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**Fantômas dans le siècle**

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# Transnational Fantômas: The Influence of Feuillade's Series on International Cinema during the 1910s

Federico Pagello

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- 1 The influence of Fantômas novels and films on global popular culture is widely acknowledged. From the 1915 Spanish musical *Cine-fantomas* to the 1960s Italian comic book series *Diabolik*, *Kriminal* and *Satanik*, from Turkish B-movies such as *Fantoma Istanbulda Bulusalim* (dir. Natuk Baytan, 1967) to Julio Cortazar's anti-imperialist pamphlet *Fantômas contra los vampiros multinacionales* (1975), Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain's original literary series have engendered uncountable translations, adaptations, imitations and plagiarisms that have spread the character's fame worldwide since its first appearance in 1911. This process continues to the present day, an example being the publication of an Italian graphic novel titled *Fantomax* by Luigi Bernardi and Onofrio Catacchio (Bologna: Coconino Press, 2011).
- 2 By focusing on the influence of Louis Feuillade's film adaptations during the first decade of Fantômas' long history as a transnational and transmedia icon, this paper aims to contribute to the growing interdisciplinary field that deals with the history of the supranational cultural sphere created by modern media culture. As a sort of archaeology of contemporary cultural globalization, this form of study intends to enrich previous historical surveys that had only taken into consideration specific national contexts. Moreover, it might also rebalance certain "colonizing" accounts that overemphasize the role of the cultural superpowers such as France, the UK or the US, often forgetting the appropriation of the products of international popular culture to be found in other countries. Therefore, this paper examines the transnational circulation of Fantômas films and, in particular, the creative processes engendered outside of France their origin country. Its goal is to explore both the immediate resonance of these works beyond French borders and the discontinuities that

characterised their reception and assimilation by foreign cultural industries. As a controversial character and a central player in the relationship between cinema and literature in the crucial years when the feature and serial film boosted and legitimized the film industry, Fantômas represents an exemplary case study to discuss the cross-cultural and cross-media dynamics engendered by popular fiction.

- 3 This paper is structured in three parts. The first section lays out the theoretical background of the research. The second compares the circulation of Fantômas novels, films and theatrical adaptations with that of other similar crime series by analysing a series of maps. The final, longer section goes into the details of the influence of Feuillade's films on international cinema in the 1910s, discussing in particular their impact in Italy, the UK, Spain, Germany, the US and Russia.

## 1. Towards a Transnational History of Popular Culture

- 4 In the past two decades, increasing attention has been paid in several interrelated disciplines to the transnational and transmedia circulation of mass-produced fictional texts. Influential works in many fields such as film and literary studies, media and cultural studies, book history and cultural history have questioned the opportunity (if not the possibility itself) of studying popular texts without paying attention to the strong interconnections between different countries and cultural areas. The growing challenges of a multicultural society, the globalization of media culture and the development of integrated media systems have encouraged researchers to investigate the economic and technological infrastructures (distribution networks, transnational/transmedia corporations, new media, etc.) as well as the forms and contents characterizing this permanent cultural exchange from one country to another and from one medium to another. The notion of national cinema, for example, now seems totally inadequate to describe contemporary film production,<sup>1</sup> as does any research that would not consider the interaction between film and other media.<sup>2</sup> New research subjects (e.g. "transnational cinema," "world literature," as well as "intermediality" or "convergence culture") and new disciplines (e.g. "comparative media studies," "transnational media studies," or "adaptation studies") have rapidly developed to address this transnational and transmedia shift. In fact, it is possible to talk about a "transnational turn" involving several disciplines.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, the so-called "spatial turn" in the humanities has pushed researchers to pay more attention to geographical considerations as well as the possibility of visualizing these phenomena through graphic and cartographic representations, thus analyzing the circulation of cultural objects not only from a qualitative but also from a quantitative standpoint.<sup>4</sup>
- 5 Within this wider framework, this paper draws in particular on research on the history of the book and popular literature proving how the beginnings of modern mass culture, as well as its transnational circulation, can be traced back to well before the second part of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it builds on studies in film history that have shown that early and silent European cinemas benefited from a international distribution system that, to some extent, can be viewed as even more favourable than in later periods.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the focus of this essay will not be on the analysis of Fantômas films and novels, but rather on the way in which these texts have travelled around the world and on how they have influenced international cinematographic productions.

- 6 The film serials produced during the first decades of the twentieth century—of which Fantômas is undoubtedly the best example in European cinema—represent an extraordinary subject test for analyzing the earlier phases of the history of transnational popular culture. As works by Monica Dall'Asta and Rudmer Canjels have convincingly demonstrated, the production and international distribution of such a peculiar format as the silent serial film involves a double process.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, it demonstrates the existence of a common cultural background among different countries, especially established upon the widespread fame of the classics of nineteenth-century popular literature and theatrical melodrama. On the other hand, it highlights how diversified consumption practices allowed, and actually encouraged, the manipulation of the original texts in order to adapt them to the targeted public. Dall'Asta, for instance, has drawn on Antonio Gramsci's well-known thesis about the lack of a "national-popular" culture in Italy to discuss the weakness of the Italian production of serial films and their incessant references to the traditional French *feuilletons*, both through official adaptations and explicit imitations.<sup>8</sup> Canjels, in turn, has carefully analyzed the strategies by which the French distributors of Pearl White's films were able to turn this 100% American "serial queen" into a tool of (French) nationalist propaganda during WWI.<sup>9</sup>
- 7 These transnational and transmedia processes are epitomized by Fantômas's global success and influence, even though its outrageous content was often at the centre of acts of censorship or at least moralistic opposition, thus making the creation and circulation of "faithful" imitations of its most subversive features more difficult. It could be argued, however, that the radical modernity of Souvestre and Allain's creation was itself inherently transnational. If we consider its historical context, the peak of what Hobsbawm has called the "Age of Empire,"<sup>10</sup> it would be hard to find in the field of popular culture a more "internationalist" subtext than the systematic aggression to the bourgeois state carried out by Fantômas in his adventures. Their obsessive insistence on the unstable nature of identity might also be seen as radically opposed to nationalist claims. Finally, the inextricable link between this series and the urban imagery of the modern city, perfectly captured by the famous sequences in Feuillade's films set in the streets of Paris, gives a pronounced cosmopolitan flavour to all Fantômas texts. Unlike other popular characters such as the all-American Buffalo Bill, the hyper-British Sherlock Holmes, or the French chauvinist Arsène Lupin, the figure of Fantômas is not clearly associated with any national stereotype. Rather, Souvestre and Allain's anti-hero could be seen as a metaphor of the condition of modern(ist) urban dwellers such as the dandy, the lumpenproletarian and the immigrant, by necessity expropriated of any predetermined social identity and thus naturally opposed to the national state.

## 2. Attempt at a cartography of the transnational circulation of crime fiction heroes (1900-1945)

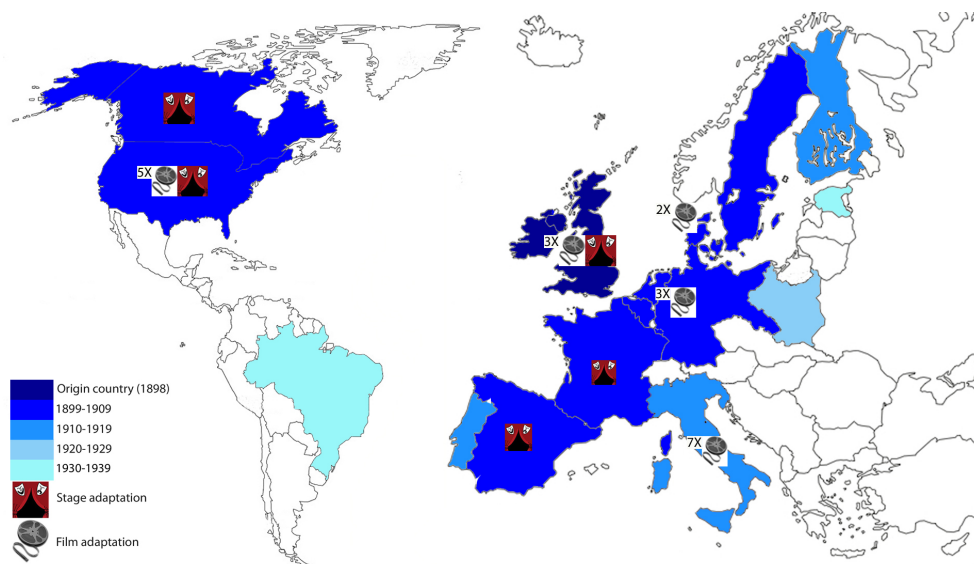
- 8 To better analyse the case of Fantômas, it is useful to briefly take into consideration other similar and coeval crime fictions series. By looking at how Ernest W. Hornung's *Raffles* (1898), Maurice Leblanc's *Lupin* (1905) and Léon Sazie's *Zigomar* (1909) were translated and adapted outside their origin countries, I intend to highlight both the exemplarity and the peculiarities of the circulation of Souvestre and Allain's series. The contemporaneous presence of all of these serial characters in book and film markets

played a pertinent role in this transnational process and markedly influenced their reception. Hence, discussing the differences and similarities in the international distribution of these four series usefully contextualises an analysis of the impact of Feuillade's *Fantômas* adaptations on international cinematic production.

- 9 I will comment on four maps illustrating the circulation of *Raffles*, *Lupin*, *Zigomar* and *Fantômas* films, novels and theatrical works in Europe and the Americas between 1900 and 1945. These maps visualise the geographical areas reached by these series, the pace with which the original novels were translated and the number of theatrical and film adaptations that were produced in and outside the respective origin countries. They thus emphasise in an effective manner that all of them were immediately translated into several other languages and adapted for the theatre and/or the big screen numerous times, and in a very short span of time. Finally, the maps stress how these adaptations were frequently produced outside their origin country and attest to intensely creative dynamics of cross-cultural circulation.
- 10 Before examining these maps a methodological note is necessary. The data used to create them was collected via three main source types: the online catalogues of national libraries; specialized bibliographies and filmographies both online and print; archival documents preserved in film archives in Paris, London, Berlin and Bologna. Although this research has provided a certain amount of useful information, unfortunately the data presented here is still incomplete. In particular, given the absence of exhaustive catalogues and filmographies in relation to this early period in film history, discovering information about the transnational circulation of films during the 1910s has sometimes proved impossible without a lengthy perusal of trade magazines preserved in the film archives of each country under analysis, and through research into state offices devoted to commercial international exchanges. Regrettably, the author was not able to conduct such forms of research for this paper. In a further complication, it is always necessary to bear in mind that around 80% of the films produced during the silent period are currently considered to be lost. Hence, information about the films analysed in this paper is often seriously defective; even if the author has been able to view all the films still accessible either digitally or in film copies, these inevitably represent only a very small part of the titles mentioned.
- 11 These problems have been addressed through different strategies. As regards the scarcity of information available on the international distribution of silent films, I have considered the number and the characteristics of the foreign adaptations as an indicator of the international reception of each series. With regards to most of these movies not being available anymore, secondary sources such as promotional materials, trade magazines of the period and previous scholarly research are referenced. This set of data and information is then used to infer how different cultural industries related to them and to describe if and what practices of appropriation have taken place.
- 12 Given these difficulties as well as the goal of this research, I have considered the collected data being comprehensive as less crucial than the attempt at providing a realistic description of the size and the overall features of the phenomena under scrutiny. Additionally, this work was influenced by Franco Moretti's "distant reading" method. The latter takes into consideration vast amounts of literary and extra-literary data in order to study—also from a quantitative perspective—those broad historical, industrial and cultural processes sometimes neglected by literary scholars.<sup>11</sup> Instead of conducting accurate textual analysis of a single or a small group of works, this

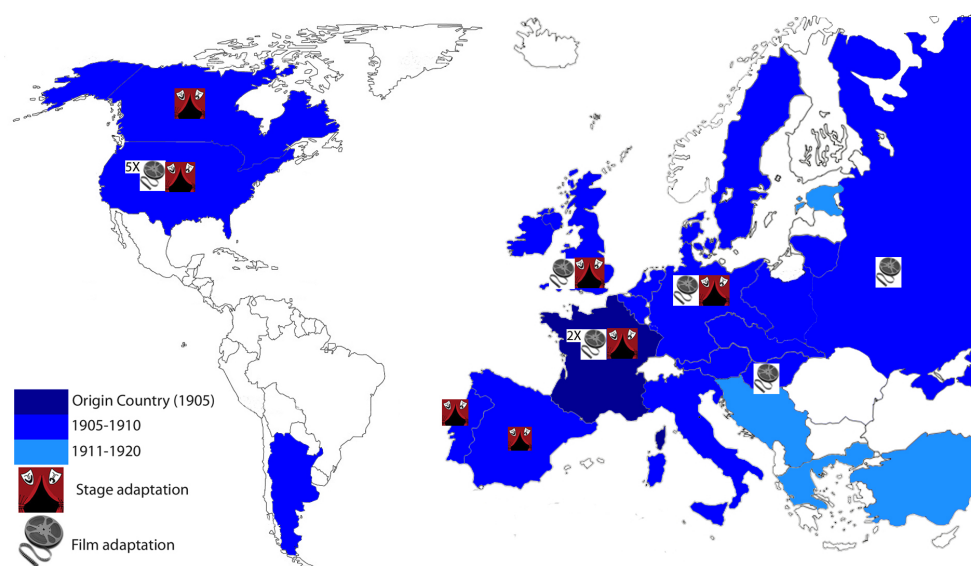
approach deals with processes of distribution, translation and circulation involving large numbers of texts. In his work, Moretti argues that this quantitative approach, as well as associated tools of spatial visualisation such as maps, graphs and trees, is a valuable addition to the traditional methods of literary history. Even though partially incomplete, the maps included in this paper are therefore a first attempt to apply this perspective to the study of transmedia popular culture and to stimulate further research in this direction.

Fig. 1: Ernest W. Hornung's Raffles



- 13 The first map concerns the literary and cinematographic texts featuring Ernest W. Hornung's "gentleman burglar" A. J. Raffles. It shows that the original literary series, formed by three collections of short stories and a novel published between 1899 and 1909, was translated in several countries in the ten years following its first appearance in the UK. The map also stresses a regular increase of the number of translations throughout the next three decades. A list of the translations of Raffles' stories in this period would thus include French, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish, Danish, Dutch, Portuguese, Swedish, Finnish, Argentinian and Estonian publications.<sup>12</sup>
- 14 *Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman: A Play in 4 Acts*, written by Hornung himself together with the American playwright and director Eugene Presbrey in 1903, was staged in at least five countries including the UK, the US, France, Sweden and Canada. The international success of this play was a lasting one: in France the show toured the whole country numerous times until the late 1940s. A further theatrical adaptation was produced in Spain in 1909. However, the quantity of Raffles film adaptations is even more impressive, including at least 20 works produced in five different countries. It's of particular interest to note that, before being taken to the big screen in the UK in 1911, Hornung's character had been the protagonist of films produced in the US (1905), Denmark (1908) and Italy (1911).

Fig. 2. Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin



- 15 The second map illustrates the circulation of stories, novels and films featuring Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin. This map makes immediately clear how the success of this series was significantly quicker, more widespread and more lasting than that of Raffles in any media. The number of translations of Leblancs' works, as well as the rapidity with which they were published, is indeed extraordinary. Less than five years after its first appearance on the pages of the French literary magazine *Je sais tout* (1905), the series had been already translated in more than ten countries. The twenty volumes collecting Lupin stories and novels continued to be published until the death of their author in 1939, thus supplying new material that would be promptly translated in these as well as other countries around the world for more than three decades. As early as the 1910s the character's fame reached non-Western countries such as Egypt and China where local imitations and variations were soon created.
- 16 It was thus predictable that the play *Arsène Lupin, comédie en 4 actes*, written by Leblanc with Francis de Crosset in 1909, was staged in a number of European and North American countries, and that at least two additional stage adaptations were created by Spanish authors in the same period. Because of controversy related to copyright issues, "only" 13 film adaptations of Lupin stories were produced before 1940. However, the variety of non-French adaptations is unique, ranging from countries such as Germany (1910), the UK (1916) and the US (1917) to even more surprisingly Russia (1918), Hungary (1921), Japan (1923) and China (1931).

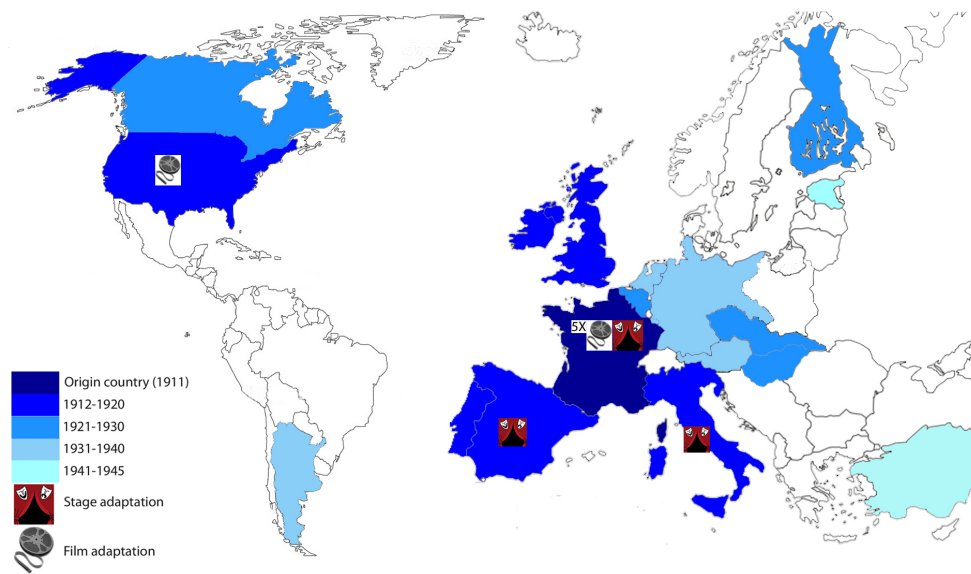


Fig. 3: Léo Sazie's Zigomar



- 17 This map refers to Léo Sazie's Zigomar serial that first appeared as a feuilleton in the French newspaper *Le Matin* in 1909. The collected data about its translation circulation is unfortunately too incomplete to make a realistic cartography of the circulation of the series. The main reason is that it is very likely that Sazie's "*grand roman*" was only published as a serial by different newspapers and journals, making it harder to collect information on an international scale. While it is certain that the Zigomar novel was translated in Italy and the UK, as yet there's no information about other translations.
- 18 The lack of editions in book form is in any case significant, especially if compared to the other three series here discussed, and a parallel with the case of Fantômas proves to be particularly useful. While Sazie's character was probably the main source of inspiration for Souvestre and Allain's anti-hero, Fantômas' novels were largely more successful than those of its model. However, the Zigomar cinematographic trilogy, directed by Victorin-Hyppolite Jasset for the Éclair Company between 1911 and 1913, became enormously popular all over the world, thus providing the ideal foundation for the transnational circulation of both Fantômas novels and films. Unlike Lupin and Raffles, it seems that the only non-French films using the figure of Zigomar were produced in Japan.<sup>13</sup> As I will explain in the following pages, Fantômas was also adapted outside France only once. The reason is possibly found, not only in the more rigid attention shown by the authors of these two series to the abusive use of their properties in comparison to Hornung and Leblanc, but also in their more subversive content. In actuality, the offensive character of figures such as Zigomar and Fantômas pushed the film industry to create less violent versions of these figures, most likely with the main goal of avoiding problems with the censors.



**Fig. 4: Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain's Fantômas**

- 19 The fourth and last map describes the case of the Fantômas films, novels and theatrical adaptations. In particular, it clearly shows how the considerable circulation of Souvestre and Allain's original literary works was significantly larger than that of the Zigomar novels. However, this map also clearly demonstrates that it was smaller and decisively less rapid in comparison to that of Hornung's and Leblanc's series. For instance, unlike the case of the Lupin stories and novels a much smaller portion of the volumes of the series was translated. The first series of Fantômas novels—published in France between 1911 and 1913—included 32 volumes, but in most cases only the very first one was translated. The pace of this process is also different and the export of Souvestre and Allain's texts was much slower and more discontinuous than that of the Raffles and Lupin stories. Though foreign editions were published quite rapidly in Italy, Spain, Portugal and the UK, the series was only later translated into other languages (German, Hungarian, Finnish and Czech) during the Twenties and Thirties.
- 20 Most interestingly two unauthorized theatrical adaptations were produced in Italy and Spain, by far the most receptive countries to Fantômas novels, being the only two in which the 32 volumes were translated in their entirety. However, as regards Fantômas film adaptations, even though precise data is as usual quite difficult to find,<sup>14</sup> there's no doubt that the five films directed by Louis Feuillade were distributed almost everywhere right after their French release. This gained the adaptations immense popularity and significantly influenced film production in several countries. In fact, while only one foreign film was officially entitled 'Fantômas' (the already mentioned 1920-1921 American serial directed by Edward Sedgwick for the Fox Film Corporation), many other films reveal strong connections with Feuillade's works. As we shall see, these productions were also deeply influenced by the wider circulation of the adaptations of other series already discussed.

### 3. The Transnational Influence of Feuillade's Fantômas

- 21 As anticipated in the introduction, the last section of this paper focuses on how Louis Feuillade's adaptations of five Fantômas novels, originally released in France between

1913 and 1914, affected foreign film industries during the years immediately subsequent to their initial appearance. Their impact on international cinema will be analyzed by drawing upon studies of their reception and most especially by discussing the films inspired by the series in six different countries i.e. Italy, the UK, Spain, Germany, the US and Russia.

### 3.1 Fantômas made in Italy

- 22 As happened with Souvestre and Allain's novels, Feuillade's films were released in Italy immediately after the French première. In the 1980s, film historian Vittorio Martinelli conducted scrupulous archival research on the Italian reception of films of Feuillade, examining the problems encountered by *Fantômas* and *Les Vampires* with the Italian office of censorship. Martinelli writes that

les épisodes de Fantômas sont présentés sur les écrans italiens très peu de temps après leur première parisienne, précédés d'un battage publicitaire bien orchestré que les revues cinématographiques, alors très répandues, exaltent dans des long articles descriptifs et photographiques, tandis que les correspondances de Paris ne laissent pas de célébrer le vif succès remporté par les aventures de ce gentilhomme-cambrioleur publiées dans la péninsule par les éditions populaires Nerbini.<sup>15</sup>

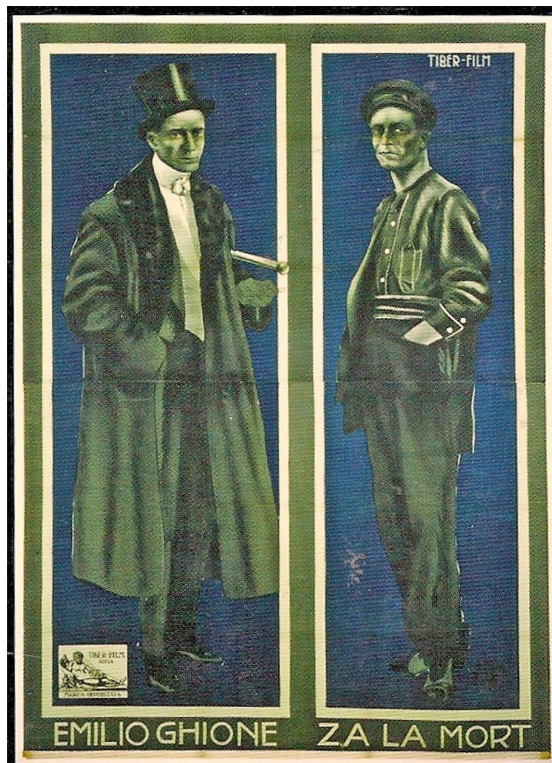
- 23 As mentioned above, there was a considerable and lasting interest in Souvestre and Allain's novels in Italy. Not only was it the first country where all 32 volumes of the series were translated as early as between 1912 and 1914 by the publishing house Salani (Florence) in its collection "Biblioteca Illustrata Salani," but numerous reprints, in addition to a new edition in the collection "Le Grandi Avventure Salani" were released up until 1937.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Italy was also one of the very few countries where the second *Fantômas* literary series, written by Allain alone in 1926, was published in its entirety—and the only one in which it was reprinted in 1928, 1930 and 1936.
- 24 Concerning Feuillade's films, Martinelli also reports that in 1915 the office of censorship revoked its previous authorization of their distribution. By that time—two years after their first release—the series had almost completed its circulation and was still screened only in small town cinemas. Considering the timing and the contradictory meaning of this decision, in addition to examining the film journals published during the same period, Martinelli concluded that the real reason for the sudden change in the office's decision was found in the increasingly protectionist campaign promoted by Italian production companies. In this period, violent attacks against foreign cinemas appeared with increasing frequency in film magazines—most of them being official or unofficial organs of the Italian film studios—as part of a campaign supporting a more high-brow, educational production inspired by Roman history or by nineteenth century literature and theatre. Not incidentally, this was exactly the genre of films the Italians companies were producing in this period.
- 25 In any case, *Fantômas*' success was already well established and could not be stopped by the censors, as testified by the ongoing translations and reprints of the novels. In fact, before starting to cry out for the defence of "good cinema" the same Italian producers had tried in vain to imitate the success of the French series. Since 1913 several films based on "crime masterminds" clearly modelled after *Fantômas* had been released, and strategies of serialization influenced by *Fantômas* had been adopted by all the most important Italian film companies. Among these films, there were crime movies such as *Il circolo nero* (Cines, 1913), *Agenzia Griffard* (dir. Vitale de Stefano,

Ambrosio, 1913, 3 episodes), *Jack l'Apache - I predatori della Senna* (dir., Eugenio Testa, Isis Film, 1913), *Gli scarabei d'oro* (dir. Enrique Santos, Cines, 1914, 3 episodes). Even the short comic film *Cinessino imita Fantômas* (in English: *Cinessino as Fantômas*, Cines, 1914),<sup>17</sup> in which a little boy called Cinessino, the mascot of the Cines company, dresses up as the “genius of terror” demonstrates that attempts to exploit the character's popularity in any way possible had been the very first response of the Italian movie industry to the popularity of Feuillade's *Fantômas*.

- 26 The most interesting of these films is without any doubt the feature film *Tigris*, directed by Vincenzo Denizot and produced by Giovanni Pastrone for Itala studios. Launched in February 1913 (i.e. three months before the French release of the first episode of Feuillade's saga) this film was probably inspired by the success of the *Fantômas* novels as much as by films based on Sazie's *Zigomar*. Not coincidentally, *Tigris* is now remembered especially for its sophisticated visual effects, something it shares more with Jasset's trick films than with Feuillade's more realist series.
- 27 Despite gaining considerable attention on the international market and announced as the first of a series no sequel to *Tigris* was eventually released.<sup>18</sup> The serialisation of crime fiction films subsequently became the specialty of one particular Italian author, Emilio Ghione. Already an established actor, Ghione debuted as a director in 1913 with the two-reel *Il Giglio Nero* (prod. Celio-Film). The film, in which he played the role of the sadistic chief of a secret society, began with a series of close-ups depicting the bandits clearly inspired by the famous opening sequence of Feuillade's *Fantômas*. Two years later, Ghione created the character of *Za la Mort* for the feature film *Nelly, la Gigolette* (prod. Caesar film, 1915). Ghione's alter-ego *Za la Mort* quickly became the most successful Italian imitator of *Fantômas*, appearing in sixteen films that include the serials *I topi grigi* (prod. Tiber Film, 8 episodes, 1918), *Il castello di bronzo* (prod. Lombardo Film, 2 episodes, 1920), *Za la Mort. Der Traum der Za la Vie* (prod. F.A.J.-National, 2 episodes, 1924),<sup>19</sup> as well as two novels, *Za la Mort. Il più grande successo romantico dello Schermo* (Florence: Nerbini, 1928) and *L'ombra di Za la Mort* (Milan: Bietti, 1929).<sup>20</sup>
- 28 In the *Za la Mort* films Ghione used a number of narrative situations as well as fake, atmospheric Parisian locations, including the characteristic *bas-fonds* and Apache gangs and dances that were borrowed as directly from Souvestre and Allain's novels as from Feuillade's adaptations. However, *Za la Mort*'s relationship with *Fantômas* is contradictory. Somewhere in between an Apache-like criminal and a “gentleman burglar,” so often closer to Arsène Lupin than to *Fantômas*, *Za la Mort* was in fact a very unstable figure in terms of genre influences. On the one hand, his name derived from *Zigomar*'s battle cry “Z à la mort!; Z à la vie!;” on the other, Ghione himself declared that he wanted to create a French equivalent of Arsène Lupin.<sup>21</sup> As the hero created by Maurice Leblanc, *Za la Mort* was indeed frequently seen acting the role of the detective and the avenger. As a consequence, Ghione's films show a highly self-conscious potpourri of influences, mixing topoi taken from popular novels and films of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an accumulation of *feuilletonnesque* images and sequences where no originality can be found. Nevertheless, thanks to Ghione's manifest irony and enjoyment in embodying *Za la Mort* the final result appeared as an amusing and fresh novelty for Italian cinema. The actor-director's unique features, at once disturbing and fascinating, made the character an unforgettable protagonist of the Italian popular imagination. Moreover, like his French

models, Za la Mort was able to achieve international popularity. His last film—the already mentioned *Za la Mort. Der Traum der Za la Vie*—was produced by the German company F.A.J.-Film National in 1924, thus proving that the series had secured international fame.

Poster of Za La Mort



D.R.

### 3.2 A British Fantômas: Ultus

- <sup>29</sup> The reception of *Fantômas* in the U.K. was described in detail in an article written by Stephen Bottomore in 1988.<sup>22</sup> The first episode of Feuillade's series, re-titled *The Lady Beltham Mystery*, was released on May 25, 1913, only two weeks after its French première. More surprisingly, the second and third parts (*The Man in Black* and *The Mysterious Fingerprint*) were even distributed before their release in their home country. Even if, as Bottomore adds that such an earlier presentation was not unusual,<sup>23</sup> the extensive British promotional campaign for the series deserves more attention. For instance, the initiatives included promotional images, detailed summaries, comments and a collection of favourable reviews appearing for months in the *Gaumont Weekly*, the English magazine published by the company producing the films. Not coincidentally, the French company Gaumont had started the regular publication of its bulletin right after the distribution of the first *Fantômas* film in Great Britain. In addition to this, in the same period—two years before their release in book format by the London publisher Stanley and Co. in 1915—the novels by Souvestre and Allain were serialised in the British magazine *Yes and No*. This testifies the particular relevance to the series the company granted to Feuillade's films, suggesting that it intended to use their popularity to support the circulation of other products in Britain. The results of this

campaign seem to have been more than satisfying, as confirmed by two reviews that appeared in the British film press and quoted by Bottomore (in French translation):

Cette série compte parmi les meilleurs histoires de detectives jamais tourné” (*The Kinegraph Weekly*); “On y frissonne d’abondance. L’auteur a pris son courage à deux mains et prodigue des trésors d’imagination, sans se soucier de la vraisemblance [...] Pourquoi les complices arrivent-ils alors qu’ils n’étaient pas attendus? Nous ne le savons pas et, vraiment, cela importe peu. La surprise est ici la sensation la plus agréable. Si nous savions le ‘comment’, le ‘pourquoi’ et le ‘quand,’ nous connaîtrions le mécanisme, et l’illusion serait dissipé” (*The Cinematograph Exhibitors Mail*).<sup>24</sup>

- 30 The most interesting example of a British series influenced by *Fantômas* is a group of films featuring Ultus, an anti-hero played by Aurele Sydney, an Australian actor with French origins who had already worked successfully in France. Released by Gaumont through its British branch, the Ultus series was evidently a result of the positive reception of Feuillade’s film in the UK. Significantly, even though the goal was explicitly one of benefiting from the success of Souvestre and Allain’s creation, the new character was not a faithful replica of the model.
- 31 The genesis of the series is symptomatic of the approach of foreign filmmakers in creating new series inspired by *Fantômas*. The director of the series, George Pearson, reported in his autobiography that Léon Gaumont had asked him personally to create “une copie consciencieuse de *Fantômas*.” The description that Pearson offers of the so-called “master of terror” is thus quite surprising: “*Fantômas* était une sort de Robin Hood, toujours prêt à faire lui-même justice dans les causes qu’il juge bonnes.”<sup>25</sup> As a result, like *Za la Mort*, Ultus was presented at once a criminal and an avenger, a figure very different from Souvestre and Allain’s outrageous character. The six episodes of Pearson’s series, released between 1916 and 1920,<sup>26</sup> focused on the story of Ultus, a former diamond miner, who plans and fulfils his vengeance against a treacherous partner who had made an attempt on his life. Similar to *Fantômas*, Sidney’s character is wanted by the police; but as a more positive hero, he also acts as an avenger, rescuing innocent children and even a minister from evil kidnappers.

### 3.3 The Spanish Vampires

- 32 Together with Italy, Spain was the only country to translate Souvestre and Allain’s novels as early as 1912. As a consequence Feuillade’s films also became extremely popular one year later, as is attested by at least two local productions.
- 33 The first one is the musical *Cine-Fantomas*, written by Ricardo Gonzalez del Toro and Gerónimo Giménez for the Madrid Sociedad de Autores Españoles and presented in 1915. It was a comic fantasy based on the *Fantomas* series and the show included two scenes set in or outside a cinema.<sup>27</sup> The second one is *La secta de los misteriosos* [The Sect of the Mysterious], a movie serial produced directed by Alberto Marro and by Hispano Films in 1917. The first serial produced by this company, *Los misterios de Barcelona* (dir. Alberto Marro, 1915),<sup>28</sup> had been an attempt to exploit the success of American and French series such as *Fantômas*, *Les Mystères de Paris* (dir. Georges Denola, 1912) and *Les Mystères de New York* (the French version of *The Exploits of Pauline*, dir. Louis Garnier, 1914). Additionally, *La secta de los misteriosos* was a film explicitly influenced by Feuillade’s films, particularly by *Les Vampires*. The female character—called La Garza—was evidently a clone of Musidora’s Irma Vep, the leader of the criminal gang



Vampires, as much as El Zorro, the chief of the group, was reminiscent of both Zigomar and Fantômas. Extremely conventional, the film tells the story of a gang of masked bandits—all dressed in black like their French counterparts—who kidnap a little girl with the goal of obtaining information about a lost treasure. If a happy ending is to be expected, it is curious to note that whereas in the original Spanish version the outlaws were defeated and all its members eventually killed or arrested, in the German version of the film *El Zorro* succeeded in escaping and promised revenge.

- 34 Even though 95% of Spanish silent films are now considered lost, a copy of this film (albeit incomplete) has been preserved and is currently available on DVD.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, the reason why *La secta de los misteriosos* did not get lost is directly connected with the transnational processes that is the subject of this paper. The copy that has survived is not the 1917, 2,100-meter-long Spanish version of the movie, but a later German edition; the original print as well as the negatives of all other films produced by Hispano films were destroyed by fire in 1918, an accident that eventually provoked the failure of the company. Luckily, Deutsche Bioscop GmbH had already bought the rights to distribute the film in Germany in its original serial form, between 1918 and 1920. After the acquisition of Bioscop by Decla Film Society Holz & Co. in 1920, *Die Sekte der Geheimnisvollen* was thus released in a new, abridged version, condensing the three original episodes into one single feature film, distributed in 1921. The copy available today is in fact a restoration of the 1,200-meter-long version realized by Bioscop.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.4 The German Phantômas

- 35 On the pages of *Der Kinematograph*, one of the most prominent German trade magazines of the 1910s, the future release of the first episode of Feuillade's series was announced for the end of August 1914 with the publication of a promotional image featuring the most famous picture of the genius of crime. However, in perusing the following issues of the magazine, no further information can be found concerning the serial. The reason was certainly the outbreak of World War I in August 1914. It is thus quite significant to note that a crime series featuring a *villain* called Phantomas was produced in Germany between 1916 and 1919.
- 36 Released by Greenbaum-Film GmbH the series was in twelve episodes by five different directors (Ernst Matray, Adolf Gärtner, Louis Neher, Jaap Spayer and Carl Boes). All of the episodes of the saga are currently considered to be lost. Although none of them were titled after Phantomas, the series as a whole is now known as the "Phantomas Detektive Series." Any attempt at finding further information on these films has been frustrated so far. It is of interest that Jules Greenbaum (Julius Grünbaum) had been the owner of another company, named Deutsche Vitascope GmbH, whose first production was the serial *Arsène Lupin contra Sherlock Holmes* (dir. Viggo Larsen, 1910)<sup>31</sup> and whose bigger success was the four-episode *Der Hund von Baskerville* (dir. Rudolf Meiner and Richard Oswald, 1914-1915).<sup>32</sup> The transnational connections of these works are not limited to their sources and their distribution in other countries. Viggo Larsen, the director of the Lupin/Holmes serial, was a Danish actor and director who had worked for the Copenhagen-based Nordisk film company, directing several films based on Sherlock Holmes's and Nat Pinkerton's stories, as well as an adaptation of George du Maurier's *Trilby*. Both Larsen and Greenbaum can thus be regarded as two specialists in

the use of international popular literature as a source for the emerging European narrative cinema.

### 3.5 Fantômas in America

- 37 Regarding the reception of Feuillade's films in the United States, we can draw a complete analysis of the evolution of Gaumont's difficult commercial expansion and its temporary retreat in that country between 1914 and 1916 from a well-informed article written by the film historian Richard Abel.<sup>33</sup> The distribution of the *Fantômas* series coincided with the climax of a contentious campaign against foreign production that was particularly aggressive towards European crime movies for glorifying anti-social heroes "for purely sensationalist reasons." While certainly moved by analogous commercial interests—as in the Italian case—these attacks nevertheless proved to be much more effective. As Abel himself explained in his in-depth study of the progressive "Americanization of the American cinema" during the first decade of the twentieth century, a large and aggressive attempt was successfully promoted in defence of national culture as well as the film market.<sup>34</sup>
- 38 Whereas at the beginning of the century French cinema—and, in particular, the pioneering firm Pathé-Frère—were still hegemonic within the USA, by the time Feuillade's movies were distributed the situation had completely changed. As a consequence, Gaumont was forced to adopt a series of strategies to overcome this resistance. The first episode of the *Fantômas* series was announced as part of a series entitled "Cracksman vs. Detective," while Fantômas was described as an elegant masked gentleman. The use of the word "cracksman" was another way of promoting Fantômas as an innocuous character, and it is certainly no coincidence that the "amateur cracksman" was the nickname of the much more reassuring Raffles, a Hollywood favourite from 1905 to 1940. As seen in the cases of the creation of *Za la Mort* in Italy and *Ultus* in the UK, the exportation of Fantômas in the US needed an intermediary to attenuate its outrageous qualities. This mediation was found either in the traditional figure of the "noble thief" or its modern equivalent, the "gentleman burglar."
- 39 In spite of these precautions, the films were not well received by the press and did not meet with any considerable success. Abel cites a few negative reviews, criticizing *Fantômas* because of the lack of narrative consistency or because of its vulgar taste. In conclusion Abel argues: "la série qui fit la réputation de Feuillade comme metteur en scène en France fut en général ignorée ou dénigrée aux Etats-Unis."<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Abel reports that the *Fantômas* movies were the last Gaumont productions to be exported into the US for more than two years, until they were re-released as a teaser for *Les Vampires* in 1916. To support the launch of this serial, Gaumont organized a large promotional campaign. However, the result of this initiative was again another failure.
- 40 These precedents did not prevent the fame of Fantômas' novels from arriving in the US, just as they didn't prevent Hollywood from making a profit from it. Between December 19, 1920 and May 1, 1921, the twenty episodes of the first post-Feuillade and the only non-French film explicitly entitled *Fantômas* were distributed in American movie theaters. The serial was directed by Edward Sedgwick and produced by Fox Film Corporation.<sup>36</sup> In this case too, however, we can easily notice how the character was deeply transformed, losing some, if not most, of its more subversive qualities. Guided



by the review published in the *Kinematograph Weekly* on April 1921, it would be difficult to recognize the frightening plots created by Souvestre and Allain, and one is more reminded of the typical American action serials of the 1910s:

One can hardly feel any sympathy with the good characters in such a *Fantomas* serial partly because they seem to walk into trouble simply because they like it, and partly owing to past experiences which teach the spectator that neither explosions, fires, falls from bridges or roofs into water, knives, pistols nor luridly devised tortures will harm a hair of their heads or the skin of their baby fingers. *Fantomas* is just the treasure serial. [...] *Fantomas* himself has a striking face, and is very ingenious in disguising it, while all the performers appear to be good acrobats. [...] The stunts include pretending to kidnap the millionaire alchemist in a motor car which really contains dummies; disguising as a chauffeur; connecting a telephone receiver with an explosive; jumping from a balcony into a motor car; swinging on a chandelier; jumping from roof to roof; blowing up a boat full of policemen, and high diving from a room through the window.<sup>37</sup>

- 41 In 1967, Marcel Allain himself, in a speech given at the Bibliothèque communale of Verviers, reproached the Americans for having betrayed the original spirit of the character:

Et puis il y a les gens d'Hollywood, qui ont un procédé très simple: ils achètent les droits d'adaptation, les livres à une équipe qui, pour justifier ses honoraires, s'efforce de faire le contraire de ce qu'il y a dans le roman. Le résultat est qu'on n'y comprend plus rien du tout. J'ai eu la surprise un jour de voir *Fantômas* devenu une femme, qui agissait pour le plus grand bien du public. Il n'y a qu'à s'incliner devant ces choses-là, mais j'ai fais interdire le film en France.<sup>38</sup>

- 42 In this context, it is useful to cite another French-influenced crime serial centred on the figure of a gentleman thief that was released in the USA during the same period as the American *Fantômas*. The fifteen chapters of *Velvet Fingers*, produced and directed by George B. Seitz and distributed by the Pathé Exchange, were distributed in the American theatres between December 5, 1920 and March 13, 1921. This well-crafted and amusing serial presents the character of a noble thief overtly modelled on Arsène Lupin. Like Leblanc's character, Velvet initially appears as a villain, but is quickly turned into a positive hero after just a few episodes. Interestingly, however, the criminologist who was meant to catch him at the beginning of the film became the antagonist of the hero. By adopting a figure inspired by the French gentleman burglar and by using this curious superimposition of the couple formed by the detective and the criminal—a typical feature of *Fantômas* films and novels—*Velvet Fingers* proves to be another example of the complex influence of the so-called “roman policier archaïque” on popular global cinema, as well as influencing its appropriation by other cultural industries in innovative ways.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.6 Fantômas in Russia

- 43 Even if first hand information about the distribution and reception of Feuillade's films in Russia are missing, a pair of extraordinary secondary sources can be mentioned. Two of the greatest directors of the Soviet avant-garde—Sergei Eisenstein and Leonid Trauberg—publicly expressed their deep love for these serials while surprisingly acknowledging them as an influence on their own approach to cinematography.
- 44 Trauberg, interviewed by Natalia Noussimova about his relationship with Feuillade's films,<sup>40</sup> recalled his memories as a young boy in Odessa where he saw the whole series

during 1914 and 1915, subsequently confirming its huge success among Russian youth. Despite considering Souvestre and Allain's novels extremely boring and admitting his preference for Feuillade's subsequent crime serial, *Les Vampires*, Trauberg employed a very emphatic tone in speaking of the relevance of the *Fantômas* films to his imagination, as well as for its influence on his work and that of his colleagues. Trauberg argued that, together with Lev Kuleshov, the pioneer of Soviet montage cinema, and other members of the collective group called FEKS (the "Factory of the Eccentric Actor Group"), he had carefully studied the cinematographic technique used in *Fantômas*. Trauberg also stated that its influence could not be detected at the level of content but had deeply affected the form of the films of the Soviet avant-garde. As an example, Trauberg cited a trilogy he had directed with his partner Grigori Kozintsev, formed by *The Youth of Maxim* (1934), *The Return of Maxime* (1937), and *The Vyborg Side* (1938). These films, he explained, were built as a series of scenes in which each sequence revolved around a single focal point "comme dans *Fantômas*." In fact,

chaque scène, c'est l'épisode de l'inspecteur Juve et de son assistant Fandor quand ils combattent Fantômas, et puis Eisenstein m'a dit que le titre du film *le Retour de Maxime* lui avait plut parce que nous étions tous deux des passionnés de littérature d'aventures, comme *le Retour de Sherlock Holmes*.<sup>41</sup>

- 45 Furthermore, Trauberg remarked how *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924) as well as *The Death Ray* (1925) were Kuleshov's tributes and parodies of *Fantômas* and other pulp heroes. Finally, the director underlined the extent to which Eisenstein's theatrical work had been influenced by detective fiction. According to him, the "attractions" that Eisenstein famously used to provoke a "shock" among the spectators and urge them to engage more actively with what they were seeing on stage came directly from French and American crime stories. It was thus by including incongruous action sequences taken from contemporary popular cinema in more traditional theatrical plays, such as those written by nineteenth-century author Alexandre Ostrovski, that Eisenstein came to theorize the "montage of attractions" with which he later revolutionized film language.
- 46 Eisenstein himself wrote about his unconditional love for the *Fantômas* novels and films. In a chapter of an unfinished work written in 1944, published posthumously as a short essay under the title *On the Detective Story*,<sup>42</sup> the Russian director and theorist engages in a long, sentimental digression referring to the anti-hero. The text starts with the following words: "Even in my earliest youth, I was crazy about the endless series of crime-detective novels, which had as their hero the elusive *Fantômas*."<sup>43</sup> Eisenstein then continued by lyrically mentioning his juvenile souvenirs of Feuillade's films. Interestingly, he also affirms that "*Fantômas* was so popular that well into the NEP years, this intriguing and magnificent name adorned a cinema on the corner of Sretenka and Boulevard Ring A," in Moscow.<sup>44</sup> He then goes on to relate how he came to acquire an almost complete collection of the first original series thanks to the *bouquinistes* along the Seine, and dwells on his love for the cover illustrations of Gino Starace. Eisenstein's admiration for all aspects of *Fantômas*' universe is made absolutely clear and he does not hesitate in defining the character not only as "the immortal creation of Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain," but even as "the dominant influence on my youth."<sup>45</sup>
- 47 While these two texts are of great interest in themselves—matching and contributing to the well-known tributes to *Fantômas* by the French surrealists—they also converge in attesting to the strong and enduring popularity enjoyed by Feuillade's films in Russia.

In fact, the impact of the *Fantômas* series is visible not only in the films of the Soviet avant-garde. Influenced by the French and American serials, the Drankov film company specialized in sensationalist cinema, releasing a four-episode serial entitled *Sonka zolotaia ruchka* ("Sonka the 'Golden Hand'," dir. Yury Yuryevsky, 1914-1915). The film, inspired by the life of the robber Sonia Blyuvshtein (1846-1902) and based on a popular novel written by Graf Amori, became a great success. As reported by the *Encyclopaedia of Early Cinema*, "part three of Sonka played twelve of Moscow's leading palace cinemas simultaneously and was heavily advertised in the mass circulation daily *Russkoe slovo* (*The Russian Word*)."<sup>46</sup> As a result, Drankov produced another crime series devoted to the famous robber Vaska Churkin, *Razboinik Vaska Churkin*, which was advertised as the "Russian Fantômas". The fact that both characters were actually real-life robbers, glorified by popular culture in the tradition of the "social bandit" discussed by Eric Hobsbawm,<sup>47</sup> confirms once again that the notoriety of Souvestre and Allain's character has most often been used to promote less controversial criminal figures than their source of inspiration.

## Conclusions

- <sup>48</sup> Though much has been written about Fantômas' international success, this paper has suggested that this topic deserves further research. During the first decades of the twentieth century, especially (but not only) thanks to the extremely rapid world expansion of the film industry, the transnational and transmedia circulation of popular fiction became so intense that an already truly global culture took shape. The list of Fantômas-like characters appearing in other countries—as that concerning any other internationally popular hero—would certainly be much longer if a collective research project had been undertaken to trace the direct and indirect influence of Souvestre and Allain's creations on international cinema. In both popular literature and silent film studies, the practical and methodological problems in carrying out such endeavours are in fact numerous, and can only be met through an international and interdisciplinary cooperation, as well as through long-term archival research conducted in each country.
- <sup>49</sup> Despite its inevitable incompleteness, this paper proved that the success of Feuillade's films, not only *Fantômas* but also its unofficial sequel *Les Vampires*, had a lasting influence in several countries. Far from producing simple imitations, this phenomenon encouraged the creation of national variations. Each country profited from Fantômas' popularity to create its own version of the modern outlaw hero as a combination of both foreign influences and its own local priorities and cultural traditions. If the overall tendency was to reduce the outrageous, hyper-modern flavour of the French "genius of crime," it is important to bear in mind that in these years cinema was still the victim of harsh cultural delegitimization and severe censorship. Although mitigated, the subversion of moral codes embodied by Fantômas' figure and the intrinsic cinematic value of Feuillade's adaptations were undoubtedly still perceptible in its foreign avatars and certainly contributed in the evolution of the respective national cinemas towards a more modern, twentieth century approach to film production and culture.

Italian poster for *Les Vampires*

D.R.

## NOTES

1. See Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (eds.), *Cinema and Nation*, London: Routledge, 2000; Will Higbee, and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no.1 (2010).
2. See David Jay Bolter, and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999; Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York and London: Routledge, 2006; Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York and London: NYU Press, 2006.
3. See Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010; Winfried Fluck, Donald E. Pease, John Carlos Rowe (eds.), *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2011.
4. See Franco Moretti, *An Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, London and New York: Verso, 2000; Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, London and New York: Verso, 2005.
5. Marie-Eve Therenty and Alain Vaillant (eds.), *1836. L'An I de l'ère médiatique. Analyse littéraire et historique de La Presse de Girardin*, Paris: Editions du nouveau monde, 2001; Jean-Yves Mollier,

Jean-François Sirinelli, and François Valloton (eds.), *Culture de masse et culture médiatique en Europe et dans les Amériques (1860-1940)*, Paris : PUF, 2006.

6. FIAF Symposium, *Le Cinéma français muet dans le monde. Influences réciproques*, Toulouse : Cinémathèque de Toulouse, Institute Jean Vigo, 1988 ; Richard Abel, François Albera, Roland Cosandey (eds.), *Images Across Borders 1896-1918*, Lausanne : Payot, 1996 ; Frank Kessler, Anna Verhoeff (eds.), *Networks of Entertainment : Film Distribution from 1895 to the 1910s*, Eastleigh : John Libbey Publishing, 2007.

7. Monica Dall'Asta, *Trame spezzate. Archeologia del film seriale*, Recco : Le Mani, 2009 ; Rudmer Canjels, *Distributing Silent Film Serials : Local Practices, Changing Forms, Cultural Transformation*, New York : Routledge, 2011.

8. Monica Dall'Asta, "Italian Serial Film and 'International Popular Culture,'" *Film History* 12, no. 3 (2000).

9. Rudmer Canjels, "Localizing Serials. Translating Daily Life in Les Mystères de New-York," in Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini (eds.), *Early Cinema and the National*, Eastleigh : John Libbey Publishing, 2008.

10. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1987.

11. See Franco Moretti, *An Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900*, London and New York: Verso, 2000; Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, London and New York: Verso, 2005.

12. In these maps, only the countries in which a local publisher released at least one translation of the series under scrutiny have been coloured. However, it is necessary to consider that these publications were often distributed also in other areas where the same language is used—as it is the case, in particular, of the former colonies.

13. In Japan the series gained such a large popularity to provoke violent reactions in relations to episodes of juvenile delinquency supposedly influenced by the films. On the attacks of the Japanese press against Zigomar films and their subsequent problems with censorship, see Arnold Gerow, "Swarming Ants and Elusive Villains : Zigomar and the Problem of Cinema in 1910s Japan," *CineMagaziNet* 1 (1996) (<http://www.cmn.hs.h.kyoto-u.ac.jp/no1/subject1/zigomar.htm>); Hase Masato, "Cinemaphobia in Taishô Japan : Zigomar, delinquent boys and somnambulism," *Iconics* 4 (1998) : 87-100.

14. For instance, the International Movie Database only indicates that the first episode of the saga was released in Turkey in 1914 and in Japan on May 9, 1915.

15. Vittorio Martinelli, "Feuillade en Italie," *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, no. 48 (1988) : 105.

16. This also means that, interestingly, Souvestre and Allain's series did not experience any problems with the fascist censorship.

17. Here is the presentation of the film published by *The Bioscope* (19 November 1914): "This is an exceedingly clever burlesque of the ultra-sensational criminal film, in which the master criminal is played by a very clever and attractive little boy. His nefarious acts are of the most desperate character, including the purloining of jam and cake, and of a lover's bouquet for presentation to his little sweetheart. It includes some very clever trick effects, and little Cinessino, in the conventional costume of acrobatic villainy, should be an enormous favorite with the youngsters at Christmas time." According to *The Bioscope* (16 December 1915), the film was distributed again in the UK the following year, but with a different title : *Cinessimo as Raffles*. Ironically, the film presentation in the journal still referred to Fantômas : "The delightful Cinessino in the costume of the celebrated Fantômas commits the most daring crimes, stealing jam, kissing a pretty little girl, and striking terror into the hearts of the local police. With no strength of plot, it should appeal to a juvenile audience."

18. Interestingly enough, some years later Marcel Allain himself published a series of novel entitled *Tigris* (Ferenczy, 1928-1930, 28 vol. ) devoted to a master criminal having the same name.

19. Of all these films only *I topi grigi*, an incomplete copy of *Der Traum der Za la Vie*, and a series of fragments of a few other films are still available.

20. See Cristina Jandelli, "Za la Mort, dal film al romanzo," in Alice Autelitano, Valentina Re (eds.), *Il racconto del film/Narrating the Film*, Udine: Forum, 2006.

21. "In that period, France Arsène Lupin, the gentleman burglar, was a triumph in France. To defend the honor of the Italian production, we had to oppose an equivalent character to him. I had the idea to create one named Za-la-Mort, that in the slang of the Apaches means: 'Hooray-for-Death.' If Lupin was a gentleman burglar, I was a sentimental Apache, a man of noble nature. I lived in violence, but I hated ugliness; I loved violets and the poor. I would become sentimental when required. In one word, the *romantic Apache*." ["In Francia trionfava allora Arsenio Lupin, il ladro gentiluomo. Bisognava, per l'onore della nostra produzione, contrapporre un altro personaggio equivalente. Mi venne l'idea di crearne uno col nome di Za-la-Mort, che nel gergo degli *apaches* vuol dire: Viva-la-Morte. Se Lupin fu un ladro gentiluomo, io fui un *apache* sentimentale, di nobili sensi. Vivevo nella violenza, ma odiavo la bruttura; amavo le viole e i poveri. Sapevo intenerirmi a tempo e luogo. L'*apache* romantico, in una parola."] Cited in Davide Bracco, Stefano Della Casa, Paolo Manera, and Franco Prono (eds.), *Torino città del cinema*, Editrice Il Castoro: Milano, 2001, 193-4.

22. Stephen Bottomore, "Feuillade dans les pays anglo-saxons," in *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, no. 48 (1988): 99-104.

23. *Ibid.*, 100.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 101.

26. Only fragments (no longer than 20') of four of the originally six *Ultus* films are preserved at the British Film Institute.

27. See Geronimo Gimenez, Ricardo Gongalez del Toro, *Cine-Fantomas: fantasia comico-lirica bailable en un acto, dividido en cinco cuadros y una apoteosis, en prosa y verso*, Madrid: Velasco, 1915.

28. The film is an adaptation of the novel *Barcelona y sus misterios*, written by Antonio Altadill in 1860.

29. Among all the films cited so far, this is the only one to be available to public in DVD form.

30. Information about the restoration of the film is provided in the bonus materials included in the DVD, released by Filmoteca Española and Filmoteca de Catalunya in 2006, as well as in a paper written by Rosa Carduna Arnau available at the following address: [http://digitool-uam.greendata.es//exlibris/dtl/d3\\_1/apache\\_media/L2V4bGlicmlzL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWNoZV9tZWRpYS8yNzQ0MA==.pdf](http://digitool-uam.greendata.es//exlibris/dtl/d3_1/apache_media/L2V4bGlicmlzL2R0bC9kM18xL2FwYWNoZV9tZWRpYS8yNzQ0MA==.pdf).

31. Although there had been earlier films featuring the character, this was the first one (loosely) based on the original stories written by Leblanc.

32. A detailed biography of Greenbaum (in German) is available at the following URL: [http://www.cinegraph.de/lexikon/Greenbaum\\_Jules/biografie.html](http://www.cinegraph.de/lexikon/Greenbaum_Jules/biografie.html) (a shorter English version of this text is available at: [http://books.google.com/books?id=z7gFT\\_Duq1cC&pg=PA166&lpg=PA166&dq=jules+greenbaum+concise&source=bl&ots=Icaf80-DF1&sig=utCzQe7GZwqu8nuIfRK2hL4\\_a5A&hl=en&ei=U9xSTrrEJM\\_KtAbf6JTQAw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CB](http://books.google.com/books?id=z7gFT_Duq1cC&pg=PA166&lpg=PA166&dq=jules+greenbaum+concise&source=bl&ots=Icaf80-DF1&sig=utCzQe7GZwqu8nuIfRK2hL4_a5A&hl=en&ei=U9xSTrrEJM_KtAbf6JTQAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CB)).

33. Richard Abel, "Le fantôme de Feuillade aux Etats-Unis," 1895, special issue [*hors série*] October 2000.

34. Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American 1900-1910*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

35. Abel, "Le fantome de Feuillade aux Etats-Unis," 311.

36. This film is notoriously lost. Despite this insuperable obstacle, and as another evidence of the long-lasting fame of *Fantômas* in the USA, David White was able to write an entire novel inspired by the paper-prints of the film's frames preserved at the Library of Congress. The book is titled *Fantômas in America* and was published by Black Coat Press in 2009.

37. "Fantômas," *The Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 April 1921, 59.
  38. Cited in Dominique Kalifa (ed.), *Nouvelle Revue des Études Fantômassiennes*, Paris : Joëlle Losfeld, 1993, 34.
  39. See Jean-Paul Colin, *La belle époque du roman policier français. Aux origines d'un genre Romanesque*, Lausanne : Delachaux et Niestle, 1999.
  40. "Trauberg parle de Louis Feuillade. Propos recueillis par Natalia Noussimova," 1895, supplemental issue [*hors série*] (October 2000).
  41. *Ibid.*, 329.
  42. Sergei Eisenstein, *The Psychology of Composition*, Calcutta: Seagull Book, 1987, 57-82.
  43. *Ibid.*, 57.
  44. *Ibid.*, 58.
  45. *Ivi.*
  46. Denise J. Youngblood, "Drankov," in Richard Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005.
  47. Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000.
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## ABSTRACTS

This paper analyzes the international distribution of Louis Feuillade's adaptations of Fantômas novels and their large influence on foreign cinemas. It emphasizes the global success of Feuillade's films, as well as the unevenness characterising their reception and assimilation by non-French cultural industries. A highly controversial character and a key player in the relationship between cinema and literature during the crucial years when the feature and serial films boosted and legitimized the film industry, Fantômas is without any doubt an exemplary case study of the transnational and transmediatic circulation of popular fiction.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** transnational circulation, crime fiction, silent cinema, Fantômas, Raffles, Lupin, Zigomar, Za la Mort, Ultus, la secta de los misteriosos, Feuillade Louis, Ghione Emilio, Trauberg Leonid, Eisenstein Sergei

## AUTHOR

### FEDERICO PAGELLO

Federico Pagello received his Phd from the University of Bologna. He has worked as a postdoctoral researcher in Bologna and Limoges, as a visiting scholar at King's College London. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities at Queen's University Belfast. His research deals with the history of popular culture, focusing on the transnational circulation of film, comics and popular literature, and their relationship with urban culture. His dissertation on the image of the city in the film adaptations of superhero comics was published as a book in Italy (*Grattacieli e superuomini. L'immagine della metropoli tra*



*cinema e fumetto*; Genoa: Le Mani 2010). He has edited an exhibition catalogue titled *Popular Roots of European Culture through Film, Comics and Serial Literature: 1850-1930* (Pescara: EPOP Project, 2010). His articles appeared in international journals such as *Adaptation*, *Studies in Comics*, *Miranda*, *Fata Morgana* and *Cinergie*.