



Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Centro de Educação e Humanidades
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Lílian Maria Araujo da Silva

The Body of the condemned in Anne Rice's *The Vampire chronicles*: Interview with the Vampire

Rio de Janeiro
2009

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Dissertação apresentada como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Orientadora: Prof^a Dr^a Maria Conceição Monteiro

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God that permits us to have access to so much knowledge.

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Some people write about
uncertainties and darkness.
Some others write about the
emptiness of things, about
meekness, quietude.
I write about the blood thirst that
is never quenched. I write about
knowledge and its price.(Anne
Rice)

RESUMO

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Esta dissertação trata do gótico literário, especialmente nas literaturas de língua inglesa. O tema principal gira em torno da figura do vampiro. A escolha do tema é resultado de minhas leituras sobre a primeira aparição do vampiro na prosa literária, figura oriunda das lendas na Europa oriental e central. Partindo do século XVIII, chego até a contemporaneidade, em solo norte-americano, onde se passa a narrativa de *Entrevista com o Vampiro*, romance este que será o foco principal de meus estudos sobre o gótico e o vampiro na literatura. Composta de três capítulos, esta dissertação trata das origens da lenda do vampiro e o seu ingresso na literatura, da questão do corpo humano e do corpo híbrido do vampiro. Por último, analiso o romance que impulsionou minha pesquisa, em diálogo com os capítulos anteriores.

Palavras-chave: Gótico. Vampiro. Literatura. Sexualidade.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the literary gothic, especially in literatures in English language. The main theme focuses on the figure of the vampire. Such a choice is the result of my readings of the first appearance of the vampire in prose fiction. The vampire arose in the legends from Eastern and Central Europe. Starting from the 18th century, I come to the present, in North-American soil, where the narrative of *Interview with the Vampire* takes place. This novel will be the center of this dissertation on the literary gothic and the vampire. Composed of three chapters, this work deals with the origins of the legend of the vampire and its insertion in literature; with the human body and the hybrid body of the vampire. Lastly, I analyse the novel that is in the center of my research, in a dialogue with the previous chapters.

Keywords: The Gothic. Vampire. Literature. Sexuality.

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INTRODUCTION

Every social structure tends to consider “demoniacal” everything that is different from itself. This attitude is ideologically meaningful. The other is considered evil for being different and for its possible power to disarrange what is familiar and known.
(Monteiro, “Corpos Assombrados na Narrativa Gótica Inglesa”)

During an academic event about languages, one of the lectures was about English literature. Before introducing the subject which was the gothic element in literature, the lecturer asked the audience to think of the word *gothic*. For some moments, they should imagine what that word produced in their minds, what they thought when it was pronounced.

In fact, the answers did not escape the expectations of the lecturer. Some people were asked to tell about their impressions. Ten people, more or less, spoke about it, what ideas came to their minds, for example, horror, death, the color black, coffins, obscurity, exotism, cemeteries. The lecturer agreed with them all, affirming that those ideas could be somehow pertinent to the gothic literature, and she went on saying that there were other themes inserted in that kind of literary style that were not evoked by the audience. Women, negroes, immigrants, people with problems related to their sexual identity, all the subjects considered excluded by the tradicional world created by white, urban, heterossexual, wealthy men, those kinds of subjects that, to a certain extent, do not disturb the laws, the norms, and who follow the doctrines of the main instituions that rule our world.

The “other”. Otherness is one of the major interests of literature. It pronounces those voices that should be quietened, it speaks the unspeakable, brings to light things about the other that should be concealed in the immensity of the self or of the selves. In the epigraph of this work, Maria Conceição Monteiro states that the Other, the different entity, is regularly seen as something bad, unpleasant. In actual fact, the Other produces a certain feeling that everyone tries to avoid. A feeling that produces newness, something that makes us abandon our known and comfortable position, that steadiness. The unknown, though, disturbs and may also cause a certain pleasure. Stepping on the other’s territory causes initial horror, because what is new is seen with suspicious eyes. I suppose that one of the

greatest fears is to find in the other a slight or enormous part of ourselves, to find an identification. Probably this reason makes the other a constant threat.

We may find the word gothic in various spheres. We can heard it in chess games, architecture, related to the ancient Germanic civilization, the *goths*, related to a music and life style, as a kind of letter and ancient language, so, it may circulate through many environments and suffer some variations in its meaning. It is not only attached to the literary and visual spheres, as many people may suppose.

I cannot forget that one good reason that provoked my interest in researching the gothic in literature came from the visual aspect, having always seen the gothic associated with obscurity, people that entitled themselves gothic subjects wearing dark garments that remind us of shadows. My concern left visual grounds and migrated to literature. I used to question the reason for the gothic to be invariably linked to the image of darkness, horror and fear, and how this interferes with the readers.

Well, as I said, my research on the gothic relies on the literary environment, but before, I think that it is interesting to make some considerations about architecture. About that kind of literature, one cannot exclude the presence of an ancient architecture, almost always celebrating that one of the middle ages, where we can find enormous castles, abbeys, old ruins, whose images impose a certain mystery, a sentiment that provokes fright, but at the same time attracts the reader, something that catches his or her attention until the end of the plot. That type of architecture allied with the feeling of dread are some of the phenomena that can be almost always observed in the literary gothic, this literature that reached its top in the second half of the eighteenth century and was consolidated mainly in England with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, by Horace Walpole. As the title suggests, the plot presents a castle with its peculiar construction, persecutions, exaggerations. The strategic scenery is composed to drive the reader to some sensations, sceneries using situations of confinement, people imprisoned underground, in dreadful places like dungeons which can be enormous or very small, images that make people feel fear, loneliness, affliction, agony.

We cannot forget the women. Their bodies continually oppressed, and, somehow, castrated, constitute one more theme for the gothic. Their attitudes, submissive or rebellious, their innocence, malice, their sterile, fertile, virginal or corrupted bodies, no

matter the way they are, put them as marginal subjects, such as those who do not integrate the center where the enlightenment dominates, as I mentioned, the center where the white and rich man from the biggest capital cities reside, the rational subject. Those who come from distant, remote sites, they have their places guaranteed in the margins. Sexuality is also a recurrent matter in the gothic, because it talks about many kinds of bodies, mainly about the bodies of those considered deviated, weird. Sexuality itself constitutes a taboo, a controversial issue, that the gothic rescues from darkness.

Literary gothic tries not to keep some voices silent and gives priority to the oppressed subjects that stand in the obscurity, it expresses what they have and need to say. They may offer other perspectives of their societies, of their domestic lives, of the world, which, for a long time, were repressed or even erased out. For many times, the suppressed content may revive through strange, bizarre manners. This psychological device, using the memories that return to the mind of the person to please or to annoy, probably offers an explanation for the gothic use of supernatural events that involve ghosts or so. Frequently, the authors use the device of the uncanny or *unheimlich*, a theory founded by Sigmund Freud in 1919, where he argues about the return of things that were repressed, about the horror in the childhood that returns in the adult life, and about the double.

Before *The Castle of Otranto* was published, however, I consider necessary to recede a little more in the past, precisely to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and make some remarks about a type of poetry that had risen before the zenith of the gothic, which had been maybe one of its roots: the *graveyard poetry*. This kind of poetry that for some readers would sound as something dismal, was create to celebrate nature, and, consequently, death which is part of men´s nature. It was broadened mainly by Alexander Pope, in the 1740s. About graveyard poetry, David Punter tells us that:

We have already seen the 1740s as the decade of Fielding and Richardson; but in poetry it was also an important decade, the decade which saw a kind of poetry which was radically different from anything Pope had advocated, and which came to be called “graveyard poetry”. At this point, it is worthy going into graveyard poetry in some details for several reasons: because its involvement with death and suffering prefigures the gothic novel; because it marks an early stage of the renewed desire for literary “novelty” which characterized the later part of the century; because it challenges rationalism and vaunts extremity of feelings; and because its influence on the gothic fiction was considerable,

although in a rather curious way: it exerted an enormous power on German writers of terror-fiction, and through them retained an influence in Britain well into the 1790s and beyond (Punter, 1996: 29-30).

The cult of death is one heritage that graveyard poetry left for the gothic novel. Other legacies came in that same century, from a sort of novel that used to exalt the passions of the heart, the sentimental novel, which had in Samuel Richardson one great representative.

The Castle of Otranto demarcated the full entrance of the gothic in literature, inserting new elements. The sentimental content of characters remains, however, there is something more that triggered in the reader, confusing and strange feelings. The excessive use of imagination and exaggeration, a legacy of the romanesque, was attached to a imagery, containing an old architecture that reminded that of the medieval times. The feelings of the characters were not only confined to themselves, but also to huge castles, remote and dense forests, sinister hiding-places. Such places and many others, should let loose, on purpose, antagonistic sensations, conducting the reader to a mysterious route, where he or she experiences both pleasure and fear.

Persecutions are also ascribed to the gothic, persecutions which not always occur in the real world. As the woman is also a common theme, it would be pertinent to say that the figure of the persecuted woman frequently appears in that kind of literature. Sandra Vasconcelos affirms that:

Without burdening it with didacticism and moral instructions, which were its characteristics, the sentimental approach was incorporated to the gothic, even in a slighter way. Richardson left the theme of the persecuted maiden – or “virtue in distress” – in the famous expression by Lady Bradshaig. The tears, the faints, the nervous sensitivity to the slightest rumors, flashy images or only glimpses, to the suggestions, were equally inherited. Now, the persecutions had their sceneries in foreign lands in – the Appenines or the Pireneus – and the persecutors were dreadful villains, *banditti* or contrabandists (Vasconcelos, 2007: 116, my translation).

The book by Matthew G. Lewis published in 1796, during the time in which the gothic ascended, *The Monk*, had some ingredients of the sentimental novel. Ambrosio, the abbot of a famous monastery in Madrid, persecutes the naive Antonia, whom he desires

with all the strength of his libido. Being supported by supernatural forces and also by Matilda, formerly presented to the reader as a man called Rosario, Ambrosio satisfies his obscure wishes, he rapes and kills Antonia. After that, he is told by a devilish and supernatural entity, that the girl was his sister.

These types of plots are common in the gothic because they talk about things that should be omitted. Eroticism is a dangerous issue in any society, the *eros* that is constantly negated and repressed may return as a threat or violently. The libido is a delicate theme that societies tend to negate, part of those primitive instincts that should be renounced in order to avoid transgression and disorder. It is exactly with these points that the gothic works, using not well-resolved devices of the human psyche, aspects which are not totally “illuminated”, clarified. About this Punter states that:

Because of the operation of the reality principle as censor, there are areas of the minds which never properly see the light of day, realizations which would hopelessly unbalance the carefully arranged fabric of the psyche in its interplay with the outside world. And it is here that we come to the crux of the matter: Gothic writers work – consciously and unconsciously – on the fringe of the acceptable, for it is on this borderland that fear resides (Punter, 1996:189).

The psyche is one part of the humans that is often evoked by the gothic, the former does not provide unity, its fragmentation and lack of harmony place the gothic story as a work that deals with the limits of the human being, with fears, with the passions of the heart, deep feelings, which are sometimes good, bad or indescribable. The authors depart from those limits to travel to fantastic and strange lands, carrying with them the “luggage” that comes from the readers.

The fantastic and the uncanny reign in the gothic atmosphere, they give a special treatment to the plot, they are there to compose a certain meaning, to represent something of the real world. Behind that character that is seen as strange, unfamiliar, there is something familiar with a certain amount of terror, which sometimes paralyzes and, simultaneously, causes attraction. About the manifestation of the uncanny investigated by Freud, we can say that it can take on various forms, among them, for instance, through telepathy, animism, the fear of being buried alive, the doubling. In the works by Edgar Allan Poe, such as “The Black Cat”, “The Pit and The Pendulum”, we can observe that the

author explores a common fear that assaults people, the one of being buried alive. Some of his characters are put in claustrophobic situations, immured, hidden in basements. The scary and imposing figure of the castle appears in stories about vampires and ghosts, it exemplifies another manifestation of the fantastic, when the castle shows life on its own and haunts their visitors and residents, lighting its own candles, making its own noises. The ghosts who live there represent the memories, sometimes very terrible ones, that should have been forgotten but return to haunt.

For some time, the castles, monasteries, convents, the big and old constructions with their ancient stories and tales, frightened the readers. However, they were seduced by the perverse characters who normally lived in those places. The evil figures that Julia Kristeva denominates as abject bodies, characters that helped to establish the fame of the gothic until nowadays. The theorist states that abjection is a process that involves attraction and repulsion that one subject exerts over the other, related to the question of terror and horror. By the way, one thing that surprised me during my researches was to discover that terror and horror have distinguished meanings, though they are frequently used interchangeably. The phenomenon of terror implicates two movements: the first is to be afraid of something, the dread itself, but, at the same time, there is some pleasure, an attraction to that object that is scary. Horror causes a shock, the person's senses remain paralysed because of the fright. Differently from terror, horror offers only one idea, which is totally negative and unpleasant for those who are the victims of it. According to Fred Botting:

What is important is that terror activates the mind and the imagination, allowing it to overcome, transcend even its fears and doubts, enabling the subject to move from a state of passivity to activity (...) Terror enables scape; it allows one to delimit its effects, to distinguish and overcome the threat it manifests (Botting, 1996: 75).

Concerning horror, Botting goes on affirming that “It freezes the human faculties rendering the mind passive and immobilising the body [...] Horror marks the response to an excess that cannot be transcended” (Botting, 1996: 75).

Those picturesque images of castles and of other monuments do not haunt so much as it used to do before. Now, fear comes from the interior of the subject, the new residence of the ghosts is the self of the person. Fear becomes more domestic, the women are still the

persecuted ones in many plots together with the servants. It was not by chance that in that phase of the literary gothic, there were more women writers, those who denounced the troubles of the house, the secrets of the family.

As time goes by, the sensation of fright and delight faded, the stories with their exaggerated plots, had their endings somehow foreseen. Like everything that is novelty one day will be no more, the gothic novel suffered a decline. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth, the Wanderer* (1820) were the last remarkable gothic works in that epoch. The main element that maintains the idea of the gothic, though, was not extinguished. Its essence, somehow making use of the element of terror, was dislocated to the end of the nineteenth century, where terror took on another face, related to the development of science, inserted in the plots together with a technological apparatus. Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker wrote noticeable works by the end of that century, respectively, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *Dracula* (1897).

Currently, there is a large variety of literary works that put the gothic still in evidence. Authors like the American Stephen King gives us a contemporary example of the gothic writing. In his books, he explores the manifestations of the uncanny in great scale. The animism is incorporated by cars, rooms, hotels, they gain life of their own as the castles in the eighteenth century. King also gets hold of the telepathy through the character of Carrie. She is the shy and repressed girl that entitles the novel and the movie, being often ridicularized by the other teenagers. Her extra-sensorial power appears as a negative response to all the humiliations and to the submission that she is victim of, living with a religious and fanatic mother. In *Sleepwalkers*, the main characters are two lovers, mother and son, who suck blood of virgin girls in order to increase their strenght. The mysterious house where they live presents a ruined and decadent structure, surrounded by several cats that represent the great threat to the couple. The author has a vast tradition in literature of terror, where vampires and other scary creatures frighten the families of our times, no more in castles, but in the big urban centers, at luxurious hotels and mansions. Terror is everywhere, not only in faraway towns like Styria or Bistritz, but also in the big capitals. About the contemporary gothic writings, Botting argues that:

The haunted house, and the ghostly reminder of transgression which inhabits it, provide the scene for a narrative that moves between the past and the present to uncover, in the interweaving of a repressed individual history with a suppressed cultural history, the external and internal effects of social oppression (Botting, 1996: 161).

I cannot leave behind the question of the body, the deformed bodies. Monsters are figures that possess a kind of body that are socially unacceptable. In the gothic, the figure of the monster may not appear only referring to the appearance as well as referring to the temper and to the attitudes. One of the goals of these creations is to produce the feeling of the sublime for they are very beautiful or very ugly. *Frankenstein* and Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* are here to confirm what I state. Like other characters, they are physically deformed, the reader or the spectator suffers a sort of shock that puts the feeling in a zone that surpasses what we understand as good and evil. This is one idea that Edmund Burke offers about the sublime, enchantment and astonishment collide, providing sentiments that ordinary words cannot describe (Burke, 1990: 101-102).

Monsters, vampires, ghosts, witches, angels, are somehow characters that present some sort of deformation, they are there with their proper appearances to provoke dread and/or attraction, fear that make people be afraid of death. For many times, their bodies represent what is repressed in the self. The body is misshaped to show that the character has an obscure, deformed identity, this identity that needs to be hidden, but, sometimes, "explodes", emerges with bizarre characteristics, as an aberration. The phantasmatic body expresses all the power of a repressed and disarranged spirit, all the disorder of a social or individual structure. According to Gabriele Schwab, "[...] phantasmatic bodies gain a specific relevance in carnivalesque figurations because they stage the spectacle of the grotesque soul" (Schwab, 1984: 137).

Among many creations that can be observed in the gothic, there is one that persists in the people's imagery: the vampire. This creation that comes from Eastern and Central European legends assumed several faces. Movies and literature are in charge of creating male, female, childish vampires, physically horrible or amazing; they have a large variety of appearances.

Not always the image of the vampire was like the human one. Some of the legends talk about bestial creatures, with monstrous shapes, offering no certainty if they had

sexual organs. Eighteenth and nineteenth century writers were responsible for humanizing the figure of the sucking-blood creature. John W. Polidori brought the vampire to an aristocratic and rational world, his noble and mysterious Lord Ruthven made the young Aubrey and the readers feel some attraction to him and some abhorrence: they were afraid of the gentleman, but they wanted his presence.

Other vampires came after him, after Lord Ruthven who was the first mentioned in prose with a more human form. Other sucking-blood characters were present in literature, in some cases, they were known as the *giaour*, a term that turns up in William Beckford's *Vathek*, to refer to a perverse monster who feeds himself by drinking children's blood.

Even though the vampire shares some traits with human beings, his or her body is different. It provides a good source of analysis. Why do they attract? Why do they scare? Why do these abject bodies have many followers? Why do stories about them have many spectators and readers? Why do they trigger the sublime, terror, pleasure and are also eroticized? These are some questions that I pose now, and I will try to answer them through my research.

The contemporary novel *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), by Anne Rice, impelled my interest in studying the figure of the vampire. A concern that had a starting point when I watched *Dracula* on TV for the first time in my early childhood.

I do not think that the author would write just to sell nonsense for fool readers, as many would affirm. What does Anne Rice really want to tell the readers using vampires? What did she have in mind when she created Lestat de Lioncourt and the little Claudia? What did she want to express when she invented beautiful characters with puzzling sexual identities? Maybe she tried to write about herself or about people of her time, any unpeackable secret that only literature could confess.

CHAPTER I

THE VAMPIRE'S ROUTE: FROM EASTERN EUROPE TO NEW ORLEANS

1.1 – The Nationality of the Vampire

But oh, how the quest for Old World vampires filled me with bitterness in those moments. A bitterness I could all but taste, as if the very air had lost its freshness. For what secrets, what truths had those monstrous creatures of night to give us? What, of necessity, must be their terrible limits if indeed we were to find them at all? What can the damned really say to the damned?

(Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*)

I invite you to imagine the following scene: a person elegantly dressed in dark colors, excellent satin, lace and velvet covering his or her pallid skin. This good-looking figure approaching by degrees, slowly, languid, whose mesmerizing eyes make you feel some paradoxical sensations. When this person opens his or her mouth for a promising kiss, however, the kiss becomes the promise of death when his or her two white pointed fangs are seen. This figure, I suppose, is familiar to almost everyone, even to those who are not keen on gothic literature.

Is there any other figure in the literary gothic that inspires so much fear and sensuality as vampires? I do not think so. They are almost everywhere people's imagination permits them to be. They are in costume parties, perfumes by famous designers, wines, books, movies. Acts and behavior of the vampires, denominated vampirism, even left the ordinary imagery of the folk and were extended to science. In psychology, doctors use the expression "psychic vampirism" to describe attitudes some people have towards others: there are problematic, mentally unbalanced people who "suck" the energy of those who live with them forcing the latter into a state of lassitude and depression. I cited this situation just to show that vampires gained lots of space out of the mythical scenery.

And if we consider the books about blood-sucking creatures, the list will be considerably long, fact that forces me to talk about only four stories, the most famous ones in literature based on vampires myths: *The Vampyre*, *Carmilla*, *Dracula*, *Interview with the*

Vampire. I will introduce them briefly, but only the last one will be further developed in another chapter, as it is the main focus of this work.

When someone is asked to imagine what a vampire stands for, the probable thought is going to be that of a man coming from a somber atmosphere, and if this same person is asked to situate the vampire in geographical terms, he or she will seldom relate this figure to a Latin American country or to somewhere bright and sunny. People with little or great knowledge will normally place the vampire in a country with a constant cloudy weather, or, at least, in a place with exotic landscapes, possessing a geography still not so much explored. We will try to understand why this frequently takes place when the main subject is the vampire.

Before any literary remark, I consider quite necessary to look back to the past and verify vampires from the historical standpoint, in order to achieve an understanding concerning their origins, the ancient myths and legends, and how they migrated to literature and have remained so strongly in people's minds up to the present.

The title of this chapter is *The Vampire's Route: From Eastern Europe to New Orleans*, and because of this title, it is very plausible that someone may imply that vampires "were born" in Eastern Europe and that everything linked to them has necessarily to do only with those lands. My intention, though, is not to put restrictions, a beginning and an end, to the pathways that vampires have supposedly followed, but show that they took journeys inside their own continent and abroad, that their first apparitions may not be linked exclusively to those cloudy sites of a mysterious Europe, where the legends are undoubtedly much more stressed.

Literature is a form of art that tries to reproduce with pretty letters (or not), things that are part of people's lives and societies. Through literature, we know that vampires firstly appeared in European lands. That fact has been supported by historians who have pursued the paths of the vampires and who have concentrated their attention on the East part of that continent.

According to some legends, the original vampires or *Nosferatu*, those ones that gave birth to the current and modern vampires that we know, were born in the year of 125 before the birth of Jesus Christ. The belief went on through the centuries. They reached the routes in the Mediterranean Sea where people used to trade silk and other products, and from

those lands the myth spread over and gained different formats. The vampires received several names in different nationalities: *Lamia*, *Baital*, *Kathakano*, among some others, are examples of expressions that designate those creatures. Stakes, holy bread, crosses, the fire, sunlight, garlic, the way that a vampire can be destroyed may vary according to the legends, such as the way their bodies are constituted.

The common point, though, that all the vampires present no matter if they are Hindi, Roman, Bulgarian or African, is that they all have deformations in their bodies, in their limbs. They are considered monsters, having few similarities with the human beings. The sophisticated features that the vampires show us nowadays are results of literary creations and movies exaggerations, exaggerations that are attributed to the gothic, and we cannot forget that the vampire appears as a literary character exactly in the time of its establishment. The writers from the Western side of the world added some characteristics that made the vampire less inhuman, distant, ragged and dirty (because they lived in coffins, miry ruins or underground). The vampire moved to urban centers to be together with other people and observe them closely. They were exactly like them, using the same kinds of clothes, sharing the same places, but with that devious appetite that is a token of any vampire of any origin: the appetite concerning blood that they suck using their distinguished teeth.

When we think of the origin, the expression itself, the tendency is to think of the legitimate, genuine subject that gave birth to the descendants, and legitimacy leads us to the idea of purity. I share the idea of Ernest Renan in *O que é Uma Nação? (What is a Nation?)*, when he states that, it is a hard task to define what is the real nationality of the subject, since among peoples there are lots of mixtures. “One cannot say that he or she is purely French, for instance, if one considers the different ethnicities that populated that country” (Renan, 1997: 20, my translation).

I would say that it sounds confusing to imagine the vampire as a pure subject not only in terms of origins, nationality but also considering the physiological aspect, since, by nature, this creature does not respond to the norms of common biology exactly because it can be the mixture of a human being with a wild animal, an unknown and hybrid species.

No one can bear, unless in fictional circles, the idea of a person whose appearance is human, but the appetites are bestial, of an irrational predator. A dead person that was buried

and comes back to life, feeding himself or herself by sucking others' blood, no matter if this blood belongs to a human being or to an inferior animal. No one considered civilized could take seriously such absurd ideas originated almost always during the chats and gossips of humble peasants, when they discovered animals mysteriously killed or when a plague attacked a great amount of people in the neighborhood. Actually, that is how the folklore usually rises, throughout the discourses and beliefs of common citizens.

Taking into consideration the first speculations about vampires apparitions, at least those speculations that reach us, it is important to throw an ethnographic light on these creatures even if it turns out to be hard to find an accurate origin for them. So, I must turn my attention to Eastern Europe where, supposedly, the most considerable legends had started.

Romania and Hungary are the typical centers where the myths about vampires abound, but I should say that they are not the only sources, specially if we consider that in those areas, there were great varieties of peoples coming from different parts of the world due to the battles in their countries that forced them to move to other places so that they could live in better conditions. Thus, the fragility of the ethnographic aspect of the vampire myth cannot be discarded. Greece, for example, has been one of the places where evidences of previous presence of the vampires are found, where some registers have been discovered.

Montague Summers, an eccentric Englishman, one of the first critics who worked with the gothic novel, produced two remarkable non-fictional works on Vampires: *Vampires: His Kith and Kin* (1926) and *The Vampire in Europe* (1929). It is supported by Summers that "in no country has the vampire tradition more strongly prevailed and persistently maintained its hold upon the people than in modern Greece" (in Gelder, 1994: 25). Greece detains the title of a nation with many myths, gods, monsters, and a blood-sucking character would not be dislocated in such fancy scenery and, consequently, would not offer us that great surprise.

Still in the ethnographic element related to the vampire, the nationality, I should state that it is dispersed, but this dispersion covers a specific area in Europe, the Eastern one. Serbia, Croatia, Turkey, Ukraine, Moravia, Armenia, Bohemia, Austria, Germany, Bosnia and other countries belong to this section of the continent where the myth had been

more spread. Even in urban and cosmopolitan places like Germany and Austria, vampires found remote towns surrounded by tacit forests where they could keep on their fame.

Nevertheless, think of anywhere in the globe that may give us any slight clue about vampirism, and there is a place that will follow us wherever we go. Consciously or unconsciously. This location will be there in our mind, and the simple act of mentioning the name of this place may cause chill and curiosity, the so-called Transylvania:

In August 1830, Thomas Scott published the first map of what was then known as Van Diemen's Land – now called Tasmania. At this time, settlers, with the half of the military, were ruthlessly clearing out the Aborigines in an organised movement which began in the south-east (Hobart and the nearby islands) and swept across the island towards the west. When Scott drew his map, over half of Van Diemen's Land was colonised. But although the uncharted remainder – the dense forests and mountains south-west of the infamous “black line” – was left in blank, it was nevertheless given a name: Transylvania (Gelder, 1994: 1).

One has great possibilities to invent things about a certain place, when very little is known about that place. Situated in the north of Romania, Transylvania would be another faraway and forgotten town if literature had not used it for fictive purposes. In fact, this is how people know it, mainly by reading the story of a cruel Count, a man who was considered a *drakul* (demon) by the inhabitants of Transylvania, for practicing the impalation. According to History, Count Vlad Tepes or Vlad III (1431?-1476) felt pleasure when he watched his enemies being sacrificed by having a spear crossing their bodies, this spear inserted into the anus and reaching the belly. After this “feast”, the Count had all the dead with the spears along their bodies fixed on the ground exposed in the surroundings of his castle. So, maybe for this reason, Transylvania with its dense forests and high mountains has always been associated with somewhere exotic and scary.

About the process of impalation, I would open parentheses and say that perhaps it had in its deep essence, something to do with the Count's sexuality, an act that was pleasant for one and painful to the other, pure sadism. A humiliation that people suffered when they had a spear set violently into their anus, an area in the human body so much tabooed. Humiliation that probably made Count Vlad, consciously or not, feel some delight in observing. The Count would be seen as a *voyeur*. I would add that these attitudes may denounce the sexuality of the vampires as something controversial, a sexuality that is not

within the patterns. A man whose sensual pleasure would not be located exclusively in the penis but in another area or other areas of the body, “prohibited receptacles of pleasure”, only available for the depraved beings.

Although the fact was very little explored, and for the majority of people it is really unknown, Vlad Tepes had his female counterpart: Countess Elizabeth Bathory (1560-1614). About this also peculiar historical character, it is said that she was Hungarian, member of a family that ruled Transylvania. Countess Bathory was a cross-dresser, in her case, a woman who used to dress in the outfits of a man. We cannot affirm whether it was because she wanted to assume the masculine gender or desired to puzzle people in those conservative times, or if she just felt attraction to men’s garment. Adding to this singular characteristic, “she reputedly tortured and killed peasant girls, drinking and bathing in their blood in an attempt constantly to renew (or alter) her identity” (Gelder, 1994: 25). In my point of view, this can be another issue concerning sexuality and gender. Bathory as a biological woman wanted to seduce people of the same sex, but, probably under the identity of a man. In her mind, perhaps, she felt like a man attracting women, and Bathory would be seen as a transgendered, or feeling herself as a woman, she had her desire oriented to women, an homoerotic subject, a lesbian.

What is important to notice in these two cases I cited, is that all the people who are said to be vampires, possess singularities normally attached to their appearances and/or sexualities, something that is not well resolved, producing a high degree of perversion that explodes in their acts.

Speculations about vampirism, however, did not stop in Romania. They left Transylvania, and I would not say that vampirism really began there, even if there have been serious researches on the subject. If vampires are as ancient as human beings it will get even more difficult to set a starting point for them. What is clear is that they became cosmopolitan citizens, leaving the ends of not so celebrated countries. They established reputation in other parts of the Earth.

Folklore with its dubious characteristic, reality and exaggeration, and for this, a great source for the work of writers, tells us that the vampires are almost everywhere. In *Vampire in the 19th Century English Literature*, Carol Senf argues about the possible forms that vampires had in different cultures:

Both Polish and Russian vampires emerge from their coffins only between midday and midnight: in addition, their coffins are filled with blood, and they had such enormous hunger that they eat their winding sheet as a matter of course. The Malaysian langsuir is a flying female demon who sucks the blood of children while the Portuguese bruxas seduces the travellers and drinks the blood of children. The Scottish baobham sith takes the form of group of beautiful girls to drain victims of blood while the Danish Mara takes human form during the day and destroys those who fall in love with her (Senf, 1988: 18).

Among other forms that vampires may take on, I would include the *chupacabra*, the goat-sucker, that had recently haunted the Latin Americans mainly in Puerto Rico: a monstrous being that was said to be half-human and half- animal.

Tony Thorne in *Children of the Night: of Vampires and Vampirism*, states that Vlachs or Wallachians, those people from Vallachia, a kingdom in Romania, the place where Counts Vlad III and Vlad II exerted their power as members of the nobility, have their own ideas of what a vampire is:

The Vlachs (or Wallachians) believed that a person who was illegitimate and had two illegimate parents would inevitably become a Vampire, as would someone killed by a Vampire. The *murony*, as they knew the creature, once activated, could change easily into a dog, cat, frog, louse or bug. The Vlachs were so fearful of their dead becoming Vampires that it was common practice in case of sudden death to summon a skilled midwife to nail the cadaver's forehead, smear pork-fat on the body, and place a sprig of wild-roses thorns next to it in the grave, so that, should the deceased try to rise, his or her grave-clothes would be caught on the thorns. Incenses would be burnt over neighboring graves. Orthodox Romanians referred to the person who had been excommunicated, publicly or secretly, before burial as *drakul* (devil) (Thorne, 1999:75).

Does this happen for they are supernatural beings with an incredible force to be wherever they want, in the format they decide to assume, or are there varieties of vampires, different ethnicities related to them? Even though so many studies have been carried out about vampires, I suppose that this is one of the questions that still remains without an answer. I would say that the vampire is a blend of distinct myths from different countries, and this mixture forms only one powerful figure "fed" by a bit of each different culture, and this makes me reinforce the idea that the vampire is somehow a hybrid subject, because he or she receives a little trait of many peoples.

Political issues can be another motivation for the creation of the vampire as a symbolic figure. According to Carol Senf, the origins of the myth may have to do with the political oppression Magyars (Hungarians) suffered by Turks and Germans, and here the vampire comes to manifest a superior strength that their oppressors do not own.

I suppose that vampires can be considered both national and foreign characters in the sense of familiar and unfamiliar. Taking this statement to the grounds of psychoanalysis and identity, they are national when we think of them, appreciating their capacity to deal with some tabooed things, even praising them for their unconcern in some circumstances when they surpass the boundaries, doing things that we would like to do, they show off their amount of evil, their lust. To a certain extent, we identify with them. On the other hand, doing so,, they surpass the limits very easily without any guilt, ignoring the conventions, simply because they do not feel like respecting anything, human life which is so sacred becomes unimportant. These attitudes towards things and people, when they act only to satisfy themselves, is what probably makes the vampire at the same time, a native/known and foreign/strange subject. People may have one self that identities with their courage to overcome boundaries but despise them when they really do so. Vampires perform in a conscious degree things that people are afraid of doing even in their most obscure dreams, in the secret of their minds.

Based on these rumors, eighteenth and nineteenth century writers had enough tools to work with places and peoples that History tends to ignore or even erase out from the map. Gothic writers use the appeal of folklore, of the villains and the social scenery of the epoch, in order to disturb the foundations of what was seen as stable and secure, as a reaction to the comfortable realism.

Then, it is time to move on to England which was under the regime of a sober reign. Although there were so many beliefs concerning sucking-blood creatures almost everywhere in Europe, England seemed to receive the news about vampires apparitions through a private letter that came from Vienna informing about their presence in Hungary, that was published in the *London Journal* in 1732, and from then on, the word vampire was applied in the English language. Since this time, *novellas* and novels based on vampires legends have been written. Male vampires, female, childish ones have been

evoked in books and films, all of them containing the same plot, fear and an appeal to sensuality and perversion.

As I have already said, vampires can be everywhere people allow them to be, if we consider that many things that become part of the folklore come from people's imagination. In this work, my final stop following the footsteps of the vampire in literature will be in North America, where one of the most famous narratives based on vampires happens.

1.2 - A Peculiar Gentleman Turns up in England

[. . .] it was too late, Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPIRE!
(Polidori, "The Vampyre")

Lord Ruthven was first seen in London in 1819, when he was introduced to the reader by Doctor John William Polidori (1725-1821), an English writer and physician of Italian origins, a very close friend of George Gordon Byron or Lord Byron. Both took a journey along Europe and fixed themselves in Switzerland for a while, so that they could meet other friends, some of them, Mary Woolstonecraft Godwin and her husband-to-be, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Although Polidori had been considered the first author to insert the vampire effigy in literary texts, it cannot be discarded the fact that other authors like Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron and perhaps others, had also mentioned this creature in their writings. As a matter of fact, Polidori was the first to write about vampires in prose while the others before him did it in poetry. There are, for example, the poem *Christabel* (1797 and the second part of this same work finished in 1800), by Coleridge, and Lord Byron's *The Giaour* (1813), a sequence of hymns. In *Christabel*, the story is about a female character that suffers strange transformations, Geraldine, that seduces the woman who entitles the poem; and the second, *Giaour* is a derogatory expression that Turks use to describe Christians. It is an extract of a Turkish tale that Byron adapted for his canticle and added as a revenge fantasy against those who occupied Athens. It is important to know that Byron was favorable to the Greek independence.

Among other strategies, romantic and gothic writers get hold of escapism and fantasy to illustrate their works. This kind of literature rises when people feel necessity to go back to the past and recover some sensations that are no more exalted; they miss the past, feel nostalgia. Then, authors bring to the scenery characters that can return to that lost past, escaping from the reality, and, at the same time, fulfilling the expectations of common people, doing things that they would like to do.

Lord Ruthven, as the name suggests, is a nobleman. He would not inspire any distrust about his identities, even though we are not informed where he is from and what his real occupation is, things that normally say a lot about a person and transmit safety. On the other hand, being in a party is a situation in which a person is not supposed to pay strong attention to anyone, because this attention is normally dispersed. There is an adolescent, Aubrey, whose eyes are caught by the figure of Lord Ruthven. The Lord is described by Polidori already in the first paragraph as someone peculiar, a hint that leads us to deduce that something unusual will take place.

In *The Vampyre*, Polidori presented Lord Ruthven, and from then on, the shape of the vampire seemed to be defined once for all: tall, white-skinned and aristocratic.

This vampire's body was rooted in the nineteenth century and persecutes people's unconscious until these days.

Another aspect that I consider interesting to point out in this kind of fiction is that when the vampire acts as a human being, circulating in social events, in public sphere, he or she always presents something that is different from the others, and, melancholic, dullish, and rich characters are the ones who mainly incorporate such singularities.

Together with Lord Ruthven and Aubrey, other two characters are evoked in this *novella*, Aubrey's sister and Lanthe, his Greek beloved. Both girls are victims of the vampire, something quite common for the Victorian ladies in literature, to be victimized. Lanthe was killed by Lord Ruthven in a rite in Greece while Miss Aubrey (whose first name is never mentioned probably because the name of the men of her family was more important than hers), satisfied the hunger of her future husband, Lord Ruthven, in the wedding day.

There are some readings about this plot, many suppositions even including the personal life of the author. These two characters, Ruthven and Aubrey, may imply a homosexual or bisexual orientation the author might have had. Although Polidori had never been to Greece and knew it only through Byron's experiences, he was fond of Eastern European myths and perhaps only decided to base his narrative on them.

Lanthe and Miss Aubrey would serve as victims, weak characters to show how the women are fragile and naive, to reinforce the opposition between men and women which determines that the former are strong and active and the latter are weak and passive.

Another possible reading can refer to pedophilia, if we consider that Lord Ruthven, an older man, encourages the attraction that the younger one seems to have towards him, a man whose life is a riddle.

In his work about vampires entitled *The Vampire in Nineteenth Century English Fiction: The Various Faces of the Other*, about Polidori's *The Vampyre*, Ariel Barroso Sant'Anna states that:

Many other instances of encoded homoeroticism are raised and analysed by queer theorists concerning Polidori's *The Vampyre*. Ruthven, however, never bites Aubrey. As a seducer of women, Lord Ruthven is a danger to the heterosexual order. He proves, though, to be very capable of "manipulating" the homosexual culture too (Sant'Anna, 2005: 75).

I suppose that the readings of a certain story vary according to the person who is reading and to the time the story is being developed. Each epoch offers different standpoints because the person identifies the character based on the background of his or her time and experience. *The Vampyre* nowadays may be considered a simpleton story about vampires, containing elements that would sound even foolish and no longer haunt people. We must consider the age it was written, the social context, the needs of that society, the villains that were "requested" to scare people, mainly in times in which people are expected to be rational, and imagination is considered superfluous, even if the second is also part of the person, waiting a slight chance to go off.

1.3 - A Cheerful Visitor Arrives in Austria

The body, therefore, in accordance with ancient practices, was raised, and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire [. . .]
(Sheridan Le Fanu, "Carmilla")

From the same lands of Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker, the Irish Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873), offered us a new perspective about vampires when he wrote *Carmilla* (1872). It seems that he was inspired by Coleridge's *Christabel* and created a sucking-blood creature, a female one this time.

At the beginning of the plot, also a *novella* such as *The Vampyre*, we are told by Laura, the narrator, what her procedence is. Laura who was 19 years old when the strangest event of her life occurred, lived with her father and two governesses in a castle, or *schloss*, in Styria, a kingdom in Austria. Through the narrative, we are informed that Laura experienced some bizarre sensations since she was very little and remembers that she had an encounter with a pretty lady when she was only 6 years old in the nursery room. Laura does not know if it was just a dream or a real encounter in which she had two needles pushed into her breasts.

Years later, Laura and her father see an accident next to the property and a lady asks them to take care of her daughter, Carmilla Karnstein, who seems to be very sick. By the time Laura sees Carmilla, a sensation is triggered. Laura feels that the visitor is familiar, she can recognize her but does not know her, and Carmilla also presents the same impressions about her hostess. We can observe shadows of remembrance and forgetfulness, something that is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, phenomena that Freud mentions in his studies about the uncanny.

Driving the readers to a faraway land, to the ends of Europe, I imagine that Le Fanu also intended to conduct them to an area of their minds that is also remote. An area of Europe that remains in the obscurity, not corresponding to the main countries like France, Germany or England. This can be compared to people for they develop the rational side and the irrational or primitive one, and one of the sides is always less explored than the other.

In the story, Mircalla, Millarca and Carmilla are the same person. It is not surprising to conclude that each name was used for a specific purpose, to forge a new identity that probably helped the vampire to get what she wanted from her hosts.

Laura and Carmilla had become close friends. Laura was very astonished by Carmilla's beauty and delicacy, however, for some times, the narrator felt abjection and discomfort in relation to the guest:

Now the truth is, I felt unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, "drawn towards her", but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging (Le Fanu, 1995: 222).

Two pretty girls residing in a lonely, distant place, where they had only each other to talk to and share thoughts; one caught by the beauty of the other. Here Le Fanu can easily take us to another path, the one of lesbianism. Maybe the author placed these two adolescents in such circumstances to goad people's imagination concerning prohibited sexuality, that one reserved to be shown only in secret places, out of the sight of society.

In *Carmilla*, the villain is also a vampire, a female one, a seductive and tricky girl. The interesting element, however, is that, at the end of the plot, Carmilla is killed despite her supernatural strength. She ends up like a victim, murdered by men who have the understanding about vampires. Again, she, a woman, is a fragile entity that is defeated by those who always have the knowledge, men, or as Sant'Anna argues: "for being drawn only to members of the same sex, Carmilla constitutes a threat to the steadiness of the nuclear family so important in the progress of bourgeoisie, so, she must be extinguished" (Sant'Anna, 2005: 73).

1.4 - A Mysterious Count in Romania

When the vampire saw Jonathan Harker, he jumped at him like a wild animal. But Van Helsing stood in front of Jonathan and held up a cross. Dracula stepped back.
(Stoker, *Dracula*)

As we can perceive, vampires seemed to have sucked the imagination of writers from the United Kingdom. I suppose that Polidori and Le Fanu who had written *novellas* about those creatures did not satisfy enough the readers fond of the gothic, and another author decided to give more treatment to the vampire myth and wrote a real novel using all the imaginative substance needed to write one of the most horrifying stories in literature.

A friend of Oscar Wilde and like him, Irish by birth, Bram Abraham Stoker (1847-1912) wrote terror short stories like “The Primrose Path” (1875), “Miss Betty” (1898) and many others. But *Dracula* (1897) was indeed his notorious masterpiece. Although Stoker had never been to that part of Europe, it was in Transylvania that he found the perfect atmosphere to develop his narrative. He was also inspired by Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* and by a nightmare he had in which he saw a vampire leaving a crypt. He created a sort of plot that takes the reader away from the big cities, conducting him or her to a depopulated village that triggers the feeling of curiosity and fear.

As it was said, Stoker was inspired by the real life of the Romanian Count Vlad Tepes, considered a cruel man in his country, Transylvania, which nowadays is marked on the map as Romania. Rumors said that when he died, after some time, his grave was opened and his body was not there, so, the speculations came out and people thought that he was not dead. From this point of view, Stoker elaborated a story somehow related to this tale, inserting other characters around the mysterious Count and adding fictive elements necessary to make the story fantastic.

Jonathan Harker, Mina, Lucy and Professor Van Helsing are the other people who are part of the Stoker’s narrative. Harker is the English lawyer, part of the sensible side of the story, who goes to Transylvania to get in touch with the Count in order to do business. Over there, the lawyer is the one who tells the reader about the place he is visiting in the Carpathian Mountains; as he himself declares, Transylvania was a beautiful place with its

high mountains, trees and rivers. That place was also infested with legends about vampires, something that Harker did not believe in.

On the other extreme, Stoker inserted Van Helsing in the plot, a scientist that is not supposed to take into consideration such beliefs, specially those that science cannot prove. Nevertheless, Van Helsing does not ignore the possible existence of vampires as many intelligent and educated people would do. Actually, he moves between the high knowledge of the science and the ordinary folklore, when he uses the same outfits that common people use to get rid of the monsters: Christian crosses, holy water and holy bread blessed by a Christian priest and garlic plants that many would use around their necks.

Again, Sant'Anna offers us an interesting viewpoint about the situation of the vampire in fiction, when he places his deep analysis of Count Dracula:

As a tyrannical aristocrat, coming from an alien world, regarded by the narrators as violent and primitive, and seeking to preserve the survival of his house, Dracula is a threat to the security of the bourgeois family in England. As an undesirable immigrant, he also becomes a cultural threat (Sant'Anna, 2005: 60).

Lucy and Mina are the female characters that serve the hunger of Count Dracula. The first who is Mina's friend is transformed into a vampire, conducted every night to a place outside the house by a sort of hypnotism. She is killed by those who know that she cannot remain alive because she is a monster and can do bad things to the others. Mina, Jonathan Harker's fiancée, drinks the Count's blood and stays under his power. This is the way the vampires most commonly exert power over other subjects. In one situation the Count sucked blood from Lucy's body; in the other, he offered his blood to be drunk by Mina.

I imagine that the author puts these circumstances in the novel, one in which Dracula is active and the other in which he seems to be passive, in both dealing with women, probably implying something about sexuality. But, what they really stand for goes inside the mind of the writer, and what we may have is a large variety of analyses of this masterpiece, that are made by theorists, psychoanalysts and other researchers who work on topics concerning fear and sexuality as being branches of the same area.

Despite the several cinematographic versions about other blood-sucking and/or dead living characters, *Dracula* still resides in people's minds, as that one who presented to the world the customs of a remote country like Transylvania. A man who makes us evoke the uncanny as we saw in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, stories with castles and coffins, placing the readers into a sensation of hermetism. Stoker used all these devices and went further, showing a creature that could take on many forms beyond the human one, a supernatural being that was probably a result of Stoker's readings about the culture in those Eastern European countries.

We do not know a lot about the Count's origins and it implies some fear and curiosity. Some pleasure may also exist for we feel delight in his image, normally portrayed exotically in the movies. If the vampires had a bad appearance and was monstrous at very first sight like folk ones with dark-blue skinned because they drink blood, dressed in torn and dirty clothes exactly like corpses, certainly no one would have that intriguing attraction that is peculiar when it comes to talk about vampires. There would not exist that fight between attraction and repulsion that affects people who appreciate gothic stories.

1.5 - A Charming Lord in The United States

I shut the wood blinds flat upon the small barred windows and bolted the door. Then I climbed into the satin-lined coffin, barely able to see the gleam of cloth in the darkness, and locked myself in. That is how I became a vampire.

(Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*)

New Orleans in the United States is a magnificent and splendid city, a door opened in the New World for all sorts of people to come in. The possible place for any kind of group, negroes, immigrants from anywhere, a perfect town for a discreet and wealthy Lord to survive without causing suspicion about one of his real identities. This discreet man is *Monsieur* Louis da Pointe du Lac, a vampire who was followed by a reporter who probably considered him a queer figure, perfect to be interviewed.

Also from New Orleans such as her vampire Louis, Anne Rice (1941-), is the wife of the poet Stan Rice. Rice wrote the trilogy *Interview with the Vampire*, *The Vampire Lestat* (1985) and *The Queen of the Damned* (1988), and many other novels that contribute to her title of a contemporary gothic novelist.

In the first book of the vampire chronicles, Rice introduces four vampires: Louis, Claudia, Armand and Lestat, this last one is present in the other novels of the trilogy. In the second book, it is possible to know many aspects of Lestat's life, from his childhood and youth to the moment he became a child of the darkness, a vampire, and what happened from then on. In *Interview with the Vampire*, Louis decides to expose all his saga to a young reporter, how he met Lestat who transformed him into a vampire and how he survived for hundred of years in this condition.

During his interview, Louis reports all the modifications that he and the world had suffered, the advance, specially in New Orleans. He also talks about the advantages and disadvantages of being a vampire, how he lacked his common human existence which opposed his condition of an immortal being in which he had the opportunities to do many things that humans could not do.

Then, the most famous abject body of Rice's novels appears, Lestat de Lioncourt, who does things totally different from Louis' principles. He is cruel, ironic and materialist,

he kills for pleasure and not for necessity while Louis suffers even if he has to kill a rat to feed his hunger. In some passages, though, Louis describes with some enthusiasm the beauty of Lestat: “I lay face-down on him, utterly confused by my absence of dread and filled with a distaste of being so close to him, handsome and intriguing though he was” (Rice, 1997: 25).

Claudia is another vampire. The child is adopted by Louis and Lestat when her mother becomes a victim of a plague in the city. They take care of her after transforming her into a vampire. Claudia becomes Lestat’s good apprentice and kills as mercilessly as him. As time passes, she gets mature and rebels against the master and together with Louis, she takes a journey through Eastern Europe to search for the origins of their species in order to discover what they are.

I suppose that Rice used elements of previous narratives about vampires adding a contemporary plus. I mean, all her vampires in this novel sleep in coffins such as Count Dracula and Carmilla (and maybe Lord Ruthven). They cannot appear in broad daylight, they are sophisticated and well born subjects. However, Rice’s vampires force us to focus on the beauty of their faces, showing that one of the strong points in the narrative has to do with seduction, even if this seduction is towards the subject of same sex.

Gothic authors use one important element to catch people’s attention, the appearance, and try to mix with others that provoke disgust and anger. I say that Rice may have elaborated a plot praising sensuality using vampires because they bear the metaphor of those subjects that do not follow established rules, they deal with a prohibited sexuality. Louis marvels at Lestat, at his image but at the same time, feels repulsion in relation to him, to his attitudes towards life and humanity.

In my viewpoint, another topic of sexuality that Rice tries to raise is the one related to the children and women, when she places Claudia, a little girl-vampire in the story. A sexuality that is always problematic no matter who writes the book and/or when it is written.

Interview with the Vampire written by a woman, probably came to show that people still need a kind of romanticism, an escapism, even though those who live in contemporary times face other sorts of threats and weapons. What I suppose is that they need something

that expresses their anguish, a threat that is beyond reality, far from their reach, an unreal threat, a delicious fear.

CHAPTER II

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE BODY

2.1 – Bodies that Matter

The soul is the effect and
instrument of a political anatomy.
The soul is the prison of the body.
(Michel Foucault, “The Body of the
Condemned”)

It is not possible to talk about gender without making references to the body. Let us take as a starting point, the three characters of the novel I will investigate – Louis, Lestat and Claudia – to depict the questions of body and gender, two men-vampire and a little girl-vampire. In Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*, we have three vampires in the same community, in the same house, and three distinct bodies to observe.

Our culture inserts practices and ideologies in human bodies but which, in some cases, do not follow biological determinations. Some organisms like vampires, do not multiply and produce other generations through common sexuality that works to maintain the vitality of the species, as Simone de Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex*:

[...] even in species capable of sexual propagation occasional fertilization is necessary to renew the vigour of the race – to accomplish “rejuvenation” – from the mixing of hereditary material from two individuals. On this hypothesis sexuality might well appear to be an indispensable function in the most complex forms of life; only the lower organisms could multiply without sexuality, and even here vitality would after a time become exhausted (Beauvoir, 1997: 36).

Still in the practices and ideas that are inscribed on the human bodies, one concept is inherent to the human condition and determines the fate of the one who will support that body: the concept of gender.

We are all taught by a heterosexual Western society since our very early life that there are only two sorts of gender, male and female, that the little baby is born boy or girl, and, any other thing that differs from these two poles, anything that does not imply one thing or the other, is abnormal. I used the expression “pole” because it gives me the strong idea of fixture, under no flexibility, that gender can be only one thing or the other. Toril Moi argues in *What Is A Woman?* that post-structuralist theorists have been more

concerned about clarifying the differences between sex and gender, about the natural and cultural sex distinctions. Moi, however, thinks that the reviews of all the theories of the body will not necessarily produce a single, good theory of it. Beauvoir also claims that feminists should avoid biological determinism in order to produce a forceful defence of women's freedom (MOI, 1999: 4-5).

Body and gender belong to different categories, and these categories appear when the bodies are engendered. Still in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir states that both sexes possess things from the other. The similarities between women and men's bodies are suppressed, social practices give new meanings to their bodies. The human bodies are submitted to continuous importance related to sex. One good example of how the similarities are repressed, negated, begins in the infancy: blue clothes for boys and pink ones for girls. Another example is that the girls are said to be more fragile than boys even if the former are taller or physically stronger than the latter. Woodward states that Psychoanalysis is a science of sexology that comes to explain many problems of human sexuality. Freud, for example, supposed that the sexual life of little boys and girls follow the same paths, that both express active and passive sexual wishes normally in relation to the mother, and that both enjoy the pleasures of masturbation, a practice which in my opinion, is still tabooed but much more evident in boys' behavior (Woodward, 1997: 198). The sexuality of the little child, boy or girl, is still a marginalized one. Children are not aware of the social and cultural tasks their genders have to cover but they obey the primal necessity of their bodies, their basic instincts.

The body is part of a biological construction. Gender, however, is a social construct and constructs can be dismantled. How people see you is not necessarily the way you are. The genital organs, for instance, do not determine the gender one assumes. Gender is fluid because the subject may transit not only between two but among other sexual identities: a man who dresses and behaves like a woman may maintain a relationship with lesbians or gay men or other variations. Kate Bornstein in *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*, and also Beauvoir state that biological determinism should be avoided for the body is constantly changing, and that we should be aware of the discourses that are thrown into the body. The body has spatial limits but gender has no borders.

So we have a body that is biologically male or female in which rules are inserted. The female body, for instance, undergoes lots of prescriptions. A woman is one to suffer the most considerable even painful changes, such as the augment of the breasts, consolidation of a controlled, decent sensuality and the development of menstruation in order to achieve only one goal: the reproduction of the species through another painful process when she delivers the baby. Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* discusses the body from a more ideological and political standpoint while Beauvoir argues that the female body is the place where biological determinism is strongly settled. This body has some sexual peculiarities which make the female somehow distinguished in the species. Biology puts the female body into a fixed position, as passive, that one who receives the spermatozoa of the active male and uniquely bears the faetus. Butler adds that these discourses limit the body and behind these constructs, there are political interests, and if these interests are not fulfilled, there is no use for this body, and the reproduction is the most expected one attached to the role of the female body.

If a person knows how a certain body operates, it is simpler to regulate and use this for one's control. All the discourses and ideas mentioned before, practices held in the body, produce power that one subject may use to govern the other. Power and knowledge are intertwined, having the knowledge about the other it is possible to exert power over him or her, to rule the other and have him or her under control. This is what Michel Foucault affirms in *History of Sexuality*:

We should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute the same time power relations (Foucault, 1992: 175).

Talking about gender, men are supposed to have a sort of power (even a biological strength) that women do not own. And this does happen in the society of vampires as well. It is expected from these same men who created the concepts, the knowledge that they provide full explanations for things which still remain in blank. As Biology, Religion and Philosophy do not answer all questions, there is a tendency to reduce the "other" to the "same", to reduce everything to the same thing, to make everyone uniform.

In his article “*Não Ao Sexo Rei*”, Foucault argues that “wherever there is power there will be, there is possibility of some resistance” (Foucault, 2005: 241, my translation). But I see some resistance even slightly against some traditional discourses. If there was no resistance, there were not so many different groups trying to express the oppression they have been suffering for ages, there would be no need for the word subversion. Action requires reaction, but at times, the latter does not correspond to what is aimed. Not always reactions cause a battle, a war but, at least, they make us reflect about all the practices we deal with in our everyday life.

Returning to that place where power is exerted, the body, and if we think of the body of a little child and woman, there is another problem. Moreover, because she, Claudia, became another child of darkness, she is even more characterized as a marginal subject.

The body that does not offer the usual changes for the most common human purposes, is not disciplined to perform what is expected from it, what the cultural discourses of the body demand. This body “escapes” from the Foucaultian concept of docility. According to him in “*Docile Bodies*”, “a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1991: 182).

Let us imagine the human body full of paradigms and tasks to be followed, not suffering transformations through time. Neither Louis nor Lestat, for instance, would grow older or procreate (except for more children of darkness like themselves). We have here two men whose bodies are male but are unlikely to perform masculine roles, bodies that do not follow all the biological determinations, and in this case, we have subjects whose bodies are not obedient to norms and rules inscribed on them. I argue that in the case of the vampires, the body as a biological determinant does not play the fundamental role but gender does.

What I also point out is that even these marginalized creatures are related to the idea of the disciplined body somehow, though they are seen as outlaw, which itself implies being out of order and discipline. They also have to follow traditions and prescriptions as we mortals do. They are not totally out of restrictions for they cannot bask in the sunlight, reproduce or get older physically. They must obey, I think, a higher instance of power.

In the case of Claudia, she remains in a childish appearance but rebels as time goes by. In the position of a little girl, she questions many things as the other children use to do

in her same age. However in the form of a vampire she uses her strength to research things on her species and attack.

Whether we take again the question of the woman's body which is always more controversial, Claudia reminds us of two other rebellious female characters, Fatma from *A Filha do Barba Azul* and Catherine Earnshaw from *Wuthering Heights*, both written in the nineteenth century. They were all women, not so submissive and all came to the same end – death – for different reasons. Maybe because they decided to achieve, somehow, men's position in having some kind of power. Truth is, in the name of love, independence and knowledge which are respectively the cases of Cathy, Fatma and Claudia, if one does not submit himself or herself to what is prescribed, there is a high cost to pay. The "other" with his or her body is a threat, and must be kept under control as much as possible, and be transformed into something uniform, under certain discipline and punishment if this "other" goes out of the rules. Again in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler argues that matter is subordinated to the gender, and materiality consists of norms and rules inserted in the body.

The economy that claims to include the feminine as the subordinate term in a binary opposition masculine-feminine excludes the feminine, produces the feminine as that which must be excluded for that economy to operate (Butler, 1996: 36).

As I said previously, considering that the body is a biological construction and gender is a social one, so, the second is subjected to continuous modifications, and other forms of sexualities may appear. Sexualities that tend to be not perceived maybe because so far, many pretend not to perceive, the sexuality not prescribed by the patterns of matrimonial life or not institutionalized by Religion or Medicine: the sexuality of children, criminals, mad people, prostitutes. The sexuality of the obscure, not disciplined subject in a category that vampires fit in well.

This is what Foucault denominates in "The Perverse Implantation", as a "peripheral sexuality", and there is a large tendency to talk about these sexualities which used to be confined somewhere else in the body, repressed, not being part of a standartization. And here I evoke Freud once more when he talks about the sexuality of the babies that follow the same pathways for boys and girls in their early life, but in adult life other paths are

installed for men and women, and any other thing different from these paths are seen as not common, weird.

Let us try to understand the body that we and the vampires supposedly have in common. All of us who have a body are likely to suffer from different kinds of illnesses, mental or physical. In case of the vampires one should not even worry about diseases for they are immortal beings and apart from all the plagues that affect humans. They are super-human subjects indeed.

Vampires sustain two well-known metaphors: corruption and eroticism. They represent both source of sexual anxiety and obscure desire as Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger state in *Blood Read*. These creatures also offer us the idea that there is a higher power that we, humans, have no access to. Sex and power are the most common elements that surround their figures. I imagine that vampires may imply a segregation between what is “clear” and “dark” in sexuality, a segregation of what is masculine and feminine, native and foreign, heterosexual and queer, right and wrong. The origin of the vampire myth, according to Senf, may also have to do with a kind of political oppression Hungarians suffered by Turks and Germans, and here the vampires came in the form of a symbolic figure to manifest a superior strength that their oppressors did not own.

Earlier writers used the image of the vampire based on the folklore from Eastern Europe, on previous literary villain characters, and on the changes of roles for men and women in society. Vampires appear to haunt the lives of virtuous people, and not by chance, the women were their most favorite preys. It is possible to see in John Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, the first time the vampire turned up in literature, how the female body is exalted in the obscure atmosphere of this gothic novel:

It happened that in the midst of the dissipation attendance upon a London winter, at there appeared in the various parties of the leaders of the *ton* a nobleman, more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank. He gazed upon the mirth around him, as if he could not participate therein. Apparently the light laughter of the fair only attracted his attention, that he might by a look quell it, and throw fear into those breasts where thoughtlessness reigned (Polidori, 1992: 22).

Polidori makes us imagine that the vampire catches people’s attention exactly because he is different from the other noblemen, his attitudes are somehow unusual. In

addition, the preferences of Lord Ruthven include to suck genteel and delicate ladies' blood after a time of seduction. Miss Aubrey, a naive lass, is victim of this noble but sinister villain. We see that she is in the position of a subaltern subject. Her body served only to satisfy the bizarre hunger of Lord Ruthven. In stories of vampires, women are frequently seduced or killed, they are not seen exerting the most significant power over the group but men do. When women become vampires they have to obey a master, usually a man, or this female creature will serve as sexual accessory to be managed somehow by one's imagination. But if this woman-vampire rebels, her eternal life will come to an end. The woman's body as I said before, can be a threat, it can present a disturbing seduction for the community, mainly if it is given a supernatural power to this woman. Perhaps this is one reason for the first vampire in literature and his successors, the most powerful and notorious, to come in the masculine body, white, wealthy, though their sexual orientation may be puzzling.

If the female body carries an ideological force as Bordo states, so the breasts, one great token of femininity present in the passage by Polidori, are here to confirm what she says. The breasts were evoked to illustrate the sensuality of the female body, and to advise that the "other" is around. Women together with negroes, immigrants and queer subjects belong to a group that Stuart Hall denominates as "marked beings" for they are the "other" part of a binary system in which the patriarchy rules: man/woman, white/negro, native/immigrant and heterosexual/queer.

A different (re)reading of the *The Vampyre* through the lenses of postmodern theories puts the figure of the vampire as not being exactly heterosexual. It is interesting to point out the strong relationship between Aubrey and Lord Ruthven, how the younger feels attracted to the exquisite man and follows him in a romantic journey along Asia and Europe, how the former feels astonished and delighted by the presence of the older who also demonstrates that he is keen on Aubrey. If we go deeper in this analysis, Lord Ruthven could be also seen as a bisexual subject for his interest in both Aubrey and his sister whom he got married to, or this interest in her was a mere disguise to hide his actual preferences.

Analyzing the body of men and women in the society which is so much explored in arts, and, of course, in literature, I think of another common figure in the folklore, the witch. Witches are commonly seen as women with an instance of power and knowledge

that men do not have, and these women were constantly persecuted. Many times I have heard the expression “witch hunt” but I have never heard “vampire hunt”. If men have more power than women, it is part of the patriarchal standards and quite acceptable. On the other hand, if women own more power than men, supernatural or not, the idea is that they should be excluded or punished.

In *Half-Hanged Mary*, Margaret Atwood revisits the story of Mary Webster accused of witchcraft in the seventeenth century in the Puritan town of Massachusetts. Mary was considered a witch for her living alone in her own property, for using her knowledge to help people and for having a seductive appearance. This behavior, which was not common in that epoch, was sufficient to make people in the neighborhood punish her seriously.

Using *Interview with the Vampire* as another example of the literary gothic, although it is a more contemporary literature of vampires, the most famous character of Rice’s books is not Claudia, even though she plays a relevant role in the novel. She does not narrate the saga on her own, she is brought up by her “parents”, both Louis, the narrator, and Lestat. I believe that these three characters, not by chance but by choice, had been created to show how vampires act in a postmodern perspective of sexuality. If vampires inspire sexuality and corruption, and in these contemporary times it is seen how body and gender have been explored in great scale, the myth is much more alive, maybe with the same disguise not so much in the darkness but in broad daylight. Each age has its own vampires.

With reference to that fluid that we and the vampire need to survive, blood, I should say that we, mortals, need it for the good operation of our bodies. In adolescence, women are expected to have their first menstruations which may sound as an “alarm”, since this is a phase in which females have their body more developed even attractive, but, the most important thing is the sign that the woman is ready to go through her most important task: to spread the species. For vampires, male or female, blood is the way to remain alive, satisfy their physical hunger, and the only way to reproduce other vampires. Menstruation and spermatozoa are not integrant parts of their bodies.

Another idea blood conveys is one of power and pleasure. Vampires do not have pleasure through usual sexuality, but, it is by sucking one’s blood that this creature would

feel him or herself sensually pleased and physically fed. Also by drinking the blood of the other, the vampire would have power over his or her “partner”. As William Hughes states:

Regarded as erotic, the vampire functions as a vehicle through which eroticism may advance with equal ease either psychological or cultural assertions. The sexualized vampire is thus read alternately as the embodiment of authorial neuroses and coded expression of more general cultural fears of which the author is, consciously and unconsciously an observer. Vampirism is a practice that tends itself to such readings. Described frequently as a “kiss” but carrying with it pain and blood analogous to those of defloration and violent intercourse, the vampire’s bite is at once oral and penetrative. (...) The vampire occupies what is superficially a conventional male or female body and yet may with equal ease prey both outside and within the family, and upon either and both gender, thus complicating conventional patterns of desire. In its sexualized form for blood, therefore, the vampire is capable of disrupting what have been culturally perceived as discrete patterns of sexual behaviour, and of evading the taboos that polarise heterosexuality and homosexuality. The vampire, in this sense, represents the liberation of those sexual activities or desires that have been allegedly proscribed or censored in society or repressed within the self (Hughes, 2001: 145).

If we consider the effigy of the vampire, his or her body are like ours, perfectly male or female, adult or childish. However, normally what he or she claims is a company to share eternal life or for a mere overnight delight, and this company not necessarily being a subject of the opposite sex, for this the myth has always sustained a sexual burden. Vampires are said to be fond of any one who can offer them pleasure, any one who attracts them, man, woman, prostitute, negro, . . . They assume the fluidity that gender provides, they can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual. As Tony Thorne claims in *Children of the Night*, a modern school of queer criticism would state that this transgressive behavior of the vampires places them as obscure subjects concerning sexuality, both super-human and sub-human. Super-human for they can live for ever apart from the usual plagues that affect the health of humans, as I already mentioned, and sub-human because they go deeper in the unconscious, the “darkness” of people’s minds and play with the conventions and moral of each one they haunt.

The figure of the vampires did not feel restrained by the male conventions of the Victorian epoch and came to rescue the secret sexual desires of the “perfect” Victorian ladies of the nineteenth century. Ladies whose souls were restricted and whose bodies were

oppressed. Perhaps here, there is another good explanation about the fact that vampires very often have an androgynous feature: common men who can fully satisfy primitive yearnings of the female, always in disadvantage when it comes to the traditions of the patriarchal system.

The form of the discourse carried out in the canonical works of Medicine, Religion and Literature is chiefly heterosexual. In these times of contemporary studies and writings, it is where authors find grounds to express their own troubles concerning body, sexuality and gender politics, how they, writers, are accepted but not understood or how they are totally excluded from the social scenery. These voices try to cry out how these concepts of body and gender that are used almost interchangeably can be mistaken, and I take the point of Toril Moi when she argues that all these theories are important to display the difference between gender and body but no theory is ready to answer all the question. I also agree with Bornstein when she states in *Naking All the Parts*, that our capitalist culture is crazy about desiring things, and gender defines desires. If one does not live according to the pattern of gender, a life without desires would be unbearable. So the more a culture works on desire the more a culture will be submitted to the arranged concepts of sex and gender.

2.2 –Identity, Otherness and Abjection

I am the vampire Lestat.
I'm immortal. More or less.
(Anne Rice, *The Vampire Lestat*)

Erik's face was white. His eyes were dark holes in the face. He had no hair. He had no nose. His face was the face of a dead man.
(Gaston Leroux, *The Phantom of the Opera*)

It was raining and, a huge crowd standing in the mud, some of them come from miles away. If my own death sentence had not been commuted at the last minute, they would have watched me hang with the same greedy pleasure.
(Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*)

We have three literary characters well-known not for their nobility, kindness or beauty. They are subjects that caught people's attention for their unusual attitudes that make them marginalized. They are said to be bizarre, and maybe that is why they are so celebrated in books and movies. The epigraphs above contain exactly those ideas of identity, horror and pleasure which are quite present in people when exposed to certain situations. Ideas related to what people consider acceptable or unacceptable and how they react in relation to some elements in a conscious and unconscious level.

Even though these characters are transgressors, many people find some identification with them, they feel some delight and even pity on them. There is a part of people's self that drives them through a complex process, to a sort of encounter with these subjects thrown into the margins and shadows of the society, a part of the self that needs this encounter with these so-called abject bodies.

I made this path to get to the three concepts attached to any human body no matter the gender, social rank, race or ethnicity it owns: the concepts of identity, otherness and abjection.

The most common idea that bears about in one's mind when expressing the word IDENTITY is that of having something stable and fixed about oneself, that one can always

sustain that self all time long, uniform. As a matter of fact, the very concept of identity implies that it is part of a continuous process, changeable, also fragmented, producing other identities. As Stuart Hall argues in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, identity is an on-going phenomenon:

The question of “identity” is being vigorously debated in social theory. In essence, the argument is that the old identities which stabilized the social world for so long, are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject. This so-called “crisis of identity” is seen as a part of a wider process of change which is deslocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in social world (Hall, 1996: 596).

Three ideas are related to the issue of identity. The first refers to the subject in the Enlightenment, which stated that there is an identity in the subject that remains the same through life. The second concept is related to the sociological subject in which identity is a result of the interaction and changes between the self and the society, identity, thus, as a product of what takes place inside and outside the subject.

The third concept of identity claims its fragmentation, not unification and constant transformations. It refers to the postmodern subject which will be the one explored in this work.

The very process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable and problematic. This produces the post-modern subject conceptualized as having no fixed, essential, and permanent identity. Identity becomes a “moveable feast”: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us (Hall, 1996 : 598).

Analyzing these statements, it can be said that due to its unfolding process and consequently for its fragmentation, identity produces other ones which can intersect among themselves and even be antagonic. The self is under imminent changes since one is under imminent vicissitudes. This unsteadiness of the self in the subject may drive him or her to the so-called crisis of identity:

These transformations are also shifting our personal identities, undermining our sense of ourselves as integrated subjects. This loss of a

stable “sense of self” is sometimes called the dislocation or de-centering of the subject. This set of double displacements – de-centering individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves – constitutes a “crisis of identity” for the individual (Hall, 1996: 597).

But is there really a crisis of identity? It is the question Woodward poses in *Identity and Difference*. If we know that identity is fragmented, moveable, antagonic, always in a process of dislocation, conflicts are expected to take place within the subject. However, what it is seen is that these crises and conflicts of identity are more issued when they bring out discomfort and uncertainties, mainly in these recent times in which the subject is exposed to permanent social changes, technological challenges, things that interfere directly in his or her everyday routine, “invading” the self of the subject.

We saw that identity has to do with fragmentation, and this fragmentation begins in the very early life of the person. When the conception happens, the foetus together with the mother form a unity, he or she is not conscious, aware of himself or herself as a separate being, he or she is not the “other” yet. When the separation takes place, there comes the necessity of the subject to search for the “other” to feel himself or herself again in that unity. Unity that sounds much more as a myth since the separation had already happened. As Jacques Lacan argues, there are some stages by which the subject are submitted: the *imaginary phase* when the baby still feels as part of the mother’s body, and the *mirror stage* in which the baby throughout differentiation begins to search for identification in the “other”.

The initial separation of the mother, this lack of unity in the identity of the subject put him or her in a continuous persecution for powerful, remarkable images outside, a constant search for identification, and “identification gives the subject a unified sense of steadiness through symbolic system and identify with the ways in which we are seen by others” (Lacan, 2002: 45). When identities are formed by representational systems, signifying practices and symbolic systems, meanings and discourses are produced and position us as subjects (Woodward, 2002: 14).

So the person needs, by nature, to identify with the others around for the most comfort of his or her self. But we cannot ignore the fact that this same person had the previous, primitive life when he or she felt no necessity to identify with anything, when

conscious did not operate yet, that phase Freud denominates the id. Because of the first needs to find identification in the society (and sociology claims that man is a social being), the unconscious phase gives place to the conscious one, the super-ego, the moment that the subjects must be aware of rules and obligations demanded by the institutions that regulate the most significant discourses. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the former self disappears completely for it is part of the subject that suppresses it strongly in the name of the moral and conventions to be followed.

As I mentioned, identity can be also a result of social relations, that is, relationship with other subjects are made of similarities and contrasts, and differences may appear within identities and between them. So the “other” that appears to threat the integrity of the established identity can be recognized as part of our self. This confirms that identity can no longer serve as a unitary phenomenon: “This means that self can no longer be plausibly understood as an unitary entity, but appears instead as one fragile moment in the dialogic circuit that connects “us” with “our” selves” (Woodward, 2003: 315).

Whether identities are so fragile entities, it is not surprising that for many times the subject finds him or her experiencing sensations that would be seen as unusual for himself or herself, as if he or she had found someone else inside him or her, a foreign sensation of not recognizing the own self. The “other” overcomes the self and, at times, the results are weird feelings that assault the subject. It is not uncommon to find people who admire villains, obscure subjects that rise from the “other” side of the society, the “dark” one, people who pay homage to these subjects and praise their deeds because they do not feel restrained by the social paradigms and perform what their instincts cry for. Unlike all the majority that is taught to repress the instincts as much as possible in order to be accepted in the society and not disturb the order, they come to reveal what the others hide.

The examples in the epigraphs show three characters that easily fit the case of abjection, as it will be shown, Lestat, Erik and Grace Marks cause some discomfort even disgust in different tiers: one is a queer and cruel figure, the other is a mysterious man with a deformed body, and the third epigraph refers to the almost hanging of the dubious character of Grace Marks in public for her being accused of murdering her employer. No one can deny that evil or mysterious characters dwell and resist in our minds more than the genteel ones. People have heard of *The Phantom of the Opera*, but I am almost sure that

many would ask who is Raoul. Even in *Dracula* which is one of the most famous horror stories, everyone knows the count that entitles the masterpiece but his opponent, Jonathan Harker, I would say that few remember.

As the issue is identity I should mention the psyche element, the place where the fragmentation of the self occurs. In the id, unconscious part of the subject, is exactly the site of those repressed contents which do not have access to the conscious area. In short, subjects are constituted by ego, super-ego and id which correspond respectively to the negotiator self, the institutions which make people repress the earlier self and the primitive self. In this process of repressing the primitive self, the earlier “other”, through life, the subject goes dealing with feelings that he or she considers as foreign, situations or things that are apparently unknown but in some level, turn out to be recognized, and it leads the subject to experience the uncanny or the *unheimlich* as Freud denominates in his great essay *The Uncanny*. As Gelder affirms in *Reading the Vampire*, “the uncanny is a route from the unfamiliar to the familiar” (Gelder, 1994: 43). Gelder states that the uncanny was defined by Freud as that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.

It is very common to imagine that abjection refers only to the idea of something scary and repulsive, the idea of rejection of something or someone vile. People are inclined to think that the abject is in the “other”, that this “other” owns something that scares or causes disgust. In some sense, abjection has to do with the rejection of something that is in the subject’s self which comes out and cannot be supported by him or her. An “other” already in “me” though “I” strongly insist to deny this “other” which can be a threat for “my” other selves and must be controlled, repressed so that “I” can be an integrant part of the socially acceptable. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva argues that this process of abjection appears in the gap between the “game” of ego and superego:

A certain “ego” that merged with its master, a superego has flattery driven it away, it lies outside, beyond these, and does not seem to agree to the latter’s rule of the game. And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master. Without a sign (for him) it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out. To each ego its object, to each superego its abject (Kristeva, 1982: 2).

Abjection, thus, is not a simple process of disliking as one may suppose, for it is part of a human “machinery”, and everything that relates to humans concerning identity must be kept under permanent investigations.

The abject would be part of the primitive life of the subject, part which was frustrated, that very early life before the “I”. The abject is part of “me”, it integrates us all. Sooner or later it comes out in the sense of horror or pleasure or even both. As Márcio Seligmann states in “*Do Delicioso Horror Sublime ao Abjeto e a Escritura Do Corpo*”, that through abjection the literary gothic offers a real description of the body, about traumas, fears, pains, about these internal mechanisms that surround the body.

Turning back again to Kristeva, she argues that the abject confronts people when they “step on” that territory of animal, of primal instincts:

Thus, by way of abjection primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove of from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representation of sex and murder (Kristeva, 1982: 13).

We cannot imagine an abject body without thinking of something evil or nauseous, these are the most current thoughts one has. Abject bodies are constantly explored in the gothic sphere, in books, paintings or movies, they produce sorts of paradoxical sensations that can horrify and at the same time please people and these sentiments guide us to the concept of the sublime.

The sublime always “invades” people’s souls. I mean invade because people cannot control feelings such as fear, pain, horror, love when they are exposed to them in some circumstances. The sublime throws the subject into the essence of pain and peril, it leads to horror, an immense “shock” which goes beyond the concepts of good and evil. which for Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, causes the manifestation of the delightful horror (BURKE, 1993: 48).

Still in Burke’s idea of the sublime, the image of the beautiful also appears in contrast with the former, both respectively corresponding to the images of “obscurity” and “brightness”, and what the literary gothic aims is to concentrate exactly on the obscure aspect of the subject or subjects, to focus on things that people have no clear ideas of. Gothic uses the sublime to make people behold a certain horror, pain, danger they already

have in themselves but do not recognize. They are invited to pay reverence to their ancient fears, to feel horror and delight for something which is part of them.

One may say that the gothic is a form of escapism for its appeal to exaggeration and imagination. Actually it is a reaction to the conventions of the eighteenth century cultural and social life, whose aims were to set aside controversial issues such as sex, social hierarchies, and these issues are the main tools for the literary gothic. It uses various manners to portray the real life in different viewpoints including realism which, according to Punter in *Literature of Terror*, “it is a power to imagine new ways of being” (Punter, 1995: 185).

If gothic works with the psyche and this last is fragmented, gothic is not a unity because it operates in the borderlands of the subject. Gothic and abjection cannot be detached since both deal with psychological aspects of the subject which are not well resolved, like how wishes are satisfied, the operation of the libido. Gothic applies the fantastic elements to fulfill the negated hopes of a society. Areas still tabooed in a culture, the sacred and unclean are the grounds where the gothic tries to manifest its writings. Eroticism is one very common and dangerous issue that the literary gothic explores, how *eros* is denied and may return in the form of threat and violence (Punter, 1995: 191). What I observe is that the repressed contents of the subject may haunt him or her using many masks, representing conscious and unconscious fears that usually turn up without warning in that space where feasts of pleasure and horror are unlimited: in dreams. The more something is repressed the stronger it becomes, this body gains an extra force and becomes rebellious, and this strength normally is followed by transgression, aggression or violence.

Punter says that the gothic speaks the unspeakable (Punter, 1996: 193). I would say that the gothic discusses the reality of people’s flesh and souls, their secrets, that it works exactly with renunciations of powerful instincts, renunciations that culture demand. The woman’s body, for instance, is a “territory” where men insert their point of view and other inscriptions. In order to be part of a system, women’s body, the “other”, became docile, uniform, subordinated to the standardization of the male system.

Let us try to relate one of the most notorious gothic figure, the vampire, to the theories of identity and abjection discussed here.

As I have said, when we think of the figure of the vampire, there are two common expressions that come to our minds: corruption and eroticism. This corruption in the vampire occurs in the social and natural sphere. If we consider the natural, vampires corrupt because they do not follow biological determinism, they do not get older physically, procreate through common sexuality or die. Their bodies are dead when it comes to perform usual human tasks, but alive when it is to manifest their supernatural power. Vampires belong to the category of sub-humans because they cannot use their bodies to go through simple natural process as humans. On the other hand, they own in this same body a modality of power humans do not have, the supernatural power. They have the power of mesmerizing people and read their thoughts, some transform themselves in other creatures. The figure of the vampire plays with that that our psyche mostly is afraid of, the idea of death. They are super-humans and can surpass the boundaries of life and death without any restriction, without any difficulty for they are living dead creatures. They defy the limits of what is possible and impossible for humans. Elements of the uncanny are always evoked in their environment. They manage telepathy so simply as humans talk on the telephone, they deal with people's fears of being buried alive when they lay down in a coffin to take their rest during the day, defying the established rules in the society that guide people's lives.

They often work with the instincts that humans must repress, they attack in order to find fresh blood which constitutes another aspect of their biology that make them inferior in relation to humans. They do not feed by eating meat or vegetables but blood as inferior animals like some worms, for example, use to do with the bodies they intrude.

Talking about intrusion, invasion, penetration, we observe that aspect that vampires constantly inspire: the sexuality. They invade humans' thoughts and seem to discover what they really want, what they really need. The biological gap that exist in the sexuality of the vampire is probably what makes people be curious about them, curiosity which is easily extended to attraction. These creatures are considered abject because they are not concerned with the rules of sexuality common in patriarchal culture which states that man should maintain relationship with woman and anything different from this should be rejected.

I would say that what is more remarkable in the figure of the vampire and probably more abject, is the fluidity of gender they assume though his or her body is humanly

impotent. What is more important is to have a partner to satisfy his or her instinctive pleasures no matter if that one who will satisfy him or her is man, woman, old or young. If Freud states that the sexual life for boys and girls in the infancy follows the same paths, it should not be a surprise for humans to see subjects that commonly feel attracted by others of the same sex. These subjects probably have their primitive instincts less negated than the others. In their psyche, they find identification with someone from the same sex or identification with subjects from both sexes. Anyway, the truth is that vampires are one of the most sexual symbols in the literary gothic.

If we take *Dracula* from another viewpoint as Thorne argues in *Children of the Night*, the question of bisexuality can be also raised. The vampire sucks blood from Lucy by penetrating her with his teeth, and penetration is the male function in sexual relation. Mina, however, sucks blood from the count which would imply the idea of “a mother nursing the baby”, a feminine activity, attached to the image of this vampire. From this standpoint, the paths of sexuality would no longer follow a fixed, straight line, and confirms that the vampire is a queer subject.

What I consider important in all these theories of the body, gender, identity and abjection is that they cannot make us change completely in terms of the constructs that are strongly settled in our minds, and that we cannot get rid of them so easily for they have been installed in the previous moments of our existence and are rooted with meanings that became fundamental for us. Constructs that somehow are necessary to create a society and find place in one of our selves. What I suggest is that we should be aware of the “other” that is outside but mainly attent to the “other” who is inside ourselves so that we can understand, if we look carefully inside ourselves that we are in some level as marginal as some villains that surround us. . .

CHAPTER III

**THE BODY OF THE CONDEMNED IN
*INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE***

3.1 –Lords and Ladies of Darkness

My beloved Louis, the narrator of *Interview with the Vampire*, had done all this. He had gone far beyond my secret little disclosure to my rock singers. He had told hundreds of thousands of readers. He had all but drawn them a map and placed an X on the very spot of New Orleans, where I slumbered, though what he really know about that, and what his intentions were, was not clear.
(Rice, *The Vampire Lestat*)

The sound of the New World. By the end of the twentieth century, 1985, the accords of rock and roll wake up the child of the Old World, the Lord of Lioncourt, or Lestat, as his fans prefer to call him. While his dear Louis chooses a soft manner to manifest himself, offering a discreet interview to a unique person, Lestat is more daring and ambitious, and likes to show off. The latter is caught by the pace of modernity: TVs, radios, and the sounds of a rock and roll band, *Satan's Night Out*, are the means he uses to become a music star. Truth is that I do not see any other sort of music that could represent this character better than rock and roll, a rhythm that conveys phrenzy, rebellion, movement and sensuality. Let us observe this rebellious character in literary grounds.

During the reading of a certain novel, a poem, a short story or any other literary work, it is quite usual for some readers (at least for the attentive or curious ones), to question why an author decides to write about a certain topic, and if this topic has something to do with the life of that person.

In this final chapter, my aim is to immerse into the universe composed by Anne Rice in *Interview with the Vampire*, and try to understand what are the meanings behind the main characters and the atmosphere in the novel, and, what aspects of the author's life probably reflect on her work.

As it was mentioned in chapter I, Rice produced a trilogy that is entitled *The Vampire Chronicles* in which *Interview with the Vampire* was the first book. In the sequence, she wrote *The Vampire Lestat* and *The Queen of the Damned*, books that were sold more rapidly than the first one. The chronicles allied with a cinematographic

production helped to spread her reputation as a gothic novelist, and Rice immediately gained the title of celebrity. This fame probably encouraged her to continue writing about supernatural elements. Rice just as her contemporary and compatriot Stephen King, found in the literary gothic, the perfect genre to manifest a profusion of supernatural beings as vampires, witches, angels and so on.

But, in modern times, why does an author make up her mind and write about subjects that are publicly known as myths, products of mere legends and people's imagination, when this same writer has possibilities to talk about current subjects of her epoch? Why another story about vampires? That is exactly what I will investigate through this chapter using passages of her novels.

Precisely in 1976, Anne Rice published a novel in which Louis da Pointe du Lac, a rich man, heir of a plantation owner, narrates his journey to a young reporter whose name is never mentioned in the first novel, but in the later ones he appears under the name of Daniel. The reporter uses various tapes to record the saga of the interviewed, and listens to him almost in ecstasy while Louis tells his adventures and misfortunes as a child of darkness. Louis goes back to the year of 1791, when he was mortal, in order to organize his narration and show how things happened through the centuries. He was around two hundred years old in the moment of the interview.

This return to the past is one of the traits that Rice uses in her novels, a return that is peculiar in the gothic style. The past is not evoked in historical terms, but what is important is to show how the old architecture, ancient buildings, such as antique ruins, old chapels, castles, can contribute to the somber atmosphere of the gothic novels. This strategical scenery helps to evoke the main themes that are present in the work: fear, horror and hidden sensuality. Topics that are forced to remain in obscurity, even if they are present in human beings of any social, economical and political sphere.

We can notice that the novel begins differently from the major stories that emphasize the figure of the vampire. We have a reporter and an interviewed person, the vampire, which in this case, is not a famous celebrity. In fact, Louis catches the young man's attention exactly because he acts discreetly and in exotic manners. I would say that one of the readings that can be made is the one that throws Louis in the role of celebrity and the young man as a *paparazzi*.

Another interesting aspect to point out is that, in stories about vampires, it is common to find young people who get astonished by the peculiarities of those creatures. By the end of the narrative, the reporter gets so involved in the story that he writes down Lestat's address: "Lestat. . . off St. Charles Avenue. Old house crumbling. . . shabby neighborhood. Look for rusted railings" (Rice, 1997: 342).

Rice at this point does not escape from the tradition and places a young person in close contact with the vampire, considering the story absurd but strongly attractive. This element may be the one concerning the role of the writer-reader or speaker-listener: Louis would be the "author" of his fantastic story, the reporter would be the "reader", the one who appreciates the fantasy. Even in the language of psychoanalysis, which I suppose that abounds in Rice's works, Louis would be a common person that needs to *relieve* his mind from dreadful secrets, confessing things, placing the reporter as a mere listener, that one who takes on the place of a psychoanalyst. Daniel is the bridge that links the reader to the vampire, he is the mortal who has the access to the secrets of the immortals.

I also think that the young people present in vampire narratives are there to signal that sexuality is a complex subject in this phase of the human existence. The young person who is under on-going processes, in a constant mutation until the moment that he or she will obey the norms, can be attracted to any kind of person, no matter the gender this person expresses, male, female or something in between them.

In a certain passage, we know that Louis, the aberration, exposes himself, he uses mortal and traditional institutions as a mean to relieve his mind from his sins. He confesses his flaws, his crimes to a priest, a man from Religion, a kind of authority that supposedly detains the power of condemnation and forgiveness:

Murders, father, death after death. The woman who died two nights ago in Jackson Square, I killed her and thousands of others before her, one and two a night, father, for seventy years. I have walked the streets of New Orleans like the Grim Reaper and fed on human life for my existence. I am not mortal, father, but immortal and damned like angels put in hell by God. I am a vampire (p.146).

According to Foucault, the act of confession is a manner to keep the subject under control, under the power of the institutions, and, in the case of Louis, under the power of the Religion:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the object of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile, a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated, and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation (Foucault, 1998: 62).

However, my special attention will rely upon the role of the vampires in the plot, the hints they will offer us that will guide to some explanations about different matters, specially about sexuality, that are explicit and implicit in the narrative.

In *Interview with the Vampire*, the narrator discloses the distant past by returning to the last decade of the eighteenth century, trying to explain what were the aspects of his previous conditions as a mortal, about his family, his decadence that led him to the decisive transformation, making the reader believe that he also had a normal life as anyone else, that it could have happened to anyone. A past that is supposed to be closed, that no one has access to, is permitted to be seen under another point of view. Even though Louis is in the body of a vampire, a being that does not take part in the social world intensely, for he is not allowed to appear during the day, he offers us another perspective of some things, for example, of how unbearable and lonesome immortality can be, watching people be born, live and die. Rice's vampires are beautiful, impeccably dressed, their skin are wan and delicate as the one of a baroque angel. They are keen on arts and have a special appeal to beauty, the simple beauty of life, of nature, the simple acts of living, getting old and dying that the normal being own. They behold ordinary things more attentively than any human being, their senses overcome those of the humans, permitting them even to read thoughts and move very rapidly.

Just as Louis, other characters also deserve special attention, and these characters are fundamental to determine the nature of the relationships in the novel. Although Louis is the narrator and, supposedly, tells everything about vampires, other subjects must have their attitudes under observation, so that they can help us to understand the varieties of reading that can be made.

3.2 - Indocile Bodies

There was a little girl, she had a
 little curl.
 Right in the middle of her forehead.
 And when she was good, she was
 very, very good.
 And when she was bad, she was
 horrid.
 (Longfellow, "There Was a Little
 Girl")

At dawn she lay with me, her heart
 beating against my heart, and many
 times when I looked at her – when
 she was at her music or painting and
 didn't know I stood in the room – I
 thought of that singular experience
 I'd had with her and no other, that I
 had killed her, taken her life from
 her, had drunk all her life's blood in
 that fatal embrace. I'd lavished on
 so many others, others who lay now
 moldering in the damp earth. But
 she lived, she lived to put her arms
 around my neck and press her tiny
 cupid's bow to my lips and to put
 her gleaming eye to my eye until
 our lashes touched and, laughing,
 we reeled about the room as if to the
 wildest waltz. Father and daughter.
 Lover and lover.
 (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*)

I suppose that the second epigraph can offer us two connotations related to the attachment between Claudia and Louis. However, firstly, I will only talk about the family tree that Rice seems to establish in her novel.

The familiar aspect is clearly emphasized which will be important to enrich my analysis. In the epigraph, Louis talks about one of the greatest adventures and experiences of his "life": Claudia, the five-year-old child that he transformed into a vampire. His daughter, his lover, his companion, his doll. As Lestat himself admits to Louis "she's our daughter and that she is going to live with us now" (Rice, 1997: 93).

Louis and Claudia have the necessity to find other vampires, to know who is the oldest one, the master of them all. Even though the figures of the vampire is out of categorization in scientific terms, Rice used these characters to reclaim a certain familiar background, a comfort that is found only if the subject is with his or her similar, showing the necessity that one has to be inserted in a group, avoiding the uncomfortable situation of being the other. The vampires in the novel are constantly trying to find others from the same species, others who can really explain what they are, or take them to the “mother”. Through the lenses of psychoanalysis, Claudia and Louis express the Lacanian *imaginary phase*, when they found discomfort in being the other, the separate element, which they were, indeed, in the body of a vampire living among humans. They wanted to find other creatures like them, so that they could feel part of a wholeness. Wholeness that is frustrated when the subject discovers that he or she is the other, an isolated unit, alone, no more a part of the mother, as Lacan states (Lacan, 1997: 44-45).

Louis lets us know that there are other vampires in the world, some much older than he is. He introduces to the reader Lestat de Lioncourt, French, according to himself in *The Vampire Lestat*. Even if Lestat is the most enduring character of Rice’s works, inspiration for lines of wines, perfumes and even has his name entitling a restaurant in New Orleans, he is not the oldest vampire of the writer. This character is widely known for his dazzling beauty and for his broad and insensitive way to deal with death. In his autobiography, he talks about his experience in the English-spoken world, his family and his weird relationships with other people, namely, Gabrielle, Nicolas, Magnus, Armand and Marius, and the integrants of his rock band. About his education, for example, at least regarding his English, Lestat says that:

Regarding my English – the language I used in my autobiography – I first learned it from a flatboatman who came down the Mississippi to New Orleans about two hundreds years ago. I learned more after that from the English language writers – everybody from Shakespeare through Mark Twain to H. Ricer Haggard, whom I read as the decades passed. The final infusion I received from the detective stories of the early twentieth century in the *Black Mask* magazine. The adventures of Sam Spade by Dashiell Hammett in the *Black Mask* were the last stories I read before I was literally and figuratively underground (Rice, 1986: 4).

Louis claims that, there are other dead-living creatures who have been existing for more than five hundreds years, such as Armand, considered one of Botticelli's angels, and Marius, the latter supposedly being born before Jesus Christ. But even before, there were Enkil and Akasha, both from the Egyptian royalty, considered the parents of all the vampires. Here, Rice generates another novel, *The Queen of the Damned*, making use of ancient mythology and placing the queen Akasha as the mother of all these condemned beings. In the second and third books of the Chronicles, she tries to create characters who can explain the genesis of the vampire. I suppose that this kind of genesis that she composes is to signal that the transgressive subject is in the world since the presence of the first civilizations, that transgression is as old as the human being because it is part of his or her world, that there is a transgressive identity in every individual.

I consider relevant to cite some characters who are not present or mentioned in *Interview with the Vampire*, but that will appear in the subsequent novels, just to support my investigation about family that will probably guide us to some explanations about different instances of sexuality.

As I said, the familiar motif seems to be a great issue in this work and in the other ones. Rice puts characters in the first book of *The Vampire Chronicles*, that are mentioned not so profoundly, but in the following books, she permits them to tell their own stories. Louis talks about Lestat, who talks about himself, and offers an entire chapter to Armand in *The Vampire Lestat*. From Lestat, we know things from the epoch of a Pre-Revolutionary France. Returning even more to the past, knowing the sagas of Armand and Marius, we are taken to an old Italian architecture, to the time of the Renaissance. Marius also tells us about his experience in the Druid society in the lands where the United Kingdom is nowadays. The more mysterious the character is the more we have to return to the old times, to an old Europe where all the answers seem to be hidden in old castles and ruins. Probably these characters were created to show that other famous vampires like Dracula, Lord Ruthven, Varnie or Carmilla were not the first ones, that they were late inventions of male writers, and, she, Rice, maybe have decided to deconstruct all the tradition in order to prove that women were not only fragile victims of the literary vampires, but that they could also take a high position as Akasha and Claudia did. Her women-vampire are not merely beautiful accessories, they read, they have knowledge, they are vengeful. I suppose that this

revenge exposed by the characters may represent the response to the years of submission that women had in the society. Now, they have the same power of men. The body of the vampire, a corrupted body, is just an excuse to show that women can do whatever they feel the desire to.

At the age of 25, hopeless and unhappy because of his brother's death, Louis becomes a victim of the vampire. A perfect victim, as a matter of fact, young, charming and wealthy. Lestat is a constant murderer, he kills just for a mere pleasure, a character that expresses no guilt in doing so, a real hedonist, the subject that seeks to feel pleasure at all cost, no matter the consequences this pleasure may bring afterwards. Being a vampire does not place Lestat in an inferior position, prohibiting him to have preferences. On the contrary, he comes from noble origins and being a vampire, with more sophisticated senses, he can choose his victims much better, in relation to their rank, appearance and sex appeal. As Louis says:

He would drink from one just enough to satisfy a momentary thirst, and go on to another. The better the human, as he would say in his vulgar way, the more he liked it. A fresh young girl, that was his favorite food the first of the evening; but the triumphant kill for Lestat was a young man. A young man around your age (the reporter's) would have appealed to him in particular (p. 41).

What would be behind this triumph, behind this immense pleasure exposed by Lestat in killing young men, people of his sex and age?

Louis goes on saying that "Being a vampire for him meant revenge. Revenge against life itself" (p. 46). Through the narrator, the reader tends to understand and even accept the idea that the vampire Lestat is exclusively the representation of evil, a merciless creature that uses his strength only to kill and deceive the others. The reader can also infer that Claudia and Louis represent the victims, that this narrative has only two clear sides well defined: Lestat, playing the role of the demon and Louis playing the one of God. The former is bad and the latter is good.

Before understanding Claudia, I should talk about her "parents" firstly. Louis was sucked by Lestat to the limits of death. What we know about the Lord of Lioncourt is that he was from a noble family in decadence, whose castle was in Auvergne, South of France. Ironically, one of the interests of Lestat in adolescence was to become a parson, something

that was refused by his family for he was not the oldest son, the priority in his family, furthermore, they had no money to support his studies in the monastery. After that, he decides to join a group of artists who visits his town, running away with them afterwards. His second attempt to leave his family, again, fails and he is brought to his family once more. Lestat had very little education, this acquired when he spent a while in the monastery with the religious men. When he was forced to drop the monastery for the sake of his family, he became a disgusted person, only supported by his mother, the Marquise Gabrielle de Lioncourt, who seemed to understand him perfectly.

Lestat and Gabrielle have a sort of attachment that surpasses the one she has with her other sons. Lestat describes her features in details and demonstrates that she plays a special role in his life. He talks about his mother being very educated, about her passion for reading that seems to me, a escapism from her tough reality, where she was expected to take care of her blind and grouchy husband and of the children. A very common reality for a woman in the previous centuries.

In order not to lose his mother who was sick, he transformed her into a vampire, supposing that this new condition would free her. The moment of the transformation is something sensually described by Lestat:

And jetting up into the current came the thirst, not obliterating but heating every concept of her, until she was flesh and blood and mother and lover and all things beneath the cruel presence of my fingers and my lips, everything I had ever desired. I drove my teeth into her, feeling her stiffen and gasp, and I felt my mouth grow wide to catch the hot flood when it came.

Her heart and soul split open. There was no age to her, no single moment. My knowledge dimmed and flickered and there was no mother anymore, no petty need and petty terror, she was simply who she was. She was Gabrielle (p. 158).

The evil has its own origins, a reason to exist that is simple to justify or not. I considered necessary to show that Lestat was a common human being who suffered frustrations as any other one does and that unfortunately as many people, he could not deal with them, becoming a vengeful being.

The question posed formerly, why the young men were triumphant deaths for him, still remains without answer, but, I dare say that this may represent the vengeance against

the norms, the great chance to respond violently to those people who punish the marginalized subjects like women, gays, poor people, all the ones who are considered discarded by the conservative world, where laws and moral should be strictly followed. In the body of a vampire, a law-breaker, so much evoked in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Lestat kills those who would kill him if they had the slightest power to. He symbolizes the disregulation of the institutions, institutions that certainly would despise him if they discovered the nature of his relationship with his friend Nicolas de Lenfant (character that was rapidly described in *Interview with the Vampire*, whose name is not mentioned, but we know that is his musician friend), and the nature of the feelings he had towards his own mother.

Very young, Lestat was transformed into a vampire, at the age of 21, victim of Magnus, a much older, ragged and dusty vampire that he calls “the thing” who seemed to know all Lestat’s secrets. He tells us that he was not certain of his mental state when everything took place, if he was sleeping or awake, if it was a delirium, he had no explanations about the reasons for he was chosen to be a vampire. For some time, when he left his family and went to Paris, he was persecuted by the voice of Magnus whispering in his thoughts, through a telephatic process that he, Lestat, was a born killer. As he states in *The Vampire Lestat* “I opened my eyes. Or I thought I did. And there was something standing in the room. A tall, bent figure with its back in the little bearth” (p. 79). In that passage, we can observe that the older vampires have much more to do with the previous legends about vampirism. Magnus, for instance, looks like the vampires from the Eastern European beliefs, he is dirty, has an unpleasant appearance and smell, is white-skinned because he spends a lot of time inside a tomb, living apart from the sunlight. Differently from Lestat, Louis, Armand, Claudia, Ruthven, Carmilla, Magnus tends to be at once repelled, he has no seductive appearance to confound the ideas of his victim. He causes horror. But, it is probable that the old vampire wanted to pass the legacy on to another vampire, a beautiful and smart one, in order to guarantee that Lestat would easily succeed in transmitting the “dark gift”. In actual fact, with his supernatural power and using his beauty and *savoir-faire*, Lestat lives through the centuries enchanting and killing.

In *Interview with the Vampire*, Lestat decided to share his loneliness with Louis and Claudia. But his interest went beyond that. He was a materialist and wanted to have the

gains that Louis' plantations could produce. He used to choose his "friends", taking into account their economic situation. He was crazy about consuming elegant clothes and refined stuff. As Louis states "impeccably dressed he was, as always, and as splendid in his rich black cloak and fine linen" (Rice, 1997: 295), taste that Claudia seems to acquire:

An endless train of dressmakers and shoemakers and tailors came to our flat to outfit Claudia in the best of children's fashions so that she was always a vision [...] Lestat played with her as if she were a magnificent doll, and I played with her as if she were a magnificent doll [...] (p. 99).

After having lost her mother, Claudia was adopted by Lestat and Louis, two men-vampire. Louis was the one who gave her the immortal life, the knowledge about things that humans do not own. Claudia was no more abandoned and had opportunities to do whatever she wanted. As a vampire she could satisfy all the hungers that a child could demand. At first, she was the doll of the house, very quiet, introspective, a good companion for Louis, and Lestat's good apprentice in the art of killing. I repeat that the girl was transformed into a vampire when she was in the freshness of her childhood, around five years old, something that makes me suppose that she was chosen because, as a child, she would never grow up and develop a provoking sensuality that would disturb her tutors. Even possessing great knowledge, Claudia would never be seen as a real woman, and would be forever under the care of those who made her. Her sexuality was mutilated so that she could follow the cultural limitations that are applied to the feminine bodies.

About Claudia, Louis states that:

And then strange things began to happen, for though she said little and was the chubby, round-fingered child still, I'd find her tucked in the arm of my chair reading the work of Aristotle and Boethius or a new novel just come over the Atlantic. Or pecking out the music of Mozart we'd only heard the night before with an infalible ear and a concentration that made her ghostly as she sat there hour after hour discovering the music – the melody, then the bass, and finally bringing it together. Claudia was a mystery. It was not possible to know what she knew or did not know. And to watch her kill was chilling (p. 199).

She demanded her own space in which she did not have to share with Louis, "she wanted a coffin on her own now [...]" (p.102). Using the expression by Foucault, Claudia

was expected to be a docile body, obedient to the norms, even in a environment where norms are not supposed to exist. But, according to Louis, “one day, she began to ask questions” (Rice, 104: 1997). Perhaps, when one decides to ask questions, it is because the person wants to know things and move to another situation, to leave the position of subordination, which provokes disturbance in the system of those who consider themselves the appropriate subjects to be in charge of things.

Rumors say that *Interview with the Vampire* was a one-week-work by Anne Rice, after her daughter died of leukemia, and that the character of Claudia was inserted in the novel exactly portraying her child. I would add that Claudia stands for the modern woman: both are searching for knowledge, for information which is no more reserved only for men. But both should never forget the demands of the society, the ones related to the family, in which women should marry men and reproduce, no matter the level of culture she has, otherwise this woman will pay a high cost, punishment generating rejection, loneliness or death.

The little girl vampire would also be the mirror reflecting two images: Anne Rice’s and her own daughter, the modern and intellectual woman in the body of a child that would never become an adult. Claudia in the condition of a vampire, would never grow up like Rice’s daughter, for the latter is dead. The two of them are trapped in a irreversible circumstance.

Claudia does not behave as a doll anymore, still and obedient, only for their delight and simply to ornament the house. She uses her strength to attack them, specially Lestat. The daughter despising the father. She unites forces to destroy Lestat. Even as a girl, she does not recoil and set up a revenge against him. “The secret is, Louis, that I want to kill him. I will enjoy it!” (p.124). Lestat posing as the one who knows everything about the secrets of the darkness is defied by her: “And you don’t know anything, and that is why you detest my questions. All that’s clear” (p.132).

Moments before she had performed her vengeance which includes a present to him, Lestat incites her wrath by provoking her, admitting that she will never have the beauty of a mature woman; “I hope that it’s a beautiful woman with endowments that you’ll never possess” (p.132). After the fire that supposedly had killed Lestat, she embarks on a journey through Europe with Louis.

As a character that reacts against the norms established by the other male vampires, abandoning her position of submission in order to discover things even in another continent, in another culture, Claudia would be classified as a female gothic, for her attempt to escape from the confinement where she was trapped being an immortal. According to Punter:

In the female Gothic plot, the transgressive male becomes the primary threat to the female protagonist. Initially, she is usually depicted enjoying an idyllic and secluded life; this is followed by a period of imprisonment when she is confined to a great house or a castle under the authority of a powerful male or his female surrogate. Within this labyrinthine space she is trapped and pursued, And the threat may variously be to her virtue or to her life (p. 279).

A non-naive reader may find some relation with other texts on vampires, for the characters of these stories always turn their eyes to Europe. Claudia and Louis, such as Lord Ruthven and Aubrey, took a trip to Europe. Although they had different interests in that continent, all the paths concerning vampirism bring to Eastern or Central Europe. Intertextuality consequently turns up in the novel, a phenomenon which suggests that a text is never aloof, never isolated, it is chained with many other units of other texts.

As a gothic novelist, Rice must have read many tales about Eastern European vampires, or read Polidori's *The Vampyre* or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, or even wrote the novel "playing" with the vampires of previous narratives, as if her vampires were the creators of all the others who pose today as famous. Louis, for instance, does not mention the name Dracula in any moment of the conversation. It is clear, though, that he ironizes the tale that is related to the Count and to other literary and cinematographic vampires, when he says to the reporter that "it is nonsense, my friend, sheer nonsense. I can look on anything I like. And I rather like looking on crucifixes in particular" (p. 23).

Intertextuality, I think, the novel has with real life in the present times, although this work explores supernatural elements. They represent the obscure desires that are inside each human being, the decadent side of the society, the chaos installed in it. The continuity of a family or the disruption of it. The characters are only mere disguises in which the author works freely with the wounds of the world and of her own.

The search for the old vampires in a distant village from Varna in Eastern Europe causes some disappointment. Louis relates that that part of Europe was a strange place where people seemed not to be civilized. As Morgan, another character, says “ I mean, French, English, we’re civilized men, Louis. They’re savages” (p. 180). The rites used against vampires in those lands are considered rude and grotesque. The place where they really had any clue about someone of their species was in Paris, the mother of New Orleans, as Louis says:

But Paris, Paris was a universe entire and whole onto herself, hollowed and fashioned by history, so she seemed in this age of Napoleon III her towering buildings, her massive cathedrals, her grand boulevards – and ancient winding medieval streets – as vast and indestructible as nature itself. All was embraced by her, her volatile and enchanted populace, thronging the galleries, the theaters, the cafés, giving birth over and over to genius and sanctity, philosophy and war, frivolity and the finest art; so it seemed that if all the world outside her were to sink into darkness, what was fine, what was beautiful, what was essential, might there still come from the finest flower. Even the majestic trees that graced and sheltered her streets were attuned to her – and the waters of the Seine, contained and beautiful as they wound through her heart; so that the earth on that spot, so shaped by blood and consciousness, had ceased to be earth and had become Paris (p. 201).

The character even uses the pronoun she and her instead of using it and its to talk about Paris, to describe its beauty as if it was a superior entity, the mother of New Orleans, the city he left, and, probably, being there, it is a way to be in contact with home again, a manner to be in the “arms” of the great mother, feeling native and not a foreign being, the other in a strange territory.

They really find hints there. They are taken to the *Théâtre des Vampires* where they meet Armand, a mysterious vampire said to be the master. The *Théâtre des Vampires* is a sort of theater where vampires pretend to be actors that pretend to be vampires, what I suppose, is another way to show that human beings wish to have their obscure necessities fulfilled through the acting of bizarre subjects doing things that they have no courage to do. The spectators pay to see on the stage a certain amount of chaos and evil that they have inside themselves, however, not always consciously recognized.

Behind the construction of this theater, for example, there are also clues that are linked to the next topic that I will examine in the novel: body, gender and sexuality. In this stage, many kinds of roles can be performed using the bodies of these hybrid beings, the vampires.

3.3 - Peripheral Sexualities

He was my age perhaps, and quite tall, and when our eyes met I remember who he was. Nicollas de Lenfent, oldest son of the draper. Who had been sent to school in Paris.
He was a vision now.
(Rice, *The Vampire Lestat*)

Queerness. It is impossible to write about vampires, who are in their essence peripheral figures, without mentioning that condition. Let us try to understand what the term queer means.

The term offers us many meanings. Strange, curious, weird are some of them. If a person, an object, an animal are said to be queer, it is because they may cause a sort of feeling that disturbs what we have in mind about which is considered normal, standard. The object of queerness teases because it may lead to varieties of sensations: fear, love, hatred, rejection, curiosity and so on, and these can be antagonic or not. Discomfort invades people when they do not have reasonable explanations for what they feel, for what they see. Simple attitudes in life, a different way of dressing, a haircut that does not follow the mainstream, for instance, may also implicate in a kind of queerness. So, it is not only applied to sexuality as one may suppose.

Nevertheless, as the main subject of this work is about vampirism, queerness will invariably be related to the theme of body and sexuality, and, consequently, this figure that owns a distinguished body construction will force us to land on the ground of peripheral sexualities.

Let us begin with the epigraph. The word vision dislocated, in a single sentence, from my point of view, suggests an emphasis that the character tried to give to the object of his observation. Nicolas was more than a simple view. He was something more than beautiful, he was sublime.

Two motifs are parts of this atmosphere that Rice yields in her work: transgression and queerness. She does not act differently from the previous authors who wrote on vampirism, however, she gives to her character Louis, a male vampire, the chance to talk on his own, a first-person narrative. In this perspective, she seems to dismantle the aspect

that shows the vampire as a cold and distant figure, giving him voice and showing that he also has pleasures and crises. According to Punter:

Perhaps the most significant transformation of the vampire in such works of Fred Saberhagen's *The Dracula Tape* (1978), Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) and Jody Scott's *J. Vampire* (1984) resides from a shift in narrative perspective. Vampires start to tell their own stories and consequently become more sympathetic, closer to the human and much less radically the "other". They are more likely to offer a site of identification than a metaphor for what must be abjected, and with the movement from the metaphorical to the metonymical, the vampire increasingly serves to facilitate social commentary on the human world (p. 271).

I suppose that she invested in the characters in order to provide a certain proximity that they may have with the human being. She may have used their figures to stress the problems that common people have, but that they insist on keeping in the obscurity.

About obscurity, the idea that comes immediately to my mind is the one of transgression. By the way, it is fundamental to understand what transgression means, something that is inherent to any person, any society, something that people own, even though they have in a slight level. Transgression, one may say, is the rejection of the norms, the negation of the standartization, a fight against the rules that are established by the institutions that regulate the societies. Nevertheless, the transgressive entity does not negate the interdiction or necessarily raises a battle against it. In actual fact, that entity questions things already fixed, uses these same things as material to transgress. This material can be re-analysed, deconstructed, intensely worked so that to produce another perspective coming from that material. Transgression is necessary to the existence of the norms, it completes them; norms and rules are fundamental to avoid the chaos and disorder, but transgression is also necessary to reinforce the existence of these rules. The norms would not be created if there were no need to punish the law breakers.

We can see that Rice, a female author, decides to write about male characters, male vampires, something in which she was successful. Other women writers also wrote about those creatures, but, undoubtedly, in contemporary times, Rice is the most famous among them all, as Ken Gelder states:

The “vampire chronicle” – where the life and misfortunes of a vampire are trapped out through a number of novels – is a recent development in popular horror fiction. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro’s *Hotel Transylvania* (1978) was the first of a sequence of novels about le Comte de Saint-Germain, an aristocratic (and, as it happens, ambidextrous) who effortlessly glides through history. She has also written a trilogy about a female vampire, Olivia, Saint-Germain’s one and only true love. Patricia Nead Elrod’s “vampire files” series, which began with *Bloodlist* (1990), traces the fortunes of a vampire detective, Jack Fleming, in his search for the woman he loves – who, again, is another vampire. Yarbro in particular has sold well, marketed at one point as the “Queen of Horror” – although *Hotel Transylvania* has been out of print now for some time. But the best-known contemporary chronicler of vampires is without question Anne Rice (Gelder, 1994: 108).

As a woman, subject that during a certain period of the world history suffered lots of restrictions, I believe that Rice decides to bring to the scene the questions of queerness that “haunt” some families. Maybe she gave to Louis, a queer male, the opportunity to speak for many, such as she gave to Lestat, Armand and Claudia. Being in the group of those who were in the past too much oppressed, she possibly understands the necessities of expressions of other marginalized groups, and, is somehow, sympathetic to them. I argue that it is like an oppressed writing about another oppressed. Her writing about a man, I imagine, is not by chance. The men in her novel are aristocratic figures, physically acceptable in the society, but conserve abnormal interests that must be hidden at all costs. Their queerness does not reside in their bodies but in their souls. Their interests are completely abominated and rejected by the regular world.

And then, I come to the topic that makes the strongest difference in Rice’s novels which is sexuality. This sexuality, however, does not call the attention of the reader for it is not that one performed by a couple blessed by the tradition, a couple constituted by man and woman. The nature of the relationships in the novel is fluid; couples can be formed as well as love triangles. Louis, Armand and Lestat are the principal male characters of the novel. We are inclined to think that Louis represents the good side of the story, flawless, full of remorse because he transformed the little Claudia into a vampire, and Lestat is the unique confessed transgressor. Louis is also a transgressor. Even if he is put in the story as a common man, full of faults because he could not cope with his abject body. Differently

from Lestat, which I think is his other side, his double, Louis could not deal easily with the feeling of guilt.

We can notice that Louis has an attachment to Lestat that involves abhorrence and attraction. The former does not hide his hatred towards the latter to whom he blames for his condition. However, the narrator also lets us know about his admiration for Lestat even in moments he considered dreadful. “(...) and then he buried his face in the flesh of her neck. I was watching all this with fascination. Lestat was masterfully clever and utterly vicious (...)” (Rice, 1997: 78). Exactly as it happens between Laura and Carmilla, Ruthven and Aubrey, in some moments, Louis repels Lestat, but, simultaneously, feels attracted to the second. Louis somehow recognizes in his figure the evil that he strongly represses inside himself, something that Lestat expresses profusely. Louis’ repressed content, his evil, his obscurity, his disturbances, would come out represented in the figure of the abject body, Lestat, his double, the other side that displays what he conceals. Lestat gives the reader the opportunity to return to the primitive phase where the concepts of good and evil were less important than the satisfaction of the pleasures.

We can identify traces of homoeroticism also from his part, even if Louis repels Lestat and Armand. He presents to the reader his pleasure and astonishment when he met Armand, which seems to be completely corresponded:

He would have startled me, except for his stillness, the remote dreamy quality of his expression. It seemed he’d been standing against that wall for the longest time, and betrayed no sign of change as we looked at him, then came towards him. Had he not completely absorbed me, I would have been relieved he was the tall, black-haired one; but I didn’t think of this. Now his eyes moved languidly over Claudia with no tribute whatsoever to the human habit of disguising the stare (p. 226).

Here, we see that the interest of Armand may move from Louis to the little Claudia, a vampire in a childish body. The fluidity of the character concerning sexual orientation may be related to what Foucault states as a peripheral sexuality, for the character does not fit in the standards of the traditional sexuality, accepted and prescribed by the Law, Religion and Medicine. In this case, Armand could be read as a paedophile or as a homosexual, or even be seen as that one containing both transgressive inclinations. Claudia, on the other hand, is trapped in a childish figure although possessing a mature mind. Nina

Auerbach sustains that “for Rice, childhood is a monstrous imposition on an adult consciousness. Significantly, Anne Rice’s resistant child/vampire/doll is female (...) while the woman writer wishes to release herself from the childhood, the male author tends to exalt it” (Auerbach, 1995: 158).

Claudia involvement with Louis surpasses the limits of daughter-father relationship, she demonstrates her love for Louis and they behave as lovers, situation that drives to another instance of peripheral sexuality, the incestuous one. In a certain moment, she, Louis and Armand compose a love triangle in which she seems to be in disadvantage for her “father“ has a crush on Armand.

In another sensual moment of the narrative, Louis confesses that he cannot resist and gives in to the charms of their supposed master:

I had the urge to search for him, to shake him violently, so that his still face would move, admit to his soft singing, and suddenly I found him pressed against me, his arms around my chest, his lashes so close I could see them matted and gleaming above the incandescent orb of his eye, his soft, tasteless breath against my skin. It was delirium.

I moved to get away from him, and yet I was drawn to him and I didn’t move at all, his arm exerting its firm pressure, his candle blazing against my eyes, so that I felt the warmth of it;: all my cold flesh yearned for that warmth, but suddenly I waved to snuff it but couldn’t find it, and all I saw was his radiant face, as I had never seen Lestat’s face, white and poreless and sinewy and male (p. 229).

The love triangle is reinforced when Armand declares his feelings to Louis: “I said that I want you. I want you more than anything in the world” (Rice, 1997: 282), Claudia perceives her disadvantage, losing the love of Louis who cannot disguise his fascination for the master vampire:

Don’t you understand what is happening to me? That he’s killing me, that master vampire that has you in thrall, that he won’t share your love with me, not a drop of it? I see his power in your eyes. I see your misery, your distress, the love for him you can’t hide (p. 265).

Going a bit further, I would say that their relationship does not involve only homoeroticism. If we consider the image of Armand as the master, the supposed father of

them all, and Louis and Claudia being two of these children of darkness, then once more, the incest can be also taken into account.

After Claudia's death, Louis and Armand go on a trip. Their tour includes, invariably, Greece, Asia Minor, Italy and Egypt. Again, Rice recovers the Grand Tour that Aubrey and Lord Ruthven took once in the nineteenth century. What was done by Louis and Claudia in the beginning, is now performed by two male characters, one younger than the other, the master and the apprentice. Their sensuous scenes seem to continue, as in New Orleans, after he met Lestat, Louis enquired by Armand about his feelings of revenge: "But didn't you feel any desire for revenge?" Armand asked. He lay on the grass beside me, his weight on his elbow. His eyes fixed on me" (Rice, 1997: 333).

Among all those attachments, the attraction dwells, for the other subject, the other person is powerful and beautiful. Beauty is, without question, something that the author insists on stressing in her novel. Her vampires are always physically well described by another vampire, who is also very astonishing. On his essay about the sublime, Burke sustains that:

I call beauty a social quality; for where women and men, and not only they, but, when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them, (and there are many that do so) they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them, unless we should have reasons to the contrary (Burke, 1990: 89).

In another passage, Burke states that the concepts of love and beauty intermingle, even though the second is an unsteady concept:

I likewise distinguish love, by which I mean that satisfaction which arises in the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful, of whatsoever nature it may be, from desire or lust; is an energy of the mind, that hurries us on to the possession of certain objects, that do not affect us as they are beautiful, by means altogether different (Burke, 1990: 128).

As it was mentioned before, the nature of the relationships of the vampires in the novel are clearly defined, causing a sort of discomfort for those who are used to a traditional way of thinking, the love between a biological man and woman, permitting no margins for speculations.

Foucault's own ideas of peripheral sexuality, practices against the nature, suggest that:

On the list of grave sins, and separated only by their relative importance, there appeared debauchery (extramarital relations), adultery, rape, spiritual and carnal incest, but also sodomy, or the mutual "caress". As to the courts, they could condemn homosexuality as well as infidelity, marriage without parental consent, or bestiality. What was taken into account in the civil and religious jurisdiction alike was a general unlawfulness. Doubtless acts "contrary to nature" was stamped as especially abominable, but they were perceived simply as an extreme form of acts "against the law", they were infringements of decrees which were just as sacred as those of the marriage, and which had been established for governing the order of things and the plan of things (Foucault, 1998: 38).

An urgency spins around this hybrid family, the urgency to return to the arms of the mother, or, at least, to return to the arms of the traditional family. Louis and Lestat, both men, a sort of couple, adopt Claudia. Both have male appearance, a masculine gender expression, but the attitudes vary regarding the vicissitudes, for example, in relation to killing and seducing. These acts could classify Louis as a passive and Lestat as active. As Gelder states "Rice emphasizes the difference between these two male vampires, with Louis delicate and sensitive (i.e. feminised) and Lestat as aggressive and impetuous (i.e. masculinised)" (Gelder, 1994: 112). Louis would represent the feminine spirit easy to satiate, when he used rats to quench his hunger, while Lestat was always murdering humans, a highly sexualized character. One serves as the resigned, calm element and the other as the insatiable, savage one.

Claudia in the role of woman rebels against the patriarchal side of the family, which seems to be represented by Lestat. She prepares his death, and she keeps him out of her journey, which she shares with Louis. But, as a woman, she went far beyond, and provoked the wrath of the other vampires who caused her end. The men, even Lestat whose transgressive behavior is widely known, stay alive. In the end of the story, he appears in decrepitude, but remains alive to tell his own story in the next episodes.

Claudia, who lost her mother, tries to find in Louis, a sort of mother, an attempt that goes well during a certain time before he finds Armand. She tries to find in Madeleine, a

female character in a female body, a real mother to rescue the maternal side that she lacks and Louis can no more satisfy.

In the case of Lestat, we see that he has an incestuous relation with the Queen Akasha, the supposed mother-vampire of them all. He also, as I said before, has a clear incestuous relationship with Gabrielle, his mother. Lestat also talks about his musician friend, Nicolas or Nicki, to whom he devotes much more than friendship. According to him in his autobiography “I was still sitting there, too unsure of myself to say anything, when Nicolas kissed me – let’s go to bed, he said softly” (Rice, 1986: 75).

We can verify, so, that the sexual identities may vary in the novel. Perhaps, the author caught the eyes of the public because she permitted the characters to express their marginalized pleasures, centering our attention on something from the everyday life, that many people identify with.

About the rescue of pre-Oedipal phase, the mother-child relationship, Gelder argues that:

Thus the novel moves back and forth between the recuperation of the mother-and-child relationship (the familiar relationship: house) and the unfamiliarity of one’s separation from the mother (away from home). In this sense it is nostalgic; but it recognises that the return to the mother (like the return to Paris) is ultimately an illusion – that such a pre-Oedipal moment can never be completely recovered (Gelder, 1994: 114).

All the cited characters, Claudia, Louis, Armand, Lestat, put the matter of sexuality in a dynamic sphere, they make it flow. It varies from character to character. Each attachment that one has to the other offers no fixed and clear definition. We cannot affirm if they are only gay, paedophile and/or incestuous beings, if they are all these things together or none of them. The most important is to observe what are the meanings that authors may insert in their characters, even if these authors seemed to have created a naive work.

CONCLUSION

I don't know if Saint Augustine is correct.
 But I believe in one thing: it is worth painting a picture, writing a novel. . . or a poem.
 (Rice, *Vittorio*)

Yes, I agree with the author. Even though I did not write a famous book, a poem or a short story as she did, I imagine that this dissertation somehow has quenched part of my curiosity regarding vampirism and literary gothic, and, as a literary work, it offered a contribution to my knowledge in literature and to my own life. As a matter of fact, the gothic that is the relevant element of this work has shown me that it comprises lots of concepts, which represent something that goes beyond the splendid and haunted castles, the sinister and deformed characters that threaten people.

Gothic literature uses its writings almost always with nuances of excess, as a way to talk about the element that is the most important tool in its process: the human soul. I mean excess because, according to my observations during this research, each subject has not only one unified and stable identity, but more than one or even many. This way, each person possesses a self that owns repressed contents which tend to return “exploding” and revealing a self that is supposedly unknown with its wonderful or awful portion. So, we have characters showing excess of kindness or cruelty, some who persecute and those that are the persecuted ones.

That is why I consider every work about the gothic so important and intriguing. It uses architecture as a strategy, uses external traits to talk about the inner parts of the subject. If horror, passion and the sublime played a special role in literature in different times, I say that they are basic devices of any human being, that come from a mysterious area that the gothic tries to explore with vehemence. Parts that some characters expose shamelessly and that we appreciate or abhor or both.

Punter, Foucault, Kristeva, Freud, Gelder and other theorists offered a fundamental voice to this dissertation, they helped me to understand some characters by Rice, the vampires. Their works served as a bridge in order to achieve a better understanding of the characters' behaviors. They also made me read the previous stories about vampires from another standpoint, observing contrasts and similarities with the most recent ones.

Although Rice is a female writer and the others are frequently men, they present the body as a vehicle to seduce and punish. Creatures that somehow attract but also have a deformed hunger and body. Such hunger that I would say that corresponds to the deformed soul of the being in his or her attempt to kill the other to get what he or she wishes with no concern about the other.

Interview with the Vampire made me search for knowledge. I dedicated one part of this dissertation to discussing the novel, taking into account all the theories that I have studied during the course, and all of them helped me so much in terms of understanding questions that guide our society such as bodies and transgression. I could see that the body is a receptacle that receives an infinity of constructs, and together with these constructs come important concepts that determine the future of those who have the body, the concepts of sexuality and gender which some theorists made me think that are constructions in which we should reflect with some consideration.

Some of those theorists, as Kate Bornstein, gave their impressions exactly because they could experience it, “theory in the flesh”. Most of their points of view came from their real life and, then, they decided to transform them into source of studies for those who want to understand the human soul and its queerness. The body is a vehicle used to label the other, when we look at a person and something is not very clear about him or her, immediately as a defence, we are ready to reject him or her, maybe because we are afraid of finding some identification with that person and of discovering that we belong to another group that is no more that one that we are accustomed to. People are usually afraid of finding themselves in the other, specially if that other subject is part of excluded groups.

One of the many things that really called my attention during my studies is that in contemporary times some authors do not discard the canonical masterpieces that were written before, but use them making another reading trying to talk about some works from another viewpoint. In some cases, the most important character is not the count with his terrible teeth but someone, apparently, like us whose relationship with the other is going to be the main concern of the story.

There is a great variety of books about vampires on the shelves of several bookstores. Many people may imagine that they are puerile works, something that only rebellious people and teenagers admire. I do not accept this idea because I think that every

literary work has something to say, something that people are not brave enough to admit. Authors create fictional characters to express anguish, despair, frustration, fear, their queerness, love and passion.

I take the risk to say that probably the author is not naive, but the reader. The writer knows what he or she wants to convey through a certain story, he or she knows what was the most important impulse that led him or her to write it. The role of the reader sometimes is not the easier one, at least if he or she tries to understand a book with so many metaphors. If the attention relies only on the figure of the vampire or the witch in terms of appearance, for example, the story may be jeopardized. However, if we also concentrate on their environment, on the historical and social moment in which he or she comes around, some things around vampires and other monsters will have voices too making the story not exactly naive, with characters that only have clear and obscure sides.

I believe that vampirism is one of those concepts that will live throughout the millenia. Probably the concept will die together with the world. The idea is as old as the world itself such as many other concepts, good and evil, for instance.

Claudia, Lestat, Louis, Dracula, Ruthven, Carmilla and other fictional vampires result of an adult's fertile mind. Those minds, though, belong to people who live or lived in a epoch, recent or not, whose lives presented many conflicts or not. They invent things to fill in the emptiness of their lives and of their readers', time goes by and people remain the same, they need someone or something special to happen, the sameness, the predictable do not excite imagination. Queer subjects or hybrid ones, as I imagine vampires to be, offered an interesting reading about human bodies. For many times, I thought, to what extent could they reflect transgression and obscurity contained in people, that amount of wildness that people insist on repressing so as to be accepted in society and how did they, vampires, play with the boundaries established by that society?

Everything that does not have a conclusive answer, escapes from rational explanations and easily provokes people's imagination permitting the fantasies to appear. If the figure of the vampire itself is totally limited to lies or absurd gossips is hard to say and it is a tough task for historians and researchers to solve. For us, mere readers, the doubt remains to give space to other writers, those who observe and try to "suck" the necessities of their times. They do not have commitment to present us any kind of truth. They are very

welcome if they help people deal better with themselves, their transgressions, something that is also part of the basic instincts of humans. This work about vampires stops here, and I have the sensation that I am still in darkness, that something is missing, maybe more knowledge, a hunger that perhaps the following writers may satisfy.

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