

## The Orpheus Theme in Swarup's *Q&A* and in Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*

*Slumdog Millionaire* overtly manifests the Orpheus myth at the moment when Danny Boyle, the film's director, inserts an operatic theme from Gluck's *Orfee* into it. The film's screenplay adapts Vikas Swarup's novel *Q&A* which does not acknowledge the Orpheus myth. Both narratives tell the pursuit of ethereal love. The modality of one is Eastern while the other's is inherently classical.

I propose to analyze in a 15-minute paper (showing one film clip) the cinemast's narrative gain for the introducing the Orpheus theme into this story. Asking both *how* and *why* Boyle adapts the myth leads to fair analysis. The film's script contained an overt allusion to the Orpheus myth in a scene that, if filmed, was at least cut from the formally released version. That dialogue clarified the mythological allusion; its omission makes the reference to Orpheus considerably more *recherchée*. Nevertheless, Boyle's retention of the allusion to Orpheus remains in the film as overt allusion to Orpheus *per se*.

My analysis of the Boyle's narrative purpose is part of a larger project where I establish "rules" for discussing the use of classical mythology within a framework of adaptation theory. Though many narratives of gain and loss plumb the emotional depths available within the myth of Eurydice and Orpheus, not every such tale may fairly be cataloged as an Orpheus narrative *per se*. Similarly for many applications of other classical myths. Boyle's overt adaptation of the Swarup novel as Orpheus myth steers Swarup's characters into a classical context, but the act of telling their interaction as an Orpheus myth is not Swarup's purpose but Boyle's. In the process of adaptation the narrative acquires classical mythological characterization. Boyle's Jamal becomes Orpheus, Latika becomes Eurydice. In Swarup, I argue, they are not.

In my paper, I will explore the single instance of one adaptation to adumbrate a far-reaching issue pertaining to analysis of classical mythological usage. My intention is to suggest to classicists certain criteria whereby critical dialogue over mythological reception is productively analyzed.

This critique of adaptation theory must take place upon a platform established by Martindale, Porter, Goldhill, and other critics of reception studies. I hope to equip classicists to observe critically the ways by which artists use classical mythology and to distinguish sensibly those narratives that use mythology classically from those that do not.

#### Works Cited:

Boyle, Danny, director. *Slumdog Millionaire*. Warner Independent Films, 2008. Distributed by Fox Searchlight.

Goldhill, S. *Who Needs Greek?: contests in the cultural history of Hellenism*. Cambridge, 2002.

Hutcheon, L. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge, 2006.

Martindale, C. "Introduction" in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. by C. Martindale and R. Thomas. Blackwell, 2006.

Porter, J.I. "The Materiality of Classical Studies." *Parallax* 9 (2003) 64 – 74.

Swarup, Vikas. *Q&A*. Later entitled *Slumdog Millionaire*. Blackswan, 2006.