Lestat tells Louis to look at the world through "vampire eyes," and, although the film never explicitly shares that perspective with us, the camera's own detached, clinical gaze gives us some idea of what that vision must be like. Gorgeous as "Interview with the Vampire" is, it seems weary, jaded, disturbingly practiced, as if it had been hitting the same vein for too long. Without the thrill of the chase, seduction is just another kind of consumption, and the romantic allure of the vampire seems like nothing but a slick come-on, a travesty of passion. "Interview with the Vampire" doesn't sweep you off your feet, because you sense that it's looking right through you.

THE New Zealand film "Heavenly Creatures" tells the true story of a pair of Christchurch teen-agers, Pauline Parker (Melanie Lynskey) and Juliet Hulme (Kate Winslet), who murdered Pauline's mother, Honora (Sarah Peirse), in 1954. (This case, a famous one in New Zealand, received worldwide publicity earlier this year, when the well-known mystery writer Anne Perry revealed that she was in fact Juliet Hulme.) The movie, like "Interview with the Vampire," focusses on a desperately unhealthy relationship and tries to explore the nature of the connection between love and violence; what happens to these imaginative girls is a real-life illustration of vampire bonding. Pauline and Juliet have the sort of passionate friendship that unhappy adolescents are prone to: it's a union that begins with shared interests and mutual infatuation but develops into an embattled us-against-the-world alliance. Like Louis and Lestat, they're so obsessed with each other that nothing outside the hermetic little universe of their relationship has any reality for them. And the feeling that other people don't count is a handy rationale for murder; Honora Parker dies because she threatens to break up the girls' friendship, to tear down the idyllic refuge that they've created for themselves.

Pauline Parker's diaries, which are quoted in the movie's voice-over narration, indicate that she actually saw herself and Juliet Hulme as examples of a rare, superior species; the phrase "heavenly creatures" is hers, and she doesn't intend it ironically. What makes the story so powerfully suggestive is that the girls' relationship illuminates some startling, and painfully recognizable, features of the landscape of adolescent despair. Bright, lonely teen-agers like Pauline and Juliet do tend to wear their enthusiasms as armor against adults and insensitive peers. These girls elaborate their crushes on celebrities—James Mason, Orson Welles, and, preëminently, Mario Lanza—into what is virtually a secret religion, a cult whose rigid doctrines only they understand. They collaborate on operas and florid novels, and address each other by the names of their characters; occasionally, they retreat to a fantasy kingdom, which they call the Fourth World and seem to regard as a realm of lofty spirituality. Like teen-age aesthetes everywhere, they use their tastes as a way of separating themselves from the herd. This is not an attractive personality type, and sharing such delusions of grandeur with someone else only makes matters worse; Pauline and Juliet, by nurturing each other's worst impulses, turn ordinary adolescent obnoxiousness into a dangerous kind of narcissism.

Unfortunately, the director of "Heavenly Creatures," Peter Jackson (who cowrote the screenplay with Frances Walsh), films the story as the girls themselves, at the height of their hysteria, might have filmed it. The movie's style is frenzied, hyperbolic, and curiously uncritical of the heroines' feverish perspective on the world around them. Jackson portrays all the adults who don't understand the sensitive girls—parents, teachers, doctors—as grotesque cartoons of authority, and bathes the heroines' early scenes together in a romantic, soft-focus glow; he even tries to show us the Fourth World, and presents it in the candy-colored style of storybook illustrations. (It looks pretty cheesy, but we're clearly meant to be entranced.) In effect, "Heavenly Creatures" tends to validate the teen-agers' warped perspective—to glamorize their artfuelled contempt for ordinary people and everyday life. Jackson treats the young murderers with a rather suspicious tenderness, as if he were hoping to be invited into their sect. With the director tagging along faithfully behind Pauline and Juliet, this folie à deux turns into a disastrous folie à trois. Jackson doesn't seem to realize that the real significance of this story is the couple's perfect, inviolable self-sufficiency. These two kids are scary company; three's a crowd. ♦