(Lougha-Kalam) Approved Scientific International Edited by Language and Communication Laboratory
Relizane University – Algeria

ISSN : 2437-0746 / EISSN: 2600-6308
Numéro de dépôt: 3412 – 2015
Catégorie (C) Décision n° 1432 2019/08/13
http://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/PresentationRevue/176

Volume 11 N°03 – Septembre 2025

Received on: 14/06/2025 Accept it: 06/09/2025 Published on: 30/09/2025

The Pragmatics of Stereotypes: A Comparative Study of Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin and its Netflix Adaptation

براغماتية الصور النمطية: دراسة مقارنة لأرسين لوبان لموريس لوبلان و اقتباسه على منصة نتفليكس

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the Netflix series *Lupin*'s adaptation, focusing on the transformation of the Arsène Lupin character, as portrayed by Omar Sy, within a contemporary French setting. Integrating comparative literature, film studies, sociology, and pragmatics, the analysis delves into issues of stereotypes, social injustices, and cultural representation. Our objective is to conduct a comparative assessment of Maurice Leblanc's foundational work with its modernized version to assess their impact on the audience.

Keywords: Adaptation, Literature, Cinema, Stereotypy, Pragmatics.

ملخص البحث

تدرس هذه الدراسة اقتباس مسلسل لوبان على منصة نتفليكس، مع التركيز على تحول شخصية أرسين لوبان كما جسدها عمر سي، ضمن إطار فرنسي معاصر. من خلال دمج الأدب المقارن ودراسات السينما وعلم الاجتماع والبراغماتية، يتعمق التحليل في قضايا الصور النمطية والظلم الاجتماعي والتمثيل الثقافي. هدفنا هو إجراء تقييم مقارن للعمل التأسيسي لموريس لوبلان مع نسخته المحدثة لتقييم تأثيرهما على الجمهور

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاقتباس، الأدب، السينما، النمطية، البراغماتية.

1. Introduction

During the nascent years of the 20th century, as literature dominated the artistic landscape, a surge of cultural and technological innovation propelled the emergence of new forms of expression, notably cinema. This medium swiftly established itself as a powerful narrative force, often drawing its stories from literary works and thereby giving rise to the practice of film adaptation. This process transforms the mental images evoked by reading into a tangible audiovisual experience, significantly enriching the narrative.

The importance of film adaptation is intrinsically linked to pioneering figures like Georges Méliès. His 1902 film, *A Trip to the Moon*, stands as one of the earliest cinematic adaptations, derived from Jules Verne's novel *From the Earth to the Moon*. This film, frequently recognized as the first science fiction movie, illustrates cinema's capacity to transcend the boundaries of literature while simultaneously drawing inspiration from it. By laying the groundwork for a cinematic tradition, Méliès established adaptation as a means of connecting disparate art forms, allowing for the reinvention of narratives and reaching a broader audience through innovative visual expression.

This phenomenon of adaptation raises crucial questions regarding the relationship between cinema and literature. Among these, it is pertinent to ask about the various forms of adaptation, whether cinematic or televisual and how they evolve based on the specificities of their respective mediums and any technical or narrative constraints. Furthermore, it's worth exploring how television adaptation can illustrate the diversity of representations within the collective imagination. Such inquiries prompt a thorough analysis of the methods for transferring a literary work to the screen, the accompanying artistic and aesthetic choices, and how these adaptations are received by an audience distinct from that of the original work.

2. The essence of film adaptation

In its broadest sense, film adaptation encompasses a diverse range of practices, from the "cinéroman" (novelization of a film script) to "novelization" (a novel based on a film). In its most common usage, however, it refers to the transposition of a literary work onto the screen. From the early 20th century onwards, a considerable number of films were adapted from plays, novels, or short stories. This practice sparked significant aesthetic and theoretical debates, particularly concerning the relationship between cinema and other art forms.

During the 1920s, certain avant-garde movements advocated for cinema to assert itself as a new plastic expression—an autonomous art. Figures like Louis Delluc and Jean Epstein, while acknowledging the necessity of a narrative framework, did not draw a fundamental distinction between an original screenplay and an adapted one. However, they sharply criticized "filmed theater," a term Marcel Pagnol provocatively reappropriated at the dawn of the era of talking films. Pagnol maintained that the true author of an adapted film remained the original writer (Journot, 2008). This assertion, however, doesn't always hold up to scrutiny, especially when the act of adaptation becomes a form of creation in its own right. In such cases, the adapter reclaims the original work, imbuing it with a new interpretation through the cinematic medium and its specific technical and aesthetic qualities.

Since its inception, cinema has extensively drawn from literary material, eliciting mixed reactions. Some detractors of the seventh art accused it of being merely a mechanical tool designed to reproduce theater, visualize music, or illustrate literature. Conversely, unconditional proponents of cinema viewed it as the ultimate synthesis of various artistic expressions, rendering other mediums

obsolete and replacing them. This position, though exaggerated and extreme, contained a kernel of truth in that it revealed how all arts fulfill a common human vocation and satisfy analogous requirements (Amengal, 1971). Nevertheless, each art possesses its laws, styles, and techniques, which determine both its forms and its purposes. Thus, cinematic adaptation cannot be reduced to a mere transposition; rather, it must be viewed as a creative reinterpretation, profoundly influenced by the specificities of the cinematic medium.

In summary, film adaptation constitutes a complex field where aesthetic, technical, and theoretical issues intersect. It interrogates the boundaries between art forms while affirming cinema's autonomy as a distinct mode of expression.

Cinema, much like literature, possesses its unique means of expression, rarely shared with other arts. Adapting a novel to film necessarily involves using a common material—that is, the same "story"—but it primarily demands a departure from the book to create an autonomous cinematic work (Carrière, 1993). What fundamentally distinguishes the two mediums is the narrative mode they employ to tell the same story. This distinction highlights the specific nature of cinematic language and its intrinsic differences compared to that of literature.

Jean-Claude Carrière emphasizes that no art form can translate another exactly. Thus, a literary text cannot fully restore a film, nor can a film faithfully reproduce a literary work (Carrière, 1933, p.127). While cinema has borrowed elements from other arts to enrich its language, it remains indebted to these borrowings. This interdependence between the arts has evolved, particularly in response to technical advancements and audience expectations.

Ultimately, cinematic adaptation is not limited to a simple transposition from one medium to another; it involves a creative reinterpretation, shaped by the technical and narrative specificities of cinema. This duality between form and content, between spectacle and literature, has shaped the history of cinema, reflecting the cultural and technological transformations of each era.

a. From Novel to its Adaptation

Throughout its history, cinema has maintained a complex relationship with literature, oscillating between proximity and distance from its narrative model, yet never definitively breaking this kinship. Today, this narrative affinity between cinema and the novel encourages a comparison of these two forms of storytelling, where the camera has become the equivalent of the pen.

For Alexandre Astruc, the act of adaptation is an act of creation in its own right, precisely because it involves rewriting a literary text using tools specific to cinema. He developed this idea through the concept of "camera-stylo" (camera-pen), proposing that the camera functions as a writing instrument, much like a pen for a writer. Astruc asserts that a filmmaker, like a novelist, can express their thoughts, even the most abstract ones, through this tool (Agel, 1966).

In his essay, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: The Camera-Stylo," Astruc explores cinema's potential by likening it to that of language. He highlights that, in certain films, "cinematic language offers an exact equivalent of literary language" (Cléder, 2006). This perspective positions the filmmaker as a creator on par with the writer, shifting the act of writing from the screenplay to the direction itself (Astruc, 1992). Consequently, cinema no longer merely transposes literary narratives but becomes a medium capable of producing original writing, where the camera embodies a form of visual pen.

However, this approach to adaptation is not universally accepted. François Truffaut, an emblematic figure of the French New Wave, sharply criticized the methods of certain screenwriter-

adapters, such as Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost. According to Truffaut, these individuals prioritized excessive fidelity to the written word, often at the expense of the text's true spirit. Edmond Cros describes this approach as "fidelity to the dramatic schema" (Clerc & Carcaud, 2004), a method that, in Truffaut's view, betrays the essence of the original work. For Truffaut, the act of writing and the act of directing are inseparable. He conceptualized adaptation as a singular process that should be led by one person, thus embodying the notion of the "auteur." He categorically rejected adapters who resorted to "equivalences" to overcome technical or narrative difficulties, inventing scenes when those from the original work seemed impossible to transpose to the screen.

Adaptation can be seen as an attempt to cinematically transpose a literary text, or conversely, a literary transposition of a cinematic work. This process entails a deferred restitution, where the original work is reinterpreted through a different medium and for a potentially distinct audience (Clerc & Carcaud, 2004, p.11). The source text, whether literary or cinematic, is thus subject to a rewriting that presupposes a subjective reading, influenced by the cultural, temporal, and spatial context in which the adapter operates. This individual reappropriation transforms the original work, giving it a new dimension while ideally preserving its essence.

For some theorists, adapting primarily means transforming. This transformation involves artistic and technical choices that can alter, enrich, or reinterpret the source work. However, the cinematic adaptation of a literary text presents ambiguous problems. On one hand, it must respect the integrity of the original work while meeting the specific demands of cinematic language, which relies on image, sound, and editing rather than written text. On the other hand, it must adapt to the technical, temporal, and narrative constraints of cinema, which may necessitate substantial modifications from the source text.

b. Fidelity versus Artistic Freedom in Film Adaptation

An adaptation is defined as: "Preliminary literary work carried out from a pre-existing work (novel, short story, play and so on) or an original subject to ensure its transmutation into cinematic terms" (Pinel& Pinel, 2016).. It is, therefore, a creative and preparatory process that involves transforming a pre-existing literary work—be it a novel, short story, play, or even an original creation—into a cinematic work. This process involves converting the narrative elements of the source work into visual and auditory terms that are specific to the film medium.

Furthermore, adaptation is also a transposition, where the original work, initially conceived for a specific purpose and a different medium, is reinterpreted for cinema. This process requires consideration of how themes, characters, and plots can be faithfully represented or judiciously modified to suit the constraints and possibilities offered by cinema, thereby creating a new work that respects the spirit of the original while possessing its own artistic identity, as cited in the *Dictionnaire du Cinéma*: "Transposition for a film of a work conceived for a different purpose" (Passek, 2001). Most analysts and theorists (Passek,2001, p.12) tend to fall into the trap of making value judgments centered on the degree of fidelity or infidelity, or even betrayal, in the process of transposing a literary work to cinema. This perspective often reduces adaptation to a simple word-for-word translation from one language to another, thereby neglecting the complexity and creativity inherent in the process. In reality, every text, whether literary or cinematic, original or adapted, constitutes a specific, autonomous, and coherent system. Only certain elements of the source work are likely to undergo transposition, and this necessarily involves complex interactions with the new iconic medium, as well as with the cultural and social context in which the adapted work will be disseminated. These

interactions often lead to internal modifications that affect the relationships between the original elements, thus redefining their meaning and scope.

The term "adapt" suggests the idea of conforming, of harmonizing two distinct modes of expression: that of literature and that of cinema. It also involves relating two sets, both textual and contextual, in a process of transposition to another mode of expression. However, this relationship is not based on an explicit "contract" between literature and cinema. Indeed, cinema's vocation is not to compete with literature in the domain of storytelling, but rather to invent plastic and visual forms that offer new relevance to the literary text, without necessarily deviating from it. Cinema thus brings an aesthetic and sensory dimension that enriches and transforms the original work, while respecting its essence.

The concept of "transformation," which underpins that of adaptation, evokes a change, even a metamorphosis, implying a transfiguration of the literary work. It's not merely about reproducing the text, but about giving it a new form—a plastic and visual character that makes it an autonomous entity. This transformation process is influenced by intertextual and contextual constraints, making the rapprochement between the novel and the film both hazardous and indispensable. In this sense, adaptation is not limited to a simple transfiguration but can be seen as a resurrection of the literary work, offering it a new life through a different medium.

Therefore, cinematic adaptation should not be perceived as a betrayal of the literary work, but rather as a creative act that reinterprets and reinvents it according to the specificities of cinematic language and the cultural context in which it is embedded. It exemplifies a fertile dialogue between two modes of artistic expression, each bringing its richness and perspective to the work.

3. Presentation of Arsène Lupin in Leblanc's Work

The literary legacy of Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin has proven remarkably enduring, capturing the imagination of readers for over a century before finding new life in contemporary digital media. The transition from the original novels to modern adaptations, particularly Netflix's acclaimed series, demonstrates how timeless characters can be successfully reimagined for new generations while preserving their essential appeal. This evolution raises fascinating questions about adaptation, cultural translation, and the ways in which classic literature continues to resonate in our digital age. This cannot be done without presenting his emblematic character.

In fact, Maurice Leblanc portrays Arsène Lupin as an elite burglar, but also as a seducer and adventurer driven by a profound sense of justice. Described as the "gentleman-burglar," Lupin embodies a paradoxical figure blending sophistication with illicit activities. His exceptional mastery of disguise and remarkable ability to change identity with ease allows him to outwit his adversaries and escape the most perilous situations.

The character of Arsène Lupin stands out for his complexity and versatility. While he doesn't fit the traditional definition of a hero, his actions, though often illegal, are guided by a rigorous code of honor. Lupin refuses to prey on the most vulnerable and frequently shows a willingness to assist those in need. His charisma and exceptional intelligence make him endearing to readers, even when his actions break the law.

In creating Arsène Lupin, Leblanc explores various themes, including social injustice and corruption. Through his character's adventures, the author subtly critiques class inequalities and the dysfunctions of the justice system of his era. Lupin thus emerges as a figure of social justice, akin to a modern-day Robin Hood, redistributing wealth and aiding the oppressed. Through this approach,

Leblanc uses his protagonist to denounce societal flaws while offering a reflection on the notions of justice and equity.

a. Synopsis of its Adaptation in the Netflix Series

The series "Lupin: In the Shadow of Arsène" offers a contemporary adaptation of Maurice Leblanc's iconic character, Arsène Lupin. Released on Netflix starting January 8, 2021, the show sets its intricate plot in modern Paris, reinterpreting the adventures of the gentleman-burglar through the journey of its main protagonist, Assane Diop.

Portrayed by Omar Sy, Assane Diop is a complex character deeply rooted in contemporary social realities. The son of a Senegalese chauffeur unjustly accused of stealing a priceless diamond necklace by his employer, the powerful businessman Hubert Pellegrini, Assane grows up in humble surroundings, shaped by injustice and family tragedy. Twenty-five years after these devastating events, he decides to avenge his father by adopting the methods of Arsène Lupin, a figure he discovered in a book given to him by his father. This narrative becomes a pivotal source of inspiration for Assane, guiding his choices and strategies.

The theft of Marie Antoinette's necklace, exhibited at the Louvre Museum and belonging to the Pellegrini family, becomes Assane's central objective. However, this act transcends mere ambition for burglary; it's part of a broader quest for truth, aiming to expose the Pellegrini family's secrets and corruption. Through ingenious disguises and remarkable intelligence, Assane infiltrates Parisian high society while outsmarting law enforcement, journalists, and financial magnates, all without compromising his identity.

The series skillfully alternates between the present and the past, gradually revealing the events that led to Assane's father's downfall and fueled his fight for justice. Flashbacks illuminate Assane's youth, highlighting his fascination with Arsène Lupin's adventures and his progressive mastery of disguise techniques, secret codes, and enigmas. These skills prove crucial tools in his battle against the Pellegrinis.

However, "Lupin" transcends a simple narrative of cat-and-mouse between thief and investigator. The series offers a broader reflection on themes such as identity and the immigrant experience in French society. Assane navigates between two worlds, striving to protect his son Raoul while pursuing his quest for justice. Furthermore, the series provides viewers with captivating action sequences and unexpected twists, making "Lupin" both entertaining and socially relevant.

In the Netflix series "Lupin," the protagonist, Assane Diop, embodies a figure marked by an unwavering pursuit of justice and truth following his father's suspicious death, presented as a suicide. This family tragedy serves as the starting point for a complex journey, shaped by the social injustices and structural inequalities he confronts. Assane Diop is a multidimensional character, driven by the desire to clear his father's name, who was wrongly accused of a theft he didn't commit. This mission of justice propels him into a series of actions based on cunning, strategy, and disguise. Endowed with remarkable intelligence and magnetic charm, Assane leverages his skills to outwit his adversaries and bring the truth to light.

The narrative follows Assane as he navigates different layers of Parisian society, moving between elite wealthy circles and more modest environments. As a master of illusion and an accomplished strategist, he plans his actions with methodical precision. Yet, his deeply human

dimension shines through, particularly in his personal relationships, especially with his son Raoul, revealing a vulnerability that contrasts with his image as a masterful burglar.

The series goes beyond the mere story of personal revenge by addressing universal themes such as justice, redemption, identity, and social disparities. Assane Diop is presented as a complex character, defying stereotypes and embodying a form of resilience in the face of adversity. While paying homage to the legendary Arsène Lupin character created by Maurice Leblanc, "Lupin" offers a contemporary and innovative reinterpretation of the myth. This adaptation elevates Assane Diop to the status of a modern popular culture icon, while also providing a subtle critique of social dynamics and persistent inequalities.

b. Adaptational Freedoms in Lupin

Netflix's *Lupin* series undertakes a significant transformation by transposing the universe of Arsène Lupin from the Belle Époque, the iconic setting of Maurice Leblanc's works, to contemporary Parisian society. This temporal shift holds particular importance, enabling the series to root itself in the present and offer a fresh perspective on the character.

Furthermore, the production employs chronological discontinuities by blending multiple timelines. These flashbacks trace Assane Diop's journey, revealing the traumatic events of his youth and their role in his evolution into a gentleman-burglar. His identification with the character of Arsène Lupin thus becomes a catalyst for personal transformation, leading him to leverage his talents in the world of scams and crime while pursuing a quest for justice.

Unlike traditional adaptations, which directly draw from Leblanc's storylines, *Lupin* adopts a different approach. The series doesn't rely on a specific narrative but rather on the overall legacy of the Arsène Lupin character: "[...] I have been inspired by so many things: what I have learned at school about French culture, but also by my parents from African culture, as well as by stories both African and French, that I have heard, which sometimes echo and respond to each other. I cannot choose; I am deeply aware of this extensive heritage". (Omar Sy, 2021). This choice positions it not as a faithful adaptation or a literal transposition of the texts, but as a modern reinterpretation that deliberately emancipates itself from the original work.

Intertextuality plays a central role in this reinterpretation. Rather than transposing the narratives to the screen, the series incorporates numerous references to Lupin's adventures while updating their themes. Thus, recurring motifs like delayed revenge and the pursuit of personal justice are re-examined through the lens of modern realities. For example, the theft of Marie Antoinette's necklace, a central plot element, illustrates how Assane adapts Arsène Lupin's methods to a contemporary context. This creative approach enriches the narrative and thematic conventions of the Lupinian universe while offering a fresh and relevant reading of this literary heritage.

Another significant aspect of the series lies in the choice of its lead actor and the evolution of the character's origins. While Arsène Lupin, as described by Maurice Leblanc, hails from a French family—the son of Henriette d'Andrésy and Théophraste Lupin—Assane Diop, the character's modern heir, is the son of a Senegalese immigrant living in France. This difference also extends to physical appearance: Arsène Lupin has historically been depicted as a white man, reflecting the sociocultural norms of Leblanc's era, both in the texts and in earlier film adaptations such as Henri Diamant-Berger's *Arsène Lupin Détective* (1929) or Jean-Paul Salomé's *Arsène Lupin* (2004).

In contrast, the *Lupin* series chooses to embody this emblematic figure through Assane Diop, played by Omar Sy, a Black actor who also produces the series. This decision reflects a desire to ground the work in a modern, multicultural, and multiethnic French society, marking a departure from historical representations. This choice gives the series an inclusive scope, aligning with current societal dynamics, while preserving the spirit and fundamental values of the Arsène Lupin character.

In the original literary work, Arsène Lupin's attire is a central element of his character. As a gentleman and dandy of the Belle Époque, he's renowned for his elegance and refined taste, sporting high-quality clothing that conveys his belonging to high society. His emblematic accessories include the tailcoat, top hat, cane with a pommel, and occasionally a monocle. These sartorial choices reflect not only his social status but also the optimistic and creative spirit of an era marked by significant advancements in various fields.

Conversely, Netflix's *Lupin* series transposes these traits into a contemporary context, reimagining Paris as the backdrop for its storylines. The capital's iconic locations, such as the Louvre Museum or the Luxembourg Gardens, don't merely serve as scenery but help define the series' visual identity and atmosphere. For instance, in the first episode of Part 1, the theft of Marie Antoinette's necklace at the Louvre becomes a pivotal moment, demonstrating Assane Diop's skill and anchoring the plot in a modern setting while retaining the essence of the Arsène Lupin character.

The narrative approach also differs significantly between Maurice Leblanc's work and the Netflix series. Where the original text follows a linear and chronological structure, the series prioritizes a non-linear narrative, employing flashbacks and plot twists to enrich the storyline. This technique allows for a deeper exploration of Assane Diop's origins, revealing subtle connections to past events and enhancing viewer immersion. This modern narrative treatment adds psychological and emotional dimensions, captivating the audience while complexifying the story.

The series falls into the category of free adaptations, drawing inspiration from Leblanc's work while significantly deviating from it. It doesn't aim to faithfully reproduce the novels' plots but reinterprets classic Arsène Lupin themes—such as the quest for justice, cunning, and intellectual superiority—by adapting them to contemporary concerns. For example, Assane's motivations, centered on rehabilitating his father's honor and his pursuit of truth, offer an emotional depth that transcends a simple homage to Lupin. Nevertheless, like his literary predecessor, he demonstrates a desire to challenge the police and prove his ingenuity, particularly in episodes where he steals the queen's necklace, escapes from prison, or orchestrates his death.

Another remarkable aspect of the series lies in its reinterpretation of the character's attire. While Assane doesn't directly adopt traditional Arsène Lupin accessories like the top hat or cape, these elements are subtly referenced through nods. For example, in a significant episode, Assane's son, Raoul, wears a top hat and cape during a festival honoring Lupin. Assane himself adopts a modern and distinctive style, such as a long coat and a beret, while retaining touches of elegance characteristic of Lupin's universe, like wearing luxurious suits to blend into Parisian bourgeois circles. Omar Sy, the actor playing Assane, emphasized in an interview that the series sought to create a unique and contemporary iconography, symbolized by modern elements like the legendary "Air Jordan" sneakers. (Liberation, 2021)

In summary, *Lupin* embodies a reinvention of the Arsène Lupin myth, adapting the character's key motifs and characteristics to current society. While preserving the universal themes of justice,

ingenuity, and defending the oppressed, the series rekindles interest in classic literature by making its legacy accessible and relevant to a diverse and contemporary audience.

4. Lupin: The Cliché at the Heart of Timeless Social Critique

As the adage goes, "Clothes don't make the man," or, adhering to the detective fiction tradition, "Never trust appearances." Guided by these two warnings and a thorough study of both the written work and its cinematic adaptation, we encounter two worlds that appear opposed but converge on a shared reflection: the necessity of looking beyond superficial appearances to discover the complexity of individuals. In this context, the stereotype becomes a tool for exploring this tension between obvious surface features and profound reality. A stereotype, as a simplified and rigid representation, tends to reduce an individual or group to a limited set of traits, thereby obscuring their inherent diversity and complexity. When disseminated within social structures, it can unconsciously influence individuals' perceptions and interactions with the world. This presence of stereotypes is also observable in literature, where they frequently serve as narrative devices.

It is undeniable that, within a literary framework, stereotypes can be effective narrative tools. They allow authors to convey complex concepts in an accessible and rapid manner. For example, the figure of the "adventurous hero" in adventure novels illustrates this process. This stereotype, characterized by courage and exemplary morality, immediately signals to the reader that this character will overcome challenges and triumph in the end. A classic example lies in Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, where the protagonists are easily identifiable as heroes through their bravery and sword-fighting prowess. However, this narrative simplification can also limit the reader's experience by trapping them in preconceived expectations and restricting their ability to appreciate the work's depth and subtlety.

From a theoretical standpoint, the stereotype lies at the intersection of social and literary disciplines. Ruth Amossy defines it as "a social representation, a fixed collective schema corresponding to an outdated cultural model." Thus, a stereotype isn't simply an individual construct but the product of a collective consensus rooted in a specific historical and cultural context. It acts as a mirror of the societal values and tensions of its era, making it a recurring element in literary productions. For instance, works from the exotic and anti-indigenous literary movements often employed degrading stereotypes concerning colonized populations, portraying them as primitive beings to justify colonial domination and legitimize foreign presence.

However, literary stereotypes are not limited to reproducing social prejudices. They can also be used critically to deconstruct these very preconceived notions. In such cases, authors deliberately employ stereotypes to foster awareness in the reader, encouraging them to question cultural norms and hierarchies. In this way, the stereotype becomes a powerful tool for exploring issues related to the human condition and social inequalities.

Ultimately, stereotypes in literature should not be perceived solely as negative or reductive elements. They also constitute means of expression and critique, reflecting both the social structures and cultural tensions of a given period. Analyzing the stereotypes present in a literary work not only enriches the understanding of that work but also provides a better grasp of the socio-cultural context that gave rise to it. This underscores the dual role of stereotypes: both instruments for perpetuating prejudices and levers for engaging critical reflection.

a. Stereotypes in Netflix's Lupin

The creative choices made in Netflix's *Lupin* series, with its modern adaptation of Arsène Lupin's adventures, raise pertinent questions about the representation of received ideas, identity, and cultural diversity. This is evident through the portrayal of the "Arsène Lupin" character by a Black actor when traditionally he has been perceived as white, all set within a contemporary Parisian sociocultural context.

Cinematic narratives are rarely the product of chance. Instead, they result from the convergence of multiple, varied factors that contribute to the artistic creation of a visual object, which conveys an idea through its screenplay (narration), characters, or specific theme. In cinema, an icon can be defined as a symbol or a visual element imbued with deep and particular meaning. In the case of Netflix's *Lupin* adaptation, the main character, Assane Diop, embodies this icon, laden with history and carrying a specific culture. This character was reinvented for a contemporary audience by creators who shaped him through their artistic and narrative choices, ensuring he would be perceived in a particular way by that same audience.

Furthermore, an icon exists within a broader societal context, encompassing political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. In the series, this context revolves around current debates on the representation of diversity in media, thereby reflecting contemporary societal concerns. Every image projected on screen is thus the product of an interaction between the icon and its societal context—two elements that will enable a thorough analysis of our corpus, namely Netflix's screen adaptation of Maurice Leblanc's work.

Context thus emerges as a key concept for analyzing the creative choices of the series' creators. As one critical perspective asserts, "A film cannot be fully understood if one ignores its context of production and its context of reception" (Esquenazi, 2000) In other words, understanding a cinematic work is intrinsically linked to two contextual dimensions: that of its production, which includes elements influencing its creation, such as socio-economic conditions or cultural trends, and that of its reception, which reflects how the audience perceives the work and the impact it has on them. This dual contextual perspective helps illuminate the artistic, cultural, and social stakes underpinning cinematic adaptation.

The *Lupin* series, produced by Netflix, is situated within a particularly tense sociopolitical context, marked by events that have profoundly influenced the French social and political landscape. This ongoing context is characterized by recurrent tensions related to cases of police violence primarily targeting young people from ethnic minorities, particularly of African origin. These incidents have regularly made headlines and sparked intense public debate. Among the most publicized cases are the Adama Traoré case (2016), a 24-year-old Black man who died in police custody after being restrained on the ground by gendarmes; the Théo Luhaka case (2017), a 22-year-old Black man now permanently disabled following a police intervention during an identity check; and the Frédéric Chouviat case (2020), a 42-year-old delivery driver of North African descent who died after being pinned to the ground by three police officers during a routine traffic stop. These events have not only shocked public opinion but have also fueled a national debate on police practices and systemic racism.

Moreover, international incidents have also had a significant impact on French society. The death of George Floyd in May 2020 in the United States, a 46-year-old African American man killed by a police officer during his arrest, sent shockwaves worldwide. This tragedy gave rise to the Black

Lives Matter movement, initially spearheaded by the African American community, but which quickly resonated in France. This movement mobilized thousands of people in demonstrations aimed at denouncing police violence and demanding justice for victims of racism. In France, these mobilizations also highlighted local cases, thus reinforcing calls for institutional reform and a greater consideration of racial discrimination.

In this turbulent social and political climate, the *Lupin* series emerges as a work that, while inspired by classic literature, resonates with contemporary concerns. It contributes to a broader debate on the representation of minorities, social injustices, and racial tensions, thereby reflecting the realities and struggles of a rapidly changing society. Added to this are the protesters who lost an eye during clashes with police during the Yellow Vests (Gilets Jaunes) demonstrations in 2018 and 2019. The Yellow Vests movement (which is still ongoing) is an unstructured protest movement that emerged in France in October 2018, initially in response to rising fuel prices, but whose demands quickly broadened to include improving the living standards of working and middle classes. Consequently, born within a specific context marked by a climate of discrimination, violence, and a worrying economic situation in France, the Netflix series *Lupin* is thus imbued with this situation, which is reflected in its overall atmosphere.

5. Deleuzian Pragmatics

Pragmatism as a theory recognizes the inevitable influence of context on artistic creation, thus shaping a work's production, content, form, and reception. For this reason, we will base our analysis of the corpus on the work of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, beyond being a product of context, a literary work also aims to have an impact on the reader, rather than simply offering a description. On this subject, Deleuze states: "Reading a text is never an erudite exercise in search of signifieds, still less a highly textual exercise in pursuit of a signifier, but a productive use of the literary machine, an assemblage of machines, a schizoid exercise that releases the text's revolutionary power" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972).

Deleuze proposes a profound reconfiguration of the act of reading, moving beyond the traditional conception that reduces it to a simple quest for decoding messages. According to him, reading should be approached as an interaction with a "literary machine," a notion that refers to the idea of the text as an autonomous and dynamic entity. This literary machine is capable of generating effects and affects, but it also functions as a "desiring machine," a concept designating the intrinsic forces within the text that contribute to social transformation and the subversion of established models.

From this perspective, reading does not involve seeking predetermined or fixed meanings but rather engaging in an active and productive use of the text. The latter possesses a "revolutionary power"—that is, the capacity to disrupt received ideas, destabilize dominant norms, and provoke radical transformations, both individually and collectively. Thus, reading becomes a creative and liberating process, where the text acts as a catalyst for change, opening new perspectives and challenging conventional thought structures. This approach invites a rethinking of the relationship between reader and text, emphasizing the subversive and transformative potential of the act of reading.

Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's thought, this approach highlights two central notions found in Maurice Leblanc's work: the rhizome and multiplicity. Deleuze, borrowing the term from biology, defines the rhizome as a structure that "neither begins nor ends; it is always in the middle, between

things, interbeing, intermezzo." Unlike the tree, which symbolizes linear and hierarchical filiation, the rhizome embodies a logic of alliance and connection, expressed by the conjunction "and... and... and...". While the tree imposes a fixed, vertical way of thinking, the rhizome unfolds horizontally, without clearly defined points of origin or end, and multiplies non-linearly. This concept thus represents a non-hierarchical and decentralized model of thought, breaking with traditional arborescent structures.

The character of Arsène Lupin perfectly embodies this rhizomatic essence. He eludes any fixed identity or linear lineage, characterized instead by perpetual movement and an ability to transform and adapt to various contexts. Each of Lupin's adventures functions as a point of connection, an "and... and... and...", extending in multiple directions, creating a complex network of intrigues and stratagems. Lupin is not defined by a stable "being," but by a "becoming"—that is, an existence in constant evolution, marked by strategic alliances and traversals of different social strata.

Thus, *Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Burglar* can be interpreted as a rhizomatic work, where each chapter, each heist, and each disguise constitutes an interconnected plateau, contributing to the richness and complexity of the overall narrative. The text itself becomes a space of multiplicities, where meanings are not uniquely imposed but emerge dynamically from the interaction between the various narrative elements. This rhizomatic structure reflects the fluid and elusive nature of the character while offering an open and polyphonic reading, following Deleuzian philosophy.

The same rhizomatic and multiplicity logic can be applied to the various themes addressed by Maurice Leblanc, notably those of social equality and justice, through the multiple characters embodied by Arsène Lupin. Indeed, Lupin cannot be silenced: he constantly reappears under new identities, disseminating his ideas and continually reminding us of the possibility of transforming the world. This capacity to reinvent himself and resurface in different forms illustrates the elusive and revolutionary nature of the character, who embodies a permanent critique of established social structures.

Cinema, as a visual art sharing an artistic and narrative dimension with literature, can be analyzed from a similar perspective. As Deleuze emphasizes, a film, though often perceived as an object of entertainment, also aims to evoke emotions in the spectator. It uses images that amplify these emotions while having the potential to transform social ideas and perceptions through the messages it conveys. For example, the concept of Blackwashing, used in the Netflix adaptation, fits into this dynamic. Although the series remains faithful to the spirit of Leblanc's work, it pays particular attention to the theme of racism, a subject already present in the original writings, but which is here deepened and adapted to contemporary issues.

Thus, the cinematic adaptation of *Lupin* does not merely reproduce the literary work; it reinterprets it in light of current concerns, using the power of images and narratives to question racial and social inequalities. This approach reflects cinema's capacity to act as a vector for changing mentalities, aligning the emotional power of images with messages of change. In this sense, the Netflix series is a continuation of Leblanc's work while modernizing it, thereby demonstrating the relevance and flexibility of the themes addressed by the author in an evolving societal context.

The concept of the rhizome is also found in the series, first through the protagonist's capacity for metamorphosis, but especially in the deeply intertextual nature of this adaptation. Indeed, Arsène Lupin does not merely exist within the pages of novels; he permeates popular culture, teleporting into

the Netflix series *Lupin*. Thus, Leblanc's work transcends the boundaries of the literary genre and becomes a cultural phenomenon, a rhizome extending far beyond its textual origin.

Furthermore, Deleuzian analysis in the field of cinema relies in parallel on other works, notably his two fundamental books: *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), which profoundly influenced film theory. Deleuze offers an original and profound approach to understanding cinema, moving away from classical analyses centered on narration, character, or dramatic structure. Deleuze thus distinguishes two main types of images in cinema: the movement-image and the time-image. The movement-image relates to how movement is represented through a series of images, creating visual continuity. For him: "Cinema is the system that reproduces movement according to any instant slice, that is, according to equidistant instants chosen to give the impression of continuity" (Deleuze, 1983, p. 14).

Unlike static arts like painting or photography, cinema has the unique ability to capture any moment (image in a cinematic sequence) and represent it in dynamic motion. This ability stems from the use of the camera to record a series of fixed images (equidistant images that are at equal distances) which, when projected at a certain speed, create the illusion of movement, where the spectator plays an active role, transforming the fragmentary nature of images into a homogeneous and fluid experience.

In the case of Netflix's *Lupin* series, this notion can be explored through several aspects. First, that of transformation and evasion: Assane Diop embodies the Deleuzian idea of "becoming" as he constantly reinvents himself, adopting new identities to achieve his goals. This identity fluidity and ability to move between different roles clearly illustrate the movement-image, where the character is never static. The protagonist, drawing inspiration from the adventures of "Arsène Lupin, the gentleman-burglar," embraces the idea that identity is always in motion and that freedom lies in the capacity for transformation. Second, in terms of visual aesthetics, the series uses camera and editing techniques that accentuate movement. Rapid chases, fluid transitions between scenes, and dynamic camera angles create a sense of perpetual motion, reinforcing the Deleuzian idea that cinema must capture the flow of life.

As for the time-image, conversely, it explores the fragmentation of time and the exploration of its subjective and non-linear dimensions. To clarify this subject, Deleuze gives us the following example:

> "And the first time a direct time-image appeared in cinema, it was not in the guise of the present (even implied), but on the contrary in the form of sheets of the past, with Welles's *Citizen Kane*. There, time came unhinged, and reversed its relationship of dependence with movement; temporality showed itself for itself and for the first time, but in the form of a coexistence of large regions to be explored. The schema of *Citizen Kane* may seem simple: Kane being dead, witnesses are questioned who will evoke their memory-images in a series of subjective flashbacks" (Deleuze, 1983).

Deleuze asserts that *Citizen Kane* marks a crucial stage in the history of cinema, where the direct time-image first appears, prioritizing the past over the present. In this film, time is no longer simply a framework for events but becomes a subject in itself, detached from movement and explored through "sheets of past" that overlap via the subjective memories of witnesses. This narrative structure of multiple flashbacks creates a coexistence of different temporalities, offering a fragmented yet coherent vision of Kane's life. Welles thus subverts the classic narrative schema by emphasizing the subjectivity and interpretability of memory, inviting the spectator to actively reconstruct the story.

By elevating time to an autonomous protagonist, *Citizen Kane* inaugurated an era of more complex philosophical and narrative explorations in modern cinema, thereby enriching cinematic language and profoundly influencing contemporary filmmakers. The "time-image," a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze, is distinguished by its ability to represent time not as a simple linear succession of events but as an independent, fluid, and multidimensional phenomenon. The *Lupin* series aligns with this tradition by skillfully exploiting the potentialities of the time-image, particularly through several narrative and visual techniques.

First, the recurrent use of flashbacks (or analepses), present in almost every episode, progressively reveals Assane Diop's past, his motivations, and the significant events of his personal history, especially those related to his father. These retrospective moments are not limited to providing contextual explanations; they construct a complex temporal structure where past and present constantly intertwine. This intertwining of temporalities perfectly illustrates the Deleuzian idea of the coexistence of times, where the past continuously acts on the present and chronological boundaries become porous.

Second, the series exploits the notion of subjective temporality, a classic element of cinematic language. This approach highlights characters' perception of time, particularly in scenes of tension or danger, where time seems to expand. These moments, often slowed down or stretched, create a temporal distortion that intensifies the emotional experience for both the characters and the spectator. This manipulation of subjective time reinforces narrative immersion and emphasizes the psychological impact of events on the protagonists.

Thus, *Lupin* demonstrates a subtle mastery of the time image, playing on the interactions between past and present, as well as on the subjective perception of time. These narrative and aesthetic choices enrich the series, giving it a philosophical depth and temporal complexity that aligns with the most innovative cinematic works.

In summary, the *Lupin* series, produced by Netflix, significantly integrates the concept of the time-image developed by Gilles Deleuze through several narrative and aesthetic techniques. The recurrent use of flashbacks, the subjective and fragmented representation of time, the in-depth exploration of memory, and innovative editing allow the series to transcend simple chronological narration. These elements contribute to a deeper reflection on the nature of time and the modalities of its cinematic representation, thus offering a rich and complex narrative experience.

By combining the two Deleuzian approaches of the "movement-image" and the "time-image," *Lupin* transcends the conventions of traditional narration. In this series, movement and time are not reduced to mere narrative tools; they become creative forces in their own right, actively contributing to the enrichment of the story's depth and complexity. This duality allows the series to establish itself as a true field of exploration and illustration of Deleuze's philosophical concepts, thereby demonstrating the relevance and applicability of these ideas in the context of contemporary cinema. Thus, *Lupin* embodies a work where cinematic theory and philosophy meet, offering a visual and narrative experience that invites a rethinking of the boundaries between time, movement, and narrative. This fusion testifies to modern cinema's capacity to integrate theoretical reflections while remaining accessible and engaging for a wide audience.

6. Conclusion

The contemporary Netflix adaptation of the *Lupin* series engages in a critical reflection, highlighting persistent stereotypes and confronting them with current social realities. The deliberate

choice to feature a Black main character is rooted in a literary and cinematic tradition that questions and redefines established archetypes, while simultaneously opening a dialogue on issues of representation and identity. The factors leading to this cinematic work's emergence are manifold, reflecting a desire to revitalize the crime genre while engaging with contemporary challenges. *Lupin* is not merely entertainment; it also sparks discussions on crucial matters such as prejudice, social inequality, justice, and the representation of diversity on screen. In this sense, the series extends beyond the traditional detective narrative to establish itself as a space for reflection and social critique.

The Deleuzian analysis of the corpus underscored the profound impact a written work can have on its readership, particularly through what Deleuze terms "revolutionary power"—the text's capacity to transform ideas and evolve mindsets. Maurice Leblanc's work, rhizomatic in nature, expanded beyond its pages to materialize in a contemporary, reimagined film adaptation. Thanks to cinematic techniques that heighten narrative immersion, this adaptation reached an even wider audience, thus amplifying its potential for social resonance. Therefore, *Lupin* is not simply an adaptation; it asserts itself as a work deeply rooted in its era, capable of transcending the boundaries of entertainment to become a vehicle for social change. It exemplifies the combined power of cinema and literature to both influence and reflect reality, thereby confirming their essential role in building a more just and inclusive society. In this regard, the series embodies a convergence of art, philosophy, and social engagement, demonstrating the relevance of narrative media in contemporary debates.

The global success of the *Lupin* series on the streaming platform has even revitalized sales of Maurice Leblanc's books. We should also highlight the protagonist's ability to thrive in both the literary work and the cinematic adaptation, alongside his capacity to transcend contexts and temporalities, which perfectly encapsulates the notion of the "rhizome" in Deleuzian theory. The adaptation of a literary work into cinema or a television series, as exemplified by the character of Arsène Lupin, perfectly illustrates the challenges and opportunities inherent in this type of transposition. The Netflix series not only successfully reinterpreted Leblanc's character for a modern audience but also addressed contemporary societal issues without straying from the author's original vision. Maurice Leblanc himself stated: "In the case of Arsène Lupin, it's about the interest presented by the connection of the present, in its most modern aspect, with the past". (Leblanc, 1933, p.149)

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