

**The Notion of Good and Evil as Two Sides of a  
Coin: Dantes' Behavioral Transformation in  
Alexandre Dumas' Novel "The Count of Monte  
Cristo**

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The present paper explores the character's Behavioral transformation in Alexandre Dumas' novel "The Count of Monte Cristo". This character is the hero of the novel and his name is Dantes, namely in his novel "The count of monte cristo". he was a good character but because of his mistress and friends' betrayal and send him to jail, Dantes' character developed and has transformed to a different person who seeks revenge. Good and evil coexist in our lives and this study is mainly emphasized on all circumstances which influenced the fables and the hero's behaviour, such as unexpected life events, deeds, psychical twists, victories and defeats..This paper shows how Dantes has changed from a good character to an evil one, just to seek his revenge and to get satisfied from his enemies. Humans are universally concerned with good and evil, although one person's "evil" can be another person's "good." This paper sheds light on the behavioral transformation of the hero in order to seek justice and revenge. Moreover, two different faces in one character can be seen in this novel, and this shows how humans are changeable and have two personalities in their life.

**Keywords:** Behaviors, change, Dantes, Good and Evil, personality, Transformation.

## 1. Introduction

Alexander Dumas is the writer of the novel "The Count Monte Cristo". He is also famous for his novel "The Three Musketeers". Dumas was born in 1802 and his father worked as an adventurer and soldier. In 1806 his father died and left him alone. at that time Dumas was four years old only and his family went through a major financial problem that time and his formal education was not so good and meager, and most of his education was at the hands of the priest.in his novel "The Count of Monte Cristo", the hero's name is Dantes, his main purpose is 'to pursue revenge and inflict judgment on the enemies. dantes shows that he is not culpable as mentioned in the novel. He admits to people that he was not evil and makes his opponents confess their faults. Also implicitly, Dantes regains his image as an honest guy through his disguise. Disguising is not only helped dantes to punish his opponents, but he also has a certain level of compassion, like helping Mr. Morrel, his former manager, to get rid of financial ruin and get Bertuccio out of jail. Another reason for his revenge is also due to his rivals' devastation. Just as they did to him, he lets his opponents experience and suffers needlessly. Dantes seeks vengeance and justice. dantes claims that justice can only be done if he can get his revenge on his opponents who put him in jail. Therefore, these motives arose after the false accusation of Dantes, which led to a change in the heroic way of thinking of the hero and the transformations in his behaviors to achieve these goals to feel the compensation of loss and take revenge on his enemies, and it's clear for the readers the impact of obstacles and conflicts on the hero in this novel, which led to a fundamental shift in the personality from good to think about revenge and evil.

## 3. Evil deeds are not born, they're made

Philosophers divided evil into different types: moral evil and the reprehensible deeds of vices, philosophical evil, which is the decrease of everything from its completeness, cognitive evil which is ignorance, .Plato believes that good is the supreme value to which all virtuous values belong, as he believes that good is a nature of those who are accustomed to it, and evil is permissible for those who want it. While his disciple Aristotle disagreed with him, he sees goodness as something divine and evil as demonic in terms of origin. Unlike Socrates, who believed that man commits evil because of ignorance, Aristotle believes that man may commit evil on purpose. Because the path of evil is as easy as demolition, although it is dark, and the path of good is as difficult as building, albeit bright. Where some studies explain that man is born as a white paper and acquires qualities from his society, whether the qualities of good or evil

Good and evil. We frequently utter words in the same voice. That is The word "and" should be joined by the two abstract nouns in cohesion; instead, It's dragging out their extraordinary opposition. They're more than words, they Come in as a mutual annihilating force. To think about "good and evil" means, firstly, to feel the power of the incomprehensible. Dualism, For this reason, the poet William Blake of the 18th century Presented good and evil as a "fearful symmetry." (Mitrano, 2020)

People are evil because they're being inhumanely led by their experiences with the community. In the early years, men managed to live by themselves and met the standards of their natural environment; however, men and women began to live alongside their kids and these families started to live together with other families. Resentment and jealousy were brought on in living with other people and communities when the neighbors naturally compared their talents and skills. Such elements create confrontation, violence, and mistrust. (Addis, n.d.)

Schmookler (1989) states, "We embrace and strive to embody what is good, not what is evil. Yet circumstance can turn us toward the dark side"(p.17). Literature has responded to this inconceivable dualism by conveying it as a question worthy of investigation. In the Bible, language has played a significant role in simplifying the frightening symmetry of stories, pictures, and parables that shield us from a shattering confrontation and, indirectly, remind us of the importance of good and evil in human life. Good and evil have been the favorite theme of literary classics. Through posing questions without simple responses, these texts help us face the unfathomable nature of dualism.

On the other hand, Evil can be seen as a result of a character's conflict. Conflict indicates opposition; it applies to confrontation and conflict. This involves two opposing forces; not more so because the receptor's emotional flux is drawn with one, and the others are all eager to help or delay this. In literature, the word conflict typically is more about the plot. Conflict events are the plot. Tennyson (1967) notes that the plot is used to characterize an action plan in the literature in a story (pp.13-14).

Popenoe (1995) also argues that conflict is a standard thing of humanity and a significant cause of social progress. This is founded on the notion that some groups of the society may be in confrontation with each other apart from being a unified group. Conflict exists as culture remains in a delicate balance. Social order is derived from the domination of some parts of society rather than natural balance among them. (p.13)

## 4. The Discussion of the Study

### 4.1. Dantes' behavioral transformation in "The Count of Monte Cristo"

Abrams (1993) states, "characters are the persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the readers as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say-the dialogue and by what they do-the action"(p.23).

Abrams notes simply that in literature, such as dramas or short stories, characters are usually individuals with moral values, characteristics, and feelings expressed by the writer. Naturally, these values are expressed in their dialog and actions in the story.

Holman (1986) offers the same character opinion in his book A Literature Handbook. He says, "Character is a short descriptive sketch of a person that is characteristic of a certain value. A person is described not as an individualized personality, but as an example of a vice or virtue or type, such as a busybody, a glutton, a fop, a bumpkin, a clumsy old man, a happy maid"(p.81).

Gill (1995) outlines the essential differentiation that needs to be made between character and characterization, "Character is an individual in a literary text, while characterization is the manner in which an individual is formed. A character is somebody in a literary text who has some kind of identity ..., behavior, titles and, likely, ideas going in the head (p. 127). There is no explanation why such 'character' literary creations are made, but as it has become common, it is prudent to keep the tradition.

In addition, Adair (2006) defines the motivation theory, "A man, woman or child is motivated when he or she wants to do something. Motivation covers all the reasons which cause a person to act, including negative ones like fear along with the more positive motives, such as money, promotion or recognition" (p.89). Adair finds out that motivation is a fundamental incentive for someone to do or behave positively or negatively.

In addition, Huffman et al (2000) note a significant aspect that motivation belongs to certain elements within a person (such as interests, desires and needs) that trigger, sustain and guide actions towards a goal. We also note that Motivation is related strongly to feelings that is regarded by psychological expectation, thought and belief, subjective judgment, and physical expression as an adequately acceptable response. Motivation, activates and directs action, feelings, experience and reaction (p. 392).

Similarly, Moskowitz (1995) states that "man is above all a driven or rational person. Most of his behavior can be seen as a constant quest to satisfy a wide range of biologically focused and learned motives. But the goals or motivations of motivated action are always difficult or impossible to achieve"(p.306). Conflict frustration prevents or impedes the achievement of the goal. Conflict basically refers to the continued motivation of all human experience without accomplishment, which is a significant and recurring feature.

Dantes' purpose is 'to do vengeance and to inflict judgment on his enemies.' The truth of his guiltless is the justice he achieves. He's evidence he's not guilty as an accused. He also said "Human justice is sadly lacking in consolation; it can only shed blood in exchange for blood" (Dumas, 1997, p. 115). These lines demonstrate how deep Dantes' revenge is. He conducts his true justice, which indicates that blood turns to flesh. When individuals do something bad that brings so much suffering, they have to pay for what they

have done. briefly, Dantes' incentive to take vengeance is to find justice. The truth in his case is the justice he wants. He intends his opponents to admit and announce that he is honest. The pain of defeat is felt by each of its enemies You lose the ones you love, and you lose dignity. Most of his rivals died in his revenge as well. He's a very kind guy. He is commonly regarded as an uncompromising and good person in a positive way. The way he reacts to people clearly mirrors his good nature. It is reflected in his good manner. Mr. Morrel came to see him when the ship arrived. Dantes humbly told the owner of the ship about their misery. Captain Leclere 's death was humbly described by Dantes. Another thing was they stopped on Alba Isle. One of the evidence of Dantes' good behavior is the following discussion. The style of Morrel's name pronunciation clearly indicates his humble and respectful way:

"A great misfortune, Monsieur Morrel!" replied the young man. "We lost our brave Captain Leclere off Civitavecchia....."

"It arrived safely, Monsieur Morrel, and I think you'll be satisfied on that score, but poor Captain Leclere....."(Dumas,1997, p. 1)

Murphy indicates another way of understanding the characters and this is by the view of other characters. In the commentaries of others, the reflection of Dantes' good character can be seen. Monsieur Morrel specifically says that in every way Dantes is a wonderful guy, "Good, good, Dantes! I see you're a fine man in every way" (Dumas,1997, p. 6). This is what Morrel told Dantes honestly after he got a straightforward answer, from him.

The good, manner and goodness of Dantes is clear by his kindness and love for his father. His good treatment of his father might be seen as an aspect of duty and responsibility that Dantes should do before everything. It is a normal outcome that Dantes must be careful and make a good life conditions to his dad. Dantes, just lives with his family, and he has an immense responsibility, to make his dad extremely proud of him . Dantes also gives a huge sum of money to his father. Dantes claims he can't borrow money any more.. Dantes' duty to support his father can be represented in the quote below:

"Yes, I'm here now, with a good future before me and a little money already. Here, father, take this and send for some things right away." He emptied the content of his pockets onto the table: a dozen pieces of gold, five or six five-French coins and some small change. The old man's face brightened. "Whose is that?" he asked. "It's mineyours-ours. Take it and buy provisions. And don't worry: tomorrow there will be more.... (p. 7)

These are all the descriptions of the characterization of Dantes. Dantes doesn't hate anyone. He values everybody, not just the people he likes, but also his employer and his friends who are trying to deceive him. Despite of this strong nature, Dantes is considered to be a man of good fortune.

After the betrayal of his friends and his mistress, Dantes has a new turning point in his life. He is in jail without any reason and because of his kindness and fortune they put him in jail and trap him unjustly. One of the most important variables of this novel is the fundamental and intellectual transformation of the hero Dantes, who was betrayed by his friends and lovers, this event pushed him to turn into a different character with new dimensions and a retaliatory vision that does not exist previously in the old character, This is what we see in the novel and through the exposure of the hero to treachery and imprisonment unjustly where these things led to the creation of a new person thinking negatively and looking for revenge and justice and retribution from those who accounted for his tragic life and the hell in which he lives. During his time in prison, Dantes began to plan to get revenge and retribution and became a different person and his character became an angry person who could not manage anything, in addition to many negative things, from here we find that the loyal and noble person who could not hurt or kill someone has become a different person and changed from a person who loves goodness and tranquility to an angry and evil person, hungry for revenge and murder. The difficulties and conflicts that a person is engaged in have a great impact on the course of his life and the building of his ideas and personality, where the good person can become himself evil and killer and from here we find that each person has two faces and the other face can appear whether he is exposed to pressure or injustice or crime. So after all of these circumstances and conflicts we will see another and a different character that has new goals and strategies that had been planned before when he was in the jail. Dantes now goes straightly to achieve his hope by making his friends and mistress life and appreciate the same harsh and painful feelings that he had because of them. As we mentioned above that Dantes was a good and kind person, now we will see a shift and transition of his innocent character and change to be cruel and an avenger. The novel simply explains Dantes' lack of understanding of the reason for his capture. Unpredictably, Dantes was arrested by the police as he attended his wedding. This case totally surprises

Dantes and a lot of people who attend the party. surely, Mercedes and Dantes' father are shocked, too. Soon Dantes is taken to the Public Prosecutor's Office:

"Edmond Dantes, you are under arrest."

"Under arrest!", Cried Dantes, turning pale. "But why?"(p. 16).

This quotation indicates the incident when Dantes was captured .in the quotation, it shows that Dantes arrested because of a false letter sent by his close friends Ferenand, Danglar, and Caderousse . They make these claims in a false document. The document states clearly that Edmond Dantes is one of the Bonapartist's traitors. A letter is written to the Office of the Public Prosecutor. Dantes was arrested and sent to prison immediately. While he was in During prison, both positively and negatively affects Dantes' behaviour. Dantes is displayed differently with some adjustments. Dantes transforms negatively into a bad man. He has unmanaged emotions. but the situation he faced now caused his extreme rage. Since the moment he was incarcerated, his unreasonable feeling can be recognized.As mentioned above, during his wedding party , Dantes was arrested, and his joy abruptly disintegrated. He told Mercedes at that time that all was fine, and he will back early. Nevertheless, the unforeseen occurrence has occurred. He was taken to jail and never returns to Mercedes. He's never back to his happiness, profession and reputation. Dantes lost his life, future and Mercedes. Dantes' excessive agitation is also triggered by Abbe Faria, his prison friend, fixes the dilemma he's having. Abbe Faria is finding the answer to his misery. He points out his enemies behind all his suffering and why they're making the wrong allegation. Faria marvelously sees a connection between his performance and the men who plotted the allegation. Faria feels that his presence must be of interest to other people. The following quote is the mechanism that Farria eventually addressed the Dantes issue. Faria was quiet, lost in thought. He states after a while, "There is a maxim of jurisprudence which says, if you wish to discover the guilty person, first find out to whom the crime might be useful" (Dumas, 1997, p. 45). Of course, Faria is supportive, on contrary, she inevitably stirs up Dantes' anger on certain men. Shortly Dantes is filled with rage and hate. Most seriously, his mind and heart are still packed with revenge. Such actions are not part of his character because he used to be a decent guy, cool and compassionate, but now Dantes is totally affected by the situation and the dilemma he faces. This quote explains how the hero Dantes gets upset as he hears explanation of Faria :

"He uttered a cry and reeled like a drunken man for a moment, then he rushed into the passage leading back to his own cell, crying out as he left...", Faria, looked at him steadfastly, and said, "I regret having helped you clarify your past and having told you what I did. Because I've instilled in your heart a feeling that wasn't there before vengeance"(p.48). The lack of faith and self-confidence is another negative behavior in Dantes. In jail, he is represented as a weak man who lost trust and faith rapidly. He doesn't have high experience to spend his destiny in prison. Sleepless nights went to a small dirty prison that put him in doubt about his future. Every hour of the night he screams and grumbles. He also beats himself on the wall. He plans to try to put an end to his life by suicide. Of course, this action is another odd thing that Dantes used to do. Dantes used to be a powerful person, both physically and psychologically. He used to be humble and compassionate to confront any kind of circumstance, but being in prison quickly put an end to his life. The quote below describes his disappointment that he decides to commit suicide:

Finally his pride collapsed and he began to pray, not yet to God, but to men... He roared blasphemies which made his jailer recoil in horror, and dashed himself furiously against the wall of his prison....The thought that death brings release from suffering led him to the idea of suicide... From that day onward, twice a day, he threw his food out the small barred window... (pp.34-35).

As stated earlier, that life in prison does not only have a negative influence on Dantes, but also a positive effect. Dantes must also be happy of certain positive sides. He . is seen as a nice man in jail , He soon has become a friend with Abbe . Abbe is a priest from Italy who has also been jailed for no clear purpose. Their meeting is obviously involuntary. Dantes was sad to chat in his jail , then he heard a scraping sound across the walls. The tone became more and more noisy. He thought somebody is attempting to get out of jail. Then Dantes tried to figure out the source of the noise. He found Abbe Faria, the guy who scraped the wall at last:

"He heard a regular scratching sound which might be coming from a large claw..."(pp. 35-36).

A moment later, Dantes heard the sound of a mass of stones...Then he saw a head emerge through his hole, and soon a man had climbed up out of it and into his cell (p. 40).

The previous speech clarifies an indication the meeting of Dantes and Faria is going to occur in the right place. The perfect moment and the right place. Dantes stayed alone in a single cell until their encounter. He nearly tried to commit suicide there, but it seemed that Faria was giving him a new chance of living more. He appeared to have recovered his self-confidence and slowly reclaimed his strength and rehabilitated his career. The presence of Faria encouraged him to dream positively about the future. Another good shift from Dantes is that he's getting smarter than he did. before that. He 's described as a quick-learning guy. He knows a lot of things easily from Faria. He has learned a lot of knowledge and science, including languages, such as maths and poetry. He speaks and learns Italian, Greek, Spanish, French and German languages. Faria motivates Dantes with his intellectual ability, which made him interested in learning more and more. The next lines shows the knowledge and languages which Abbe Faria taught him in jail:

He already knew Italian and a little modern Greek... within six months he was beginning to speak Spanish, English and German... Dantes had a prodigious memory and a quick, keen intelligence. His mathematical turn of mind gave him a facility for all kinds of calculation, while the poetic strain which in every sailor breathed life into demonstrations reduced to numbers and lines"(p. 49).

The previous quote specifically identifies Dantes as a wise man. He has the source of the intellect that supports him in his study. He, has no trouble to learn, something different, so that he can acquire such skills and languages within two years as he said, "It would not take more than two years to teach you all that" (p. 49). This comment is made by Abbe , who is certain that that Dantes is able to gain knowledge.

Soon, this comment proves that Dantes actually has improved negatively and positively. Living in prison is completely affected by his bad temper, that dantes didn't control his emotions. He lacks his faith in god and confidence, but, luckily, he doesn't. Dantes' changes take place not only during his incarceration, but also after his incarceration. Dantes' life is constantly changing both the physical and the behavior. Physically, Dantes is growing old. He's getting low. Moreover, he looks like a man without a soul of liveliness, also, his appearance is not easy to identify. 14 years of prison life appears to have loosened his weight and healthy attitude. He entered prison when he was 19 years old, but after that escaped at the age 33. The following quote indicates the appearance of dantes at the time after he escaped:

He was now thirty-three years old, as we have said, and his fourteen years of prison had greatly altered his face. All that was now changed. His oval face had lengthened; his smiling lips had taken on the firm lines of resolution; his eyebrows had become arched beneath a single thoughtful wrinkle; his eyes wore a look of deep sadness, with occasional flashes of dark hatred; his skin, which had been away from the sunlight for so long, had grown pale. Furthermore, although he was naturally tall, he had acquired that stocky vigor of a body which constantly concentrates its strength within itself (p. 71).

surely, the behavior of Dantes is also evolving. Even though he has a great character and perfect personality, but these characteristics are still part of his disguise that is effective in seeking revenge. In fact, his compassion displayed to those who have caused his suffering is one of the ways in which he can fulfill his greatest inspiration for vengeance.

### 5. Conclusion

Alexander Dumas' "The Count of Monte Cristo" is an impressive novel, not because of its story, but because of its plot. It's a very typical representation of love and the deception of a friend who ruins real love and turns it into vengeance. That helps the novel rit the essence of humanity. When Dantes was a good character, he was portrayed as a character with a perfect and proper attitude at the age of nineteen. Dantes is often described as a good person with a kind heart. He has a good manner and appreciation that is shown to everyone. And after the betrayal of his mistress and friends and send him to jail, Dantes transformed into a new person who only has one goal which is revenge, Dantes' behavior is a little different. In fact, he is a good person, but the situation in which he lives and stays in jail for days and nights turns him into a poorly-tempered person. He's getting annoyed, losing trust and hope quickly. In addition to these negative attitudes, during his incarceration, Dantes made positive milestones. His incitement to vengeance is to seek justice. The truth of his guiltlessness is the justice he desires. He needs his rivals to admit their mistakes directly. The transformation of the hero's character of this novel, Dantes, from a good character to a new character looking for revenge and justice and making those who sent him to prison live the same suffering and grief, may bring to us the idea that says that a person is born like a white paper and the society and the environment in which he lives are the main influencers of character building Including good and evil in it, as well as injustice, conflicts and hatred may push the character to transform into another different person, and this is what we could find in the novel.

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