, or has been shocked back into it – seeing the loss he faced by keeping from fulfilling his emotional bond with Louis. The result of not reaching out to him, when it was so clear that Louis was open to expand on their connection, has been what he feared. Losing Lestat. However, Lestat’s apparent humanity as it comes across in his fear of losing Louis to the vampires of the Parisian theater didn’t suddenly emerge in that moment. It might seem like it did, with Louis's imminent death being a stressor that activated Lestat's panic attack. Certainly, this is the first moment we see proof of a deeper connection to Louis after his transformation through an actual physical reaction, but there are signs that indicate that the source of Lestat’s emotional awakening stems from another time entirely. In the novel, we are given a clue to where this awakening stems from - from Lestat’s own words to Louis, when he begins to realize that Santiago and the others from the Théâtre des Vampires intend to keep Louis from him, and punish Louis for his part in Claudia’s schemes against Lestat.

“ ‘No,’ he said. ‘Louis, you must come back to me. There’s something I must tell you... about that night in the swamp.’ But then he stopped and looked about again, as though he were caged, wounded, desperate. (Rice: 296)

What Lestat is talking about turns is what I have discovered to be the most important moment in the entire novel. The swamp. Where Louis and Claudia dispose of Lestat's body after Claudia’s attempted murder of Lestat. His body was left shriveled and weak after Claudia offered him the blood of the poisoned child. Appearing dead, Claudia convinces Louis, despite his reluctance, that he must help her dispose of the children’s and Lestat’s bodies. Caving to her request, they decide to take the bodies out into the swamps.

This scene early on depicts Louis struggling with undetermined feelings for Lestat. He did not wish Claudia to kill Lestat, but at the same time he couldn't bear the risk of Lestat destroying her if he found out her plans. When Lestat appears to die, it is clear that Louis is mourning him and is having trouble letting go. Just this, by itself, makes this an important part of the novel. Add in the fact that Lestat, who was presumed dead at the time, mentions the swamp

when Louis is being faced with accusations of being an accomplice in Claudia's murder-plot, makes it even more significant. It seems an easy thing to miss, as the hint to this moment's significance for Lestat stems from a single mention of the swamp by Lestat – along with a vague reference to it towards the end of the novel, in which the word swamp is omitted. I see this scene as Lestat's emotional awakening. Whether it occurred due to him suffering from the shock of near-death or because he felt the same tangible connection as Louis did in that moment is unclear, but what is clear is that it had a deeper meaning for the two of them, beyond that of a simple body-drop. In my thesis, I have previously brought forth the idea of Louis as one who reaches out towards Lestat and the following quote from the swamp, when Louis is heading into the swamp to dispose of Lestat's remains, validates this suggestion more than anything else in the novel:

I went deeper and deeper in with Lestat's remains, though why, I did not know. And finally, when I could barely see the pale space of the road and the sky which was coming dangerously close to dawn, I let his body slip down out of my arms into the water. I stood there shaken, looking at the amorphous form of the white sheet beneath the slimy surface. The numbness which had protected me since the carriage left the Rue Royale threatened to lift and leave me flayed suddenly, staring, thinking: This is Lestat. This is all of transformation and mystery, dead, gone into eternal darkness. I felt a pull suddenly, as if some force were urging me to go down with him, to descend into the dark water and never come back. It was so distinct and so strong that it made the articulation of voices seem only a murmur by comparison. It spoke without language, saying, 'You know what you must do. Come down into the darkness. Let it all go away.' (Rice: 138-139)

Even as he believes that Lestat is gone forever, Louis feels a pull towards his creator – his spouse and father. A pull to sink into the depths along his body, where he feels a belonging. Certainly, this is much more severe than what Simon May proposed in his theory of rootedness. It seems this love that Louis has for Lestat has been interconnected with the death-drive as a result of this loss. It is plausible to consider that the urging force Louis is experiencing, is Lestat, calling out to him – With some part of Louis responding to Lestat's remaining life force. Still, with his incomplete knowledge of vampires, there is no way he would suspect that Lestat was not dead at this point, especially not after having seen the inhuman deterioration of Lestat's body after Claudia's attack. To Louis, this was Lestat's death and with him disappeared the hope of a future together. In Pete Remington's essay on the depressive self he adds in William Styron's thoughts on depression:

In depression ... faith in deliverance, in ultimate restoration, is absent. The pain is unrelenting, and what makes the condition intolerable is the foreknowledge that no remedy will come – not in a day, an hour, a month, or a minute. If there is mild relief, one knows that it is only temporary; more pain will follow. (Day: 232)

Louis has succumbed to his depression, his faith gone, and again we see how Louis deals with emotional loss. After his brother's death, Louis numbed his pain with alcohol and walked the streets, searching out death. *I lived like a man who wanted to die but who had no courage to do it himself.* (Rice: 11) When he believes he has lost Lestat and is lowering his body into the swamp-water, Louis talks about a protective numbness – followed by the notion that he should submerge himself into the water with him. An action prevented by Claudia as she snaps him out of his near-trance. And lastly, we see a similar reaction after Claudia dies, where, after having sought out revenge for her death, he shuts down and becomes methodical and distanced in handling his emotions. It seems it has become an emotional defense mechanism for him to withdraw from the situation when he experiences a loss which is emotionally taxing. However, the presence of a loved one seems to be able to threaten this sense of safety with the capability to pull him out of that numbness and snapping him back to the harsh reality of emotional pain.

Another thing that stands out in the quote above, about Louis feeling a pull to submerge himself into the water, is the *You know what you must do* part. Loss, in Louis's case, seems not only to end in numbness, but first urges an action. In this case, sinking down alongside Lestat's body. Joining Lestat in death, like he joined him in his coffin after being transformed into a vampire – as if the death of either one of them requires closeness upon its climax of death. After all, that was what happened when Louis first died. However, Louis does not let himself sink into the dark and murky waters as he is distracted by Claudia and pulled out of his trance-like fixation on Lestat's quickly disappearing body. When Claudia dies we see a similar reaction when Louis is trying to process the knowledge of Claudia passing away, of having been burnt to death by the sun. In his conversation with Armand, he says: *I know now what I must do.* (Rice: 307) In contrast to when he experienced losing Lestat though, this action leads to him killing several vampires in revenge, rather than what could have ended up being an attempted suicide had he followed the pull to join Lestat underwater after his supposed passing.

Through Louis' retelling we are shown how the scene in the swamps transpired, along with a recount of conflicted and confused emotions at the time – both towards Lestat in his death and Claudia in her role as Lestat's murderer. Yet, it is first when Lestat mentions the swamp that we realize that it had a deeper significance for him as well, as I mentioned earlier. I believe this moment, with Lestat's weakened body being encompassed in Louis's arms, as he gently places him in the water and considers going down with him, is very much an intimate moment between the two of them. Lestat is not dead and I believe that he is very much present in that moment, seeing the care with which Louis treats him – seeing Louis has no malicious feelings left for him and is mourning him. I believe that in this moment he is reaching out towards Louis, and this is what Louis responds to when feeling the draw towards Lestat. Their bond, as vampires, as lovers, was forged in Louis's death and rebirth. When Lestat first came to him, he made Louis an unspoken promise. A promise that his pain would end, and the times when he has seduced Louis after the transformation, it has brought with it this promise of which Louis becomes convinced each time and I think Louis is still looking for Lestat to keep this promise – even when he believes Lestat to be dead.

This is where the swamp really comes in. It represents an escape from reality, to be submerged in dark waters and therefore sheltered from the surface-world. With everything that can cause misery being drowned out and left out of reach. To share this place with Lestat, represents a return to the coffin – but one without repression. An open coffin. What Louis is considering as he feels the pull to sink into the waters with Lestat, is not him giving up on his life, but rather a release from his repressed emotions. At this time, I see Lestat and Louis synchronized. Louis giving up the harm of repressing his true feelings and Lestat allowing Louis's feelings to reach him and draw out his own repressed desire. By far, I consider this the most intimate moment of the novel, even beyond that of the transformation set in *eros*. I see this as a culmination of all bonds forged between the two, in which they have moved beyond their own harmful ways of self-preservation, and have given in to affection. A culmination of *eros*, *agape*, *filia* and *storge* – physical, spiritual, conditional and unconditional. This is as close as Louis gets to having the deep emotional bond with Lestat that he craved, and he is not even aware of it. Not aware of the fact that in that moment when Lestat's body is submerged, Louis is not alone. Perhaps, had not Claudia dragged him out of his connection to Lestat at that moment, Louis might finally have found peace by going down with him. Instead, he finds himself caretaker of the child, his daughter the woman, who took from him his deepest, repressed needs.

Yet, we never get a clear answer from Lestat on what he wanted to tell Louis about that night in the swamps. There is no confirmation of what transpired from Lestat's point of view in this novel, only that it was important enough for Lestat to reveal that there was something important about that moment – something vital. We know this because it becomes the most important thing for Lestat to say just moments before Louis is pulled away from him by the vampires of the Théâtre des Vampires. Lestat is convinced Louis is being sentenced to death and this is what concerns him before Louis is to, presumably, be executed. The last words that may be shared between them.

When they next meet, Louis discovers Claudia's dead body which clouds his mind and prevents the subject from being brought up again. And again, with Lestat's crippling emotions, he has realized that his window of opportunity and redemption in Louis's eyes is over. Like it said in the quote I used earlier in this subsection of my chapter on consequences: *In depression ... faith in deliverance, in ultimate restoration, is absent.* (Day: 232) With Lestat's newly awakened humanity, his consequence for his action is another depression. Not one of repression, but one without faith in forgiveness. Because Claudia is dead and Lestat is responsible for her punishment, despite not being the one who carried it out.

Only one more time does the subject of the swamp resurface – upon them reuniting decades later:

“ ‘What was it you wanted to tell me?’ I asked. ‘What was it you wanted to talk about?’

“I could well remember his mad insistence in the Théâtre des Vampires. I hadn't thought of it in years. No, I had never thought of it. And I was aware that I spoke of it now with great reluctance.

“But he only smiled at me, an insipid, near apologetic smile. And shook his head. I watched his eyes fill with a soft, bleary despair. (Rice: 330)

Clearly, even after all that time, thinking of what he had wanted to tell Louis, all those years ago, still rouses a fair amount of emotion and despair in him.

## Ch. 3.3

### Reunion - Lonely vampires

Though Lestat tried to keep up with Louis and Armand when they first fled from the Théâtre des Vampires, after Louis's shock at seeing Claudia's dead body, he is left behind along the way and it is later revealed that Louis believed Lestat to have perished in the fire that Louis set at the theatre as he sought revenge for Claudia's death. Years later, Louis discovers that Lestat is still alive. A fact hidden from him by his lover, Armand. Decades have passed without them seeing each other, without Lestat having sought him out. Both vampires have broken down. Gone is Lestat's vindictiveness and determination to control the situation around him, and gone is Louis's guilt and humanity, leaving him frozen in an uncaring state.

And my journey through the Louvre that last night I've described to you, that was merely prophetic.

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

Louis is no longer the man or the vampire he once was. Before, he was defined by his moral standing and respect for human life. Now, he seems to have turned his back on all that and all others – even Armand, his current lover and companion. Emotionally shut down, unable to give Armand the passion and affection he desires from him, he has in more ways than one, adapted into a version of Lestat that we were originally faced with. Shut off from emotions and unable to provide the necessary closeness to keep people from leaving. To Louis though, loneliness has become a far more attractive fate. Despite the issues Louis had with Claudia after the attack on Lestat, it is obvious that her death has changed him. His violent rampage as he killed most of the vampires responsible for her death signaled him throwing away the last of his humanity – his rage, a human response he no longer cares for. As years upon years pass after leaving Paris he finds himself having grown cold to the world. He has realized that he is truly a doomed creature and that there is no redemption for him.

‘I wanted love and goodness in this which is living death,’ I said. ‘It was impossible from the beginning, because you cannot have love and goodness when you do what you know to be evil, what you know to be wrong. You can only have the desperate confusion and longing and the chasing of phantom goodness in its human form. I

knew the real answer to my quest before I ever reached Paris. I knew it when I first took a human life to feed my craving. It was my death. (Rice: 336)

This acceptance which he spent decades denying, results in Louis giving up on the things he once treasured without fight. Even knowing that he will lose Armand with his cold, dead ways – yet, he cannot help but feel relief as he sees Armand slipping away. *I was wishing, as I often wished, that he was not there, that I was alone. Alone with this powerful and cool river under the dim moon.* (Rice: 333) Still, there is something that remains, something that pulls at Louis: *all during these years I had a vague but persistent desire to return to New Orleans.* (Rice: 322) And when it is discovered that Armand has withheld the information of Lestat's survival from him, it causes a reaction in Louis.

"I cannot convey to you the feeling that came over me when I heard this. Of course, Armand told me he had protected me from this knowledge, hoping that I would not undertake a long journey merely for revenge, a journey that would have caused me pain and grief at the time. But I didn't really care. I hadn't thought of Lestat at all the night I'd torched the theater. I'd thought of Santiago and Celeste and the others who had destroyed Claudia. Lestat, in fact, had aroused in me feelings which I hadn't wished to confide in anyone, feelings I'd wished to forget, despite Claudia's death. Hatred had not been one of them. (Rice: 323)

With this information, Louis realizes he wishes to see Lestat again and having felt the pull to return to New Orleans, that is exactly what Louis does. Upon arriving in New Orleans, Louis exclaims *I knew that I had indeed come home.* (Rice: 323) Of course, this isn't just a return to Lestat – after all, this is where Louis lived his human life in the period before he became a vampire. Despite the town having changed, Louis still recognizes the streets and as he explores them he feels a strong sense of Lestat – memories from their early days flooding back.

"And I felt something else; it was a sadness that came over me then, after Armand had gone on his way. But this sadness was not painful, nor was it passionate. It was something rich, however, and almost sweet, like the fragrance of the jasmine and the roses that crowded the old courtyard garden which I saw through the iron gates. And this sadness gave a subtle satisfaction and held me a long time in that spot; and it held me to the city; and it didn't really leave me that night when I went away. (Rice: 324)

When Louis has experienced loss in his life, it has always been followed by a numbness to emotions, in order to protect himself from further emotional damage. However, this sadness he describes above is bringing back to him some of his humanity. It is a sadness, not caused

by bad memories, but one caused by good. It brings back a longing in Louis and with this he is even more determined to locate Lestat.

When Louis discovers a young vampire lurking through the streets, he has a feeling that this will lead him to Lestat's location and follows him. First, to a home where he fed and killed a woman, and stole her baby, and second to an old house, surrounded by an overgrown yard and an iron fence. Here he finds Lestat.

Through their breakdowns they have shut down from the world around them and they have become lonely vampires. However, loneliness has different meanings for the two vampires. Both have companions, that will not last them – yet for Lestat this is the most disastrous. Not because he has any true affection for his companion, but because he is dependent on him. Lestat, already struggling with his reawakened humanity, is overwhelmed by the new, modern world which is a far more noisy and scary place than the one he grew up in. In fact, it appears he has developed a certain degree of Agoraphobia, meaning he fears going outside. He cannot handle the world alone and his so-called companion, who detests Lestat more than Louis ever did – even in his darkest hours – has to hunt for Lestat, which is why he brought him the infant child. A meal that Lestat is not happy to receive. Through a window, Louis even observes that the place is littered with the bodies of animals, showing that Lestat has adopted a similar diet as Louis did in his first years as a vampire. When announcing his presence, Lestat is overjoyed, thinking his Louis has finally come home for good.

‘You’ve come back to me, Louis,’ he whispered in that thin, high-pitched voice.  
‘You’ve come home again to me, Louis, haven’t you?’ And again he bit his lip and looked at me desperately. (Rice: 328-329)

Lestat is prepared to throw his new companion aside in a heartbeat to reclaim Louis, yet his companion makes this decision for him and leaves Lestat behind now that Louis has arrived. Facing Lestat, Louis is greatly impacted by what he sees. Watching the tears in Lestat’s eyes and later realizing he too was crying, signals some part of the old Louis being revived. Seeing Lestat so broken and helpless, a mere shadow of his former self stirs something in Louis. Perhaps, to a degree, it is a mere nostalgia where Louis has come to appreciate the past, but not enough to put himself in a situation subject to loss again. Especially not when he sees how altered Lestat has become – how crippled by having let his emotions enter his life.

I could see the tears welling in his eyes; and only when his mouth was stretched in a strange smile of desperate happiness that was near to pain did I see the faint traces of the old scars. How baffling and awful it was, this smooth-faced, shimmering immortal man bent and rattled and whining like a crone. (Rice: 327)

Lestat, so damaged and crippled. The complete contrast of the man Louis once knew. Lestat is a visual representation of what Louis would risk becoming should he decide to withdraw from his protective numbness in order to live a full life of emotions. He once feared becoming like Lestat – an unfeeling monster, yet this is what Louis has become when he shut down his humanity. Now he fears weakness, and he will not be weak. Still, there is an ache, a longing, a sadness.

I was thinking of all the things that had passed between us. I was remembering things which I supposed I had completely forgotten. And I was conscious then of that same overwhelming sadness which I'd felt when I saw the place in the Rue Royale where we had lived. Only, it didn't seem to me to be a sadness for Lestat, for that smart, gay vampire who used to live there then. It seemed a sadness for something else, something beyond Lestat that only included him and was part of the great awful sadness of all the things I'd ever lost or loved or known. (...) I put my hand to my face and wiped at the tears that were in fact there and looked at them in amazement. (Rice: 331)

Louis aches for the past they shared, though not fully understanding why, but he realizes that being near Lestat only brings with him this sadness. A sadness for what has been lost between them, of Claudia and of his own humanity. He knows that to be able to live on, he must give up on love, because love has only caused him misery. This is why loneliness is not something Louis fears. The prospect of being alone, means he doesn't have to face more losses and if he ceases to feel, to care and no longer feels like he has to strive for love and goodness, he will be safe from more of that overwhelming sadness. Being cold and feeling nothing is the favorable choice, when devastating sadness is the alternative.

Just like how Louis was made weak to the will of Lestat and Claudia when he felt that he was alone or under the threat of ending up alone, Lestat has become weak by being separated from Louis. He is pining for the past, and is unable to bond with his current companion, who is not much more than a delivery-man for Lestat whom is too scared to leave his home. I suggested earlier in my thesis that Claudia was a symbolic substitution in Louis's life for his repressed feelings towards Lestat, and in the same way, Lestat's new companion can be considered a failed substitution for Louis. Lestat may well have had an emotional awakening, but his

awakening was a realization of the feelings he already had for Louis, and these are feelings that he has not moved past. Feelings he has harbored since the beginning, only now having brought back into light. I say this because the joy in Lestat is evident when he sees Louis again, and it is clear that Lestat has not been taking care of himself for a long time. In other words, Lestat is stuck. Not just in the house he resides in, but trapped in his love for Louis, who now appears too similar to how Lestat was prior to accepting his love for Louis. Shut down, with his emotional guard up and withdrawn from the humanity he once cherished so deeply, Louis has become emotionally unavailable. These star-crossed lovers have fallen victims to their own emotional instability, both reaching out towards one another at different times, never fully reaching each other – never able to fulfill the promise of their Unspoken Love. While recognizing that Lestat needs him, Louis is not willing to commit to Lestat again. Yet, upon Armand questioning Louis about what he felt after meeting with Lestat, he says to Armand, before he leaves Louis for good, that he felt nothing in his reunion with Lestat, but this is not true, as he admits to the interviewer: *I remembered palpably that sorrow. It was as if the sorrow hadn't left me suddenly, but had been near me all this time, hovering, saying, 'Come.'* (Rice: 333) Admitting this to Armand, that there was still some passion left in Louis, might have persuaded him to stay, but realizing this, Louis keeps this information away from him. Louis still feels a pull towards Lestat, but all he wants now is peace and quiet and solitude. He is beginning to feel again, to feel his connection with Lestat, and he knows that if he returns to Lestat, his remaining emotional barrier may come crashing down. For as long as he keeps his distance, Louis has control. And for as long as Louis has control, he is safe from love's consequence of depression.

## Conclusion – Love and vampires?

Seduction appears to be commonplace when it comes to vampire literature, but this might also be the reason for why it has become so popular in this day and era. The romance business is booming, and you will not have any problems finding something you like. Every kind of fetish has been accounted for. With Stephani Meyer's *Twilight saga*, we find our beloved vampires, though somewhat more sparkly than the stereotype, and another sensation, *Fifty shades of gray* by E.L. James, which I mention as it began as a reimagined version of *Twilight*, introduces us to the world of BDSM. Author J.R. Ward, who also has had several books on the New York Times best seller list, has done a great job with her *Black Dagger Brotherhood* series, which incorporates both vampires and a variety of sexual preferences between the featured couples. However, the reason why vampires have gained this high standing in romance novels, erotic or more teen-appropriate stories, is not so obvious. Why have we gravitated towards this sub-genre of romance?

We know that life is everchanging, and today, nobody expects you to be married before you turn twenty. However, that used to be the case. We don't have the same expectations anymore that the generations before us had and being in love doesn't necessarily mean you need to get married, or even that you will stick together if you do. More and more people start families without ever feeling the need to change their marital status and they may still live long happy lives without taking that step in their relationship. This has become the new normal and you are no longer required to get a woman a ring the second her pregnancy-stick proves positive. Some may still choose to do so, but it is equally acceptable not to. That is, unless you come from a strict, religious family, then you might have to, to avoid being labeled the black sheep of the family.

So maybe we aren't looking for the traditional anymore, because marriage is no longer synonymous with forevermore. *Till death do you part*, is no longer a requirement to marriage, because divorces are no longer taboo. This contract that has had so much significance in our human lives is no longer a permanent thing. So instead, we look elsewhere for something that can stand the test of time. And vampires, they do stand the test of time, and oddly enough their life begins with death, instead of ending with it, which essentially means that Romeo and Juliet are no longer the IT couple of literary romance.

Their story is undoubtedly grand, but when they die, their story ends and who wants a relationship that ends with death? Instead of dying to immortalize the love felt between two parties, like Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers, the focus has now landed on dying in order to become immortal and live forever, together. The more appropriate wedding vow – *for as long as you both shall live*, can still have its place here, as becoming a vampire is much like sealing a contract. Where you put your life in the hands of another in hopes of something everlasting.

Becoming a vampire though, doesn't necessarily have to mean that you stay together forever, but you will always be linked as creator and creation.

Is this contract then, that is sealed in blood, and one that promises eternal life, the new marriage?

As we have seen, the relationship between Louis and Lestat can be read as symptomatic of this new 'marriage', a relationship which seems to be almost haunted with problems.

Through analysis of Louis and Lestat's relationship, it seems obvious to me that there is a shared, but unspoken love between the two in this novel. They need each other and desire each other, but the parts they've played and the lives they've lived, has caused in them a cautious nature. The consequence of this being what keeps them apart at the end. Love is a risk and with so many hopeful moments in their past, spoiled by disappointment, there is an inherent fear of repetition of betrayal. In the famous words of Dr. Phil McGraw: "*The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.*"

Returning to the main format of this novel, the actual interview, we can ask ourselves why Louis chooses to tell his story to a perfect stranger, and not just that – allowing that story to be recorded. I believe that after Louis's reunion with Lestat, it leaves him struggling against a returning humanity. He knows returning to Lestat will put him at risk, but still he feels conflicted. When Louis seeks out the interviewer, it is his way of connecting to the past he shared with Lestat. It certainly isn't something he wishes to forget, not when he goes to the extent of engaging a human writer to tell his story to and allows him to live, while being in possession of the recordings detailing his life. In a manner of speaking, this can be looked

upon as a form of marriage counseling, in which Louis is sorting out his feelings and fighting against his desire for a marriage-reunification.

In Jennifer Smith's *Anne Rice: A Critical Companion*, she proposes as the central question of the plot, of the story of Louis and Lestat's life together, as being: "*Will Louis free himself from Lestat and find peace and self-knowledge?*" (Smith: 25) I, on the other hand, propose that Louis does not wish to free himself from Lestat. He is conflicted because he still desires him and by reliving his own history through this interview, it serves as an attempt to remind himself not to get lost in his emotions and trust his mind above his heart. To remind himself of what he has lost and what he is sparing himself from, by not giving in to his need for Lestat. He has seen what has happened to Lestat, who is now perhaps the most human he has been since childhood, in his broken down, fearful way. Should Louis want to, he could return to Lestat and nurture him back to health and possibly end up with the kind of relationship he once wished they shared. Going through this interview, going through all the events leading up to that interview, allows him to reflect over his life – weighing his options up against the potential downfall. And the interviewer is an integral part of this soul-searching. Despite the candid nature of the interview though, we get the feeling that the interviewer is almost irrelevant. He is there for a reason, to fulfill a purpose, and that is to record these past events. It seems therapeutic for Louis, to go over his own story, to recall the good and bad of his life. Yet the main conflict of the novel is the fact that nothing is resolved. Louis doesn't know Lestat's thoughts. He can only deduce so much from seeing the broken-down version of Lestat and his apparent joy at seeing him again. He simply doesn't *know*. Not for certain.

Throughout this thesis I have presented several moments in which Louis has acknowledged a desire or emotion directed towards Lestat, presented in a way in which he is hesitant to put a name on it. Resulting in a failure of confirmation. The evidence is there, but one doesn't always see it. An example of this is at the very end of the novel, after the conclusion to Louis story, in which the interviewer exclaims:

"The love of Claudia, the feeling, even the feeling for Lestat! It didn't have to end, not in this, not in despair! Because that's what it is, isn't it? Despair!" (...) "Don't you see how you made it sound? It was an adventure like I'll never know in my whole life! You talk about passion, you talk about longing! You talk about things that millions of us won't ever taste or come to understand. And then you tell me it ends like that. (Rice: 339)

Clearly, the interviewer sees something Louis does not and follows this up by asking to himself be turned into a vampire, something that Louis is angered by. Yet, the interviewer continues to say: *You don't even understand the meaning of your own story*, (Rice: 340). I believe the boy, the interviewer, is seeing much of what I myself have seen, going through the unhappy love-story of Louis de Pointe du Lac and Lestat de Lioncourt. An unrealized love, that after a moment of pleasure is repressed – hidden away, causing nothing but emotional damage. Activating his humanity and his feelings for Lestat, means that Louis yet again is faced with the possibility of loss. It leaves him standing in the middle of the swamp with the threat of being pulled under – with the threat of drowning. The first time Louis lost Lestat and found himself having to dispose of his body in the swamp, something pulled at him. Urging him to go down into the depths of the water along with his lover's body. It shows a death drive spurred on by grief and for every loss, Louis shuts down more severely than the last time. Detached from his emotions, Louis is safe. To allow his feelings to surface again would mean that Louis is willing to die – not an emotional death, but an actual and final death where he will decompose and cease to exist. Therefore, Louis's decision to leave Lestat this second time, is his own lifeline. He is rejecting death and is not ready to put himself in such a risk, because he sees death as a possible consequence of returning to that path. He only sees the truth of the past and the sufferings he has had to deal with. Yet we see that Louis's humanity is not gone, only suppressed, as evident by his reaction to their reunion after so many years of Louis being walled off to his emotions.

In Edelman's *No Future* (2004) he quotes from Joan Copjec:

"is the meaning, when all is said and done, of Lacan's notorious assertion that 'there is no sexual relation': sex, in opposing itself to sense, is also, by definition, opposed to relation, to communication." From that limit of intelligibility, from the lack in communication, there flows, like blood from an open wound, a steady stream of figures that mean to embody – and thus to fill – that lack, that would stanch intelligibility's wound, like the clotting factor in blood, by binding it to, encrusting it in, Imaginary form. (Edelman: 108)

We have a failure to communicate in the relationship between Louis and Lestat. There is a bond of creator and creation, of pleasure, and of family. These are the things that are accepted. These are the things without doubt. And still, there is a lack. Affection withheld out of fear, and seduction, a means to an end, but stronger than that, as it is driven by a fear of losing the other.

In the end, I am left with one question:

If this love had been spoken, and understood clearly without confusion, could this relationship then have represented an ideal state – a new and improved love and existence?

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