The Life of Anne Rice and Her Attempts to Cheat Death ~Timothy M. Yates

Timothy M. Yates wrote his paper “The Life of Anne Rice and Her Attempts to Cheat Death” for Dr. Sturr’s English Senior Seminar (ENG 49091). Students were asked to find an aspect of an author’s life and analyze it in comparison to that author’s work.

The life of Anne (O’Brien) Rice has been often surrounded by death, and has therefore existed in a repetitive state of bereavement. The theme of mortality is one that Rice has been unable to escape considering she lost her mother, first born child, and husband all before ‘their time.’ Rice gained fame and fortune through her characters who have proven themselves quite capable of cheating death through vampirism. Yet, in order for Rice to cheat death as her most famous characters have, she has surprisingly had to turn her back on the style of writing through which she obtained her fame.

The novels of Anne (O’Brien) Rice are autobiographical in nature. The way in which these works may be understood is to understand the cyclical process that is involved with this undertaking. A common focus of literary biography is the practice of looking at an author’s texts in regards to his/her life in order to gain understanding of both the life and the works that are a part of that life. Only by looking at and understanding both, may claims be made regarding the existing connections between an author’s life and his/her work. Katherine Ramsland, in her article about literary biography entitled “On Being Witness,” discusses this element of studying an author’s life and works stating, “Facts are malleable and the way they are interpreted will evolve with changing contexts; any aspect of a subject’s life can be exaggerated out of proportion, minimized, ignored, or suppressed, depending on the biographer’s overt or covert agenda” (94). Sometimes biographers will use the life events of an author to historically discredit, or defame that author (for instance Shakespeare didn’t really write this text because…). You will not find a hidden agenda within these pages, only claims that arose while becoming familiar with the author’s life events and written works. Granted, the scope of this assessment is limited due to the fact that Rice’s library includes 22 novels, not including the works written under her two other pen names (which, once totaled is too large of a volume of work to be analyzed and discussed within the bounds of this assignment). Yet, the analysis that is presented here is a strong starting point for the lessons that can be learned about Anne Rice and her written work through comparison.

Life Events that Contributed to, but Preceded Her First Novel

Rice was born and raised in New Orleans. Her family stressed the ideals of her Irish-Catholic upbringing, and because of this Rice attended mass almost daily from infancy through young adulthood. Raised a devoted Catholic, Anne questioned and challenged many issues regarding her family’s chosen faith. One of her early impressions regarding her faith according to the Dictionary of Literary Biography is that, “O’Brien’s [Rice’s] devotion to the Catholic Church was complicated by her sensuous response to the mass and its symbolism. The conflict between pleasure and fear of punishment led to masochistic fantasies she later developed in her erotic novels” (par. 5). Rice not only challenged the various ‘holy’ aspects of religion, but the unholy aspects as well: “There’s always been this terrible dilemma in Christianity conceiving of the devil as not learning anything. I mean he’s supposed to be extraordinarily clever, an angel, and yet for thousands of years he doesn’t learn anything?” (Mulvey-Roberts par. 43). These types of questions that Rice was beginning to ask at a young age would only gain potency when her life would be touched by traumatic events.

Rice’s mother, who was the family member that encouraged Anne to read and be creative, and called her “my little genius,” died in 1955. The death of Rice’s mother would be the first taste in a long line of human mortality that would have a profound affect on her life, “This devastating loss contributed to a fear of death that influenced her adult life and writing” (DLB par 6). This premature loss of her mother to alcoholism would give birth to the distance that would only grow between Rice and the Catholic Church. Upon reaching adulthood, this aforementioned distance would continue to grow when she met, fell in love with, and married Stan Rice, an atheist poet.
"While in college, [Rice’s] curiosity led her to explore ideas that were contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church" (DLB par. 7). Life, for this newly married couple, would remain “happy” for a few years, before Anne would be haunted by bereavement once more. Seventeen years would pass between the loss of Rice’s mother and the next loss that would affect her life, yet this loss would affect her life even more than before:

On 21 September 1966, the Rice’s first baby, Michelle, was born.... In the summer of 1970, her full attention turned to Michelle, who was diagnosed with acute granulocytic leukemia.... Rice found no way to save her child. Michelle died in 1972. After losing her mother and her daughter, Rice no longer believed in God. She turned towards humanism, seeking goodness separate from religion, and she began to place more value in human experience than in abstract ideas (DLB par. 10).

Through this period of bereavement over the loss of her first child, Rice drank daily and began to write what would become not only her first, but most famous novel, Interview with the Vampire, which began her Vampire Chronicles.

Aspects of Rice’s Life and Persona Intertwined with Her Fiction

The characters that Rice would create would become her compass to guide herself out of depression as she would begin mixing her life in with her pages of that first novel. Rice’s characters within her Vampire Chronicles continue to struggle with aspects of the Christian faith that they were exposed to before they cast aside their mortal coils and stepped boldly into immortal lives as vampires. There are parallels regarding struggles of faith between the lives of her vampire characters and her own life. Rice and her characters wish to escape death, and continue to adhere to moral codes that survive even after belief in or dedication to religion has been cast aside. In addition, Rice has lived off the sale of these works where her characters, has cheated death by living off the deaths of others, and struggle with the conscience that they must cast aside daily in order to merely survive. Also, it is quite possible that these characters were created completely from Rice’s own desire to cheat death herself.

In the article “Interviewing the Author of Interview with the Vampire” by Marie Mulvey-Roberts, Rice comments on the process of creating her first work of published fiction: “It was a very instinctive thing to write the novel, an instinctive thing to become that character Louis in the first book, and start talking about being a vampire” (par. 18). Rice and others who have written about her, discuss how autobiographical aspects recurrently appear within her fiction. For instance, the Dictionary of Literary Biography makes this statement regarding Rice’s written work:

Rice puts herself into her novels, allowing characters to live her experiences and voice her thoughts. The history of her writing is thus the history of her own journey of self-discovery. In fact, Rice has described her writing as a therapeutic process that has helped bring together a personality fragmented by several losses in her early years” (par. 1).

These biographical elements and moral lessons of a cast-aside religion have crept into and affected Rice’s work.

For Rice, it may have been easier to indulge in her creative fiction than to face her grief over the loss of her daughter in full force. Rice, by distancing herself from her grief, could decide how her character Louis would cope with similar life events that would also help the author. The characters Rice would create in that first novel would facilitate a survival of the grief process that this author has been unable to escape.

Louis, the main character from Rice’s first novel Interview with the Vampire, is the first character that Rice introduces in her series who struggles with issues of faith and morality. Louis tells his interviewer the chain of events that led up to his transformation nearly 200 years earlier. He reveals that even though he and his brother had been raised Catholic, he did not understand how potent his dear brother’s faith was: “Prayer was what mattered to him, prayer and his leather-bound lives of the saints” (Rice, Interview 6). Louis, in narration, speaks of how his brother’s life changed because of his faith. He no longer wished
to be part of the family business within their southern plantation, and he had decided to give his life to prayer and to God. Louis discusses how his brother’s life became consumed by religion, so much “That in his love for God, he had perhaps gone too far” (Rice, Interview 7).

His brother began forsaking all other aspects of his life in order to spend more time in prayer. He stopped working, eating, and sleeping. Finally, Louis engages him in an argument in which his brother claims to have seen visions of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, and thus a holy figure within the Catholic faith. Louis had but one response to his brother’s claim—disbelief. “I was Catholic, I believed in saints. I knew their symbols, their names. But I didn’t, couldn’t believe my brother. Not only did I not believe he saw visions, I couldn’t entertain the notion for a moment” (Rice, Interview 8-9). After their argument, his brother, who remains unnamed, had a mysterious fall down their stairs, broke his neck and died.

Louis hints towards two reasons of what led him towards the damnation of an immortal life of vampirism, his disbelief that his brother had been actually touched by a holy figure (the Virgin Mary, or God), and that someone like his brother who wished to be so close to God could suffer such an unexplained fate. It should be noted here the similarity between Rice and Louis. Rice (after the loss of her mother/daughter) and Louis (after the loss of his brother) both turned their backs to God because they had lost loved ones. After his brother’s death, Louis commented on his existence saying, “I saw my life as if I stood apart from it, the vanity, the self-serving, the constant fleeing from one petty annoyance after another, the lip service to God, and the Virgin and a host of saints whose names filled my prayer books, none of whom made the slightest difference in a narrow, materialistic, and selfish existence” (Rice, Interview 14). When this issue of human mortality was reinforced for Louis, similar to Rice, he turned his back on God. Indeed, he wished for damnation, a wish that the vampire Lestat was more than willing to grant by making him an immortal.

Lestat, the vampire who infected Louis into vampirism, could also be called his creator since he made Louis into a creature that was no longer human. But Lestat, unlike the creator from Catholic ideology, mocks his creation for his continued weakness. He rebukes Louis, saying, “You whining coward of a vampire who prowls the night killing alley cats and rats and staring for hours at candles as if they were people and standing in the rain like a zombie until your clothes are drenched and you smell like old wardrobe trunks in attics and have the look of a baffled idiot at the zoo” (Rice, Interview 50-51). Lestat feels as though Louis is a weak vampire, killing animals—not people—in order to survive. In return, Louis resents his creator (once again similar to Rice) stating “I hated him and wanted to leave him; yet could I leave him?” (Rice, Interview 63). Lestat, the creator of Louis, also speaks his mind regarding his view of the Creator from Catholicism:

God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we; for not creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms. (Interview 88).

These passages serve as a parallel to those who struggle with their Christian faith and wish to turn their backs on their creator yet fear what the repercussions of that disobedience may be.

Any genre (science fiction, horror, romance) typically has various rules or codes to which the characters must adhere. Rice’s Vampire Chronicles are no different. In terms of the rules of vampirism that Rice establishes, Lestat, from the perspective of Louis, is a glutton. Rice’s rules indicate that a vampire within her works can survive by taking one victim per night if that victim is drained to the point of death, yet Lestat takes small amounts of blood from several victims per night, sampling blood as though he is a wine connoisseur. But Lestat, who mocks Louis’ weakness, reveals his own weakness towards human life. Lestat (who appears to not care for humans other than for proper nutrition) is revealed to have been caring for his now bedridden deaf and blind father. When Lestat and Louis discover that the workers of Louis’s plantation know that these men are not human and that they must flee, they realize that they cannot escape if they have to transport Lestat’s father. So Lestat requests, “Kill him... I know he’s my father! That’s why you have to kill him. I can’t kill him! If I could, I would have done it a long time ago, damn him!” (Rice, Interview
This passage shows that Lestat, who claims to not possess any feelings towards his kills, still feels as though he must adhere to a blending of the fifth (thou shall honor thy mother and father), and sixth (thou shall not kill) commandments from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Even though Louis turns his back on his mortal life as a human being, aspects of that life, conscience and guilt for instance, still flow through his inhumane body. Louis had to turn his back on his Catholic upbringing in order to be reborn into vampirism, but the ideology of his now abandoned faith continued to seep through. After completing the act of his first kill, Louis states, “I understood the difference between us. For me the experience of killing had been cataclysmic. So had that of sucking Lestat’s wrist” (Rice, Interview 31). This passage above represents how Louis feels contempt for the manner in which he must now survive, through the death of humanity. Nevertheless, as his skills as a predator of the night grow, so does his disdain for conventions of human life and worship of an immortal God. He comments on how when he met with his sister after his transformation he, “would see her sweet and palpable before me, a shimmering, precious creature soon to grow old, soon to die, soon to lose these moments that in their intangibility promised to us, wrongly… wrongly, an immortality” (Rice, Interview 38). Louis (similar to Rice) would be tortured by death even though he was invulnerable to it. Louis would discuss how his dreams of death would continue to torture him “I dreamed of my brother, for instance, that he was near me in some state between life and death, calling to me for help” (Rice, Interview 76).

Even though his consciousness of morality is still evident within his persona, he still curses the practice of humanity believing in immortals that would grant them an everlasting life through faith and dedication to ideology. Also, it must be noted that the cursing of this ideology by Louis illustrates that he is not fully free from this convention.

A third and final character from Interview with the Vampire to whom connections can be made to Rice’s life is the character of Claudia. It is believed by some that not only are a man and woman solely involved in the conception of a child, but that God (the Creator) also has a key role. As mentioned earlier, Lestat can be viewed as Louis’s creator, which could also be said regarding Claudia since it was Lestat who infected her with vampirism. Claudia was Lestat’s gift to Louis that nevertheless served a selfish purpose. Lestat knew that Louis needed a companion that would not approach vampirism as lavishly as Lestat does, and that Louis would be less likely to abandon him if he was forced to take her with him.

When Louis first meets Claudia (in human form) the purpose of this meeting is for Louis to feed. Yet, when he approaches her he “Feel[s] such pity for her… Why do I wish to touch her tiny, soft arms, hold her now on my knee as I am doing, feel her bend her head to my chest as I gently touch the satin hair?” (73). Even though he pities her, Louis gives in to his urge for human blood, yet notices while feeding on the five-year-old that she had “not the heart of a man or an animal, but the rapid, tenacious heart of the child, beating harder and harder, refusing to die, beating like a tiny fist beating on the door, crying ‘I will not die, I will not die, I cannot die, I cannot die…’” (74). It is noted through narration that Claudia’s heartbeat was too strong and that Louis could not kill her without weakening himself. He abandoned her when he noticed that Lestat had been watching him, to mock that for his human kill Louis picks a young girl. Lestat would go back to the filthy hospital for the poor that Claudia’s body would be taken to in order to claim her as his daughter to only kill and infect her.

Claudia is a powerful killer within this text. Louis comments on her abilities as a predator, “little child she was, but also [a] fierce killer now capable of the ruthless pursuit of blood with all a child’s demanding” (Rice, Interview 96). Fierce predator that Claudia is, she struggles with the fact that even though she may mature as a hunter her physical form would never surpass that of a five-year-old child. Claudia will never grow taller, develop breasts, or enjoy living as a woman; therefore, her image is forever unchanged by time. The same could be said regarding Rice’s daughter, Michelle, mentioned above. Michelle died of leukemia at the age of six, and Rice’s image of her would also remain unchanged by time. Michelle would never grow old, develop, or mature; Michelle’s image, similar to Claudia’s, would forever remain unchanged.

Like Louis, Claudia would resent her creator because of his nature and for the information that he would continue to withhold. Her resentment and later malice towards her creator would lead to her death.
When a vampire coven would learn how vivid her hatred of her creator becomes (due to the fact that various vampires have varying gifts including mind reading) they would sentence Claudia and Madeleine (a female companion/mother figure that Claudia requested of Lestat and Louis) to death by locking them in a room that would be consumed with daylight at dawn. When Louis discovers these tragic events and sees Claudia’s and Madeleine’s ashen bodies he states: Mother and daughter in one another’s arms… these two lying under the gentle rain were Madeleine and Claudia, and Madeleine’s lovely red hair mingled with the gold of Claudia’s hair, which stirred and glistened in the wind that sucked through the open doorway… and the hand that clutched at the child was whole like a mummy’s hand. But the child, the ancient one, my Claudia, was ashes. (Rice, Interview 301)

The death of Claudia and Madeleine can be viewed two varying ways. The first way in which these plot events can be viewed is that the death of this pair could be symbolic of the deaths of Rice’s mother and daughter. The other way that these events could be interpreted is that a part of Rice died with her daughter and that is why she wrote that Madeleine, Claudia’s vampire mother figure and companion, would die with Claudia.

These examples from within Rice’s first book, Interview with the Vampire, are but a mere sampling of the textual evidence within her work that displays how her characters survive through the convention of sin, and struggle with their conscience, guilt, and recurring elements of morality.

To illustrate that this concept of continual morality is a reoccurring theme in novels by Rice we will view another book from her Vampire Chronicles, Memnoch the Devil. In this novel, we gain a view of Lestat that readers were not offered in Interview with the Vampire, Lestat’s view of himself. Lestat’s self image is that, “I maintain myself as morally complex, spiritually tough, and aesthetically relevant” (Rice, Memnoch 2). The basis for the plot of this novel is that the ‘sin business’ has become simply too busy for the devil to handle on his own, and that he now needs an accomplice. Since the devil is fully aware of Lestat’s evil deeds that have occurred since his early beginnings in 18th century France, he knows that Lestat is the one other being that could possibly become a formidable ally. In order to prove his identity, Memnoch transports Lestat back in time to events that have forever impacted the world of sin. One place that Memnoch transports Lestat is to the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. In the article, “Who Do You Love? Anne Rice’s Vampires and Their Moral Transition,” Kathleen Rout states, “In Memnoch the Devil, he [Lestat] visited the ancient past and literally drank the blood of Christ; he went literally to Hell and questioned the reason for his existence” (474). After Lestat witnesses Christ carrying the burden of the cross, the human side of this supernatural being discloses the shame and disappointment he feels for his own actions over the course of nearly 300 years. At this point it must be noted that Lestat (similar to Rice with her religious background and works of fiction) has witnessed two types of immortality in the making. Lestat has now witnessed the transition that fellow vampires make when rising from the dead into vampirism, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ into immortality.

Over the years, Rice would continue to shape and polish her world of vampires, and their moral dilemmas. Lestat, in later books, would discover a vampire community in which “the official foreign policy of vampires towards humans is to forswear the killing of all but the Evil Doers, themselves murderers of innocent human beings” (Rout 477). Rice has single-handedly revitalized the traditional vampire legend with the ten books of her Vampire Chronicles. As Rout states, “Rice has moved the vampire novel 180 degrees from Bram Stoker’s Dracula. No longer are vampires mindlessly evil, but they have adopted a moral code that allows them to coexist with the ‘good humans’ as ‘good vampires’” (478). Rice has been able, in some circles, to change how fictional beings like vampires have been perceived, due to the elements of morality that she has displayed through characters like Louis, and (at times) Lestat.

In an article entitled “The Gospel According to Anne,” David Gates from Newsweek states that Rice’s characters, “whose compulsive, conscience-stricken evildoers reflect her long spiritual unease” (http://www.msnbc.msn.com). This theme of spiritual unease, even though it inspired many works of fiction, was continuing to torture her as it had done since the death of her mother. Even in Memnoch, Rice is able
to project an idea that maybe even the devil isn’t that bad of a guy, one more symbol of her struggle with her own spirituality.

The Troubling Events that Showed Anne the Light

From 1998-2004 Rice, unlike her immortal vampire characters, has been reminded of the limitations of mortality once more; Rice’s experiences with death and near death experiences may very well have contributed to the change that she has made within her career in fiction. Even though she has been writing about those characters for nearly three decades, it may have been the changes within her own life that cemented the changes within her fiction. A number of events would soon swiftly change Rice’s life:

In December 1998 Rice acted on her growing desire to return to the Catholic Church [a place she had not been since she was 18 years old]. She was drawn back by a yearning to experience Communion [the symbolic act for what her character Lestat had actually done] and by the mystery of the Incarnation, the concept of God taking on human form in Jesus Christ. Rice went to confession, received Communion, and had her marriage to Stan Rice blessed in the Catholic Church. Two days after her Catholic wedding, Rice slipped into a diabetic coma and almost died. (DLB par. 56).

This reinforcement of her own mortality, instead of the mortality of those around her, “got the ball rolling” so to speak in regards to the changes that would occur within her life, and how her career as a writer of fiction would also require change in order to continue. Four years later another traumatic event would touch her life:

On December 9 2002 Stan Rice [her husband of 41 years] died of a brain tumor. As Anne Rice informed her readers of her husband’s death that night, she expressed the hope that whatever pain she suffered would help her be more sensitive to others, and she offered support to struggling writers. Speaking on her fan phone line about future plans, she stated, “My direction will be so strange that many may abandon me, but who knows?” (DLB par. 68).

Both of these traumatic events mentioned above occurred within a four-year period of Rice’s life; surely, these events (a near death experience, and the death of a spouse) had a profound effect on the author who is known for writing anywhere from one to two novels per year.

Within the article, “Gender Differences in Emotional Processing Among Bereaved Older Adults,” it states, “The death of any loved one is typically extremely painful, but the loss of a spouse has been found to be the most difficult for older adults... [and]... the survivor’s social, emotional, and cognitive worlds are typically severely disrupted and require reorganization” (Guinther, Segal, Bogaards, 15). One typical reorganization that typically occurs when an individual ages (or suffers a great loss) is a rededication to religion, and religious principles. Rice, who, as noted above, had changed the world of vampirism 180 degrees, had now made the same change regarding her faith in God. Is it merely coincidence that when Rice’s life would require such “reorganization” that she, the writer of conscience struggling evildoers, would then decide, “from now on I would write only for the Lord” (http://www.msnbc.msn.com)?

In order to understand the stress and trauma that would have affected Rice regarding this loss that brought about vast change, we must take a closer look at the common characteristics of individuals who suffer similar circumstances. In an article entitled, “Death of a Spouse: Illusory Basic Assumptions and Continuation of Bonds,” Ayelet S. Reisman discusses the needs of individuals who have lost a spouse to continue a bond with that person even after his/her death. Reisman states, “Higher order distress is created when people discover that, in fact, their abstract fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world and themselves are illusory...it places a trembling animal at the mercy of the entire cosmos and the problem of making sense of it” (446). It was discussed earlier that Rice has struggled with her beliefs and morals for the majority of her life, these traumatic events which occurred could have only intensified her personal struggle (which had been based since the age of 14 on a distrust in God and organized religion due to the deaths of loved ones).
Rice’s work involves multiple beings who are immortal and this aspect that appears in her writing may very well be a written wish for her own desire for eternal life. Reisman also states that, “Indeed, it is well documented in the literature that there is an increase in mortality rates among older adults following the death of a spouse, as well as higher suicide rates” (448). When Rice’s mortality was reinforced by her own medical struggles and the horrific loss of her husband to cancer, it is highly possible that her ideology about this world changed during her “reorganization” period. Reisman also mentions that most individuals who lose a spouse wish to continue a bond after the loss occurs, “Maintaining bonds with the deceased spouse is an attempt to cope with the loss of both the spouse and the “normal” illusory basic assumptions” (446).

Many are aware of the idea within Judeo-Christian ideology that by believing in God wholeheartedly that one can obtain eternal life within the Kingdom of Heaven. Rice once stated in an interview “I don’t think I could turn down immortality” (Muley-Roberts 54). Rice’s rededication to Catholicism may be her way to cheat death, as several of her characters have done by converting to vampirism. Another aspect within Reisman’s article discusses when events like a loss of a spouse occur we become aware of how vulnerable we truly are: “those who have experienced a great loss lose any sense of security they may have had in the past. The world becomes a dangerous place in which there is disaster round every corner” (448). This quote reinforces another aspect of Christian/Catholic ideology where we (humanity) must realize that the events of the world are out of our hands and that it is faith that will allow for each and every one of us to prevail through the trials of life on Earth. Therefore, what better way could Rice continue a bond with her lost husband than by claiming that she will never return to her vampire-based, murder-filled works of fiction that had made her famous; consequently, deciding to now only write to glorify God. Rice has hinted at the fact that the majority of her work, even though it contains elements of morality, still glorifies sin, and that in order to glorify God she can not continue to write such material similar to her previous works.

Now, Rice has already published a religious novel entitled, Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt, a book that is one title of a planned trilogy based on the life of Jesus Christ. The objective of this planned trilogy is to tell the story of Christ from birth to death, and then beyond death through resurrection. Those of Christian faith know that very little is known of the life of Jesus of Nazareth from the ages of 18-30 years; therefore, Rice once again may face criticism for the stories she may tell in the years to come. Yet, in decades past, Rice received fame for glorifying the immortal lives of immoral or evil beings who survived solely on the basis of the daily practice of sin. Now, after the changes that have occurred within the last eight years of Rice’s life, she may receive a new kind of fame. By consciously choosing to not return to her dark works, and by deciding to write to only glorify God, (In this case adhering to the Christian ideology that the word of God must be spread) Rice will still be writing about immortals, something she has done since the beginning of her career. The difference now is the fact that by writing about, and glorifying the life of Jesus of Nazareth, one of the world’s most recognized figures that embodies all that is “good,” she may be one step closer to achieving the everlasting life she has apparently desired. Through this change of lifestyle and career Rice may vary well be able to continue the bond that she had with her beloved husband that was recently broken by the trials of her mortal existence.

In an author’s note that appears at the end of Rice’s most recent work, Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt, she makes several declarations about her faith, and the journey that led to the completion of this novel. In regards to why events occurred that cleared a path for Rice back to the Catholic Church, she states: “Now why did this happen to me? Why did this love and trust [for and in God respectively] fill my heart at that particular moment in time? The honest answer is: I don’t know” (345). In addition, Rice, who now claims to understand more than she once did, is still questioning. Addressing the issue of why she was “given” this purpose to write about Jesus during her husband’s illness and death she states “Was I given the gift of purpose before this tragedy so that it would sustain me through it? I don’t know” (328). Another strange yet noteworthy quote from the author’s note is when Rice, who claims to have changed her writing 180 degrees makes a claim that Jesus, an immortal of the Christian faith, is similar to but better than the immortals she is accustomed to writing about stating, “After all, is Christ Our Lord not the ultimate super-
natural hero, the ultimate outsider, the ultimate immortal of them all” (338). Rice makes this claim hoping that her readers who fell in love with her work based on immortal lives will follow her on her journey of fictionalizing the life of Jesus.

Katherine Ramsland, Rice’s biographer, stated in her article that “I was free to present her from a variety of perspectives, some of which did not agree with her own” (97). It is quite possible that Anne Rice would not agree with the claims being made by this essay either. To reiterate, Rice, throughout her life has been obsessed with, as well as having maintained, a paralyzing fear of death. Also, Rice’s main characters were able to escape from death (including her new works based on the life and resurrection of Jesus), an ability that she would wish for not only for herself, but for loved ones who have died before their times. Finally, if Rice is unaware of why this renewed love for God came upon her, and unaware why this purpose (of writing to glorify God) was bestowed upon her, than rededicating her life to God allows Rice to cheat death (just as the majority of her characters have) as she adheres to principles that will lay the foundation for her journey from Earth to Heaven. After all, Rice did say, “I don’t think I could turn down immortality” (Roberts-Mulvey 54).

Works Cited


