

RECONSTRUCTING IMAGE AND TRUST THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF CINEMATOGRAPHIC ART CRITIQUE

Raluca-Andreea NECHIFOR
raluca.nechifor17@gmail.com

Faculty of Letters
“Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău

Abstract: This article explores the strategies through which film critique reconstructs image and trust in the contemporary media landscape, focusing on the 2022 television adaptation of Interview with the Vampire as a case study. It enhances its critical reception, as well as the manner in which language creates and modifies the image of certain characters, in comparison to the 1994 film adaptation and the literary portrait created by Anne Rice. The analysis employs discourse and rhetorical methods to examine how the language of critic’s functions not only as an evaluative tool but also as a medium for establishing authority, credibility and audience confidence.

A central concern of this research is how critics manage the tension between adaptation fidelity and innovation. Reviewers frequently invoke comparisons with Anne Rice’s original novel and Neil Jordan’s 1994 film, while simultaneously legitimizing departures in characterization, narrative structure and representation. This negotiation of style, image and reliability often involves appeals to authenticity and ethical responsibility, particularly in relation to issues of race, sexuality, historical setting etc.

The study highlights the performative nature of critique; critics do not merely report on the series but actively shape its cultural image by mediating debates about various points of interest, including identity, genre and fidelity. By proceeding as such, they participate in the broader cultural work of redefining trust in media evaluation, at a moment when scepticism and polarization dominate public discourse.

Keywords: *cinematographic art critique, trust and image reconstruction, discourse analysis, cultural representation, identity crisis.*

Introduction

Cinematography is known as the more complex successor of photography, a form of using the technique of overlapping pictures in order to obtain movement, plot and finally, meaning. The process of deliberate manipulation of visual elements manages to extends from a mere aesthetic purpose to a more intricate pattern in which the captured moments are chained and interlinked to form a context, a paradigm, a context and even a story:

Viewed in this perspective, the cinema is objectivity in time. The film is no longer content to preserve the object, enshrouded as it were in an instant, as

the bodies of insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber (Bazin, 1967:14).

The movement across captured moments is acquired in order to construct a logical visual depiction of events in which characters are presented according to the script and ideas flow cursively. Therefore, by beginning with visual elements and ending with an artistic product, cinematography is considered another branch of art, with different styles and genres, just like literature, painting, music and others. As a means of communicating emotion and experience, cinema is also placed somewhere between art and industry, due to its manner of combining two different sets of qualities and features:

The cinema, wrote the documentarist Paul Rotha in the 1930s, ‘is the great unresolved equation between art and industry’. It was the first, and is arguably still the greatest, of the industrialized art forms which have dominated the cultural life of the twentieth century (Nowell-Smith et al, 1996: xix).

This study follows the logical pattern in which elements derived from critical examination and detailed assessment (in terms of vocabulary, pragmatics and concepts exploring verbal interaction) of the cinematographic techniques gather to create a comprehensive and extensive work highlighting specific traits and characteristics of art critique language. The research situates the identified traits within broader aesthetic and theoretical frameworks, which may be markers of diverse categories of aesthetic dogma and genres, as this particular piece describes and evaluates the language of film and series reviews used as a tool to assess and reconstruct image and trust in the audience in the case of visual depictions of Anne Rice’s novel, Interview with the Vampire. By analysing visual storytelling functions as key-elements while working with narrative forms, this study elucidates the role of cinematography in reshaping and remodelling viewer perception to enhance the interpretive richness of the cinematic experience in everyday life and situations inspired from reality, the focus being placed upon the issue of identity by means of personal image and reliability in social and cultural contexts.

1. Understanding image and building trust

From the beginning, the concept of image has been closely related to the one of trust and deceit. Noticed to be introduced in language circa 1200, the term image had an interesting meaning, detailing about its capacity of representing something and more accurately, someone: “piece of statuary; artificial representation that looks like a person or thing” (Online Etymology

Dictionary). Borrowed from French, the term encompassed multiple forms of depiction or faithful representation of life and entities: “image, likeness; figure, drawing, portrait; reflection; statue” (Online Etymology Dictionary). All these variants derived from the mother tongue, Latin, which sensed the ethical and logical discrepancies that may occur when discussing the concept of image in relation to the original in various social contexts, as *imago* is often translated as imitation or likeness. Therefore, image is generally understood as a sort of social depiction of a person or a phenomenon, encompassing not only the characteristics or features, but also the manner in which the person/phenomenon/element is perceived and described in the public space. Additionally, it may be used as a visual representations of the self: “Increasingly visual images have become central to creating social images of a social object, a direction which holds the capacity to transcend previous knowledge about self and other, both individually and social to mirror a particular social imaginary” (Nicholson & Awad, 2024:1.3) or simply manners of presenting and identifying ourselves in society:

People actively pursue specific social images and they may go to great lengths to create a particular impression. From everyday interactions with peers, to first dates, to momentous audiences with power brokers, individuals present themselves in ways that they believe will produce positive rewards and help them accomplish their goals (Rodriguez Mosquera & Uskul & Cross, 2011:404).

Images, in almost every domain, are known to play a powerful role in communication and self-referential practices, due to their ability of conveying emotions and meaning in a wide variety of contexts and under various sets of circumstances. This process, which occurs quicker than words alone, has an important role in transmitting even a more serious and more powerful messages than verbal ideas, is considered a valid element helping build trust between a creator of different forms of art or messages (a business, a brand, a slogan, a motto or an individual marketing strategy) and their audience. This particular idea of building trust is closely related to the concept of image, as a social representation of a person is constructed on the foundation of a sort of relationship between the person and the public space in which they act. Images build trust through visual authenticity and numerous adjacent concepts and ideas.

Firstly, the involvement of images inspired from reality, accompanied by elements and data supporting its authenticity, instead of generic ideas presented in front of the public help people acquire a certain feeling of knowing who they are praising or engaging with. In other words, observing and perceiving the real identity of a person signals transparency

and build a sort of confidence in what that particular person displays in the public space. This technique was developed and extended in other domains, such as marketing and publicity strategies

a similar mechanism that they call virtual re-embedding might also take effect when social cues (photographs, video, text or speech), which provide prompts for personal trust, are added to a website of an online-retailer (...) virtual re-embedding had a positive effect on user trust for medium experienced shoppers (Steinbrück & Schaumburg & Sabrina & Duda & Krüger, 2002:1).

In terms of connection and social engagement, social and cultural images are constructed to appeal to the public, while triggering an emotional response from the receiving target. Numerous elements and tactics, including a friendly face, a clean reputation or a successful project have the power to manipulate people into becoming more comfortable and confident in a particular environment, especially the one created by the person exposing an image. It includes and uses techniques of enhancing this concept, such as using a consistent style, theme and even tone in creating images and adjacent forms materialising into a recognizable identity. Therefore, when the target audience notices visual consistency, it may be guided into considering these elements pieces of a larger project denoting reliability and professionalism. These features may be also discovered in other fields and proceeding, such as the one of creating a logo, as social images as markers of personal branding and personal popularising of identity logos:

For instance, a logo that a professional has designed can create certain feelings and images in the minds of the consumers, while a carefully selected set of colours can strengthen the brand image and characteristics. Using these design elements consistently and integrated across all the touch points, from the product packaging to the digital mediums, enhances brand recall and creates a sense of brand equity among consumers (Wei & Yin, 2024:1).

Other elements enhancing the assimilation of personal image as a key element involved in building trust are the existence of social proof, the usage a narrative techniques and storytelling strategies, as well as concepts involved as components of clarity and transmission. Images and visual representations of one's identity may take the form of various depictions inspired of customers, testimonials, behind-the-scenes work and community involvement concerning that person, a topic which expands on credibility. It acts as proof that others trust the depiction launched in the public space and new groups are more likely to do the

same. These visual representations usually are meant to tell a story while excluding the need for paragraphs of explanation and additional details, they encapsulate the true essence of a subject. They may be considered visual journeys, detailing before and after transformations, shifts in identity, personal milestones and other related issues. They aid people's general understanding of one's values, worth and expertise, in a society demanding more than words alone. Gradual occurring visual elements, various topics surrounding nature, behaviour and values, all make information easier to acquire; when people are provided with the tools for understanding, their trust grows naturally:

Trust is, necessarily, an emergent property. This is because it derives from this interaction between at least two or more entities; one of whom trusts and another who is trusted. Trust can be, and often is, reciprocal. Trust itself is expressed by the information conveyed via a communication channel linking all of these persons and/or other responsive entities together (Hancock & Kessler & Kaplan & Stowers & Billings & Schaefer & Szalma, 2023).

Building on the ideas discussed, the following sections will address the language of art critique in cinematography, as well as the differences between film reviews and series reviews.

2. Cinematography as a branch of art

Despite its being a disputable field of entertainment, cinematography has managed to attract and to maintain the interest of audiences for decades, as the public chose and still chooses cinema over television and other types of moving pictures, with millions of cinephiles around the world. This is why numerous voices have militated and sustained the existence of cinematography as a branch of art and not just a mere manner of pleasing the industry and making profit off a market which is currently overstimulated:

Film resembles painting, music, literature, and the dance in this respect – it is a medium that may, but not need to, be used to produce artistic results. Coloured pictures post cards, for instance, are not art and are not intended to... (Arnheim, 1957: 8).

As a means of expressing emotion and creating an artistic effect, cinematographic values can be assessed and analysed by diverse categories of people, especially the one of reviews and critics.

We may understand the syntagm “film critique” as the language used by a specialised category of people, that are critics, in order to assess

the value and the meaning of different works of cinematographic art. By proceeding as such, critics act as entities assuring the communication and the exchange of feedback between the two groups involved within the process of critique: creators/art and audience/public.

In this respect, critique is viewed as a manner of corroborating a wide variety of elements in order to construct a professional opinion capable of a complete assessment of value, background story and meaning for diverse pieces of art:

In 1963 the art historian (and sometimes critic) Edgar Wind lamented the “dehumanizing of artistic perception” by contemporary artists, who seemed to treat inventiveness not as a creative activity, performative task, but as an end in itself, to be accomplished through rational analysis or strategic variation” (Elkins & Newman, 2008:7).

By understanding this process, it is important to highlight that in order to achieve a balanced and precise piece of critique, specialists need to “dehumanise”, to detach themselves from a subjective point of view, in order to carefully craft a faithful and realistic approach to art.

As an active part in this process, the critic manages its role as a professional in this domain, who conveys personal preference and opinion. As Lorente mentions, a critic is someone “in Latin criticus was also a designation particularly used for literary scholars. (...) Art critic, in a broad sense, could be anyone devoted to the exegesis and judgement of the arts and this has been the traditional assumption for centuries” (Lorente, 2020:2). We may understand this role as one manifested in the proximity of films and other manifestations of cinematographic art.

Eventually, for academic pursuits, critique is understood as an essential discipline responsible for the tasks of examining, interpreting, as well as evaluating art products. It is a branch of aesthetic judgement providing other critics, creators, consumers of art, etc. with methodologies and various sociological and cultural patterns necessary to analyse art beyond its surface meaning.

As previously mentioned, this research was applied to two different categories of cinematography reviews concerning the depictions of Anne Rice’s novel, entitled Interview with the Vampire.

3. Film versus series. Context and features

Therefore, there is noted that upon its release in 1994, the Interview with the Vampire film, directed by Neil Jordan and adapted from the 1976 novel, was considered a precious piece emerging as a major commercial and cultural phenomenon at that time, shyly depicting a partnership between two supernatural male beings, two vampires trying to maintain the relationship in their own manner, by passing over family drama, death and treason. The film, at that time, attracted substantial critical and popular attention, being distinguished due to its opulent decor and overcharged plot, the atmospheric cinematography, as well as the taste for the introspective treatment of vampirism as a central theme of both decadence and redemption. Voices praised it for its featuring of famous performances delivered by Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, alongside the notable debut of young Kirsten Dunst. Additionally, the adaptation gained worldwide visibility by various means, including the path opened by its inclusion and depiction of gothic aesthetic and its unique reinterpretation of Rice's narrative within the broader vampire dogma, considered both scandalous and intriguing. With global earnings surpassing 220 million dollars, the film secured its stop as a strong piece of mainstream cinematography, while being capable of simultaneously cultivating a dedicated cult following, particularly among audiences drawn to gothic thematic frameworks and queer coded social and cultural hints. In this respect, the fascination manifested by the public was further intensified by debates and cultural discussion surrounding cast decisions, performance accuracy and the film's fidelity to its original literary source, fact which generated heated arguments around various groups of interest and audiences. As a result, the film development from a mere succession of moving pictures as a piece of 1990s vampire cinema that was appreciate for its interplay of high production values, romantic gothic expression and psychological depth of bold characters.

In contrast, the second visual depiction was launched decades after the 1994 film, as the 2022 AMC television adaptation of Interview with the Vampire triggered a new reaction in public, under the form of a renewed cultural investment in Rice's Vampire Chronicles. Its release marked the moment when society rediscovered the world of vampires after cliches delivered by shoes and films such as The Vampire Diaries and Twilight. The public was introduced to a new, fresh breath of Gothic motifs and themes, becoming acquainted with Sam Reid's unpredictable Lestat and the enigmatic Louis de Pointe du Lac, brought to the screen once again, this time by Jacob Anderson. Due to the fact that it was critically acclaimed upon release, the series was praised for various reasons, especially for its

vivid and colourful reinterpretation of the source material (Rice’s novel), as well as for its richly stylised visual language and the complexity of performances of actors, reigniting the admiration of the public for the relationship between Lestat and Louis.

By drawing a comparison between the reception of the two and the results of their impact upon their viewer, it is easily noticeable the fact that their differences in style, themes and manner of action directly influence the language of reviews, creating large discrepancies between the manner in which critics evaluate meaning and assess the values of these two depictions, including the manner in which image is reconstructed and trust is reestablished in audiences.

In contrast to the 1994 film, for instance, the language of reviews describing and assessing the series manages to act even further, as it directly addresses questions of race, sexuality and colonial history. Consequently, it aligns its thematic concerns with current social and cultural norms within current society and this specific contemporary reframing managed to resonate with both old fans, as well as new viewers, and it contributed to its prominence within streaming platforms and digital fan environments and societies. AMC’s strategic commitment to expanding the Rice literary universe fostered anticipation for extended narrative development, such as in the case of season 3, depicting Lestat’s story. As such, the series did more than just a mere retelling of the same story, it reaffirmed the cultural relevance of Interview with the Vampire in popular culture and it secured its spot in the cinematographic archives. Additionally, it proved the capacity of television in longer formats (series) to explore gothic narratives with increased thematic nuance, character complexity and historical awareness, as tools of expanding the world of films (shorter forms of cinematography).

The critical response concerning the two depictions can be summarised as divergent. These two adaptations bring to light cultural frameworks that are constantly changing and their respective evaluative criteria, modifying accordingly. The language of art critique constructed on Interview with the Vampire comports a dual role.

Firstly, the critical language concerning the 1994 reflects the aesthetic values of its specific era that emphasizes emotional introspection and assessment, enhances gothic spectacle and details upon ambiguous eroticism, shrouding romance into mystery and even darkness. Reviews tend to adopt a literary and descriptive tone, focusing mainly upon the building atmosphere, the assessment of artistic performance and a short discussion encompassing philosophical hues and symbols used when

depicting the characters' identity. Conversely, the reception of the 2022 adaptation established its status as a culturally shifting discourse, having critics employing analytically rigorous and socially oriented language to mirrors the series' engagement with formerly taboo topics concerning race, queerness and intergenerational trauma involved in the personal quest of one's identity. While the film focuses upon Rice's story as a tragic meditation concerning themes of immortality, longing and ethical ambiguity, the series shifts the perspective and reconfigures the text as a political and historical exploration of identity and social power.

Lastly, the language used invites audiences to reconsider the narrative in a different light, being more than a gothic romance, namely an evolving piece of cinema sparking arguments on the sociohistorical conditions shaping the vampire figure across media and time and reestablishing their image in front of their audience and building trust in the latter.

4. Research methodology

As mentioned, our research involved a qualitative and interpretative methodology used to construct a detailed comparative analysis of critical discourse surrounding two forms of cinematographic adaptations, those being film and television series. The central aim is to investigate reviewers' role in the process of generating meaning and assessing aesthetic value, in order to engage with cultural themes and social motifs when reconstructing the image and building trust in the audience perceiving and following depictions of Interview with the Vampire.

As a hybrid means of releasing creative and analytical writing, film critique may be considered a highly complex domain providing specific lens through which we can observe genre conventions being upheld, or contested within contemporary cinematic discourse. This phenomenon occurs particularly when putting into contrast reviews of feature films with those of serialised adaptations of the same topic (Rice's novel).

Having extracted various pieces of reviews from established digital media platforms and reputable critics, the research seeks to identify and affirm common points between genre theory, cultural analysis and rhetorical devices used in modern cinematography reviews. The focus is directed towards the process of examining differences in thematic emphasis and stylistic choices employed by critics while evaluating the two screen adaptations of Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire, namely the 1994 film directed by Neil Jordan and AMC's 2022 television series.

Through this comparison, the study aims to highlight the manner in which specific contexts shape critical interpretation and value judgment as previous steps taken in order to reconstruct personal image and to reestablish a general sense of trust in the depiction.

4.1. Research objectives

The main aim of this study is the focus placed on identifying and analysing the differences and particularities in thematic priorities and stylistic strategies employed by critics during the process of assessing two screen interpretations of Anne Rice's 1976 novel. By overlapping these critical responses, the research seeks to detail and clarify the role of cultural contexts as vital points influencing frameworks of evaluation and evaluative judgements statement. It functions as prior mechanisms through which critics construct personal and cultural background for authorial persona, while managing to juggle the techniques of negotiation credibility with restoring a broader sense of trust in the visual representation of the narrative itself and the characters.

On the other hand, the specific objectives are the following:

O1: To examine the thematic and linguistic patterns in cinematographic reviews structured on the two visual depictions of Gothic 1976 novel written by Anne Rice, in order to decipher and organise the critics' linguistic and sematic patterns used in forming their personal style of assessment of different elements of cinematography.

O2: To identify, arrange and analyse an extensive list comprising issues such as linguistic choice, symbolic and thematic criteria in cinema reviews.

O3: To investigate the language of cinema critique as a medium of detailing upon cultural and social norms, studying the tools and techniques used by reviewers in order to highlight their role as pillars in depicting strategies of reconstructing social and cultural image in order to rebuild trust in the audience.

4.2. Research questions

Aligned with the overall aims and objectives, the research is constructed around a series of central guiding questions. Given the fact that cinematographic art reviews function simultaneously as pieces of evaluative critique and as cultural statements, they manage to provide a proper site for examining the process in which language, ideology and aesthetic judgement converge within the critical reception of cinematic works.

Q1: What is the process by which critics assess and detail thematic, symbolic and linguistic aspects in the 1994 film and the 2022 TV series?

Q2: To what extent do form conventions (film and series) and societal norms influence elements comprising language and style used by critics when analysing main and secondary roles of language of critique?

Q3: Does the language cinematography critique function as a form of cultural assessment concerning reflecting or challenging methods and tecqniues centering the process of image reconstruction and reestablishing trust?

4.3. Hypothesis

The language used by critics in their reviews of Interview With the Vampire demonstrates a sophisticated interplay of linguistic choice, themes and symbols, which collectively reconstruct the image of the series and establishes trust with their audience.

4.4. Methods and process

In order to create this research, we have selected a number of reviews from various platforms, for each depiction, as we may observe from the following tables:

No.	Review title/Name of the reviewer/Organisation	Date
1.	“Interview With the Vampire review – Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt’s brilliant bloodsucking bromance” / Peter Bradshaw/ The Guardian (Top critic)	February 15 th , 2024
2.	“A Feast Of Rats, Blood And Wild Rice”/David Ansen/ Individual Review (Top critic)	October 18 th , 2008
3.	- / Marc Savlov/ Austin Chronicle (Top critic)	January 1 st , 2000
4.	- / Robert Ebert/ Chicago Sun-Times (Top critic)	January 1st, 2000
5.	- / Geoff Andrew/ Time Out (Top critic)	February 9 th , 2006
6.	- / Rita Kempley/ Washington Post (Top critic)	January 1st, 2000

Table 1. The reviews selected for the *Interview with the Vampire* 1994 film, extracted from different sites and magazines

No.	Review title/Name of the reviewer/Organisation	Date
1.	“Interview With the Vampire review – Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt’s brilliant bloodsucking bromance” / Peter Bradshaw/ The Guardian (Top critic)	February 15 th , 2024
2.	“A Feast Of Rats, Blood And Wild Rice”/David Ansen/ Individual Review (Top critic)	October 18 th , 2008
3.	- / Marc Savlov/ Austin Chronicle (Top critic)	January 1 st , 2000
4.	- / Robert Ebert/ Chicago Sun-Times (Top critic)	January 1st, 2000
5.	- / Geoff Andrew/ Time Out (Top critic)	February 9 th , 2006
6.	- / Rita Kempley/ Washington Post (Top critic)	January 1st, 2000

Table 2. The reviews selected for the Interview with the Vampire 2022 AMC series, extracted from different sites and magazines

4.5. Findings

In terms of critique, the two parties expressed their opinions, revealing that there are differences in terms of form of expressions, choice of terms and content related to societal norms and values. The 1994 film was perceived as a lush, brooding and provocative visual depiction of Anne Rice's 1976 novel. Furthermore, as the selected pieces of critique reveal, it may be also understood as a film capable of inspiring both admiration and repulsion, a dichotomy between these two opposing sides, depicting a gothic fever dream that oscillates between different concepts, ranging from philosophical musing, to brutal, controversial melodrama. In this respect, the language used by critics did not stress mainly upon representing the ideals highlighted in the book, and whether those were indeed visually depicted, they were done briefly, fact which made audience avoid this particular representation of the vampire lore.

On the other hand, the series was considered the opposite of the film, disposing of time to enhance and extend elements overlooked in the film, but heavily discussed in the book. This longer version was widely praised as a daring and soulful reimagining of Anne Rice's classic, blending lush visuals with powerful colour palettes, intense performances and fresh thematic interest, particularly around issues surrounding delicate discussion concerning race, queerness and identity in a highly diverse and ever-changing environment. Critics celebrated aspects such as its boldness and innovatively in depicting moral and psychological dilemmas, though their focus vary according to each critic style and purpose. For instance, Dyer insisted on emotional authenticity and its relation to the personality of characters, whereas Pobjie's main interest was placed upon sensory richness. Lastly, Frederick highlighted sociocultural aspects, especially the one's concerning Louis' identity and image in a controversial society.

In this respect, the critical reception of the 1994 film reflected the aesthetic and thematic values of its time, with the main aim being the one of exploring and further detailing items such as emotional introspection, Gothic aesthetics and ambiguous intimacy between the two protagonists, as revealed by their partnership. The language used in these reviews can be characterised as both dramatic and abstract, often tending to centre mood and performance over inner meditation of the self and society. The 2022 series, being received as a bold and, in some contexts, brutal cultural reimagining of the plot, is assessed by critics responding with a socially engaged tone, having included intellectually rigorous language which reflects the professional commitment to exploring themes previously ignored or superficially discussed (race, queerness and trauma through

horror) as a method of reestablishing the trust of audience in the visual representation's image. In the specific parts in which the film depicted Anne Rice's narrative as a tragic romance ignited by the soul, the series reframes it as a newly understood, innovative meditation on history, identity and power, one that compels both the characters and the audience to reconsider the stories lying behind characters and the messages transmitted through certain choices concerning time, space and roles.

In critical discourse construction, reviewers usually maintain a pivotal role in both reconstructing the image of a cinematic work and establishing trust with their audience. Therefore, the language employed by critics has to be carefully structured and ideas must be attentively structured. The outcomes may be achieved in various manner, and through strategic process of employing intricate sentence structures and deliberate tense choices, reviewers are able to convey nuanced evaluations of plots and artistic effects. They may also place the work within numerous historical and cultural contexts that may be relevant for the public or for the idea itself; for instance, a critic may note that “Neil Jordan's 1994 movie... did an admirable job... but, a product of its time, coyly skirted the story's central, defining premise”, thereby offering a balanced judgment that acknowledges both artistic merit and contextual limitations, encompassing both positive aspects, as well as weaknesses (“The histrionic energy and ambition, operatic pathos and dapper, jaunty offensiveness are undimmed”).

At the grammatical level, choices may vary according to the style and the intention of the critics. They often employ highly complex syntactical sentence structures, depicting the manner in which visual depictions are generally assimilated and understood by various audiences: “But Louis has squeamish qualms about living off human blood, timidly at first preferring only that of animals, to Lestat's genial contempt”; “After the outrageous melodramatics flung between Anne Rice and seemingly everyone else concerning the casting of pretty boy Cruise in the pivotal role the vampire Lestat, this is the fall movie audiences will flock to, sink or swim”; “Pitt cuts a smoldering figure as the tortured Louis, his long hair cascading beautifully, As the heartless Lestat, a blond Cruise looks dashing predatory”. These structures, composed of multiple subordinate clauses, enables each critic to interweave aesthetic, narrative and cultural comments with historical or thematic analysis. This linguistic strategy is useful in the process of offering for depth and subtlety, as it presents the process of evaluation as a unique experience that is simultaneously informative and persuasive. In this way, critics act as mediators of both

meaning and context between the cinema piece and its target audience, due to its well-established role of guiding viewers' interpretations towards a finite product, shaped by the thought expressed by critics. It also highlights the text's layered dimensions and, in addition, by carefully reconstructing the image of the series or film, they are able to expand their influence even longer than these borders; they cultivate trust within their readership, reinforcing the authority and reliability of their assessments. Ultimately, the critical voice of those reviewers serves higher purposes passing the stage of an ordinary arbiter of taste and reaching the superior position of cultural interlocutor that is able to shape audience' perception of the pieces and assessment of values of cinematographic storytelling.

The other levels that composed the core of this research were the thematic issues, the linguistic choice and the symbols put into discussion.

4.5.1. Thematic issues

Concerning the 1994 film, critics' ideas primarily explored themes of existential despair, moral ambiguity and emotional isolation within the context of the vampire mythos, especially studied within Louis' case, constantly torn apart between the world of human and the one of decay. Critics insisted on various paths exploring concepts detailing the film's portrayal of immortality as a curse rather than a gift, while emphasising Louis's story of constant suffering and loss of purpose after being turned into a vampire: "And what he adds-flashes of dark humour are a welcome respite from the tone of lugubrious regret that fuels this tale of an overly sensitive vampire, Louis (Brad Pitt), whose vestigial humanity is at war with his ruthless vampirical nature". Though the theme of queerness is present in the plot and between the two main characters, the film largely subdued these particular elements, choosing instead to depict Louis and Lestat's relationship as a more codependent, ambiguous partnership rather than a romantic or explicitly erotic one, avoiding in some cases even the intimate variant of the relationship: "Lestat-Louis is an occult teacher-pupil relationship that Brad Pitt was to duplicate five years later in *Fight Club*, only with himself in the alpha role". The emotional heart of the film contains grief and guilt, all sprung from the inner desire of remaining human and pure, as much as he can: "Can a murderer hold on to his scruples, or will he succumb to the emptiness of immortal vampire life?". Vampirism, in this context, serves as a metaphor for emotional repression, as it is accompanied at every step by the burden of memory: "Louis himself has a romantic, almost idealist concept of vampirism, entranced, in his pained way, by the eternity of longing". The film's themes are consistent

with 1990s Gothic revival aesthetics, due to its purpose of characterising inner emotional plots and visually pleasing points prioritising melancholy over social critique.

In contrast, the series reviews fully embrace and expand the themes of the original text, as they reimagine the story through modern, more tolerant lens. In this respect, queerness and race are central, in other words, they are indeed textual. Louis has now a new appearance, both in race and identity: an African American man living in early 20th century New Orleans: “Formerly a white plantation owner in 18th century Louisiana, we now join Louis as a wealthy Black man running a bordello in 1910 New Orleans’ red-light district”. This transformation he experiences, from this particular perspective shifts into a more complex state of existence, as he is turned into a vampire who is deeply tied to issues of racial identity, class and systemic oppression, hence the changed dynamic between Lestat and him: “their unearthly existence made all the more potent by enslavement to all-too-human desires”.

Therefore, critics’ emphasis on themes such as immortality, queer desire, race, grief and ethical responsibility (“as well as the young man’s hidden sexual desires. But it is grief at the sudden and tragic death of his brother that will finally prove the trigger for driving Louis entirely into Lestat’s thrall, and hence to the blessing and curse of immortality”) has the main purpose of reconstruct the image of the series, as it transforms it from a culturally plain gothic fantasy into a reimagining that resonates with contemporary cultural debates and which brings to the surface issue overlooked in the first depictions: “And what an interesting life Louis has, even in the beginning of “Interview with the Vampire,” when he is still mortal and filled with complexities and longing as a businessman in the red-light district of New Orleans”. By acting as such and framing immortality as an existential struggle for both characters and especially, for the newly turned ones (i.e. Louis and Claudia), the language used by critics has the ability to elevate the plot and the narrative thread into a deeper meditation concerning philosophical exploration: “Louis becomes very emo, a state that fans of the film and of Rice’s book will certainly recognize. He’s basically a mortal trapped in the body of his own worst enemy—for eternity”; “Anderson is excellent as Louis, bringing a confident swagger with a bubbling undercurrent of anger to his mortal days, turning to an explosion of grief and despair”.

Additionally, by highlighting bold and unexpected issues such as queer intimacy and racial representation (“he can therefore play on Louis’ sense of resentment at his place in society and his yearning for higher things, as well as

the young man’s hidden sexual desires”; “carnal thirst”), they align the concept of adaptation with urgent discussion surrounding inclusivity and systemic exclusion. These pieces of critical discourse also established and root into the topic items such as grief, trauma, mortals, and they reposition the story as emotionally grounded and morally serious.

These statements involved in the larger picture detain even more power, they reshape the franchise’s artistic and cultural identity by bringing a new, fresh and improved look on the visuals and thematic items, but also build trust within audiences thirsty for both fidelity to source material (Rice’s novel) and authenticity in representing ideas, concepts, reactions and personalities: “Each episode explores more of the characters’ evolving dynamic—their uncertainties, longings and deep contradictions”.

Moreover, there are also brought into discussion the casting choice and the embrace of queer romance: “fully embracing the queer romance at its core and, moreover, updating the entire story for a modern audience”. This two detailing’s maintain a connection between the series and specific categories of views interested in topic reflecting their state: “There are certainly some things about Louis that Anderson, as a Black man, could relate to, even today. But the actor took as deep a dive as he could to learn more about Black life in New Orleans during the period”. Thus, viewers feel taken seriously and respected, due to this connection with the series and its serious, respectful representation, while the treatment of violence and desire with ethical depth depicts accountability for real life situation, rather than mere show. Finally, critical discourse, both at an evaluative and descriptive level reinforces that that these themes are intentional and central, their a detailed and helpful extended in order to legitimize this specific adaptation of the novel as meaningful art. In this way, the critics’ manner of framing and heavily observing the values and semantic worth simultaneously reconstructs the series’ cultural image by fostering trust and respecting aspects concerning audience identities, ethics and emotional intelligence.

4.5.2. Lexical choice

Language usually does not encompass only terms or only meanings. It is accompanied by elements of metalanguage, meronyms, homonyms and it is directed with a particular intention encompassing the role of a messages. Similarly, the language used in reviews for the 1994 film tends to be elevated, theatrical and stylized, abundant in intricate linguistic structures and much like the film itself: “The histrionic energy and ambition, operatic pathos and dapper, jaunty offensiveness are undimmed”. Therefore, we may consider

language or discourse as an extension for translating meaning and mediating understanding between the final product and the receiver. Critics often employed richly descriptive language, embellished with literary prose elements and vivid depictions to mirror the Gothic aesthetic and the overall tone and hues of the novel: “Neil Jordan’s horror-comedy features Cruise in scene-chewing form in a film that outrageously explores the vampire’s actually rather complex lived experience”. Terms including melancholy, opulent, haunting and sensual were commonly used in this context, as their goal was to highlight the film’s romantic visual style and emotional tone, while the reviews focused heavily on the depiction of atmosphere, performance and mood, in order to set the tone for introducing the reader into the realm, rather than the interaction between characters: “did an admirable job of capturing the story’s Gothic feel but, a product of its time, coyly skirted the story’s central, defining premise as a centuries-spanning love story between two (vampire) men”. Therefore, we observed the frequent reference to the “beautiful sadness” of the characters, the lush cinematography and the mythic nature of the vampires all expressed through the usage of language that avoids excessively addressing identity politics or queerness. It instead maintained a tone of abstract, universalized suffering, centring Louis grief between two worlds that do not fully accept him: “whose vestigial humanity is at war with his ruthless vampirical nature”.

The reviews built on series are created with a different intention behind them. They usually take the form of more prompted reviews much more analytical and strongly rooted in phenomena and identity related issues. Critics conveyed their opinion and general assessment of value and artistic worth by adopting a tone capable of blending academic insight with persona traits and experiences, ranging from emotional engagement to a more intricate pattern of reflection of contemporary language of social critique. As a result, the usage of ideas such as intersectional, reclamation, trauma, resistance (“begins to record the creature’s century-long history, in particular the violent, toxic love affair”; “beautifully rendered adaptation is an exquisite study of preternatural sexuality and the immortal condition”) appeared frequently and almost in all studied pieces of critique, as a recurrent motif exploring the show’s engagement with social themes often avoided by other generations: queerness, racial identity historical violence and oppression (“The change in setting as well as the race of the main character brings a whole new dimension to the story”; “Anderson is excellent as Louis, bringing a confident swagger with a bubbling undercurrent of anger to his mortal days, turning to an explosion of grief and despair”) etc. There was also observed a greater interest manifested

towards social, cultural and even political resonance, as reviewers discussed in their pieces the implications and outcomes of turning a formerly Caucasian, implicitly queer character into a queer man of colour, strategically placed in a racially stratified setting: “Within his Black community and family, whose narratives are thoughtfully expanded in this iteration, Louis gives off the vibe of an accomplished entrepreneur who rarely steps outside in anything other than an impeccably tailored three-piece suit”. Additionally, critics used language often describing the dialogue and structure as meaningful instrument of proving and using metalanguage in a triple R technique (revolutionary, revisionist, reflective) to enhance and even to reinforce this depiction’s deliberate approach to creating a retelling of the story and offering complex elements for the “raw” material (the novel): ““I think that was maybe part of what was interesting about it for Rolin and the [costume] designers, was [that] this period in New Orleans and Storyville is this forgotten piece of history, but was very inclusive of Black people in the South at the time,” Anderson said”. By using metalanguage as a definite instrument in assessing artistic value and conveying personal views upon cinematograph, critics’ ideas emerge and markers of reinforcement of image and worth for the topic itself and their depiction, rebuilding trust and connection between audience, public opinion and the 1976 novel.

Furthermore, the critics’ lexical and stylistic choices act as systems maintaining the proper functioning of the communicative machine (discourse). They are considered to play a crucial role in shaping the identity and image of *Interview With the Vampire*, detailing about the representation which is imagined at a cultural and popular level; thus, their main purpose is to reconstruct its image through distinct registers ranging across various domains and sections, such as authority exertion, immersion into the original story and its adjacent thematic choices and social awareness of its own placement within the narratological thread or within the visual plot. In this respect, various voices of critics adopted attitudes differing in content, technique or focus.

For instance, Dyer’s authoritative and evaluative lexis, encompassing terms such as admirable, exquisite or preternatural sexuality: “remains to be seen, but this intricately detailed, beautifully rendered adaptation is an exquisite study of preternatural sexuality and the immortal condition. It injects fresh new blood into an iconic tale”. This usage of terms frames the series as both a well-established form of art and a faithful Gothic adaptation, having the possibility of increasing the level of trust in the audience. It lends the depiction aesthetic legitimacy and cultural weight in front of the audience

and it reconstructs the former popular image, reconditioning it and polishing it in order to be accessible to the general opinion.

On the other hand, Pobjie’s vivid, sensory language (lustrous period detail, savage strength etc.) is intended to depict and reinforce the show as visceral spectacle for both the heart and mind, promising gradual intensity and alluring atmosphere that immerse the viewer into the deeper layers of the plot and hidden meanings: “The change in setting as well as the race of the main character brings a whole new dimension to the story”; “this is a show concerned with death and desire, and it depicts both with a blend of beauty and brutality”.

Lastly, Frederick’s socially attuned vocabulary, containing harsher expressions and impactful vocabulary (Blacker and Gayer Than Ever, thoughtfully expanded narratives etc.) repositions the adaptation as progressive and ethically engaged retelling of Rice’s story, one that may comprise the redemption of the novel. This particular approach is meant to aligning the show with current open and blunt debates on themes such as race, sexuality, cultural responsibility, identity enforcement and others: “There are certainly some things about Louis that Anderson, as a Black man, could relate to, even today. But the actor took as deep a dive as he could to learn more about Black life in New Orleans during the period”, “Spirit of a Culture: Cane River Creoles,” studying photographs, listening to the jazz from the era - “a lot of Jelly Roll Morton,” he says - and getting his hands on any other material he could find”.

These linguistic strategies are meant to build audience trust; Dyer’s formal register infers expertise and fidelity to the Gothic novel and the respect towards genre tradition, whereas Pobjie’s dramatic register fosters confidence in the series’ emotional richness that may touch the heart of audience and may ignite their passion for the genre and the topic itself. Lastly, Frederick’s reflective structure of opinion and tone aware of cultural and historical implicature reassures audiences and particularly marginalized groups within the former that the story is a manifestation of equality and balance concerning the issues of identity and ethics (that are handled with care). Therefore, the linguistic choices of the discourse acts as force constructing and establishing themes, ideas and most important of all, principles. It does more than describe the fact and characters, it positions them as credible interpreters and affirms the adaptation as both aesthetically profound, overall, highly pleasing and trustworthy for larger and diverse audiences.

4.5.3. Discussing symbols

Besides the techniques involved in discussing thematic elements and linguistic processes and choice, the language used by critics in their discourse was also embellished by the assessment and usage of symbol throughout the two depictions, hence the role of those iconic elements in reconstructing image and trust in the audience, as a means of mediating image and visual representation.

Concerning the 1994 film, reviewers used symbols as tools in evoking Gothic and Romantic genre-based tradition and dogma. For instance, blood acts as the most prevalent symbol, conveying a mix of sensual desire, moral corruption and eternal life: “Interview With the Vampire review–Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt’s brilliant bloodsucking bromance”; “But Louis has squeamish qualms about living off human blood, timidly at first preferring only that of animals, to Lestat’s genial contempt”; “it’s the story of a pair of vampires, the passionate, moral Louis (Pitt) -- who abhors killing so much that he initially dines almost exclusively on the blood of rats after his vampiric inception)”. It is considered at once beautiful and grotesque, a dual metaphor for the seductive horror of vampirism: “the vampire seems to be courting the younger man, and there is a strong element of homoeroticism in the way the neck is bared and the blood is engorged”; “Whether your favoured flavour of bloodsucker is angsty (Twilight), daft (What We Do In The Shadows) or just plain horny (True Blood), it owes some measure of debt to Anne Rice’s seminal Vampire Chronicles”.

Additionally, the symbolic roles of both light and shadow are revealed as elements which ornate interiors and the changing appearance of characters (especially Claudia): “Claudia (the extraordinary Kirsten Dunst), a cherubic child whose upbringing consumes her "daddies". They also carry symbolic weight due to their intricate design of evoking the themes of decay and the unnatural passage of time: “Kirsten Dunst’s curly-haired Claudia, the little girl the two men vampirize into their "family," and who comes to hate her eternal entrapment in an undergrown body, manages to assume an eerie agelessness”. Claudia herself is symbolic of arrested development and the tragedy of immortality; in other words, she is a child in body, but with the mind and anguish of a woman trapped in time. Critics noted how the film used her character to evoke both horror and pity: “But eventually Claudia comes to resent Lestat for condemning her to an eternity in a little girl’s body”.

Through symbolic language, critics reconstruct the cultural image of Interview with the Vampire while simultaneously building trust in its artistic and ethical seriousness.

Therefore, voices such as Dyer employ various tropes, including metaphorical references. These metaphors of blood and queerness frame the adaptation as both a renewal and a reclamation of Anne Rice's mythology: "Whether your favoured flavour of bloodsucker is angsty (Twilight), daft (What We Do In The Shadows) or just plain horny (True Blood), it owes some measure of debt to Anne Rice's seminal Vampire Chronicles"; "makes no such mistake, fully embracing the queer romance at its core and, moreover, updating the entire story for a modern audience". They maintain the roles of assuring audiences that its emotional and thematic "heart" remains intact while embracing queerness with unapologetic authenticity: "Jones, never precious about the source material, has made canny, artfully realised changes, maintaining the spirit of the original while never slavishly replicating it"; "It injects fresh new blood into an iconic tale".

Pobjie's imagery of refinement and savagery, on the other hand, depicts the series as layered and complex retelling of the same story, once presented in a shorter form: "The change in setting as well as the race of the main character brings a whole new dimension to the story". Its discourse captures the dualities of vampirism, a constant inner struggle between civilization and brutality, intimacy and violence: "Anderson is excellent as Louis, bringing a confident swagger with a bubbling undercurrent of anger to his mortal days, turning to an explosion of grief and despair"; "refined gentleman of old-world charm and sophistication who is yet a fierce and primal beast". These symbolic motifs encourage audiences to trust in its artistic depth of the depiction and to assimilate the ideas and concepts of the original story, in an attempt of retelling Rice's story using moving pictures.

Lastly, Frederick's usage of symbols deeply rooted in culture and racial identity reframe portraits and characters, as seen in Louis' case. Louis being reimaged as a figure of African-American resilience and oppression is a central and powerful element which may gather the interest of the audience, of viewers belonging to marginalised groups that their inner inquiries concerning race, history and ethical judgement are more than just mere thoughts occupying one's mind, as they are central points of interest rather than peripheral elements of distraction: "There are certainly some things about Louis that Anderson, as a Black man, could relate to, even today. But the actor took as deep a dive as he could to

learn more about Black life in New Orleans during the period”; “this period in New Orleans and Storyville is this forgotten piece of history but was very inclusive of Black people in the South at the time,” Anderson said”. Brought together, these symbolic affirmations elevate the adaptation from Gothic horror to a multidimensional cultural discourse which reassures audiences of the series image as visually and narratively compelling, as well as of a depiction of socially inclusive elements and thematically trustworthy for various groups of interest.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, the comparative analysis of the reviews for the 1994 film *Interview with the Vampire* and the 2022 AMC series adaptation reveals a difference in the degree of each version’s manner of reflecting cultural and artistic values of current times. Additionally, they are interpreting Anne Rice’s novel through distinct thematic, linguistic and symbolic perspectives, augmenting the depiction’s image in the eyes of the public. The 1994 film, accompanied by a strong sense of emphasis on existential anguish, on the moral weight of immortality and a stylistic fidelity to Gothic tradition, is reviewed as a visually rich yet emotionally restrained work. Critics in this respect focused mainly on its atmospheric qualities, in relation to the artistic capacity of rendering messages and conveying meaning and other elements including the usage of elegant language, a philosophical tone. These are often highlighting the role of formal dialogue and symbolic use of metaphors and other related tropes as hidden thematic issues of inner torment and suppressed identity; however, it takes away from the possibilities of extending portrayals of queerness or racial difference, topics of interest in the current society and hooks creating connections with the public.

Ultimately, the reception of both adaptations may be considered a complex process in which their respective approaches to storytelling are revealed and exhibited to the receiving public. The film is often seen as a product of its time, being elegant, moody and displaying a restrained allure in the domain of depictions, while the series is celebrated for its emotional complexity, inclusivity of themes and motifs and thematic expansion. Reviewers from both groups acknowledge the artistic achievement of each visual adaptation, although their contrasting main interests, their personal manner of exploring existential introspection in contrast to sociopolitical engagement underlines the capacity of *Interview with the Vampire* of evolvement from a simple Gothic tale into a

multidimensional narrative framework, continues to invite fresh interpretation and to spark debates.

The critics' reviews of *Interview with the Vampire* possess a collective manner of reconstructing the show's image as rich and culturally relevant in which audiences can trust. Voices including Dyer emphasises authenticity and queer relationships instead of plain partnerships, hiding the real essence of Lestat's and Louis' connection, Pobjie highlights cultural and emotional items such as passion, duality and brutality, while Frederick brings to the surface discussions of race, repression and power distribution. Together, the interplay of themes, language and symbols insists on the manner in which art critique and critical discourse itself becomes an extension of cinematographic art, in order to mediate meaning and interaction between screen and audience, as to reframe the series under a different image, both a work of horror and a mirror of human complexity.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Ansen, David (2018).** “*Wipe Off That Smile*”, <https://www.newsweek.com/wipe-smile-131713>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Arnheim, Rudolf (1957).** *Film as Art?*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Bazin, Andre (1967).** *What is Cinema? essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Bradshaw, Peter (2024).** “*Interview With the Vampire* review – Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt’s brilliant bloodsucking bromance”, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/feb/15/interview-with-the-vampire-review-tom-cruise-brad-pitt-kirsten-dunst-antonio-banderas>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Dyer, James (2023).** “*Interview With The Vampire: Season 1* Review”, <https://www.empireonline.com/tv/reviews/interview-with-the-vampire-season-1/>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Ebert, Robert (1994).** “*Interview With the Vampire (1994)*”, <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/interview-with-the-vampire-1994>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Elkins, James (2025).** <https://jameselkins.com/category/writing/essays/>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Elkins, James, Newman, Michael (2008).** *The State of Art Criticism*, Routledge, New York.
- Etymology Dictionary,** <https://www.etymonline.com/>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Hancock PA, Kessler TT, Kaplan AD, Stowers K, Brill JC, Billings DR, Schaefer KE, Szalma JL. (2023).** “*How and why humans trust: A meta-analysis and elaborated model*”, in *Front Psychol.* doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1081086.

- Kempley, Rita (1994).** “*Interview With the Vampire (1994)*”, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/movies/videos/interviewwiththevampirerkempley_a0a49a.htm, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Kendall, Andrew (2025).** “*The harrowing meanness of ‘Bring Her Back’*”, <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2025/08/31/sunday/reel-encounters/the-harrowing-meanness-of-bring-her-back/>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Lorente, Jesús Pedro (2020).** “*Art Critic*”, in *International Lexicon of Aesthetics*, <https://lexicon.mimesisjournals.com/archive/2020/spring/ArtCritic.pdf>, accessed September 18th, 2025, DOI: 10.7413/18258630083.
- Nicholson, Cathy, Awad, Sarah H. (2024).** “*The power of the image: the role of social representations*”, in *Papers on Social Representations*, Volume 33, Issue 1, pp.1.1-1.8.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, et al. (1996).** *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Pobjie, Ben. (2023).** “*Lustrous period detail and sexy vampires make this interview a treat*”, <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/tv-and-radio/lustrous-period-detail-and-sexy-vampires-make-this-interview-a-treat-20230501-p5d4lb.html>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Rodriguez Mosquera, Patricia M., Uskul, Ayse K., Cross, Susan E. (2011).** “*The centrality of social image in social psychology*”, in *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41 (4). pp. 403-410.
- Savlov, Marc (1995).** “*Film Reviews*”, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/film-11672718/?Film=oid%3A138413>, accessed September 18th, 2025.
- Steinbrück, Ulrike, Schaumburg, Heike, Duda, Sabrina, Krüger, Thomas. (2002).** “*A picture says more than a thousand words*”, in *Photographs as trust builders in e-commerce websites*, 10.1145/506443.506578
- Wei, Na, Yin, Moyun. (2024).** “*The Impact of Graphic Design on Brand Identity and Consumer Perception*”, in *Design Insights*. 1. 10.70088/bjmdxv23.