

VERSATILITY IN ALEXANDRE DUMAS' NOVEL *THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO*

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to reveal the versatility of the protagonist and to understand more about the implementation of versatility in daily life to obtain an ease in every path. The whole analysis is conducted by means of descriptive qualitative method, the one commonly used to uncover social phenomena and in this case to uncover how the protagonist revenge those who have ruined his life using his versatility. The data are texts from the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas tending to issues of versatility. The outcomes of the study show the following conclusions. There are three versatilities of the protagonist found in the novel, namely diplomacy, congeniality, and camouflage. Edmond Dantes communicates and creates connections through diplomacy. The forms of diplomacy he does are dialogue, negotiation, and lobbying. Congeniality traits that appear in Edmond Dantes are humility, empathy, belief in action, using words wisely, and patience. To manipulate his enemies, Edmond Dantes performs a variety of camouflage. The camouflage characteristics of Edmond Dantes are arrogance and smartness.

Keywords: camouflage; congeniality; diplomacy; versatility

1. Introduction

Life is an unpredictable journey, marked by twists and turns that often catch us off guard. One universal truth that resonates across cultures and generations is the inevitability of difficulties. Challenges, whether big or small, have an uncanny ability to materialize unexpectedly, disrupting the equilibrium of our daily lives. Understanding and accepting the notion that difficulty may come anytime is an essential aspect of navigating the complexities of the human experience.

One of the fundamental reasons why difficulty is an omnipresent aspect of life lies in its intrinsic nature. Life is inherently dynamic, subject to an ever-changing array of circumstances, events, and interactions. The unforeseen challenges that arise can manifest in various forms – personal setbacks, professional hurdles, health issues, or broader societal crises. In recognizing the capricious nature of existence, individuals can better prepare themselves mentally and emotionally to confront the unexpected. However when destiny speaks, no one could reply as seen in the famous novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

The Count of Monte Cristo is a classic novel written by Alexandre Dumas. First serialized between 1844 and 1846, the novel has captivated readers for its intricate plot, rich character development, and exploration of themes such as justice, revenge, and redemption. The story follows Edmond Dantès, a young sailor falsely accused of treason and imprisoned in the Château d'If. After escaping from captivity and discovering a hidden treasure on the Isle of Monte Cristo, Dantès transforms into the mysterious and wealthy Count of Monte Cristo. Driven by a desire for vengeance against those who wronged him, he orchestrates elaborate schemes to expose the betrayal he endured. As the narrative unfolds, the novel delves into the complexities of morality and the consequences of unchecked revenge. "The Count of Monte Cristo" is celebrated for its intricate plotting, memorable characters, and exploration of timeless themes, making it a masterpiece of adventure and intrigue in literature.

It will deeply be regretted when the important points and the knowledge in this novel are to be let abandoned and when it is taught and disseminated then this story would surely be very useful for most people, and for those reasons, the versatility of the protagonist in Alexandre Dumas' Novel *The Count Of Monte Cristo* should be uplifted to the surface. There are probably many more important lessons available here in the novel for different points of view and purposes. We have to take the novel, enjoy the story, understand each part and new ideas will emerge unexpectedly. *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas is like a glass of magic water, no matter how much we take, the water will always be there for us to drink again.

The important points of discussion in order to focus on the study are:

- a. The diplomatic appearance of Edmond Dantes before, and after the indictment.
- b. The congeniality then allows him to get along with different kinds of people, one of whom is Abbe Faria because of whom Dantes miraculously gains his freedom.
- c. The camouflages then invisibly held to exact the revenge on the people who have betrayed him.

Pressures and obstacles come repeatedly into Dantes' life, but the talent he gets for diplomacy, camouflage and congeniality has become the driving force behind his success. Previously he only has ordinary capabilities, but over time and compulsion, he is finally able to develop them through the lessons he learns from Abbe Faria during his imprisonment. It is not an easy task to fulfill, on the other hand, the punishment for those who betray must be done. In this story, it is clearly illustrated that 'Without a deep effort any plan will not work'.

The purpose in choosing the title is to remind that every individual should be sensible of the things which may cause psychological interference in life. Realizing the symptoms and their negative impacts, one should be able to handle and overtake the problem, sometimes when any of these psychological disorders are ignored, it may lead to serious problems. This study is conducted with the use of a qualitative method proposed by Taylor and Bogdan theory (1975) and the psychology of literature is used here as an approach. The goal of this research is to describe the phenomenon and its characteristics, what is, rather than how or why something has happened. It involves the description, analysis, interpretation of the present nature, and composition or processes of phenomena. The focus is on prevailing conditions, or how a person, behaves and functions in life. It often connects types of fractions or divergence.

2. Literature Review

The psychology of literature delves into the intricate relationship between the human mind and literary works, exploring how individuals perceive, interpret, and emotionally respond to written or verbal expressions of ideas. This interdisciplinary field draws on principles from psychology, literature, and cognitive science to unravel the cognitive processes underlying reading and literary analysis. Cognitive psychologists investigate how readers construct mental images, empathize with characters, and engage in perspective-taking while immersed in a narrative (Newman & Newman, 2013). Moreover, the psychology of literature considers the emotional impact of literature, examining how stories can evoke empathy, joy, sadness, or even fear, and how these emotional responses contribute to a deeper understanding of the human experience. Additionally, it explores the influence of cultural and social factors on literary preferences, shedding light on why certain themes resonate more strongly with particular individuals or communities. Ultimately, the psychology of literature provides insights into the intricate interplay between the written word and the complexities of the human psyche.

The psychology of literature goes beyond surface-level analyses and delves into the intricacies of how language and narrative affect the human mind. It explores the cognitive processes involved in comprehension, memory, and imagination during the act of reading. Psychologists interested in this field examine how readers create mental models of fictional worlds, characters, and events, and how these mental simulations contribute to a richer understanding of the narrative (Wellek and Warren, 2004).

Furthermore, the emotional dimensions of literature are a focal point in the psychology of literature. Researchers investigate how literary works evoke and modulate emotions, exploring the mechanisms by which readers empathize with characters, experience catharsis, or develop a sense of connection with the narrative. The exploration of these emotional responses provides valuable insights into the potential therapeutic effects of literature, as well as its role in fostering empathy and emotional intelligence (Newman, & Newman, 2013).

The psychology of literature also takes into account the cultural and societal context in which literary works are produced and consumed. It investigates how cultural norms, values, and historical experiences shape readers' interpretations and preferences. This perspective considers the impact of diverse cultural backgrounds on the reception and appreciation of literature, highlighting the dynamic interplay between individual psychological processes and broader sociocultural influences.

Additionally, the field explores the concept of literary aesthetics, examining why certain writing styles, metaphors, and narrative structures appeal to readers on an aesthetic level. This involves studying the neurobiological underpinnings of aesthetic experiences during literary engagement, shedding light on the neural mechanisms that contribute to the pleasure and engagement derived from well-crafted language and storytelling (Wortman & Loftus & Mary, 2019).

The psychology of literature is a multifaceted discipline that investigates the cognitive, emotional, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the complex interrelationship between literature and the human psyche. By examining these intricacies, scholars in this field aim to unravel the profound ways in which literature shapes and is shaped by the intricacies of the human mind.

By looking at the descriptions on psychology of literature that is used as an approach in this research, then there are three points of discussion to be analyzed under

on the concept or theory of versatility. In this study versatility is then sub-grouped into diplomacy, congeniality and camouflage (Guerin and Norby, 2020).

2.1 Versatility

Every human being must have a sense of unity, versatility skills, ability to make connections, level of intelligence, creativity, inherent curiosity, and awareness of individuality. Ahmed (2018: 96) in his book *The Polymath: Unlocking the Power of Human Versatility*, mentions that there are six components needed by humans to improve their abilities. These components are: individuality – understanding oneself; curiosity – continuous, boundless inquiry; intelligence – nurturing, exercising and optimizing various abilities; versatility – moving seamlessly between different spheres of knowledge and experience; creativity – connecting and synthesizing seemingly disparate fields for a creative outcome; unity – unifying various strands of knowledge for greater clarity and vision of the whole.

Versatility comes from the Latin word *versatilis* which means turning, revolving, moving, and capable of turning to varied subjects or tasks. According to Simpson (2017) versatility is a noun from the word *versatile*, which means having many different skills or uses. Versatility can also be referred to as the ability to anticipate and adapt to change. This means that people who have versatility can do many things competently. Simply, this ability is used to move smoothly between different fields or situations.

Versatility can also be referred to as multiple intelligences and people who have versatility traits can be referred to as polymaths, someone who has a lot of knowledge and diverse learning. Gardner (2006) states that human intelligence is divided into several categories namely logical-mathematical intelligence, linguistic intelligence (verbal), spatial intelligence (visual), musical intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence (physical), naturalist intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intelligence existential.

2.1.1 Diplomacy

Diplomacy, at its essence, is the art and practice of conducting negotiations and managing international relations with finesse, tact, and strategic skill. It involves the effective communication and negotiation between representatives of different nations to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and advance mutual interests (Briggs, 2003). Diplomats, often acting as conduits between governments, navigate complex geopolitical landscapes, employing a combination of interpersonal skills, cultural awareness, and political acumen. The objective of diplomacy extends beyond the mere avoidance of conflict, encompassing the pursuit of common ground, the establishment of alliances, and the negotiation of agreements that contribute to global stability. Successful diplomacy requires the ability to balance assertiveness with flexibility, recognizing the nuances of diverse perspectives, and finding diplomatic solutions that accommodate the interests of all parties involved. In an interconnected world, diplomacy plays a pivotal role in fostering cooperation, building bridges between nations, and addressing the challenges that transcend borders (Shoelhi, 2011).

2.1.2 Congeniality

Congeniality refers to the quality of being pleasant, agreeable, and easy to get along with, whether in personal interactions or within a broader social context. It

encompasses a blend of friendliness, warmth, and affability that fosters positive relationships and interactions. A congenial person is often characterized by a genuine openness, approachability, and a willingness to connect with others in a harmonious manner. This trait extends beyond mere politeness, encapsulating an authentic spirit of cooperation and an ability to create a welcoming atmosphere. In various settings, such as workplaces, social gatherings, or community interactions, congeniality contributes to the creation of a positive and collaborative environment, enhancing social cohesion and mutual understanding among individuals. The term embodies the idea that individuals who exhibit congeniality not only make interactions more pleasant but also contribute to the establishment of a supportive and amicable social fabric (Kabir, 2020).

2.1.3 Camouflage

Diplomacy is a sophisticated and nuanced practice that plays a pivotal role in shaping international relations. It involves the artful negotiation and management of interactions between nations to foster understanding, maintain peace, and advance shared interests. Diplomats, as skilled representatives, navigate a complex web of cultural, political, and economic considerations (Elkan, 2013). They employ keen interpersonal abilities to build relationships, practicing the delicate balance of assertiveness and tact in their engagements. The scope of diplomacy extends beyond crisis resolution, encompassing ongoing dialogue and the cultivation of alliances. Effective diplomats possess a deep understanding of global issues, and their work often involves mediating disputes, facilitating trade agreements, and addressing issues such as human rights and environmental concerns. The success of diplomatic efforts hinges on the ability to comprehend diverse perspectives, anticipate potential challenges, and craft solutions that accommodate the varied interests of the involved parties. In an era marked by interconnectedness, diplomacy stands as a key instrument for fostering cooperation, mitigating conflicts, and promoting a more stable and collaborative international order.

3. Research Method

Research design is one of the important elements in conducting research. Research design aims to get answers to research problems. Creswell (2009: 3) states that research design is plans and the procedures for research to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. The qualitative methods provide a way to differentiate, examine, compare, and interpret data. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1975), the definition of qualitative research refers to the broadest sense of the research that produces descriptive data, through written or spoken texts and observable behavior.

The data are in the forms texts and dialogues tending to the concerns of versatility taken from the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas as the data source. Then some other respective references are used as the secondary sources of data to support the focus of the study. Some steps are conducted in collecting the data, such as in collecting data, the researcher applied several steps as follows: reading the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* for several times to get a full understanding, identifying the data by highlighting and note-taking, taking some texts or quotations related to versatility and other problem formulations, classifying the data into categories based on the formulations of the problem in this research i.e versatility, diplomacy, congeniality, and camouflage. For the analysis, all the data already obtained are then classified based on the needs of the study focus and then given descriptions after going through data reduction, data display and conclusion.

4. Discussions

Edmond Dantès, the protagonist of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, embarks on a transformative journey that unfolds against the backdrop of betrayal, imprisonment, and revenge. Initially portrayed as a young and virtuous sailor, Dantès's life takes a dark turn when he is falsely accused of treason by individuals he considered friends. His unjust imprisonment in the Château d'If becomes the crucible for a profound metamorphosis. During his 14-year solitary confinement, Dantès discovers a hidden treasure on the Isle of Monte Cristo, an unexpected twist that shapes his destiny. Upon escaping, he assumes the persona of the Count of Monte Cristo, an enigmatic and wealthy figure driven by a relentless desire for retribution against those who orchestrated his downfall. The Count's character is marked by a complex interplay of motivations, as his journey evolves beyond mere vengeance to encompass moral reflection and questions of justice. Proficient in disguise, the Count navigates high society, orchestrating intricate plans that impact the lives of those around him. As the narrative unfolds, Dantès grapples with the consequences of his actions, revealing a depth of intellectual and emotional complexity. The Count of Monte Cristo serves not only as an agent of revenge but also as a catalyst for redemption and transformation in the lives of those he encounters. Ultimately, his story explores themes of forgiveness, mercy, and the intricate interplay between justice and personal morality (Sitompul, 2019).

Finally, with all his versatility, Edmond Dantes as The Count of Monte Cristo succeeds in his life and manages to avenge his enemies. Dantes proves that, no matter how bitter life is, there is always a way back and adversity will not hinder success as long as we have a will.

4.1 Diplomacy

Diplomacy is an activity or skill that aims to create agreement in terms of policies or interests. Diplomacy is not only be done by people with special professions, but also by ordinary people who have interests. Dantes does various forms of diplomacy to achieve his goals. He views diplomacy as a useful medium for gathering information and deceiving his enemies. The forms of diplomacy carried out by Dantes can be seen from the quotations below.

"Was he not a friend then?" asked the abbé. "Can a man be a friend to him whose wife he covets? Dantès was so large-hearted that he called them all his friends. Poor Edmond!" "Do know in what way Fernand wronged Dantès?" "No one better than I." "Will you not tell me?" "What good would it do?" "Then and faithless friends, a reward intended for faithful friendship?" "You are right," said Caderousse. "Besides, what would poor Edmond's legacy be to them now? No more than a drop of water in the mighty ocean!" (Dumas, 2003: 122).

The quotations above show Dantes' diplomacy through dialogue. Diplomacy is illustrated through a conversation between Dantes and Caderousse, who disguises himself as an Abee named Padri Busoni. One of the purposes of dialogue is to share and exchange ideas. In dialogue, the parties involved convey information, data, facts, thoughts, ideas, and opinions to each other. This is illustrated from the quotations

above. Dantes tries to disguise himself to dig up information from one of his enemies, Caderousse. On page 121, Busoni says that he will give Dantes' inheritance, a large gem that will be divided among his three friends, namely Dangarls, Fernand, and Caderousse. With his shrewd dialogue and because of Caderousse's greed, Dantes manages to get Caderousse to tell the real secret; the secret of his slander and arrest, the death of his father, and the betrayal of Mercedes, his ex-fiancée.

4.2 Congeniality

Congeniality means a good personality, friendly and fun. A person who has an innate trait is called a congenital person. A congenital person is someone who has a pleasant nature and is easy to get along with. In connection with the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmond Dantes who is known as the Count of Monte Cristo has several traits of congeniality. These properties will be proven through the data below.

"Are you my master no longer? Have I ceased to be your slave?"

Monte Cristo smiled as he replied: "Haydee, we are in France, you know, so you are free!" "Free to do what?" asked the girl.

"Free to leave me !" "To leave you! Why should I leave you?"

"How do I know? We shall see people..." "I do not wish to see anyone." "Listen, Hydee, it may be that this seclusion, which is customary in the East, will be impossible in Paris. Continue to learn all you can of our Northern countries s you did at Rome, Florence, and Madrid; such knowledge will always stand you in good stead whether you continue to live here or return to the East."

(Dumas, 2003: 228).

The quotations above show the Count of Monte Cristo's humility towards his slave, Hydee. Hydee is a girl he buys in Constantinople. During her time with the Count of Monte Cristo, Hydee is always treated with kindness and equality. The data also illustrate that the Count of Monte Cristo frees Hydee to live independently. He also gives advice to Hydee that she must continue to learn all things from various countries so that she can become a person of integrity and independence. The Count of Monte Cristo's humility benefits himself and others. This trait also makes the people around him loyal and love him. This trait implies that, even though now the Count of Monte Cristo has great power and wealth, it does not make him indulge in all the pleasures to the point of exalting himself.

4.3 Camouflage

Camouflage is a defense or tactic used by a certain living thing, such as organism, to disguise their appearance, usually to blend in with their environment. Camouflage allows organisms to mask their identity so that their enemies cannot recognize them. Regarding the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Dantes masks his true identity to survive by camouflaging into multiple identities. He changes his name to the Count of Monte Cristo after he gains power and wealth, as Lord Wilmore, an English nobleman while helping Benedetto, as Abbe Busoni to gain the trust of those he wants to manipulate under religious pretexts and, as Sinbad the Sailor when helping his former boss, Monsieur Morrel from bankruptcy. Dantes performs various actions covering his identity and avenges his enemies. These actions are shown in the quotations below.

"Monsieur Beauchamp," interrupted this extraordinary man, "the Count of Monte Cristo is responsible only to the Count of Monte Cristo. Therefore not a word on this subject, if you please. I do please, Monsieur Beauchamp, and believe me, what I do is always well done." "Honest men are not to be paid with such coin, Count. You must give honorable guarantees." "I am a living guarantee, monsieur," replied the Count, unmoved, but with a threatening look in his eyes. "Both of us have blood in our veins that we are anxious to shed, and that is our mutual guarantee. Deliver this answer to the Viscount, and tell him that before ten o'clock tomorrow I shall have seen the color of his blood."

(Dumas, 2003: 402).

The excerpt depicts a conversation between the Count of Monte Cristo and Monsieur Beauchamp. In the preceding pages of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Albert, familiar with the Count's methods of retribution, challenges him to a duel. Beauchamp, perplexed by Albert's sudden shift in demeanor, queries the Count. His inquiry insinuates that the Count's actions have led to Albert's predicament as part of a vindictive scheme. However, the Count refutes this assertion, asserting his sole accountability and self-reliance. He maintains that he requires no assistance to safeguard his own life, embodying a steadfast assurance in his autonomy. The Count's demeanor underscores his willingness to assert dominance and uphold his honor in confronting adversaries.

5. Conclusion

After scrutinizing the protagonist's versatility in Alexandre Dumas' novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, several conclusions arise:

1. In his quest for survival and vengeance, Edmond Dantes assumes multiple identities: the Count of Monte Cristo, Sinbad the Sailor, Lord Wilmore, and Abee Busoni.
2. Edmond Dantes exhibits three notable aspects of versatility: diplomacy, congeniality, and camouflage.
3. Diplomacy serves as a primary mode of communication and connection for Edmond Dantes, manifesting through dialogue, negotiation, and lobbying.
4. Dantes' adept dialogue is exemplified in his guise as Abee Busoni, where his astute speech reveals the true secrets of Caderousse.
5. Negotiation skills come into play as the Count of Monte Cristo strikes deals with the Danglars, leveraging his prowess to secure victory and assert dominance.
6. Lobbying efforts directed towards Albert aim to infiltrate Parisian high society, positioning Dantes closer to his adversaries for eventual retribution.
7. Congenial traits exhibited by Edmond Dantes include humility, empathy, action-oriented belief, judicious speech, and patience.
8. Humility is demonstrated through the Count of Monte Cristo's equitable treatment of his slave, Hydee, reflecting a refusal to let power corrupt. Empathy is evident in Dantes' loyalty and compassion towards Abee Faria.
9. Belief in action is underscored by Dantes' relentless pursuit of escape from the Chateau d'If, showcasing determination and industriousness. His adept use of words

is illustrated in consoling Mercedes upon her son's departure. Patience is evident in Dantes' methodical approach, ultimately leading to triumph and wealth.

10. Employing various disguises, Edmond Dantes employs camouflage to manipulate his foes, characterized by arrogance, deception, and extravagance.
11. Dantes' arrogance surfaces in his interactions with Monsieur Beauchamp, serving as a tool to maintain his pride and subdue adversaries.
12. Demonstrating cunning in deceit, Dantes adeptly fabricates scenarios, such as posing as a castaway Italian sailor, showcasing his survival instincts. His lavish spending, notably on a temporary residence in Paris, illustrates a strategic move to infiltrate high society and exact revenge.

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