

Charting Cultural Changes Through the Movie Adaptations of The Three Musketeers

What Retelling Alexandre Dumas' Classic Story Shows Us About Our Evolving Social Norms and Moral Codes



**For the
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Dedications

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"That's true," replied D'Artagnan; "I have not the uniform, but I have the spirit. My heart is that of a Musketeer; I feel it, monsieur, and that impels me on."
(Dumas B&N 50)

Introduction

Classic novels withstand the test of time. What is that "test of time" though? True classics transcend time, allowing us to continue to respond culturally because they embody universal cultural norms. Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* achieves the status of a beloved classic novel, but we must be careful not to deceive ourselves about the reality of the characters' morals in the text. Movie adaptations have had to alter the characters and the plot of this novel in order to satisfy audiences and fulfill the cultural norms of the decades when the films were produced. Dumas' story shines as a true classic with themes that surpass the changes of our societies. However, elements of the book, the portrayal of the characters' actions and relationships, as well as the driving plot with turning points with dramatic climaxes, end up altered in our modern movie renditions of this "timeless" tale. Our explanation of this defiance lies not simply in the need to produce movies that fit into a certain time allowance, but rather from our changing social norms and expectations over the decades. Acting like a grand mirror, capable of capturing the world around the viewer and allowing the viewer to see what he or she wants, every remake of Dumas' novel adapts itself to the targeted movie-going audience. By examining the techniques used by the directors of the movie adaptations, we can chart our culture's changes as an audience over time and

gain insight as to why even timeless stories must endure changes in order to gain public acceptance. Each version tells us about that generation's views of heroics, freedom, the need to rebel, truth, politics, sexual morality, and love.

In order to gain a view of how the movie versions of *The Three Musketeers* reflect and reveal who we are as a culture and movie-going audience, we have to take



Figure 1: Swordplay from the 1921 version of *The Three Musketeers*

a few steps back. Remember that Alexandre Dumas wrote for an audience in the 1840s about the French culture of the 1620s. Knowing more about Alexandre Dumas' life and background gives us insight about his magnificent talent to cater a story to an everlasting reading audience while keeping his revenues coming in. Looking at the 20th Century, at several different decades and the events that shaped the audiences in the United States, brings historical context to our discussion of how the movie adaptations of *The Three Musketeers* truly reflect the changing world. In this paper, I present five different movie adaptations, although *The Three Musketeers* has been remade each decade since the invention of the motion picture. I analyze and compare the movie versions from 1921, 1933, 1973-1974, 1993, and 2001.

Each team of screenwriter, director, producer, and cast members becomes an artistic unit. "One of the traditional roles of the artist is to reflect the world," explains Henry M. Sayre, an expert in visual arts. Sayre later continues, "...assume all four of the traditional roles of the artist. To review, they record the world, give visible or tangible form to ideas, philosophies, or feelings, reveal hidden or universal truths, and help us see the world in new and innovative ways." (Sayre 6-11) Examining the differences in our culture and the movie adaptations allows us to appreciate the artistic expression and presentation of each movie adaptation and, ultimately, Dumas' original work.

Problems arise when attempting to understand and appreciate changes in culture over time. Sometimes we forget about one of the main themes of Dumas' novel, the individual trying to fit into a larger world. Joining with peers and surviving in a complex society means having to adjust to social norms and situations. Julia T. Wood, expert in communications and social interaction, defines social norms as "informal rules that guide how members of a culture think, feel, and act. Norms define what is normal, or appropriate, in various situations" (Wood 427). Our norms govern our behavior, even when we choose specifically to rebel against them. Another problem with evaluating movie adaptations comes from ethnocentrism. Julia T. Wood offers the definition of ethnocentrism as "the tendency to regard ourselves and our way of life as superior to other people and other ways of life" (Wood 424). Movie directors keep this self-interested mindset close at hand when analyzing audiences and must be aware to adapt cinematic stories so that viewers may

identify with the characters on the screen. Of course, clever manipulators of an audience can use unacceptable social norms and symbols of looked-down upon cultural elements to frame villains for a movie.

Alexandre Dumas, having been a successful playwright in Paris, was familiar with audience manipulation and used these skills when writing his novels. He led an interesting life that the directors of the movie adaptations should truly look to for inspiration when becoming involved in a project adapting *The Three Musketeers* novel to the big-screen.

General Dumas

To understand Alexandre Dumas, the author of *The Three Musketeers*, we must first understand his father and the expectations involving how he came into the world. Dumas' father died when the boy was only about four years old, yet Dumas was greatly affected by the time his father had spent with him and the stories his father told him about his encounters over the years.

Dumas' father was Thomas-Alexandre Dumas Davy de la Pailleterie, the son of a marquis and a Haitian woman, Marie-Cessete Dumas (Ross 13). When Thomas-Alexandre turned

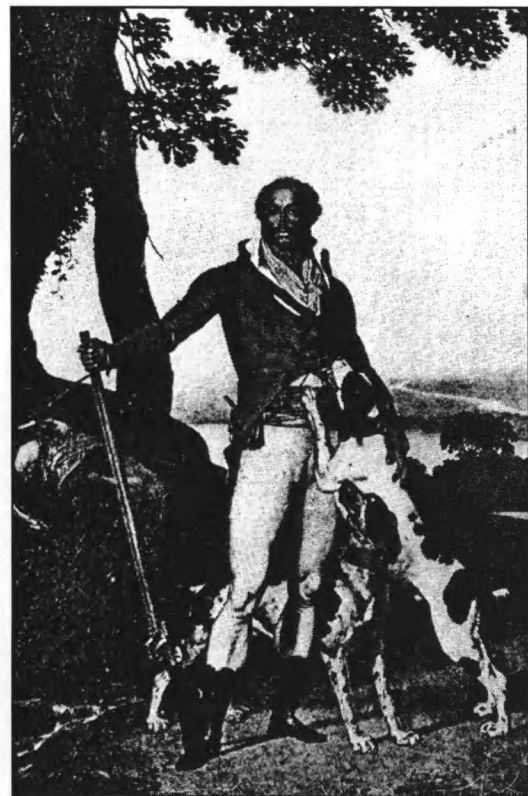


Figure 2: General Dumas

eighteen and enlisted in the French military service, his father insisted he do so under the name Dumas so as not to draw negative attention to the family name (Ross 13). Ironically, the public today no longer remembers the name Davy de la Pailleterie while the name Dumas lives on in great respect.

Thomas-Alexandre spent his adult life gaining respect, and ultimately losing this accomplishment. He rose in the ranks of French military. His strength and courage might have made him a model for Alexandre Dumas' Musketeer character Porthos. With a successful career ranked as a general, Thomas-Alexandre Dumas attempted to retire. When he did, General Napoleon Bonaparte took Dumas' place at St. Roche and laid the foundations for future glory (Ross 17). Dumas ended up serving for Napoleon Bonaparte during his rise to power and expansion of the French Empire. Bonaparte had agreed to be the godfather to Dumas' first-born son, but when Alexandre was born in 1802, Thomas-Alexandre had fallen out of favor of the famous Emperor (Ross 21). Thus, Alexandre Dumas was robbed of his promised godfather and his family would never be given the salary, commission, extra pay for battle experience, and the compensation for when the general was taken as a prisoner of war.

General Dumas died when Alexandre was only about four years old, but he left a great impression on his son, including having told the boy countless stories about politics and the famous men he had interacted with. One of the most interesting encounters General Dumas told Alexandre about was his brush with the Duc de Richelieu when he was younger (Ross 27). Dumas used

this adventurous spirit in writing his historical fiction and coloring the landscapes he presented of the fictional past mixed with reality.

Young Alexandre Dumas

With an adventurer's spirit and a light heart, Alexandre Dumas lived an enjoyable childhood. From an early age, his mother wanted him to be a priest, but Alexandre quickly took to illustrated books and taught himself how to read (Ross 29-31). Alexandre, "in his Memoires admits that his precocity in the accomplishment of reading made him unbearably conceited" (Ross 31). Not all was fun



Figure 3: Young Alexandre Dumas

and games for him though; as a child, Dumas lived in a time of war. "From time to time there came news of titanic events from far afield - victories for the French (or more correctly for Napoleon): Lutzen, Bautzen, Wurtchen, Austerlitz; then came the decline of the Emperor's star; disaster followed disaster: Moscow, Colmar, Besancon, Landau, Forbach, Leipzig" (Ross 32). The wartime struggles influenced Dumas just as the wars of the 20th century later affected filmmakers. A need for violence and politics to play into life becomes apparent in the establishment of Dumas' plays and novels.

After entering puberty, Dumas' life changed. Michael Ross simplifies when he states "overnight, the country bumpkin, who lived only for hunting and shooting, had entered on the first steps to manhood" (Ross 45). Ross also translates part of Dumas' *Memoirs* to express Alexandre Dumas' own thoughts on the subject of love and sex. "Almost all the girls in Villers-Cotterets had some more or less serious affair on hand. For some reason we in Villers-Cotterets had the English custom of free and easy associations between the sexes which I have never seen in any other French town..." (Ross 45).

Dumas moved to Paris when he was twenty and began his climb to fame. His excellent handwriting helped him get a position working with the Duc d'Orleans, the future King Louis Philippe ("Alexandre Dumas (sr.)"). Dumas' arrival in France coincided with the beginnings of the Romantic Movement and he read from the classics of his day.

Established Alexandre Dumas

While working his clerkship for the Duc d'Orleans, Alexandre Dumas enjoyed life in Paris. He took time to write plays. His first breakthrough was with *Henri III* in 1829, and after its success, he was taken seriously as a writer in Paris ("Alexander Dumas (sr.)"). Marie-Catherine Labay, a dressmaker, was one of Dumas' mistresses and she gave birth to his illegitimate son, also named Alexandre Dumas. By 1843, Dumas had written at least fifteen plays that were being performed in French theaters ("Alexander Dumas (sr.)").

Dumas led a very interesting life while producing historical novels. The lifting of press censorship in the 1830s caused an enormous increase in the spread of newspapers. The newspapers used entertaining serial novels to attract readers, thus Dumas became a serial novelist to make more money. Dumas made more than 250 books with the help of his seventy-three assistants. His most notable assistant was the teacher Auguste Maquet who might have drafted the original rough sketches of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.



Figure 4: Alexandre Dumas at 40

("Alexander Dumas (sr.)") Dumas used his own personal flair to develop intriguing characters, move the action along, and offer teasers to keep the readers in suspense.

In 1830, Dumas adventurously took part in the revolution of July and became a captain in the National Guard. He married an actress in 1840, but divorced her after spending her entire dowry. ("Biography of") After 1857, Dumas traveled to Russia. He also assisted Garibaldi, who was restoring Sicily and Naples to Italy. Having succeeded there, Dumas lived in Sicily for a while. He eventually returned to France and died peacefully on December 5, 1870. ("Biography of")

During his lifetime, Dumas published many stories and continued trying to satisfy his audiences while making more money to survive. Dumas' financial needs pushed his creative spirit to a magnificent level of artistic expression that revealed truths about history, through fiction, and truths about the era in which he lived. Dumas had to write in order to make money to support his mother, his mistress with his son, and the other women he would develop relationships with along the way. While very talented and a magnificent writer, the pressure of trying to gain wealth and survive his adventurous life, pushed Dumas' creativity all the more. His motivations reflect that of moviemakers today, trying to stand out and succeed in difficult markets where judging your audience is key to pulling in more revenues.

Historical Context for the 1921 Adaptation

The phonograph was first invented in the 1890s and America was first falling in love with the movies in the 1910s (Murrin 639 & 660). 1920 brought the Red Scare, the League of National Women Voters formation in Chicago, the National Negro Baseball League, a census report proving urban population exceeded rural population in the United States, and a public still reeling from the effects of World War I (Agnone 98-99). In 1921 the Russian civil war ended, 85 people died in a race riot in Oklahoma, Ireland won self-government from England, and many other important social events were shaping the United States (Agnone 100-101).

1921 Three Musketeers

The 1921 version, *The Three Musketeers* silent film achieved much success while only telling half the tale. One version of *The Three Musketeers* had already been produced in 1916, proving our hunger for the retelling of Dumas' classic novel. The director filmed this version in black and white and pieced the story together to fill 118 minutes. *LIFE* magazine critic Robert E.

Sherwood wrote, "When

Alexandre Dumas sat down at his desk, he doubtless had but one object in view: to provide a suitable story for Douglas Fairbanks to act in the movies."

Sherwood also praised the movies as "one of the great achievements of the movies." The New York Times reported, "A stirring, thrilling picture! A distinct achievement." (*The Three Musketeers* 1921 DVD) This version is a silent picture in black and white because of the technology available at the time. The 1921 audience needed to escape from the confusing, harsh world and wanted to laugh while experiencing drama and intrigue. Dumas' classic tale provides all these elements.

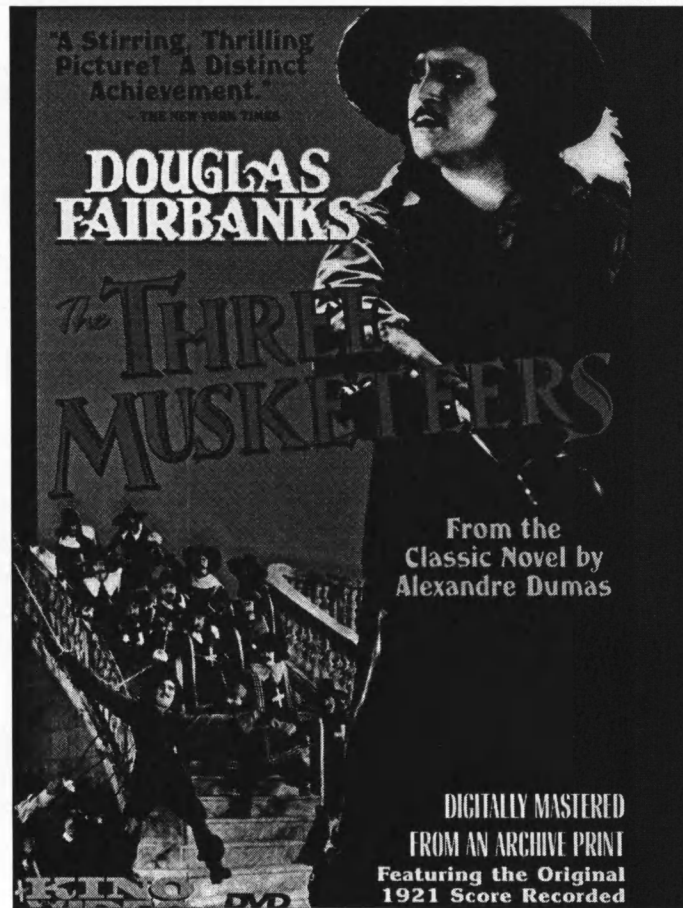


Figure 5: DVD cover for the 1921 version

The cast and crew positively impacted this film. Fred Niblo directed the 1921 version from a screenplay by Edward Knoblock. The original filmscore was by Louis F. Gottschalk and performed by Brian Benison and the "Elton Thomas Salon Orchestra." Douglas Fairbanks, a popular young energetic and comedic actor, engaged audiences as a naïve and ambitious D'Artagnan. Although not martial arts, Fairbanks stunts resemble the work done in the 2001 *The Musketeer* because he was quite a nimble gymnast, capable of jumping around during swordplay. Nigel De Brulier maneuvered the role of Cardinal Richelieu, appearing devious and mysterious. Adolphe Menjou played the role of the confused King Louis XIII. Queen Anne was portrayed by Mary McLaren and she embodied a strong female character. An actor named Walt Whitman appeared as D'Artagnan's father at the beginning of the film.

As a silent film, the movie's opening captivated me. They set the narrative beginning as:

Life knows no age nor time.
Youth will ever set out to seek fortune.
Man will ever fight for the love of Woman.
Kings will threaten - Queens weep - Ministers conspire.
And so - though our story is of three hundred
years ago, it is as young as Yesterday or To-morrow.

This beginning, not from the novel, plays out well on the big screen. The director establishes this story's themes as timeless while captivating the audience with a preview of the plot devices. Unlike the novel, this movie begins not with D'Artagnan, but rather with a long segment of political intrigue involving the King, the Queen, and the Cardinal. The presentation makes the viewer aware that the Queen's influence keeps the Cardinal from controlling

the King. This sets the movie up to revolve around the plot of keeping the Queen in power and thus thwarting the Cardinal's goals, only expressing the first half of the novel. This movie offers the Cardinal as the main villain and Milda de Winter is merely a pawn of his, as are the nameless Rochefort and an invented character known as "Father Joseph." "Father Joseph" wears a gray robe and perhaps represents Death. The Cardinal keeps many cats around him, holding and petting them in true symbolic movie-villainous style. D'Artagnan enters the story with a living father who sends him to Monsieur Treville to become a Musketeer. Capable of acrobatic stunts, throwing his sword, and extremely fast swordplay, D'Artagnan proves the value of physical prowess. D'Artagnan has a young French man named Planchet as a servant, though the movie portrays D'Artagnan treating the young man well and uses him for some comic relief. This movie version completely eliminates the individual plotlines involving the three Musketeers themselves. This movie never once even references Aramis as being a religious man. In the end, they make it through half of the novel's plot and D'Artagnan restores the Queen's jewelry to her. The Cardinal ends up being a "generous foe" who unites them all after having been separated during the first sequences.

The 1920s audience was not concerned with bloodshed and intense special effects like



Figure 6: 1921's romantic D'Artagnan

our modern-day viewers tend to desire in this type of action and suspense thriller. Douglas Fairbanks embodies the hero of the time. He has a comic appearance, inner energy supporting an iron will, and the ability to overcome very difficult odds. He provides entertainment and manages to foil the very intelligent Cardinal. A sense of rebellion and camaraderie comes from the comic dinner scenes as the Musketeers trick others into giving them food to eat. The movie ignores issues of religion and treats the political issues very superficially, providing for lighthearted entertainment that was needed in such troubling social times. Since the invention of the motion picture, people have used the movies as a form of escapism. The director uses good physical props to show the difference between good and evil as well as having the silent film stars use great expressive facial movements that the audience knew how to interpret. The movie makes D'Artagnan seem dashing and romantic, like the novel. Yet, unlike the novel, he does not have any affairs with married women or servant girls. The director captures Fairbanks' charm and uses it to drive the story.

Historical Context for the 1933 Adaptation

This version of *The Three Musketeers* exists as a product of its time. The Great Depression began on October 29, 1929 and lasted for ten years. America had already begun to lose trust in immigrants and foreigners. One World War was already in our nation's history. (Murrin 8837-8847) President Hoover had a lot of trouble between 1928 and 1932. In 1932 the public elected Franklin D.

Roosevelt as President. The United States felt a real threat to democracy at this time. (Murrin 8837-8847)

1933 Three Musketeers

The 1933 version, *The Three Musketeers* twelve-part serial, strayed so much from Dumas' story that I almost chose not to include the adaptation in my study. Fortunately, I realized the great diversity of this piece proves very useful in analyzing our culture at the time. I must note that this one version fails to accomplish timelessness. Most audiences would become annoyed by trying to watch this entire serial at once.



Figure 7: DVD cover for the 1933 version

The cast and crew of this black and white production make the work very memorable, although they can not save the serial from its horrible plotline and rushed production appearance. Nat Levine owned Mascot Pictures Corporation and produced serials to run in theaters across the country. He was known for having tight schedules and tight budgets. He made the crews work long, hard hours in order to produce his features. (*The Three Musketeers* 1933 DVD) Co-director Armand Schaefer later had success as the producer of Roy Rogers films and as the head of Gene

Autry's production company (*The Three Musketeers* 1933 DVD). John Wayne stars as the D'Artagnan character, named Tom Wayne. John Wayne was not yet famous and this is one of three serials he made before becoming popular in Hollywood. Ruth Hall plays as Elaine, Tom Wayne's romance interest. Yakima Canutt dons a mask to play the mysterious villain El Shaitan. Lon Chaney, Jr. and Noah Beery, Jr. also each co-star with John Wayne.

The plot of the 1933 version differs too much to be held as an accurate portrayal of the novel. Each episode begins with the title *The Three Musketeers* and flashes "A modern version of the famous story by Alexander Dumas." The D'Artagnan character, Tom Wayne, innocently finds himself helping the Foreign Legion fend off attacks from savages in Araby. The movie portrays the Arabs as savages similar to the portrayal of Native Americans in old cowboy movies. This lack of cultural awareness and lack of appreciation for other societies seems tasteless compared to today's standards. In the serial, Tom's best friend uncovers the truth behind a conspiracy founded by the mysterious El Shaitan. Throughout the twelve episodes, the driving plot involves Tom, the three legionnaires who call themselves the Three Musketeers, and Tom's girlfriend Elaine trying to figure out El Shaitan's identity. Dumas' political powerplay theme is evident as well as the comedic action sequences used to solve the mysteries. An innocent love story plays out as Elaine learns to trust Tom even though he is accused of killing her brother. Elaine remains a bit fickle throughout the serial, though her emotions fail to create a dynamic female like

Dumas' complex characters. While watching the serial, I felt the struggle over the mysterious letter reminded me of Dumas' own Shakespearian plot devices.

To confuse viewers all the more, all the actors in the movie were white even though some of them were supposed to be Arabic. The plot caused Tom and Elaine to be unsure whether El Shaitan was an Arab or a white man pretending to be an Arab. The actors wore cheap blankets and body coverings to appear Arabic and there were several times the different characters, even the good guys, used the clothes to disguise themselves and suddenly seem Arabic. In the end, Tom did figure out who El Shaitan was and had the man arrested. The three characters calling themselves Musketeers acted like simple men who enjoyed to fight. They also provided good comic relief while being loyal friends to Tom.

In the serial, the D'Artagnan character proves to be a heroic detective capable of escaping most battles with his physical might. His friends honor him with loyalty and prove the value of teamwork time after time. Americans likely appreciated seeing this in heroes of the 1930s. All of the good guys had to rebel against authority, especially Tom when he was accused of murder and still had to escape to solve the mystery. The Musketeer characters defy their superiors because no one in the political scene can be trusted - after all, by the end of the serial it's quite obvious anyone could have been dressing up as El Shaitan and plotting a resurrection. A distrust of foreign authority coupled with the ability to use wits to save yourself comes through as the constructive

lessons of the serial. Sexual morality only comes into play as Tom Wayne behaves like a total gentleman with his "sweetheart" Elaine.

Historical Context for the 1973-1974 Adaptation

The United States entered an era of freedom and the world allowed for freer expression during this time. Several movements took place to give more rights to minorities. Sadly, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in April of 1968. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 was passed. President Nixon was elected in 1968 and he announced his "Vietnamization" policy in 1969. (Mullen 1026) U.S. troops entered Cambodia in 1970. Nixon was reelected in 1972. The Paris peace accords were signed in 1973. The Supreme Court upheld a woman's right to abortion in the case of *Roe v. Wade* (1973). (Mullen 1026)

1973-1974 Three Musketeers

The 1973 and 1974 films *The Three Musketeers* and *The Four Musketeers* deserve great applause for adequately capturing Dumas' novel, thanks to the free-spirited American 1970s - our decade most

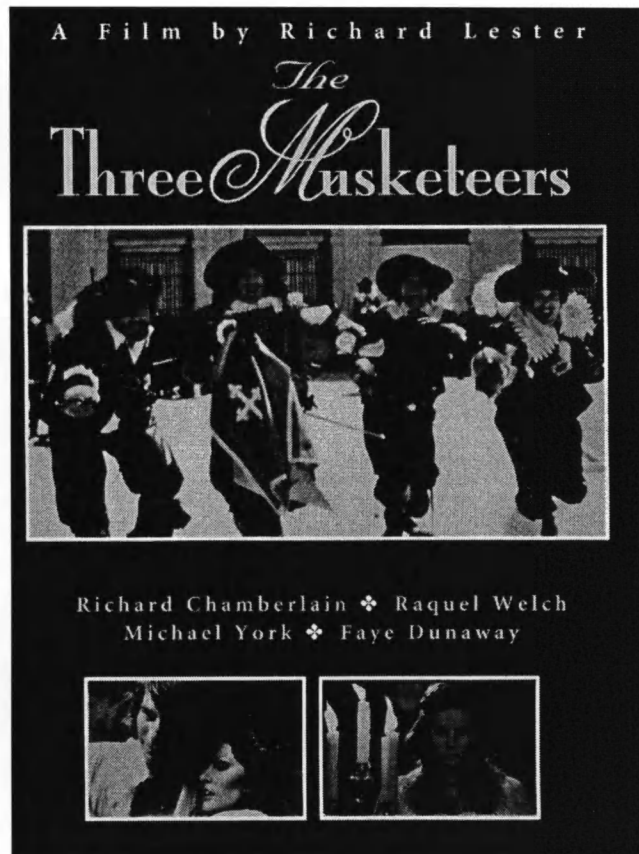


Figure 8: DVD cover for the 1973 version

resembling the free spirit of the French culture Dumas reveals in his text. By splitting the novel in half and depicting each half as a feature-length motion picture, the director accomplished making two successful movies while having enough time on screen to accurately follow Dumas' plot.

The team behind these two movies made them film classics. Richard Lester directed both movies, based on screenplays by George MacDonald Fraser. Michel Legrand composed the music. Alexander Salkind, Ilya Salkind, and Michael Alexander co-produced the movies. William Hobbs directed the fight choreography. The cast included Jean-Pierre Cassel as King Louis XIII, Richard Chamberlain as Aramis, Geraldine Chaplin as Queen Anna of Austria, Sybil Danning as Eugenie, Faye Dunaway as Milady de Winter, Frank Finlay

as Porthos, Charlton Heston as Cardinal Richelieu, Roy Kinnear as Planchet, Christopher Lee as Rochefort, Spike Milligan as Mister Bonancieux, Oliver Reed as Athos, Simon Ward as the Duke of Buckingham, Raquel Welch as Madame Bonancieux, and Michael York as D'Artagnan. The cast included several well-

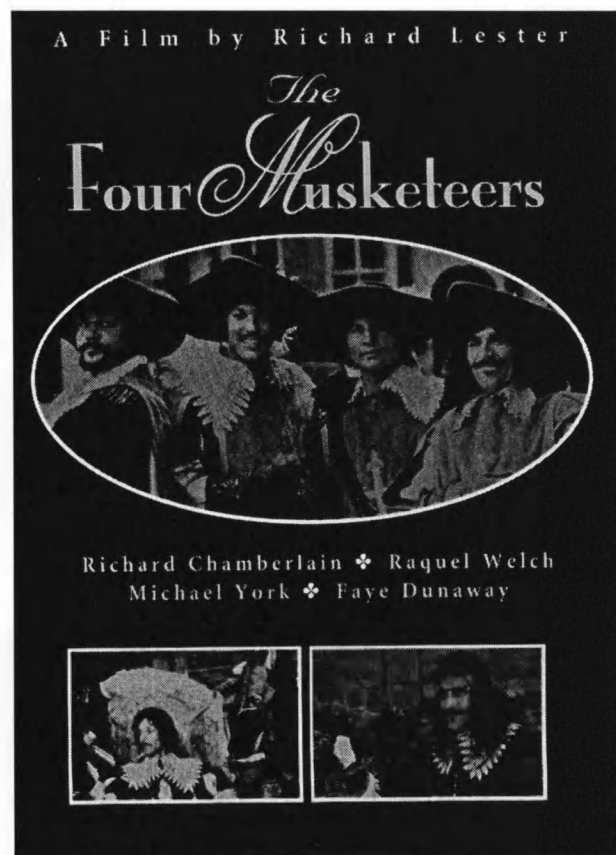


Figure 9: DVD cover for the 1974 version

known stars at the time, thus proving great expected box-office potential for the two movies that did in fact pay off.

Proving to be the most accurate movie adaptation of the classic novel, the two movie set opens with D'Artagnan's father sending him off to Paris with only a sword, a letter, and advice about politics. The movie even includes small details from Dumas' novel, such as D'Artagnan's mother's ointment capable of curing most wounds in a short period of time. Michael York excellently portrays the simple country boy entering the big city. York goes around shirtless for as much of the movie as they could possibly portray him as a sexy male icon in the 1970s. The major benefit of the costuming is that you see the large crosses worn by all of the major characters. The first movie centers around D'Artagnan's arrival and helping the Queen retrieve her jewelry from the Duke of Buckingham before the King learns of her secret love affair. The second movie focuses on the second half of the novel, the mystery and attempted vengeance of Milady de Winter. At the end of the first movie, D'Artagnan becomes a Musketeer and has won the respect of the Queen. D'Artagnan's overweight servant, Planchet, accompanies him and provides comic relief. D'Artagnan's love affairs are revealed in their true forms just as in the novels. The Cardinal remains a calculating political force and shows no signs of manic insanity, another excellent point true to the novel. Charlton Heston plays an excellent Cardinal, capturing the role with eloquence. One interesting change of the plot comes from announcing Rochefort and Milady de

Winter as lovers. The second film captures the seige at La Rochelle extremely well and proves the wit, not only the might, of the brave Musketeers.

The freedom of the "hippy era" and freer sexual norms allowed for a much truer rendition of *The Three Musketeers* than the theater had ever seen before. Culturally, the audiences of the day could handle a hero who slept around with several women while sincerely proclaiming to love all of them. D'Artagnan used his muscles and speed to achieve victory as the young farm boy innocently found himself swept up in a world bigger than himself. That basic theme can be found in many successful movies even still today. The first *Star Wars* film, from 1977, is a good example. Dumas' timeless tale, while altered for each generation, shined through most honestly here. The crosses worn by the major characters showed a willingness to explore the religious element of the story, as well as the detailed portrayal of Milady de Winter's manipulation of her Protestant guard. The war between France and England was an important religious battle of the time. These two movies supported freedom, honor, and love, as well as having an interesting and dynamic female villain who blossomed in the second movie. The heroes gain their footing in the heavy world of politics; although not mastering the political realm, the Musketeers defy authority in order to bring order into their own lives.

Historical Context for the 1993 Adaptation

The 1980s brought entertainment into an era of family ethics and strong social ties. President Ronald Reagan brought the United States heavily into an arms race with the Soviet Union while he was in office from 1981-1989. I remember Dan Quayle making a huge fuss over the television series *Murphy Brown* because the lead character was a pregnant single woman. Some political figures placed a lot of emphasis on normative family concepts. The 1980s also saw a rise in connecting music pop hits with producing movies and a special collaboration was made for this movie's soundtrack. The result was a pop hit, *All for One*, sung by Rod Stewart, Sting, and Bryan Adams.

1993 Three Musketeers

The 1993 *Disney* movie *The Three Musketeers* brought a great entertaining spirit that maintained some of Dumas' themes while straying heavily from the plot.

Disney's cultural censorship greatly

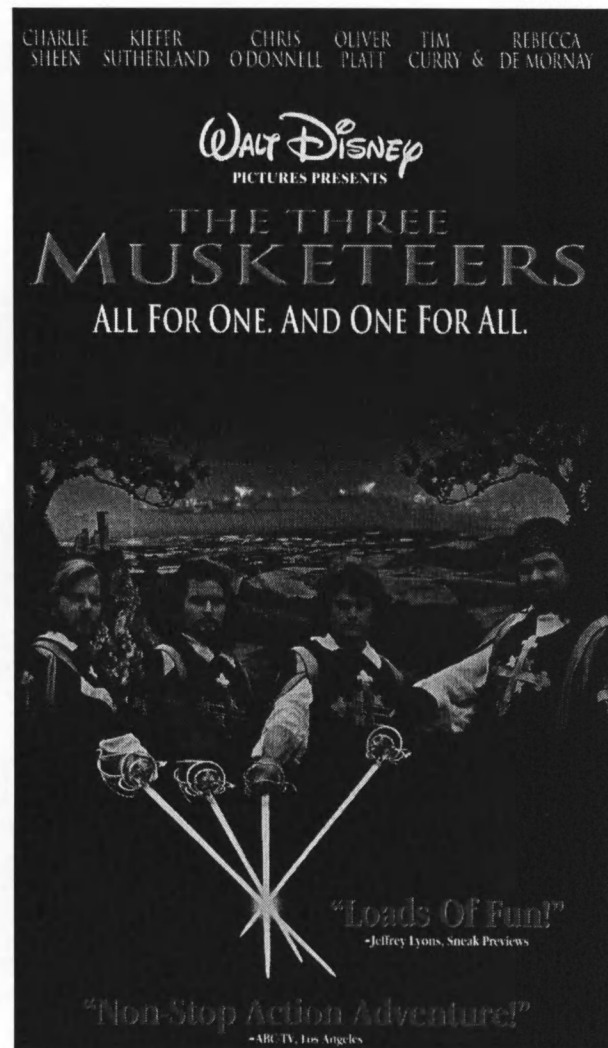


Figure 10: VHS cover for the 1993 version

reflects the post-1980s and early 1990s stances on morality.

The cast and crew of the 1993 *The Three Musketeers* created a very enjoyable and entertaining movie. Director Stephen Herek captures Dumas' sense of action, comedy, love, suspense, and mystery in this modern motion picture success. The acting was superb, though Chris O'Donnell could have done better in the lead role as D'Artagnan. Athos, Porthos, and Aramis are portrayed by Kiefer Sutherland, Oliver Platt, and Charlie Sheen. Tim Curry steals the show as the proud Cardinal Richelieu. Rebecca De Mornay plays a very seductive and manipulative Milady.

This plot only slightly resembles Dumas' original tale. D'Artagnan's father, in this rendition, was a murdered Musketeer who recently died while attempting to protect the King. D'Artagnan is a young man trying to follow in his father's footsteps and ends up having to avenge his father's death. The Cardinal openly plots to assassinate the King and make himself the new ruler of France while attempting to forge an alliance with the Duke of Buckingham. The Duke of Buckingham never appears in the movie. The Queen and the King, in true *Disney* fashion, seem to want to love one another (and only one another) and by the end of the movie understand one another enough to fall in love. D'Artagnan maintains only one love interest in the movie, one of the Queen's ladies in waiting named Constance. The movie fleshes out Athos' storyline and remains true to the background story of Athos and Milady. The climax of the plot comes from the Musketeers and D'Artagnan stopping the evil insane cardinal and his henchman Rochefort. Rochefort has been transformed

in this movie as the evil former Musketeer who killed D'Artagnan's father.

Rochefort wears only black and has a patch over his right eye. Typical symbolism and costuming allows the audience to easily separate the good guys from the bad guys.

I firmly believe the plot changes are not an effort simply to reduce the amount of information from novel format to the big screen. The plot changed too much. The shifts in theme and direction of character are cultural results, not simply editing decisions. The Cardinal needed to be a power-hungry insane fool in order for the early 1990s audience to more easily accept him as the defeatable villain, conquered in 105 minutes. In the novel, the Musketeers never eliminated the Cardinal. The screenwriter transformed Rochefort in order to give D'Artagnan the excuse of honorable vengeance for his crusades. Milady, interestingly enough, had her role watered down while still being very dynamically presented by De Mornay. Her final scene shows a woman who still loves her husband and has been torn with inner conflict. Aramis and his religious faith are downplayed to the extent of adding to the comic relief, a reflection of a less religiously serious society in recent times. Plenty of comedy and fight sequences keep the movie paced well, as our audiences now expect at the movie theater. O'Donnell manages to portray a 1980s innocent hero in over his head and simply trying to fit in.

D'Artagnan ultimately achieves fame and honor while helping defend the



Figure 11: 1993 Aramis

majestic King of France. D'Artagnan even remains a modern day gentleman as he refuses the seductive attempts by Milady. The Musketeers each present truth, honor, and freedom in a good light. Viewers learn that Athos was tortured by his past, but admitting it and asking for forgiveness sets him free. Porthos has a free spirit and succeeds well in battle while uttering humorous one-liners. Aramis honors all with his religious code, even the men he kills in duels. If Dumas saw the 1990s version of his classic with his own eyes, he would hardly recognize the adaptation of his novel.

Historical Context for the 2001 Adaptation

With the success of *The Matrix* in 1999, directors have proven what an impact technology continues to have on our movie experience. The early 1916 version of *The Three Musketeers* would never have been possible if not for the invention of the camera and film. Special effects technology improvements keep changing how we see movies. Directors like George Lucas are able to tell the stories that have been trapped in their imaginations because of the difficulty of bringing

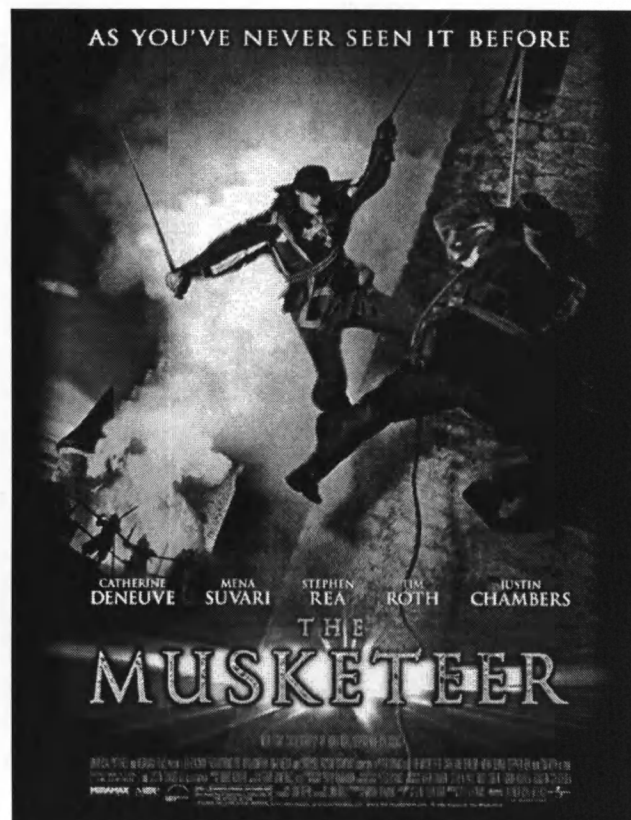


Figure 12: Movie poster for 2001 version

them to the big screen has been relieved by generating new special effects tricks.

2001 The Musketeer

The 2001 film *The Musketeer*, advertised as a re-imagining of Dumas' classic tale with martial arts choreography, received reviews from bad to horrible. Despite what critics expressed, I observed audiences in the movie theater enjoying this new take on the classic and wrapped up in the fast-paced action sequences. *The Musketeer* presents a new challenge to analyze because this film received horrible reviews, and yet, still presented an entertaining and dynamic rendition of Dumas' classic novel.

Peter Hyams, the director of *The Musketeer*, decided to capture a new take on *The Three Musketeers*. Hyams wanted to make a new blockbuster hit and went out on a limb to try



Figure 13: Scene from a 2001 version fight sequence

something new, with lots of special effects and the kind of action choreography that has become popular with audiences. Writer Gene Quintano wrote the screenplay. Hong Kong action choreographer Xin Xin Xiong brought a new look to *The Musketeer* fight sequences. They placed several accomplished actors in supporting roles. Catherine Deneuve portrays the Queen, Stephen Rea captures the role of the

Cardinal, Tim Roth dashinglly acts as Febre, and Mena Suvari fills the female lead as Francesca. Justin Chambers leads the cast as D'Artagnan, *The Musketeer*.

The plot of this movie looks like a mix of Dumas' novel, the *Disney* version from 1993, and a remake of some Jet Li action sequences. Perhaps the most perplexing change to the plot is the evil Febre. Quintano wrote this villian in, in what I can only assume was an attempt to create an insane rogue version of *Disney's* Rochefort. Tim Roth, as Febre, is costumed like the 1993 Rochefort. He begins the movie by killing D'Artagnan's father in front of the young boy. D'Artagnan vows vengeance and his father's good friend Planchet teaches the boy swordsmanship. D'Artagnan grows up wanting nothing but vengeance. This creates an easy to follow, simplistic plot device. The movie has Athos, Porthos, and Aramis in the background, but they hardly do anything to help the movie along; Hyams tried to take a cue from such movies as *Gladiator* and *The Patriot* and give us one hero to focus on. Large battle scenes resembling those two movies add an extra touch of leadership to D'Artagnan's role when they come into play by the end of *The Musketeer*. Unlike *Gladiator* and *The Patriot*, *The Musketeer* fails to delve deeply into subplots exploring the minor characters. As part of the plot, D'Artagnan rescues Francesa from her abusive uncle and has to deal with the Cardinal. The Cardinal ends up victim to his insane henchman who he cannot control. Febre becomes a lunatic who D'Artagnan has to stop in the climactic battle scene at the end of the movie.

Hyams made some major cultural experimental decisions while putting this remake together. He knew the audience enjoyed movies with one central heroic character and so he tried to eliminate the rest of the heroes from the story. His mistake becomes obvious when you remember what a master storyteller Dumas was when he wrote *The Three Musketeers* in 1844-1845. D'Artagnan is the central protagonist, but a story with that much political intrigue and large-scale events requires more characters with mysterious differences. Many fans who grew up watching a new version of *The Three Musketeers* every decade were let down with the elimination of some of literature's most heroic dynamic individuals for the sake of one man's glory. We live in a time of teamwork and recognition of the strength of pulling together a team's diverse talents. Sexual morality was only toyed with by having a scene with Mena Suvari in a bathtub when Chambers come crashing into the room to say he has never seen a naked woman before. The two actors do play out a nice romance during the movie.



Figure 14: Scene expressing D'Artagnan's innocence

Critics say the action scenes were overdone and the editing for the film was horrible with lots of continuity problems (Gutierrez) (Huffman). The special effects were amazing though, and seeing Dumas' story retold like this helped

me realize the formulaic trend developing in today's one-hero, special-effects dominated films.

Revealing Shifts in Cultural Expectations

We must understand the original telling of *The Three Musketeers*, the novel itself. The most important story elements to consider are those the movie adaptations shy away from. Many times, movie versions of novels eliminate story elements for the simple sake of converting from book to film. More importantly though, we need to look at what elements changed because the cultures at the time would not have accepted them in the movies. Culturally, the directors changed these elements for a reason. Fans of *The Three Musketeers* who have only seen one version of the movie and who have never read the book itself will be surprised by several of the following details.

D'Artagnan - Transforming the Heroic Cultural Icon

D'Artagnan's father was not a Musketeer and his death did not send D'Artagnan seeking vengeance. Many modern stories account for the need to kill through self defense and vengeance plots.



Figure 15: Ideal D'Artagnan

D'Artagnan's father was a great swordsman and a friend of Treville, Captain of the Musketeers. D'Artagnan's father told him to respect the Cardinal and the King and then set the young man out to boldly enter France and make a name for himself. D'Artagnan began humbly, but Dumas portrayed him as a clever man. Over time, to portray a cinematic hero, D'Artagnan's appearance, wit, and view of romance had to alter with each generation's changing levels of social acceptance.

Dumas introduces D'Artagnan as, "A young man - we can sketch at a dash. Imagine to yourself a Don Quixote of eighteen; a Don Quixote without his corselet, without his coat of mail, without his cuisses; a Don Quixote clothed in a woolen doublet" (Dumas B&N 2). Dumas presents the young man as an adventurous spirit with no experience beyond his small hometown.

D'Artagnan's father specifically tells him, "Endure nothing from anyone except Monsieur the Cardinal and the king. It is by his courage, please observe, by his courage alone, that a gentleman can make his way nowadays" (Dumas B&N 3). D'Artagnan's father urges the young man to never hesitate in boldness, to be quick with his sword, and to make a name for himself in Paris.

Thematically, Dumas uses the young man's appearance to counter the presumptions of the other characters who assume, because of D'Artagnan's clothes and humble beginnings, that the man is a foolish country bumpkin.

D'Artagnan proves himself extremely witty through the journeys in the novel. In 1921, Douglas Fairbanks comically plays off his foolishness, but luck, rather than wit, seems to help him achieve his ultimate victory. The 1973-1974 movie

version best adopts this theme as Michael York masters the act of giving off foolish facial expressions while actually cleverly dealing with the villains. Chris O'Donnell, in the 1993 version, has the proper setup, yet appears very confident and expresses bold wit while interacting with Rochefort and the Cardinal. Justin Chambers applies this same variation on theme, managing to come across as a cocky swordsman who handles all problems with his amazing fighting ability.

Another important shift in D'Artagnan over the years is the change from Dumas' free loving, good-hearted young man to the romantic gentleman audiences accept today. In the novel, though seemingly in love with his married mistress, D'Artagnan has two more affairs while she is kidnapped. He courts Milady De Winter, and one day when Milady is gone, realizes how much Milady's servant girl Kitty admires him. D'Artagnan uses Kitty to gain an advantage in figuring out the affairs of

Milady while also enjoying the chance to bed the young lady. Not surprisingly, only the 1973-1974 version depicts this part of the novel. Kitty's absence from the 1921, 1933, 1993, and 2001 versions culturally makes sense. Not only does Kitty



Figure 16: 2001 version's light romance scene

disappear, but screenwriters failed to include the love affair between D'Artagnan and Milady in any other versions. The 1921 audience only saw half of the novel portrayed, so the movie would not have had a chance to explore

this relationship anyway. The 1933 version contained an entirely different plot and only had one female actress. The 1993 version arrived at a time when our society questioned the idea of what a family is and how we socially define normative family values, thus this plot device was necessarily deleted. In the 2001 version, forced plot simplification reduced the use of secondary characters to the extent that there was no Milady. The romance of *The Musketeer* portrayed D'Artagnan as a virgin, even at his age, who gentlemanly courted the innkeeper's niece.

While dealing with D'Artagnan's love interest, we must look at Madame Bonacioux specifically. The movie versions greatly transform her from her original role as well. Dumas wrote Madame Bonacioux as the wife of the innkeeper where D'Artagnan secures lodging in Paris and a trusted servant of the Queen. For Dumas, D'Artagnan involving himself with a married woman was an accepted part of the French culture he portrayed in the novel; young men in Paris often had married mistresses who would supply them with money and tokens to aid them. None of the movies present Madame Bonacioux as a married woman, not even the 1973-1974 version. In 1973, Madame Bonacioux was the daughter of the old, spying innkeeper. In 1921, she was the niece of a mean and nasty innkeeper. In 1933, the D'Artagnan character's main love interest was the sister of the character's best friend and man he was accused of murdering. Not even an innkeeper, D'Artagnan's love interest in the 1993 version was single and one of Queen Anne's ladies in waiting. The Musketeer presents Madame Bonacioux as the niece of an innkeeper who, viewers easily

piece together, most likely abuses her. Thus the 2001 D'Artagnan becomes even more of a hero by wooing her and saving her from her uncle. All of the movie versions, as well as the novel, provide D'Artagnan with at least one chance to rescue his lady.

Queen, King & Duke - Evolving Acceptance of Love Affairs

Applying the same shifts in cultural norms concerning D'Artagnan about adultery, free love affairs, and the ideas of a heroic gentleman, we can easily analyze the changing portrayal of the royalty presented in the movies. The



Figure 17: 1974's Duke of Buckingham

Queen of France, Anne of Austria, intrigues several political men. Dumas portrays France's King Louis XIII (her husband), Cardinal Richelieu, and England's Duke of Buckingham as all vying for Anne's affection and attention. The Duke of Buckingham has her heart and she engages in a secret love affair with Buckingham, known of by the Cardinal.

This subplot asks for trouble. Dumas used historical texts, journals and diaries as well as historical records his team researched, to come up with ideas for his subplots. While the real world witnesses strange love affairs such as these, screenwriters feel the need to filter the audience's view, sometimes making these characters less significant. In 1921, the plot actually revolved around this love affair, despite not allowing D'Artagnan to engage in his

multiple love affairs. The Queen has power over the King and our heroes help her keep this affair a secret. The main obstacle for D'Artagnan stems from him being the main hero of the story, whereas these more complicated social figures retain more liberties because of their status and use in the plot. The 1933 version lacks these characters altogether. For the 1973-1974 movie adaptation, the novel's plot fully comes to surface, even showcasing Buckingham's courting of the Queen and her feeling at a lack of power to be with him despite her heart's desires. The 1993 version involves the Queen in loving her husband while presenting Buckingham as an ally to the villainous Cardinal. These character changes deserve our attention because the 1990s audience needed to recover from the forced family value-oriented social scene caused immense straying from the plot due to social expectations. In 2001, *The Musketeer* engages D'Artagnan in helping the Queen, but her problems stem from the Cardinal's vying for power and the insane Fevre, not from an intense love affair with another head of state. This plot simplification stems from the desire to further portrayal of Fevre's qualities as a loose-cannon rogue agent while not slowing down the action-oriented cinematic experience desired by many movie-goers today.

Athos, Porthos & Aramis - The Hearts of the Musketeers

Athos, Porthos, and Aramis are all assumed names. Readers at the time understood that Dumas' French swashbucklers were using pseudonyms in order to hide their own identities, thus adding to the mystery behind each

character. The novel reveals Athos to be a noble man, Porthos a man with several prominent mistresses, and Aramis only temporarily serving in the Musketeers before beginning his devout religious studies. While Porthos and Aramis remain interesting and well-fleshed out character allies and role models for D'Artagnan, the most interesting Musketeer remains Athos. Athos becomes D'Artagnan's most trusted confidant and Dumas spends the most time creating the atmosphere of Athos' background.

As a noble man, the Comte de Wardes, Athos was married to Milady and saw the mark of treachery burned on her shoulder. Honorably, he felt betrayed and deceived by the woman he loved. He arranged for her hanging. Interestingly enough, the novel never says if she was originally guilty of the murder she was accused, only that she was marked



Figure 18: 1973's Athos, Porthos, D'Artagnan, & Aramis



Figure 19: 1993's Athos, Aramis, D'Artagnan, & Porthos

and Athos spurned her when he saw the symbol. She becomes one of the most dynamic characters fleshed out in the second half of the book, thus adding to the depth of Athos as a character.

The 1921 movie version only covers the novel prior to these realizations and thus lacks the portions of the plot exploring the pasts of the Musketeers. The 1933 version, concerned more with politics and warfare than mysterious romances of the past, leaves out any themes similar to the Athos subplot, despite having had plenty of time in the twelve-episode serial to have taken advantage of these types of clever subplot concepts. In fact, the 1933 version reduces the characters resembling the Musketeers to simple-minded soldiers who enjoy fighting whenever possible. The 1973-1974 version displays great camaraderie between the Musketeers and D'Artagnan, but the movies also fail to delve into the intricate details of these fascinating supporting characters. Disney's 1993 version portrays the Athos and Milady background very well. The screenwriter changes her execution to a voluntary death after her confession, but the character's emotions still seem true to Dumas' intent. The 1993 version also excellently captures the brotherhood of the Musketeers, an important thematic element from the novel. Sadly, the 2001 *The Musketeer* almost entirely eliminates the Musketeer heroes from the movie. Athos receives the largest cut of airtime and these characters fail to form a deep relationship with D'Artagnan. The script sets this up so D'Artagnan seems to be more of a lone hero, fighting against all odds with very little help from others.

The Siege of La Rochelle takes place during the events of the novel. D'Artagnan and the Musketeers need a place to talk privately, so they cleverly arrange a bet with other soldiers so that they can hold the fort in the battlefield on their own for an hour while they eat lunch. Dumas uses this to give them a chance to discuss events while also boldly placing the heroes in a very historic setting. Most of the movies ignore the actual war taking place between France and England during the novel. The heart of a Musketeer's job rests in defending King and France. In the 1921 version, the Musketeers mostly only battle the Cardinal's guards as they try to retrieve the Queen's jewelry. The 1933 adaptation forces all the characters to continuously switch sides and betray loyalties in the confusion of trying to identify the actual enemy. For the 1973-1974 version, the social norms of the time allow depictions of the battle scenes and includes the siege of La Rochelle as portrayed in the novel. Interestingly though, during the movie's scenes when the enemy attacks the group, Planchet provides comic relief offsetting the tension of the actual battle. In the 1993 movie adaptation, the Cardinal disbands the Musketeers and then plots to ally with Buckingham while stealing power from the King. This plot allows for more of a civil war led by the power-hungry 1993 Cardinal. For *The Musketeer*, portraying the war



Figure 20: 1998 *Man In the Iron Mask* cast portrayal of the older Porthos, Aramis, Athos, & D'Artagnan

allowed the director to shoot battle scenes similar to the large-scale fighting scenes in *Braveheart*, *Gladiator*, and *The Patriot*. Dumas used the battles to bring the Musketeers and D'Artagnan closer together, but the movie versions utilize them more for pacing and as plot devices.

Milady - Portraying a Powerful & Witty Woman

In Dumas' novel, after a night spent with D'Artagnan, Milady has him under her control. She has slept with him, used her feminine charms to win his heart, and told him the story of how her former husband falsely accused her. D'Artagnan has no reason to realize her husband was his trusted friend Athos. "Seeing D'Artagnan about to leave her, Milady recalled his promise to avenge her on the Comte de Wardes" (Dumas B&N 369). At this point D'Artagnan simply wants reassurance that she loves him, then the young man agrees to do anything for her because she has given herself to him. Showing an understanding of the power a manipulative woman can wield in a world of romantic idealists, Dumas reveals the true threat Milady poses to our heroes. While great swordsmen manipulated by the Cardinal stand almost no chance of surviving battle with D'Artagnan, Milady becomes the one pawn of the Cardinal who has the ability to defeat the young hero, and with the simplest means.



Figure 21: 1993's guilt-stricken Milady

I was amazed when I realized Dumas spent over forty consecutive pages of his novel detailing Milady's imprisonment, breaking from the constant shifting focus between different characters and locations. Milady, at this point, hates D'Artagnan and blames him for her bad fortune. In the novel, and in the 1974 movie adaptation, Milady ends her imprisonment by manipulating the religious guard. She understands the battle between the Catholics and Protestants and feigns faith as a Protestant to win the heart of her guard. Her deceptions work well enough to convince the jailer to free her and then go assassinate his commander out of love for Milady and his religious faith.

None of the other movies portrays the events of the novel that prove Milady's intelligence and need for vengeance. The 1921 version uses her as the mysterious female pawn of the Cardinal who exists simply as a messenger. Unfortunately, due to plot differences and not due to cultural norms, the 1933 version lacks the ability to even attempt to present Milady and her struggles. In the 1973-1974 movies, Milady comes across strongest. She steals the role of main villain for the 1974 sequel, *The Four Musketeers*. The audience willingly welcomed a powerful female temptress capable of endangering the heroes. In 1993, Milady again acted as a temptress by using her body to try to seduce and murder D'Artagnan. The family-oriented 1993 D'Artagnan resists her charms because of cultural doctrines of the day, though D'Artagnan's desire to give into her attempts seems apparent. Milady also repents in the 1993 version and admits to truly loving Athos, thus supporting close family values even after showing her tortured and evil past. The Musketeer eliminated Milady's role in

order to concentrate on other central themes, though our society would likely have welcomed the subplots surrounding the exploration of this powerful woman in the year 2001.

Planchet - From Humble Servant to Comic Relief

Other than changes in the heroic character portrayals of D'Artagnan, the manipulation of Planchet stands out the most in my mind. I remember my excitement when I saw the list of characters for



Figure 22: 1973's D'Artagnan & comic Planchet

the upcoming movie, *The Musketeer* and convinced myself a chance existed that Dumas' true reflection of the master-servant relationship might grace our big-screen. The movie let me down, yet at the same time, fascinated me by bringing a new twist to this cultural dilemma. What a dilemma for a movie director too, as he sits back and wonders whether or not he should even attempt to address the issue of servitude, equating slavery on some levels.

"When D'Artagnan was out of the Louvre, and consulted his friends upon the use he had best make of his share of the forty pistoles, Athos advised him to order a good repast at the Pomme-de-Pin, Porthos to engage a lackey, and Aramis to provide himself with a suitable mistress" (Dumas B&N 72). Here, Dumas refers to the servant as simply a lackey. That description undermines today's view of the servant's job and role towards his employer/master as

portrayed in the novel. All of the other Musketeers already had servants and Porthos procured Planchet for D'Artagnan. The Athos character embodies the characteristics of an honorable and noble hero, yet Dumas details Athos' interaction with his own servant, Grimaud, in the following passage: "He had then, in order not to disturb his habits, accustomed Grimaud to obey him upon a simple gesture or upon a simple movement of his lips. He never spoke to him, except under the most extraordinary occasions" (Dumas B&N 73). Our cultural norms today demand we doubt Athos' honorable nature when we see how he treats his loyal servant. Narratively, Dumas makes the claim, "An old proverb says, 'Like master like man'" (Dumas B&N 74). By describing the way each of D'Artagnan's new friends handles having a servant, Dumas provides depth about each Musketeer.

By neglecting the servant characters, all of the movies lack complete understanding of the French culture and miss out on added insight into the Musketeers. Directors make these moves so as not to confuse audience expectations about the good guys. None of the movies present roles for the servants to the actual Musketeers, but some portray D'Artagnan's servant, Planchet, in different ways. A young male servant obediently and comically follows D'Artagnan around in the 1921 movie adaptation, allowing the movie to maintain a light-hearted comedic theme while not probing into the novel's social treatment of servants and the French class divisions. The 1933 serial deals with different cultures and the female character, Elaine, has an Arab house servant who betrays her in his loyalty to the mysterious El Shaitan. The

question of a servant becoming a double agent or spy drives this part of the plot along while providing part of the intrigue of the production. The 1973-1974 movies bring back the comic role of D'Artagnan's servant, this time an overweight middle-age man who carries D'Artagnan's weapons for him. Planchet provides comic relief during the fighting scenes, especially since the servant obviously lacks any fighting skills. In 1993, the *Disney* version refuses to acknowledge the use of servants by D'Artagnan and the Musketeer characters.

In 2001, *The Musketeer* reinvented Planchet as a loyal mentor figure for D'Artagnan. For the opening of the movie, the evil Febre kills D'Artagnan's father when the boy is only about eight years old. Planchet, an old man who apparently taught D'Artagnan's father



Figure 23: 2001's loyal mentor Planchet

the art of swordfighting, shows up and comforts the boy. He promises to teach D'Artagnan how to fight and avenge his father's death. Throughout the movie, Planchet acts as a "loyal friend" to D'Artagnan by driving his carriage, carrying his items around, arranging for meetings in town, and generally following the main hero around the same way a servant would. Planchet's role in the movie is voluntary though, as a mentor watching his pupil succeed in achieving rightful vengeance for unjust wrongs. This twist fulfills Planchet's place in the novel while avoiding the cultural taboo of addressing having a main hero

dominate in the master-servant, slave-like relationship over another man. The screenwriter of *The Musketeer* artfully accomplishes this goal while staying true to the movie's overall themes and not having to reduce Planchet to a tool for excessive comedy in a movie already full of good humorous dialogue.

Conclusion

When the Cardinal's guards first arrive to challenge the Musketeers, they tell D'Artagnan he may simply walk away before the swordfighting begins. "That's true," replied D'Artagnan; "I have not the uniform, but I have the spirit. My heart is



Figure 24: 1973's *Rochefort*

that of a Musketeer; I feel it, monsieur, and that impels me on" (Dumas B&N 50). This quote, from the novel and closely paraphrased in the 1993 movie adaptation, reminds me how bold the main character of Dumas' novel truly was. These movies portray characters and the events of Dumas' classic novel differently, but really only because of the cultural changes and shifts in audience expectations. In analyzing this thesis, I took the approach of learning as suggested by Edward O. Wilson, an internationally recognized intellectual, in his book *Consilience*. In order to fully understand the context of our studies, Wilson suggests pulling from all areas of education, history, the sciences, and our world experiences.

My study reveals how our society's changing views over time, our differing cultural norms mixed with ethnocentric expectations at the box office, affected the production of movie adaptations. In the 1920s, the audience was not concerned with intense special effects the way our modern-day viewers are with this type of action and suspense movie. The 1921 movie carried a comic, entertaining tone for a time when escapism was greatly needed in our country. In the 1933 version, the director expressed respect for detective heroes who worked together as a team. The characters defied their superiors because no one in the political scene could be trusted. The 1970s brought the freedom of the "hippy era" and a looser sexual code, allowing a much truer rendition of *The Three Musketeers* than the theater had ever seen before. Culturally, the audiences of the day could handle a hero who slept around with several women while proclaiming love to love them. The young farm boy innocently found himself swept up in a world bigger than himself, causing defiance to authority to bring order into his adult life. In the 1990s, the audience needed a plot free of all the cultural taboos of Dumas' classic. The Cardinal had to be a power-hungry insane fool in order for our early 1990s audience to more easily accept him as the master villain. Rochefort transformed to give D'Artagnan the excuse of honorable vengeance for his crusades. Plenty of comedy and fight sequences paced the movie well. The 2001 audience received martial arts choreography and a one-man heroic tale that sacrificed many of Dumas' plot devices while interestingly reinventing some of the classic themes.

By knowing our audience, we can better gauge the success of different story elements and cultural acceptance of reflections of past societies in our storytelling. While Dumas' novel exists as a classic, we now understand that even classics that are widely accepted and highly acclaimed must be altered in order to satisfy target audiences over time. Movie-going audiences still want what Dumas' original tale offered: intrigue, action, love, suspense, comedy, politics, strong characters, and believable fantasy fiction, they just want to see the themes portrayed in light of their own norms and accepted codes of conduct.

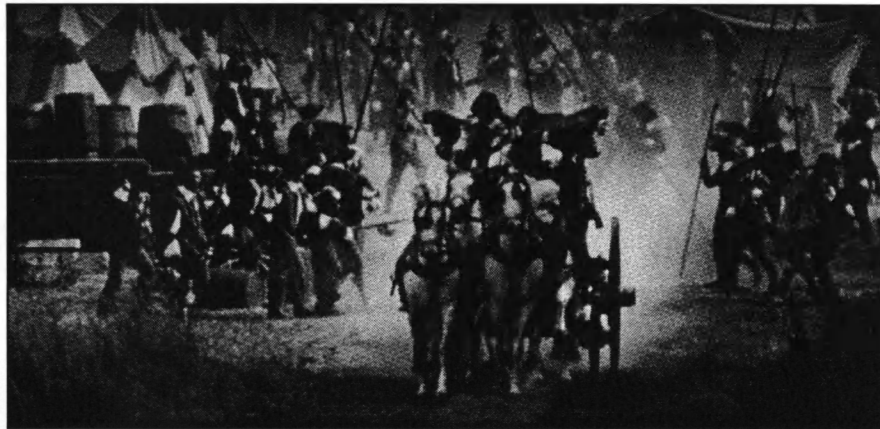


Figure 25: Action scene from the 1993 version

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*These editions do not credit translators for the text.