Queer as Vampires

- A study of Anne Rice’s *Interview With The Vampire* through queer theory
Abstract

This paper will focus on the homosexuality and homoeroticism that can be found in Anne Rice’s novel *Interview With The Vampire* using Queer theory. The paper is divided into four parts in which different aspects of the novel will be discussed. Firstly the discussion focuses on the homoeroticism which is abundant in Rice’s novel. The second part covers the subject of identity and Louis’ quest to find out what and why he is. Next the issue of family within the vampyric world is examined using the family unit that Louis, Lestat and Claudia make as its basis. Lastly the question of why the ‘gender-free’ love which is present in *Interview With The Vampire* is important to the vampire genre is answered.
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Introduction

Anne Rice’s novel *Interview With The Vampire*, which was published for the first time in 1976, is a true classic in the vampire genre. It is the first in a series of vampire stories collectively called the *Vampire Chronicles*. *Interview With The Vampire*, hereafter to be referred to as *Interview*, is narrated by vampire Louis. After meeting a reporter at a bar, Louis takes him home and proceeds to tell him the story of his two lives – the mortal one and the vampyric one. The novel is divided into four parts of which the first is about Louis’ human life and the time he spent with his maker Lestat. The second part covers Louis’ and his and Lestat’s ‘daughter’ Claudia’s failed search for their roots in Eastern Europe. The next part focuses on the group of vampires they find in Paris and Louis’ relationship with their leader, Armand. The fourth and final part of *Interview* deals with how Louis mourns and tries to overcome Claudia’s death and his acceptance of what he has been turned into.

Homosexuality and homoeroticism are two aspects that have been more or less evident in the vampire genre since Dr. John Polidori’s *The Vampire*. Here homosexuality will be used primarily to talk about the sexual attraction between two men while homoeroticism will refer to the erotic attraction between two males as it is depicted in the texts.

The aim of the thesis is to look at homosexuality and homoeroticism in Anne Rice’s *Interview With The Vampire* through queer theory. Since the genre is known for its connections to sexuality, and in this particular novel, two of the three major relationships are between men, queer theory is an logical choice to make when analysing it. The analysys will be divided into four themes which are prominent in the novel, namely, homoeroticism, identity, family and ‘gender-free’ love.
Queer as Vampires

“When you think of a man who dresses well, stays out late, and has an endless appetite for supple young flesh, admit it: Vampire are the second thing that come to mind” (W. Jones).

Wenzel Jones is of course alluding to that the first thing to come to mind is a gay man. His is not alone in seeing the connection between homosexuality and vampyrism. Darryl Jones writes that:

from the very beginning as a literary trope, vampirism has always been used as a vehicle for more-or-less encoded articulations of sexuality and desire (as a way of writing about sex without writing about sex), and importantly (though not exclusively) of articulating homosexual desire, thus operating on a dialectic of vampirism as dissident or deviant and thus forbidden and silenced (hence the need for metaphor, for a form made of encoded meanings, a kind of secret language, a supernatural polari), but also as desirable, wished-for: a version of the standard Gothic dialect of desire and repulsion[…] (85)

Though vampire fiction was not a new phenomenon when Rice published Interview, the fact that the story was told from the vampire’s perspective was fairly new. But even with this divergence from the earlier vampire stories, there are quite a number of similarities between Rice’s vampires and the vampires preceding them. Like many of the vampires of the 19th and 20th century, Rice’s vampires have much in common with the first modern vampire, Polidori’s Lord Ruthven. Nancy Gagnier and D. Jones both claim that most vampires have taken on the characteristics first seen in Polidori’s The Vampire, which is also true when it comes to the vampires in Interview. D. Jones states that “the image of the vampire in literature – the decadent, sexualized aristocrat – was really established in the popular imagination with the publication of Dr John Polidori’s The Vampire in the […] 1819” (78). Like Lord Ruthven,
Rice’s vampires are social, aristocratic vampires who “[attack] the poor quickly and violently without the protracted seduction saved for the upper-class women” (Gagnier 297). Gagnier also states that “[o]ne of the most striking tensions in the vampire narrative tradition plays between sympathy for, and detestation of, the vampire. He is both a monstrous, calculating predator, and yet again, depending on whose vampire he is, a lonely, haunted outsider trapped by his need for blood” (294). That tension between the good and the bad in the vampire is very prominent in not only Interview but also in the way Louis views himself.

Throughout the novel, Louis is trying, and failing to find out where not only he, but all of the vampires came from. Nina Auerbach has a theory about why the vampires cannot find the meaning behind their existence:

[w]hen Louis, and later in the Vampire Chronicles, Lestat, seek the origin of vampires, that origin is unrecognizable to the human reader: these vampires live without reference to us, composing a mythical landscape of their own. Nevertheless, the fraught ménage of Louis and Lestat is a return of vampire beginnings. Their irritable mutual obsession recovers literary vampires lost origin: the homoerotic bond between Byron and Polidori. (1997: 201)

And while George E. Haggerty weakens this argument by pointing out that Byron and Polidori were not vampires themselves (186), Auerbach’s claim still has some value. Even though Byron and Polidori were not vampires, Polidori’s Lord Ruthven was based on Byron, thus making it likely that whatever “homoerotic bond” was between the two of them was transferred into the text.

Dennis Harper states that “[q]ueer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is
an identity without essence” (62). This means that not only can ‘queer’ be used to describe a sexuality other than heterosexuality, it could also be applied to vampires, in which case “the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” would be humanity. They term queer theory first appeared sometime in the early 1990’s. It has its roots in gay and lesbian studies as well as in post-structuralism. Like post-structuralism wants to “deconstruct” binary opposition, gay and lesbian studies and queer theory wants to ‘deconstruct’ the homosexuality/heterosexuality binary (Barry 143f). The Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures describes queer theory as a theory which shifts identity and even sexual identity itself. ‘Queerness’ is often used to describe any and all sexual minorities, not just homosexuality (630). Furthermore, Gregory W. Bredbeck states that “queer theory is a plural and diffuse set of practices, not a unified field of theory” which is “being continuously rewritten and redefined” (glbtq.com). However, Peter Barry has stated six ways in which queer theory can be used of which the second one is the one that applies to this thesis. Queer theorists “[i]dentify lesbian/gay episodes in mainstream work and discuss them as such, […] rather than reading same-sex pairings in non-specific ways, for instance, as symbolizing two aspects of the same character” (148).

**Homoeroticism**

There is no shortage on homoeroticism in Interview. Everything from the killings and the turning of men into vampires to the relationships between the vampires can easily be read as described in homoerotic terms. The beginning of the novel itself sets the reader up to expect a less than ‘straight’ story. Louis and the boy-reporter he met at a bar are in an apartment on Divisadero Street; a street just at the edge of the gay-district in San Francisco. Haggerty calls this “a straightforward parody of queer seduction” (2006: 186). It is especially the beginning and the end of the novel which are filled with homoerotic images. These are the passages
where Louis’ relationship with Lestat and Armand are most prominent. Due to the limited space the focus will be on just these two relationships.

When Louis is telling the reporter about Lestat turning him into a vampire, the language he uses is extremely sensual:

[H]e lay down beside me now on the steps, his movement so graceful and so personal that at once it made me think of a lover. […] [H]e put his arm around me and pulled me close to him, and in the dim light I could see the magnificent radiance of his eye and the unnatural mask of his skin. As I tried to move, he pressed his right fingers to my lips […] and as soon as I stopped my abortive attempt at rebellion, he sank his teeth into my neck. […] [H]is lips moving against my neck, I remember that the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion… (18f)

The language Rice uses is highly sexual and even Louis himself compares the experience to “the pleasure of passion”. He tells the reporter that he cannot express the actual turning any more than he could explain the act of sex to a virgin: “I can tell you about it, enclose it with words that will make the value of it to me evident to you. But I can’t tell you exactly, any more than I could tell you exactly what the experience of sex is if you have never had it” (15). Rice makes it blatantly obvious that what is happening between the two vampires is another version of sex by making Louis and Lestat share a coffin on Louis’ first night as a vampire: “’[n]ow I’m getting into the coffin,[…] and you will get in on top of me if you know what’s good for you.’ And I did. I lay face-down on him” (25).

The relationship between Louis and Lestat is a complicated one. Lestat loves Louis, but he cannot be who Louis wants him to be. Louis on the other hand is entranced by Lestat, especially before he is turned, as he tells the reporter: “before I died, Lestat was definitely the most overwhelming experience I’d ever had” (25). However, he cannot love Lestat, mostly
since he cannot forgive him for turning him into a vampire, but also because he believes that Lestat is refusing to tell him the answers to his questions.

Even though Louis professes to hate Lestat he feels bound to him. While he is disposing of Lestat’s body after Claudia has attempted to kill him the first time he “felt a pull suddenly, as if some force was urging me to go down with him, to descend into the dark water and never come back…” (139). And after he and Claudia leave New Orleans for Europe, Lestat is always with him, throughout their travels Louis is constantly wondering what Lestat would have done, thought or said about whatever they are encountering at the moment. He confesses to the reporter that “I wanted to forget him, and yet it seemed I thought of him always. And sometimes I found myself so vividly aware of him it was as if he had only just left the room and the ring of his voice were still there. […] I wanted him alive!” (196). Even after Claudia is killed, and Louis decides to stop feeling he cannot escape the power Lestat has over him: “Lestat, in fact, had aroused in me feelings which I hadn’t wished to confide in anyone, feelings I’d wished to forget, despite Claudia’s death. Hatred had not been one of them” (323).

Where Louis is uncertain of whether he loves or hate or even likes Lestat, his feelings for Armand are clear from the beginning – he loves him. When watching several female vampires cling to Armand, Louis confesses that “what appalled me was my own fierce jealousy. I was afraid when I saw them so close to him, afraid when he turned and kissed them each. And, as he brought them near to me now, I was unsure and confused” (243). His attraction to Armand is not one-sided and Armand, after having taken Louis to a place which is so special to him he has not shared it with anyone before, “I want you. I want you more than anything in the world” (282). Their love, no matter how strong it might have seemed in the beginning cannot survive Claudia’s death and the blame Louis put on Armand for his part in it.
After Claudia and Madeleine are killed, Lestat and Armand both beg Louis to come with them. Louis ignores Lestat’s pleas for him to return and after torching the Théâtre des Vampires he believes that Lestat has died in the fire like the rest of the vampires and leaves Paris with Armand. Armand is however aware of the bond that exists between Louis and Lestat, and even though he is the one Louis turns to at that point in time he realizes that it will not work. In a last attempt to turn Louis back into the vampire he was before Claudia’s Madeleine’s deaths, he tells him that Lestat survived the fire and is living in New Orleans to which Louis reacts: “But when I heard this now from Armand it was as if the veil that protected me were thin and transparent, and though it still hung between me and the world of feelings, I perceived through it Lestat, and that I wanted to see him again. And with that spurring me on, we returned to New Orleans” (323). However, after meeting Lestat again, Louis still does not want to feel anything. He confronts Armand about his reason for telling him that Lestat had survived and Armand admits that it was because he wanted to bring the old Louis back again. He tells him that: “‘[y]ou care about nothing…’ […] I thought that something might quicken and come alive in you if you saw him…if you returned to this place.’” To which Louis replies: “‘[t]hat I would come back to life?’” (335). Even though Armand tries hard not to give up on Louis, he finally has to come to terms with the fact that the Louis fell for is no more.

Identity

D. Jones points out “we have the vampirism as a metaphor for gender-relations or sexuality, for sexual repression, perversion, or dissidence” (71). Case in turn claims that “the queer dwells underground, below the operatic overtones of the dominant: frightening to look at, desiring, as it plays its own organ, producing its own music” (200). Something which can be further illustrated by Elaine Showalter’s discussion of the late 19th century, where she notes that "[f]or most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double
life, in which a respectable daytime world often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism” (191). The fact that Showalter is talking about a specific point in time has no real meaning when looking at the similarities between the homosexual man’s life and the life of a vampire. It is the image it creates which is what matters; that the men’s respectable life during the daytime could be substituted for the mortal life of the vampire, and the night world in which the men could be themselves can then be seen as the vampire’s vampiric existence – one life by day, another by night. Just as the homosexual man was seen as something secret, dangerous and deviant, so is the vampire.

Louis has a hard time accepting his vampiric nature and he can never really forgive Lestat for turning him, even if he wanted to be turned at the time. Gagnier argues that Rice “creates in Louis a reluctant vampire, one who experiences both the ecstasy and the repulsion of the kill” (303). Louis not only has trouble adapting to the life as a vampire, he cannot let go of his humanity either, something which annoys Lestat who wants a companion with whom he can be the vampire he was meant to be:

[Lestat] shook his head. ‘Louis!’ he said. ‘You are in love with your mortal nature! You chase after the phantoms of your former self. Freniere, his sister… these are images for you of what you were and what you still long to be. And in your romance with mortal life you’re dead to your vampire nature!’(81)

According to Auerbach “[v]ampires, like other minorities, may look alike to the outsider, but the differences between them are more telling than surface similarities” (1997: 72). That Louis and Lestat view their vampirism differently is evident throughout the novel, not least in the way in which they approach their victims. Louis refuses to feed on people for a long time and when he finally succumbs to his true nature he makes the killings as quick and impersonal as possible; he feeds because he has to, and while he enjoys the thrill it gives him at the time
he does not care for the lingering guilt he feels after the deed is done. Lestat on the other hand truly enjoys killing and toying with his victims, getting them to love him before he betrays them in the ultimate way. They embrace their vampiric nature to different degrees, just as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick claims that “[s]exuality makes up a long share of the self-perceived identity of some people, a small share of others” (2005: 82).

Another of Louis’ struggles with accepting that he is a vampire is the making of other vampires. The thing he holds off doing the longest is turn another into what he himself does not want to be. Claudia offers him a way to be with Armand by asking him to turn the doll maker Madeleine into a vampire companion for her. However, no matter how much Louis wants to be free to be with Armand, he is not willing to cross the final line until his masculinity is questioned:

’If you were a mortal man; man and monster!’ she said angrily. ‘If I could only show you my power…’ and she smiled malignantly, defiantly at me ‘… I could make you want me, desire me! But you’re unnatural! […] What can I give you! What can I do to make you give me what you have!’ (268)

Madeleine’s words, though spoken to a vampire, could just as easily been spoken to a homosexual man. After Louis has turned Madeleine he begins to fear that the love he had for Armand, the love he gave it all up for, might not be there anymore. However, he finds that his feelings are just as strong as before:

’[Armand] alone can give me the strength to be what I am. I can’t continue to live divided and consumed with misery. Either I go with him, or I die,’ I said. ‘And it’s something else, which is irrational and unexplainable and which satisfies only me….’ […] That I love him[.]’ (292)
It is first now that he begins accepting that he is in fact a vampire. Yet accepting what he is, is not the same as liking it. He might be a vampire, but he still hates himself for it. He tells Armand:

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

But Armand does not understand what he means. He does not share Louis self hate for what he is and can therefore not comprehend what it is that Louis means by his statement.

Louis’ biggest question is where he came from and what his purpose is. He cannot and does not want to believe that he just is. He and Claudia search throughout Europe for other of their kind who might hold the answers but what they find is not what they were hoping for: “[t]here is no reality of meaning behind vampirism, as Louis realizes – and this is ‘the most fantastical truth of all’. But one can still ‘be’ a vampire because – since there is no reality behind it – acting and being collapse into each other” (Gelder 112). This search for the cause of their ‘condition’ could be compared to the different searches in medicine and psychology for the cause to why some people are homosexual. The fact that there is no answer to be found as to why either group is the way they are does not diminish the fact that they are.

**Family**

Family is very important to both Louis and Lestat. Louis is turned because he cannot overcome the grief and guilt he feels over his brother’s death. Lestat, the one who is portrayed as being unfeeling and uncaring is taking care of his aging, blind father. And when the times come to kill the old man he cannot do it himself but asks Louis to do it for him.
However, the focus here will be on the ‘family’ that Louis and Lestat ‘start’ together. Ken Gelder claims that the Vampire Chronicles can be read as a kind of family saga, which is represented in *Interview* through the queer family that is made up by Louis, Lestat and their vampire daughter Claudia. He sees Louis and Lestat as a “demonic (but not demonized) gay couple, queer male parents competing with each other for ‘our daughter’ Claudia” (113).

As soon as Louis is turned, he and Lestat move together into Louis’ family estate. They each have their own role in the relationship where “[Louis is] investing the money which [Lestat] acquired, increasing [their] lands, purchasing apartments and townhouses in New Orleans which [Louis] rented” (49). However, even though they are sharing all of Louis’ wealth he is reluctant to sign over anything to Lestat. It is not until Louis wants to be free of Lestat that he signs over some of the assets to him so that “[Lestat] would have his own money and need to come to me for nothing. For all these years, I’d kept him dependent on me” (119).

Just as Louis has kept Lestat dependant on him for money, Lestat has kept Louis tied to him by denying him any knowledge about what he is and where they are from. And when Lestat feels like that is not enough to keep Louis with him, he ‘traps’ him by creating a vampire child – Claudia, just like a married couple might have a child to keep the relationship alive or make it better. Louis tells the reporter that after they had turned Claudia:

> We stood there with her between us. I was mesmerized by her, by her *transformed*, by her every gesture. She was not a child any longer, she was a vampire child. ‘Now Louis was going to leave us’, said Lestat, his eyes moving from my face to hers. ‘He was going to go away. But now he’s not. Because he wants to stay and take care of you and make you happy.’ […] ‘You’re our daughter, Louis’s daughter and my daughter, do you see?’ (94f)
The two male vampires raise Claudia together, each taking on a different role in her upbringing. While Louis shares his love of reading and the arts with her, Lestat teaches her to hunt and to enjoy all the wealth that is at their disposal. When Claudia ‘grows up’ she starts asking the question all children at one point ask their parents – ‘where did I come from’: ‘Which one of you did it? Which one of you made me what I am?’ […] ‘How was it done?’” (108). When told that Louis and Lestat made her she asks how? How is it possible for two men to make a child?

Sue-Ellen Case makes a connection between queerness and vampirism which is based on the division between life and death:

Life/death becomes the binary of the ‘natural’ limits of Being: the organic is the natural. In contrast, the queer has been historically constructed as unnatural. Queer desire, as unnatural, breaks with the life/death binary of Being through same-sex desire. […] The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny.” (200)

Life and death are seen as being natural while the in-between is not. The same applies to heterosexuality and homosexuality where the first is the one which is natural and the second is not. Heterosexuality is natural because it results in bringing new life into the world while homosexuality then results in non-life. Seeing as the in-between life and death is un-natural and homosexuality creates non-life, the link between these two is naturally the vampire. Where sex between heterosexuals results in a child, the sucking of blood results in a vampire child, regardless of the sex of either vampire or victim (Case 200). Therefore it is possible for Louis and Lestat to create a child of their own, Claudia.

As in most dysfunctional relationships, the child is the one who suffers, and Claudia is not an exception. Though she blames both of her ‘fathers’ for making her what she is, she hates Lestat for it and in a fit of rebellion, she decides to kill him so that she and Louis can
leave him behind to go to Europe in search of their roots and the answers they believe Lestat is holding back. However, when they are finally free of Lestat neither feel like it has done them much good. Louis tells the reporter, “I had perceived in [Claudia] certain changes which made me at once aware she was Lestat’s daughter as well as my own” (169). And Claudia herself realizes her mistake and tells Louis that “‘[a]s much as I hated him, with him we were… complete’”, to which Louis replies“‘[n]o, only you were complete…’ […] ‘Because there were two of us, one on either side of you, from the beginning’” (199). Apparently, no matter how bad things were before, they were still better because the three of them were a unit – a family.

When Louis meets and falls in love with Armand, Claudia, just like a child jealous of a stepparent fights to keep Louis away from him and with her.

‘[T]hat 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. Turn around, I’ll make you look at me with those eyes that want him, I’ll make you listen…And he can have you then!’

‘It’s you who will not share me with him, it’s you who wants every drop of that love. […] He overpowers you, he disregards you, and it’s you who wish him dead the way that you killed Lestat.’ (265)

And when forced to make a choice between his love and his daughter, Louis cannot do anything but choose Claudia. Claudia, who knows that she cannot make it on her own and that Louis’ real affections lay with Armand now, finds herself a substitute for Louis in Madeleine and thus frees Louis from his bond to her. Madeleine is the missing piece in Claudia’s life, the mother that neither parent in her queer family could take the place of. According to Gelder, the search for a mother is something which can also be seen in cultural terms, in Louis’ and Claudia’s “journey to Paris – ‘the mother of New Orleans’” (113).
Another scene which has a focus on family is the last time Louis meets Lestat. It is set in a very domestic setting where Louis interrupts Lestat’s new companion who has come to offer his maker a baby. While talking to Lestat about the past they share, Louis is rocking the crying baby to calm it down. Later, when he has said good-bye to Lestat he returns the baby safely to its crib. Even though either he or Lestat could have feed upon the child, they both made a choice not to. The scene shows that Claudia had made an impact on both vampires. While they once turned her, then no more than five years old, being her ‘parents’ has changed them. Even the ultimate predator who has once been a parent will not harm an infant.

‘Gender-free’ love

Gelder writes that a vampire is a “[c]itizen of the world’, a figure to whom boundaries […] meant very little” (111). The claim is a valid one. Vampires know no boundaries; they can travel through the social classes, all over the world and even beyond death. Is it then not only natural that sexuality is not an issue either? Auerbach argues that “[a]s unnatural actors, vampires represent freedom from activity – even, it seems, from sexuality” (1995: 181).

To Rice’s vampires, gender is not a major factor in choosing lovers, as Gagnier points out:

While the vampire stories of Polidori, Le Fanui, and Stoker are all sexual – both hetero- and homosexual in nature – Rice extends the erotic nature of the vampire by emphasizing the androgyny of vampiric relationships. Companions can be of either sex, and the ecstasy of the kill derives solely from the kill and in spite of gender. (303)

What instead seems to be important in the different relationships is power. Though Louis probably was not homosexual before he was turned, he was still drawn to Lestat and the power he held as a vampire. That kind of power is also what draws him to, and makes him fall for Armand. The vampires can love anyone and though Rice’s vampires are not capable of
having actual sex it does not mean that there are no romantic feelings or attraction between them. While grieving for Claudia, Louis tells the reporter that he thought about how he might have found comfort in Armand had they both been men: “I might have fallen helpless in his arms finally, the need to share some common grief so strong, so consuming” (315), clearly stating that had it been possible for him to be intimate with his lover, he would have been.

However, Gagnier also claims that it makes no difference whether the victim is male or female, that it is just the thrill of the kill that matters and that is not the case. Not only does the sex of the victim matter, but also the way in which they kill their pray. Louis tells the reporter that for Lestat “[a] fresh young girl, that was his favorite food the first of the evening; but the triumphant kill for Lestat was a young man” (41). He also tells him that Lestat “played with his victims, made friends with them, seduced them into trusting and liking him, even loving him, before he killed” (127).

In *Sexual Rhetoric in the Works of Joss Whedon: New Essays*, two of the contributing authors, Alyson R. Buckman and Kathryn Webber, use Dr. Alfred Kinsey, an American biologist, and the so called Kinsey Scale to explain the sexuality of the characters in the TV-shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, including the two main vampires, Angel and Spike. Buckman argues that the “triangle (Angel-Buffy-Spike) enables a continuum of sexuality in which men can be both/ and rather than either/ or, i.e., in love with both [Buffy] and each other, in the mode of Kinsey’s continuum” (78). The Kinsey Scale measures the human sexuality from zero to six. Someone who is a zero on the scale is completely heterosexual while a six is someone who is completely homosexual. According to Kinsey almost no one is at either end of the scale; instead most people are somewhere in-between. “Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely
deals with discrete categories [...] The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects” (Kinsey et.al 639). He further claims that:

While emphasizing the continuity of the gradations between exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual histories, it has seemed desirable to develop some sort of classification which could be based on the relative amounts of heterosexual and homosexual experience or response in each history [...] An individual may be assigned a position on this scale, for each period in his life (ibid)

Rice’s vampires, as has been stated before, are neither homosexual nor are they heterosexual, they are instead transcending gender and sexuality. Louis is an evident example of how someone moves throughout the scale over the course of their lifetime. As mentioned, Louis does not appear to be homosexual while human, but when he is turned he enters first into two relationships with other males.

Continuing on the same line as Kinsey, Garber too wants more flowing between the two opposites on the scale. She asks the question:

[w]hy do we resist the idea that erotic life is all part of the same set of pleasures, that there is only sexuality, of which the ‘sexualities’ we gave so effectively and efficiently define are equally permissible and gratifying aspects? Because to do so would threatened the social structure of which ‘civilization’ and ‘society’ are built. (64)

Vampires provide a good way to accept sexuality as just sexuality without having to define it as either homo- or heterosexuality. The world of the vampires is not our world; it is not the world Garber talks about, which makes it all right to bend the rules since there is no fear of it affecting the “social structure of which ‘civilization’ and ‘society’ are built.”

Conclusion
The vampire has always been used as a symbol for sexuality, maybe especially homosexuality. Like some homosexuals, Rice’s vampires live two separate lives – one natural (the mortal one that they live by day) and one unnatural (the vampiric one that they are now living by night). Just like sexuality is more or less important or more or less easy to accept for some people, Louis and Lestat view their vampirism in different ways as well. Louis has a hard time accepting what Lestat has turned him into. He has a hard time letting go of his mortal nature, something which annoys Lestat who has fully embraced being a vampire. The most evident example of their different attitudes about being a vampire is the killings. Lestat enjoys everything about the kill, from the picking and seduction of his victims to the actual killing of them. He makes the most of it and draws it out as long as he can before he finally strikes. Louis on the other hand kills only out of need. Though he enjoys the actual kill itself, he is plagued with guilt about what he is about to do or has already done.

*Interview* is overflowing with homoeroticism. The language Rice uses is both sexual and sensual, leaving little to the imagination even though it is not always explicate. She uses a lot of similes and metaphors to paint the world of the vampires, and often they are sexual in nature. But it is not only the language that is suggestive; there are also the relationships between the vampires. Louis has a love/hate relationship with his maker Lestat. Even though he claims to hate him, his actions and thoughts about Lestat suggest he harbors other feelings for him as well. Louis’ relationship with Armand (at least in the beginning) is more straightforward – he loves Armand and Armand loves him. After Claudia’s death, even though Louis chooses to stay with Armand, it is only Lestat who can evoke any type of emotion in him, something that even Armand is aware of.

Louis’ biggest questions are where vampire came from and what their purpose is, questions he finds there are no answers to. Auerbach has a theory about why there are no answers to be found. She claims that it is because the basis for their origin is not to be found
in literature but in real life – namely in the relationship between Lord Byron and Polidori. It is not until Louis finds and falls in love with Armand that he begins to accept his vampirism. That being said, he is still a far cry from embracing it.

Family is important to both Louis and Lestat, in their mortal lives as well as in their vampyric existence. They keep each other dependent on one another by withholding what is important to the other; in Louis’ case it is money while Lestat does not want to reveal what he knows (or does not know) about being a vampire. When Lestat feels that Louis is slipping away from him he turns Claudia into a vampire, making them a family and ensuring that Louis will remain by his side. The two of them do become somewhat closer after the ‘birth’ of Claudia and Lestat especially loves the picture the three of them make when they are seen in public together – Claudia and her two fathers. Louis and Lestat each take part in ‘raising’ her and like any human child would she too adopts traits from both of her parents. But the consequences of a dysfunctional family seems to be the same in a vampyric relationship as it is in a human one and Claudia ends up being the one who suffers for Lestat’s rash decision to make her. As she ‘grows up’, the natural questions of where she came from – especially how Louis and Lestat made her together – arise. When she gets no satisfying answer, she turns on Lestat, whom she believes to be the one most responsible for making her a vampire.

After having severed their ties with Lestat, Louis and Claudia set out to Europe to find their roots. Their journey leads them to Paris, the ‘Mother of New Orleans’ (203), and Armand. Armand challenges the bond between Louis and Claudia but in the end Louis cannot leave his child for his lover. It is Claudia who comes up with a solution for their problem by making Louis turn Madeleine into a vampire. Madeleine takes the place of Claudia’s mother – the one who dies shortly before Claudia was turned and that neither Louis nor Lestat could be for her. Even after Claudia is gone, her impact on the two male vampires can still be seen. The final time Louis meets Lestat, he is gently rocking a crying baby, which has been brought to
Lestat as food, before safely placing it back in its crib – showing that the paternal instinct is still alive in both vampires.

Vampires do not have to respect any kind of boundaries – not even sexual. Rice’s vampires are no exception. Though they are not capable of performing actual sexual acts, they still feel attraction and love for each other. They are also perfect examples for how the Kinsey Scale works. Louis for instance is (most likely) heterosexual and therefore in the lower digits on the scale during his mortal life. However, as he meets Lestat and is turned into a vampire, he moves further up the scale, towards homosexuality. He climbs even higher on the scale after he has fallen in love with Armand.

One of the reasons vampires are such a rich source for homosexual (sub)text and homoeroticism is that they inhabit a world like ours – but still very different. By having them act like gender is not an issue when it comes to love in their world, it can be accepted in without having to disturb the social structures of our own world.

This thesis has only scraped the surface on the issues it has dealt with. There are many more questions to be asked and a tone of more passages in Interview that could have been addressed instead. However, I do believe that I have managed to point out some of the most interesting parts of the novel, some more obvious in their link with homosexuality and homoeroticism than others. One possible way to continue analyzing Interview through queer theory would be to take a closer look at the character of Claudia and her relationship with her two ‘fathers’.
Works Cited


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