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经典世界文学名著丛书



基度山伯爵

THE COUNT OF  
MONTE CRISTO  
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

英语经典世界文学名著丛书

# 基督山伯爵

## THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

*Alexandre Dumas*

With an Introduction by David Coward

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING & RESEARCH PRESS  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

外语教学与研究出版社·牛津大学出版社

# (京)新登字 155 号

## 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

基度山伯爵 = THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO  
英文 / (法)大仲马 (Alexandre Dumas) 著。—北京:  
外语教学与研究出版社, 1994. 10  
(英语经典世界文学名著丛书)  
ISBN 7-5600-0903-4

I. 基… II. 大… III. ①长篇小说-法国-近代-  
英文 IV. I565.45

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (94)第 09166 号

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外语教学与研究出版社出版发行  
(北京西三环北路 19 号)

华利国际合营印刷有限公司印刷  
新华书店总店北京发行所经销

开本 736×960 1/32 36.5 印张

1994 年 10 月第 1 版 1994 年 10 月第 1 次印刷

印数: 1—20000 册

\* \* \*

ISBN 7-5600-0903-4/H·480

定价: 22.50 元

## INTRODUCTION

Alexandre Dumas was a force of nature. A robust, roaring man of vast appetites and even vaster energies, he cries out to be measured in cubits rather than the feet and inches that are used for mere mortals. For forty years, sparks from his mighty anvil lit fires which inflamed the world and burn still. D'Artagnan and Edmond Dantès are the stuff of dreams.

He was born in 1802 at Villers-Cotterêts, about fifty miles north-east of Paris, the second child of an innkeeper's daughter and of one of Napoleon's most remarkable generals. Thomas-Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie was born at Saint Domingo in 1762, the son of a French marquis and Marie-Cessette Dumas, a negress. Disowned by his father, he took his mother's name, enlisted as a private soldier in 1786 and rose rapidly through the ranks during the early Revolutionary campaigns. A courageous and dashing field officer, he usually had more to say for himself than was politic. In 1799, he quarrelled with Napoleon and never regained his favour, nor did he receive the army pay that was due to him. He died poor in 1806, leaving his wife and children to manage as they could.

At the schools which he attended with no great enthusiasm, young Alexandre, who inherited all his father's drive and (as caricaturists were later to emphasize) some of his negroid features, learned at least to write a good hand. It was for his handwriting rather than through his father's old friends that he found work as a none-too-diligent minor clerk in 1823. He had left Villers-Cotterêts for good and was determined to make his way in Paris as an author. While waiting for his hour to come, he set about laying the foundations of his future life. He spent more money than he earned, developed a habit of collaborating with other writers and kept up a steady stream of affairs: by Catherine Lebay, a

seamstress, he had a son in 1824, also called Alexandre, who later became famous as the author of *La Dame aux Camélias* before turning into the self-appointed guardian of the nation's morality and censor of his father's excesses. Many plays and numerous mistresses later, Dumas scored an enormous success with *Henry III and His Court* (1829), a play which helped to inaugurate the new 'Romantic' drama which was a potent expression of the reaction against the ultra-conservative political, moral, and cultural climate of the Restoration. He threw himself unbidden into the July Revolution of 1830 and single-handedly captured a powder magazine at Soissons. He persuaded Lafayette, the liberal hero of old Revolutionary struggles who had helped set the constitutionally-minded Louis-Philippe on the throne of France, to appoint him organizer of the National Guard in the Vendée, but Dumas, a natural republican, soon gave up when he encountered strong local Royalist opposition. He returned to Paris where he resumed his position as one of the age's leading theatrical lights.

Dumas tackled contemporary subjects in plays like *Antony* (1831), a lurid story of marital infidelity, but as a dramatist was always temperamentally attracted by historical anecdotes, which he unfailingly exploited for their melodramatic potential. He also re-wrote, with or without permission, plays by other hands and soon acquired a suspect reputation for his nonchalant attitude to literary property. By the mid-1830s, however, conscious of the inadequacy of his education, he began reading history seriously with a view to creating the French 'historical novel' which would be as respected and successful as the English historical novels of Walter Scott. In the meantime he accepted whatever commissions came his way. It was thus that he undertook a walking tour of the South of France in 1834 to collect material for a series of articles which he later published as the first of his books of travel impressions. As a travel writer, Dumas gave short historical and geographical measure but always suc-

ceeded in interesting his reader with local lore coaxed out of chance acquaintances, and with amazing anecdotes of his personal perils and astounding adventures. (The Romantic poet Lamartine once remarked that while some men spent their lives looking for the secret of perpetual motion, Dumas had invented 'perpetual astonishment'.) His journeys were not always motivated by commissions—in 1832, when his republican sympathies had become dangerous, he prudently left Paris for Switzerland. Surrounded by mistresses, fending off creditors, and habitually working fourteen hours a day at his desk to meet his many commitments, he remained as yet a man of the theatre and consolidated his position with the triumph of *Kean* in 1836.

But by the late 1830s he was turning to the novel, partly because he was interested in the possibilities of fiction and partly because the market was favourable. The appearance in 1836 of *La Presse* and *Le Siècle*, the first of a new breed of cheap newspapers financed almost entirely by advertising revenues, had revolutionized the newspaper industry. Editors found that they could increase circulation by running novels in serial form, though not all writers were able to provide the thrilling climax to each episode which ensured that readers would buy the next issue. Where Balzac failed, Eugène Sue succeeded: when *Le Constitutionnel* outbid its rivals for Sue's *Le Juif errant* (*The Wandering Jew*) in 1843, the number of copies sold daily soared within three weeks from 4,000 to 24,000. Dumas's gift for melodrama and the speed at which he worked ensured that he made the most of his opportunities and on occasions was writing three or even four serial novels simultaneously. When the episodes were collected (as they at first were by opportunist Belgian publishers who paid no royalties) and sold in multi-volume sets, he became not merely France's best-known writer but also the most famous Frenchman of his day, a star who was recognized wherever he travelled.

He thrived on fame and success and lived up to the image

of extravagance, indestructibility, and recklessness which he himself encouraged. He married an actress in 1840 from whom he separated in 1844. By this time he was growing close to his son, Alexandre, whom he undertook to initiate into the literary and social life of the capital. With Alexandre, he set off for Spain in 1846—simply abandoning a number of novels he was writing on the grounds that he needed to rest—and thence travelled to Algeria, with an official commission to write one of his inimitable travel books which the government hoped would make North Africa attractive to potential colonizers. In 1847 he moved to Marly, to the 'Chateau de Monte Cristo' which was to have been a modest residence but had grown into a costly palace which symbolized his success. The same year, he inaugurated the 'Théâtre historique' where he hoped to reap enormous financial rewards by staging mainly his own plays. Meanwhile the stream of historical romances continued to feed the presses of the Paris newspapers and he commanded huge fees, which he squandered. Dumas had no financial acumen and the horde of social and literary spongers took full advantage of his generosity.

Though he courted kings and princes, his democratic (or rather meritocratic) leanings prompted him to stand, unsuccessfully, as a republican candidate in the 1848 elections. But while he welcomed the change of regime, the Revolution which ended Louis-Philippe's bourgeois monarchy also ruined the market for his novels and plays and he was never thereafter to earn the vast sums he needed to finance his lavish adventures. In 1850 the 'Chateau de Monte Cristo', which had cost him 400,000 francs was sold to an American dentist for 30,000. The 'Théâtre historique' failed and Dumas fled to Brussels to avoid his creditors. His reputation still made him attractive to women who more often than not counted on him to advance their careers. His son grew increasingly embarrassed by his self-indulgence. He continued to write indefatigably and to travel, notably to Russia

in 1859. In 1860, he met Garibaldi and was swept up enthusiastically into the cause of Italian independence. In 1867 he began his final liaison, with the American acrobat Ada Mencken, and published his last significant novel, *La Terreur prussienne* (*The Prussian Terror*), which carried a clear-sighted warning of the threat looming from across the Rhine. He lived long enough to be saddened by the decline of his powers and to witness the Franco-Prussian War he had predicted. In September 1870 he suffered a stroke and lingered until 5 December when he died at the home of his son at Puy, near Dieppe.

Dumas, who had earned millions, was not a rich man when he died. He had no financial sense, nor indeed much of a sense of property. He kept money in drawers and tobacco jars and was as ready to give large sums away as he was unembarrassed when borrowing his cab-fare or annexing sections of a neighbour's land to complete his estate at Marly. This open-handedness helps to explain his cavalier attitude to literary property. Early in his career, comments were made about his use of collaborators, and even friends and fellow authors found it hard to believe that any one man could, unaided, write or even dictate all the vast novels he signed. In 1845 a journalist named Jacquot attempted to expose Dumas, accusing him of directing a 'fiction-factory' which employed writers to turn out the serials and volumes to which he put his signature. Dumas took him to court and won his case.

But though his good faith cannot be doubted, the question of Dumas's authorship of his works cannot be left there. He never tried to hide his debts to others and was always eager to acknowledge the contribution of collaborators. As a playwright in the 1830s, he had been in the habit of working with one or more experienced hands. Sometimes plays which had not found a home would be brought to him for rewriting: *La Tour de Nesle* (*The Tower of Nesle*) (1832) was the result of one such proposal. He might call too upon others to supply the



historical and documentary background for his romances: for *Georges* (1843) he talked to a Mauritian who gave him enough information for Dumas to describe the island as vividly as though he had been there. His most regular collaborator, however, was Auguste Maquet (1813-88), a failed author of a scholarly disposition, with whom he discussed the direction his plots should take and who furnished him with historical and other materials which Dumas duly incorporated into the books that continued to appear under his name. Dumas's contemporaries raised an eyebrow at this practice, but his collaborative working habits certainly help to explain just why he was able to publish over 300 plays, novels, travel books, and memoirs: 1,348 volumes, in all, it has been calculated. Of this total, it is likely that one or two titles were never even read by Dumas who on occasions agreed to lend his name to help a struggling writer: the name of Dumas could sell anything. But there can be no doubt that he wrote all his books himself, though with the kind of help enjoyed by modern script-writers. Some of his collaborators would nowadays be called 'researchers'. Others, providing no more than secretarial assistance, recopied his manuscripts, adding punctuation and correcting inconsistencies. Others still—Maquet in particular—were involved in what would nowadays be called 'script-conferences', discussing story-lines, the development of characters, and ways of grafting fictional events onto solid historical stock. But only Dumas had the 'Dumas touch', and he alone was ultimately responsible for the final tone, tension, and form of his romances. The writing of *Monte Cristo* is a case in point.

In an article published in his own newspaper, *Le Monte Cristo*, in April 1857, Dumas explained that in 1842 he had accompanied Prince Napoleon on a sailing expedition to Elba. It was then that he first saw the Island of Monte Cristo which so took his imagination that he promised the Prince that he would one day write a novel in which it would feature. In 1843 he signed a contract with the publishers Béthune and

Plon for eight volumes of 'Impressions of Paris'. But the success of Eugène Sue's *Mystères de Paris* gave the publishers second thoughts and they subsequently informed Dumas that they now wanted a novel rather than the historical and archaeological guide they had originally commissioned. Having received an advance but not yet having written a word, Dumas was only too happy to oblige. He dusted down an 'anecdote' which he had found in the *Mémoires historiques tirés des archives de la police de Paris* (1838, 6 vols.) by Jacques Peuchet (1758-1830), a former police archivist, who had written accounts of a number of intriguing cases in the manner designed to thrill, titillate, and horrify.

The affair that had attracted Dumas was entitled 'Le Diamant et la vengeance' ('Revenge and the Diamond') and began in Paris in 1807 where four friends from the Midi, François Picaud, Gervais Chaubard, Guilhem Solari, and Antoine Allut were in the habit of meeting regularly at the café run by one Mathieu Loupian, a widower with two children. When Picaud, a cobbler, announced that he was to marry Marguerite Vigoroux, a pretty girl with a handsome dowry, the envious Loupian persuaded the others that Picaud needed to be taught a lesson. With only Allut dissenting from what he considered to be a dangerous jest, they denounced Picaud as an English spy. He was arrested and disappeared from sight. Seven years later, in April 1814, Picaud was released from the prison of Fenestrelles in Piedmont. While serving his sentence, he had grown close to another prisoner, a Milanese cleric abandoned by his family, who had come to regard him as a son. Before his death in January 1814, the cleric made over to him a vast fortune which included a secret hoard of three million gold coins. Picaud returned to Paris an extremely rich man on 15 February 1815.

There he learned that Marguerite had waited for him for two years before marrying Loupian who had used her dowry to open what had become one of the most fashionable cafés in

Paris. Following the trail, he travelled to see Allut who had retired to Nîmes. Calling himself the abbé Baldini, he explained that he had shared a cell in a Naples jail with Picaud who was now dead. For services rendered to a wealthy English prisoner, Picaud had acquired a diamond worth 50,000 francs and had charged the abbé to give it to Allut, the only member of the conspiracy to demur, on condition that he reveal the identity of those who had denounced him. Their names were to be engraved on his tombstone. Allut hesitated but was brow-beaten into accepting by his greedy, shrewish wife. Subsequently the merchant who bought the diamond resold it for 100,000 francs, thus incurring the anger of the Alluts. When he was found dead, Allut was charged with murder and jailed.

At about the same time in Paris, an old lady approached Loupian and offered him a small regular payment to employ an old family servant named Prosper. Shortly afterwards, Chaubard, one of the original four friends, was found stabbed on the Pont des Arts. Attached to the handle of the murder-weapon was a note which read: 'Number One'. It was the first of a series of sinister incidents. Loupian's dog and his wife's parrot were poisoned. Mademoiselle Loupian was seduced and promised marriage by a rich nobleman who proved to be a former galley-slave who promptly absconded. The café burned down and Loupian was ruined. One night Solari was taken violently ill and died in agony. A note pinned to the body proclaimed: 'Number Two'. Loupian's son was lured into bad company, took to crime, and was jailed for twenty years. Marguerite died and Loupian's daughter, now destitute, was forced into prostitution by Prosper.

One night in the Jardin des Tuileries, Loupian was surprised by old Prosper who revealed that he was Picaud, the architect of the catastrophes which had befallen him, his purpose being to ruin the man who had ruined his life. Picaud stabbed his victim to death but was himself overpowered by

a stranger who locked him up in a lonely cellar. The stranger was Allut who had followed the trail of the 'abbé Baldini' but had arrived too late to warn Loupian. He too now wanted revenge for the time he had spent in prison and demanded 25,000 francs every time Picaud asked for food. Though he was worth 16 millions, Picaud had grown avaricious and refused to pay. Finally Allut lost patience and murdered him before fleeing to England where he revealed the full story on his death-bed in 1828.

Dumas retained the tripartite structure of Picaud's revenge which he decided initially was the essence of the anecdote. From Monte Cristo's disguises to Vampa's treatment of his prisoner Danglars—but not the character of Marguerite/Mercédès, who is given a central role—he relied heavily on Peuchet's sombre version of events. He began by setting his story in Rome at what is now Chapter 31. Working quickly, he took events up to the return of Albert de Morcerf and Franz d'Epinaï to Paris—though his chronicle was at this stage written in the first person from Franz's point of view. He then showed what he had written to Maquet who asked why the most dramatic part of the story—the betrayal, imprisonment, and escape of the hero—had been omitted. The tale would have to be related at some point to justify the theme of vengeance: it was too long to be introduced retrospectively and too interesting to be summarized. Dumas agreed and the next day decided that the novel should fall into three parts: Marseilles, Rome, and Paris (that is, Chapters 1–30, 31–9, and 40–117 in this translation). Subsequent 'script conferences' prompted Maquet to write out a kind of story-board which Dumas was only too happy to follow.

The 'first part' appeared in *Le Journal des débats* between 28 August and 18 October. The 'Roman' section followed immediately but 'Part III' was delayed by Dumas's other commitments: in addition to deadlines for *L'Histoire d'une casse-noisette* (*The History of a Nutcracker*) (1845) and a number

of similar smaller commissions, he had contracted to write *La Dame de Monsoreau* for *Le Constitutionnel*, and *Les Quarante-Cinq* (*The Forty-Five Guardsmen*) and *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* for *La Démocratie pacifique*. As a result, Part III did not appear until June 1845 and the final instalment, beginning at Chapter 63 of the present edition, ran more or less smoothly until 15 January 1846. It is hardly surprising that Dumas, who regularly over-committed himself in this way, gladly accepted whatever help he could get.

But if Maquet had given him a line to follow, it was Dumas who breathed his own life into the saga of Edmond Dantès, which retains many features of Peuchet's anecdote and yet is quite different from its mood. From his stay in Marseilles in 1834, he recalled the Morrel family, the Catalan community, and his visit to the Chateau d'If where he had inspected the cell once occupied by Mirabeau. He remembered too the stories he had heard of the strange and learned abbé Faria who had died in 1819 (see note to p. 104). To give a ring of authenticity to the murders perpetrated by Mme de Villefort, the wife of the magistrate who sent Dantès to the Chateau d'If, he borrowed scientific details from the trial of the poisoner Castaing and the experiments he and a friend named Thibaut had carried out with toxic substances (see notes to p. 348 and 712). He drew on his own experience for his descriptions of If, Monte Cristo, and Rome, while his picture of Paris—and Dumas thought of the book as essentially a novel of contemporary manners—was rooted in his own observation. But more important than the way the story was put together or the memories of places and people which made it authentic and immediate, Dumas's imagination took his melodramatic plot into the realm of legend. The first part especially has an extra, special, magnetic charge. In Italy and Paris, Monte Cristo the avenger burns like ice, but Edmond Dantès, the super-hero of the Chateau d'If, generates a sense of wonder and simply makes off with the reader. Balzac or Stendhal, who were greater novelists, never

achieved as much, and only Hugo's archetypes, Jean Valjean and Quasimodo, have a comparable epic presence.

Yet for all the oriental and magical aura of his tale, events are rooted in real life, as the explanatory notes at the end of the present edition serve to show. Dumas parades his knowledge of horticulture, art, architecture, literature, and history and in so doing attaches his tale to the common-place, common-sense world. His characters live at real addresses, patronize well-known stables and watchmakers, see the operas and plays which everyone who was someone had seen, live in authentic social milieus in the *Chaussée d'Antin* or the *Faubourg Saint-Germain* and adopt attitudes appropriate to their age and rank. Politically they live in the shadow first of Napoleon, then of the conservative Restoration before emerging into the kind of society where opportunists like Danglars made fortunes by speculating in the new railways and the nascent industrial revolution, and where canny politicians like Villefort or Debray always stayed on the winning side.

Against the forces of conservatism stands the idealism which had made Greece independent, sought a just settlement in Carlist Spain, and turned Mehemet Ali and Ali Pacha into heroes in the struggle against tyranny in general and the British in particular. Dumas, who took pride in being the friend of Kings and Princes, was a paradoxical democrat and his mixed liberal sympathies give the novel an ambiguous political colour. His contempt for the ambition of the representatives of the people who despise the voters who elected them is as clear as his sympathy for Faria's belief in the inevitability of national and personal freedom. Edmond Dantès is not merely the victim of the envy of Danglars but a pawn in a game of political intrigue: the clothes and titles may be different, but France is as firmly under the control of sultans and vizirs as the Orient where the outward forms of tyranny were at least openly acknowledged. Yet Monte Cristo speaks out against 'the socialists' and rejects all loyalty

to a society hostile to the idea of justice: is not Villefort 'the living statue of the law?' Dantès the victim turns himself through his own efforts into a hardened individualist who, though he never forgets the rights of man, has relied on his own energies, brains, and will to overcome impossible odds.

At this level *Monte Cristo* shares the nascent habit of realism best exemplified by Balzac: indeed, the novel is sometimes thought of as a kind of 'Comédie humaine' in its own right. Then again, Dumas's protagonist, a superman who tastes disillusionment, belongs with those disintegrating, self-doubting heroes who so fired the Romantic imagination. He suffers the fate of those who live to see their wishes come true: the heady wine of vengeance turns to dust in his mouth. But Dantès's trials and his heaven-sent opportunity to revenge the wrongs done him also cripple him emotionally. His first thought on returning to France may well be to reward the good, and Morrel's business is duly saved. But he is doomed to engineer human happiness in which he cannot share: he is a man apart, an outsider. And the terrible toll he takes of those who wronged him leaves him empty rather than fulfilled. Vengeance may be a meal best eaten cold, but cold meats do not satisfy him. He is as lonely as Vigny's Moses who is abandoned by God. Monte Cristo does not simply live above the society which he judges, he is cut off from it, without human contact, a solitary figure chained to the destiny of his mission. He believes that he is God's agent through whom just punishment is meted out to those who have sinned against man and heaven. But as time passes, even he begins to doubt that anyone can really be 'the angel of Providence'. As Mercédès points out, self-appointed Hammers of the Lord are not always able to distinguish between Justice and Anger: why does Monte Cristo remember crimes that Providence has forgotten? It is only when Villefort has gone mad, Danglars has blown his own brains out, and Morcerf is destroyed that Monte Cristo understands that he is not the privileged instrument of God's providence but a victim of Fate

like all the others. Only then does he abandon his obsession: the crimes of Mme de Villefort and the death of Edward, which he had not foreseen, do not simply teach him that Fate is beyond his control but finally sicken him. Monte Cristo's ultimate victory is not the defeat of his enemies but the spiritual re-birth which enables him to rejoin the human race and sail away in hope with Haydée.

Thus to historical realism and strong social types is added a level of psychological depth which is also present in the bold sketch of the lesbian Eugénie, say, or in the mixture of puritanism and sadism which explains so much of Villefort's later conduct. ('I am on the earth to punish', he says). But *Monte Cristo* is also a highly moral book. François Picaud revenged himself by acts which were criminal; Monte Cristo, as the agent of Providence, remains neutral, refuses to intervene, and settles for laying traps in which his prey entangle themselves through greed or ambition. His victims are made responsible for bringing about their own downfall and their fate is a punishment not for what they once did to Edmond Dantès but for the crimes they have since committed against moral and social law: Danglars for his financial opportunism, Fernand for betraying Ali Pacha, and Villefort for applying the law without mercy. Behind events is a vigorous defence of Justice.

But of course it is not Dumas's moral lessons or social and psychological realism nor the solitary Romantic anguish of the hero which explain the novel's lasting popularity. For most readers, *Monte Cristo* is not about Justice at all, but about Injustice. It is a tale of Revenge and Retribution which does not lead back to the Paris of the 1840s but opens into a world of magic, of fabulous treasure buried on desert islands, of bandits and dark intrigue, of wizardry and splendours borrowed from the *Arabian Nights*. The fearless Monte Cristo is a super-hero who overcomes all the odds. A master of disguise, he has the secret of all knowledge, immense physical strength, endless resourcefulness, and complete power to



punish the wicked. Heroes do not come any taller. He is 'the stuff of adolescent dreams and will retain his fascination, as Swinburne said, 'while the boy's heart beats in man'. It was for 'the Great Dumas' capacity to stir the emotions and carry his reader into a world of excitement and adventure that Thackeray was kept 'on the stretch for nearly nine hours one day' in July 1849. In September 1853 he wrote to a friend: 'began to read Monte Christo [*sic*] at six one morning and never stopped until eleven at night'. Shaw placed Dumas with Dickens and Scott 'in the second order because, though they are immensely entertaining, their morality is ready made', and commented reproachfully that Dumas 'made French history like an opera by Meyerbeer for me'. But the niggards and carpers (and they have never been in short supply) will always lose hands down. With *Monte Cristo*, Dumas, King of Romance and Prince of Story-tellers, achieved what he also managed in *The Three Musketeers*: he manufactured a folk legend.

Where in that extrovert, amiable, and engaging personality Dumas found the resources to deal with such sombre subjects as treachery and revenge remains a mystery. Part of the answer surely lies in the exuberance of his imagination which was equalled in his own age only by that of Victor Hugo. Hugo's literary gifts were undoubtedly the greater but even he deferred to Dumas. After Dumas's death, he wrote: 'The name of Alexandre Dumas is more than French, it is European; and it is more than European, it is universal'.

For even during his lifetime, *The Count of Monte Cristo* had travelled far beyond the frontiers of France. It was quickly translated into German, Spanish, and Italian and subsequently into countless languages from Arabic to Swedish. The first English version was made in 1846 by Emma Hardy for the inexpensive Parlour Novelist series published in Belfast, but it was the anonymous translation published by Chapman and Hall the same year which was to flood the English-speaking world. It differs in some respects from the