

ISSN 0976-8165

The Criterion



The Criterion

An International Journal in English

Quarterly Refereed & Indexed Open Access Journal

April 2013 Vol. 4 Issue- II

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Movies are Literature Reborn: A Metamorphosis of an Author's Imagination

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There is no story sans plot, there is no literature sans story and there is no movie sans literature. Literature and movies go hand in hand since the dawn of movies around the turn of the twentieth century. In the twenty-first century, with the rampant digital technology, movies take literature to a completely new level. In a time span of one century, our literature has gone from text-based to visual-based. People watch more movies than they read books. Movies help literature to reach a mass of audience. In the modern, hectic world, not everybody appreciates and takes time to read literature, but they find movies as an entertainment without much thought to its literary value.

“The study of literature casts light on the meanings in the film and the study of the film can illuminate the full value of literature.” -Ronal Perrier

Adaptations from diverse resources of literature have been a ubiquitous practice of film making from the earliest days of cinemas, and novels are frequently adapted for films. The metamorphosis of a book into a movie can reach even a lay person easily as the conception of a story or idea is enhanced through visual and audio effects. Movies always get the better of literature through these techniques. This paper explicates that movies bring literature to life. A comparison of Jules Verne's novel, **Around the World in Eighty Days** and its 2004 film version is offered. The main argument is that watching the movie is more entertaining and enjoyable than reading the book.

Comparison of the novel, *Around the World in Eighty Days* and its 2004 film version:

The novel, *Around the World in Eighty Days* revolves around an interesting plot, wherein, an English gentleman Phileas Fogg, whose life ticks with the precise movement of his clock, accepts the awesome challenge to travel around the world in eighty days. Accompanied by his French valet, Passepartout, Fogg embarks on a fantastic journey around the world. The 2004 film version, directed by Frank Coraci, takes a different look at the story and centers the action on Jackie Chan, who plays the role of Passepartout. The director's obvious plan is to make people laugh than to highlight the story. He didn't want to create a documentary of how Phileas Fogg set out on a race, against time, to do what no one had done before him at that century. The movie-maker wanted to create fun, and undoubtedly, it is a humorous romp with Jackie Chan, a comical genius in the lead role.

The writers of the film have modified the story for the modern audience. At the outset, the movie starts with the wager. Fogg (Steve Coogan) bets his career against that of his challenger, who is the present Head of the British Royal Academy of Science. If Fogg circumnavigates the globe in eighty days, he will take over as the Head of the Royal Academy.

Should he fail, he must never invent again for the rest of his life. Fogg accepts the bet and races off around the world.

The very plot of the movie is different from that of the original, but there is a purpose to every detail in this movie.

“Changes are inevitable when it abandons the linguistic medium and goes for visual”. (Bluestone, 1973:219)

Phileas Fogg is changed to an inventor, as though, he is the representation of Jules Verne himself, someone who sees the future. Instead of showing him as a sober gentleman of the English society, the 2004 film version displays him as an eccentric inventor, who comes up with many gadgets to help people travel around the world, with great speed and ease, with plans for a future flying machine.

The previous valet of Fogg quits since he vehemently refuses to test any more of Fogg’s contraptions. Lau Xing (Jackie Chan) on the run after stealing a valuable Jade Buddha from the Bank of London observes from a window, two policemen approaching an oriental man in the street and asking for his identification, and hears them say, “Passport Too”. Thus, he becomes Fogg’s valet under the pseudonym Passepartout. He becomes a guinea pig for Fogg’s experiments to break the 50 mph speed barrier. It is a hilarious scene, whereas, in the novel, the confrontation between Fogg and Passepartout is a mere serious exchange of questions and answers. With the help of Passepartout, they succeed and head to the Royal Academy of Science, where Phileas Fogg is pressured into a bet and challenged to travel around the world in eighty days.

The Jade Buddha is one of the main focuses of the movie, in a whole new theme, totally different from that of the book. In their journey to Paris, Passepartout leads Fogg to an Art School, where Phileas meets Monique (Cecile de France), who is a would-be impressionist. At the school, Passepartout is attacked by warriors sent by General Fang, who is after the Jade Buddha that he stole from the bank. The scene tickles our funny bone when Jackie Chan fights the minions using every material available- canvas, brushes and buckets of paints.

To avoid the monotonous descriptions of the locations, as in the novel, the movie offers the map animations between locations, which give the viewers to look forward to a multiple viewing of the film.

The travel by the team to Turkey is a gimmick added to the movie, which is not found in the novel. In turkey, they are greeted by Prince Hapi (a cameo appearance by Arnold Schwarzenegger). The Prince orders Monique to stay as his seventh wife, while the men are ordered to leave. The travelers blackmail him into releasing Monique using a prized, but apparently flimsy, “The Thinker” statue of the Prince. The statue is destroyed but the three travelers escape.

To keep the movie fresh and action-packed, the director has added new ideas that contain virtually everything that any Kung Fu fan’s heart can desire. One such scene is their trip to China, where they are attacked by the Black Scorpions. In China, Passepartout’s original name is revealed as Lau Xing and he joins hand with his martial art masters of the “Ten Tigers of Canton” and drives away the Black Scorpions. The Jade Buddha is returned to the village.

For comical reasons, the movie is intentionally deviated from the novel with the addition of some anachronological elements. For example, in the movie, the three meet the Wright Brothers in a desert in America and take the idea of the plane. Even Phileas Fogg gives some suggestions to their idea. Also, in a scene in New York, a battle against Fang and her minions commences in the work shop, where the Statue of Liberty is being constructed. The director has shown these places with a comical intent in the movie.

The movie makes Passepartout (Jackie Chan) the real hero and lingers for comical effect, instead of fretfully looking at his watch, as portrayed in the novel. He demonstrates his signature comical action styles in several well-choreographed stunt scenes.

The movie is a bag of special effects, when Phileas is closing in on reaching London, and the ship runs out of coal. So he decides to build a gigantic, slingshot powered, hang-glider on the deck. He hops in and shoots into the sky leaving a trail of magnificent stream of sparkling glitter, whereas in the novel, Phileas offers \$60,000 and demands the captain to sell him the ship. Later, he burns the upper part of the ship to reach his final destination. The scene in the movie is more enthralling to watch than, when read in the novel.

The film moves beautifully from country to country and manages to keep a feel of the nineteenth century throughout. The choreography of the color effect is ebullient. England is gray, France is full of light pastels, Turkey is of strong colors like blue and bright white, India is shown in deep brown, orange and green and China has a natural green background. The movie is a visual feast to eyes and ears.

Books are not written for screen but capturing the essence of the book is the most important thing in a movie. As a person who is enthralled when reading a literature, I believe movies add a sense of visual and sound effects for conveying a concept. This is even true in classroom teaching, where smart class systems with audio-visuals are becoming more popular in the current scenario. Of course reading gives the pleasure of mental imagery, which varies from person to person; movies give the exact image of the background with the look and feel of the characters. Movies are nothing but literature reborn.

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