



外国文学经典

The Three
Musketeers



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火枪手
(上)

Alexandre Dumas père (法) 著

外语教学与研究出版社

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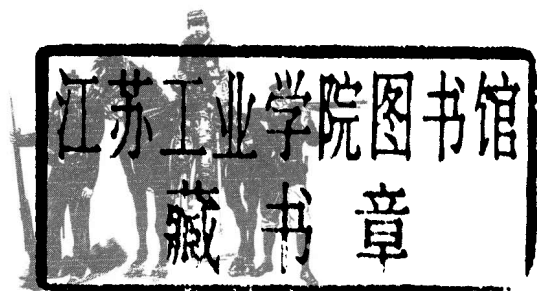
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THE THREE MUSKETEERS

ALEXANDRE DUMAS was born at Villers-Cotterêts in 1802, the son of an innkeeper's daughter and of one of Napoleon's most remarkable generals. He moved to Paris in 1823 to make his fortune in the theatre. At 28 he was one of the leading literary figures of his day, a star of the Romantic Revolution, and known for his many mistresses and taste for high living. He threw himself recklessly into the July Revolution of 1830 which he regarded as a great adventure. Quickly wearying of politics, he returned to the theatre and by the early 1840s was producing vast historical novels at a stupendous rate and in prodigious quantities for the cheap newspapers which paid enormous sums of money to authors who could please the public. His complete works were eventually to fill over 300 volumes and his yarns made him the best-known Frenchman of his age. He earned several fortunes which he gave away, or spent on women and travel, or wasted on grandiose follies like the 'Château de Monte Cristo' which he built to symbolize his success. In 1848 he stood unsuccessfully in the elections for the new Assembly. By 1850 his creditors began to catch up with him and, partly to escape them and partly to find new material for his novels, plays, and travel books, he lived abroad for long periods, traveling through Russia where his fame had preceded him, and Italy where he ran guns in support of Garibaldi's libertarian cause. Without guile and without enemies, he was a man of endless fascination who lived long enough to see his talent desert him. He died of a stroke at Puy, near Dieppe,

in 1870.

DAVID COWARD is Professor of Modern French Literature at the University of Leeds and the author of studies of Marivaux, Marguerite Duras, Marcel Pagnol, and Restif de la Bretonne. For Oxford World's Classics, he has edited seven of Dumas's novels (including *The Count of Monte Cristo* and the whole of the Musketeer saga) and translated Dumas fils's *La Dame aux Camélias*, two selections of Maupassant short stories, and Sade's *The Misfortunes of Virtue and Other Early Tales*. Winner of the 1996 Scott-Moncrieff prize for translation, he reviews regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement*.

INTRODUCTION

ALEXANDRE DUMAS was born at Villers-Cotterêts, fifty miles north-east of Paris, in 1802. His mother was an innkeeper's daughter. His father was the son of a dissolute French Marquis and a former slave. Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie (1762–1806) had risen through the ranks by his own efforts and was a general at 31. But his plain speaking was not to the taste of Napoleon who effectively ended his military career. He died destitute, leaving his widow to raise his two surviving children as best she could.

From his mulatto father, Alexandre Dumas inherited healthy appetites, an iron constitution, and the swarthy skin and tight curls which were later to prove a boon to caricaturists. His schooling was deficient but he enjoyed his childhood immensely (there was no part of his life that he did not enjoy). He began earning his living as an office-boy in 1817. Six years later, he moved to Paris to pursue his literary ambitions, supporting himself as a lowly clerk in the service of the Duke d'Orléans. He filled his leisure hours with writing and love-affairs. From his liaison with a seamstress, Catherine Labay, resulted a son, the future author of *La Dame aux Camélias*. His first performed play, which he wrote with two friends, went unnoticed when it was staged in 1825 and only four copies were sold of a volume of stories which appeared in 1826. He turned his hand to poetry, comedy, and tragedy with little success and though a five-act verse tragedy, *Christine*, was accepted by the Comédie-Française, it was not

performed until 1830. By then, however, Dumas was famous.

Through Charles Nodier, whom he had met by accident, he was introduced to Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, and Musset, the rising stars of the new generation of 'Romantic' writers who, under the banner of 'freedom in art', inaugurated a new age of imaginative literature. Classical reason and measure were discarded in favour of sensation, emotion, and the cult of nature, youth, and death. The new hero was not sober and dignified but an exalted, morbid soul given to grandly Byronic gestures. In 1829, backed by the new iconoclasts, Dumas staged a historical drama, *Henry III and his Court*, which was not only a personal triumph but struck a spectacular blow for the cause. Instead of the flat verse and arid passion of classical theatre, Dumas gave audiences fiery prose, action, and conflict. His melodramatic manner was ideally suited to the extravagant mood of his times and he was catapulted into the leading ranks of the Romantic Movement. When, in July 1830, literary revolt turned into political revolution, he threw himself dashing into the fray. Single-handedly he captured two tons of gunpowder from a bemused garrison at Soissons and persuaded La Fayette that he was the man to organize the new National Guard in the Vendée where, however, he made little headway against staunch royalist opposition. Quickly tiring of his new role, he returned to Paris and literature.

Over the next two years, he staged seven plays which glorified passion in melodramatic situations, and mixed the sublime and the grotesque in the new

approved manner. Success brought money which he squandered on women and travel or simply gave away, a habit which he never lost. In the summer of 1832, suspected of harbouring republican sympathies, he left Paris and visited Switzerland which he made the subject of the first of his many travelogues. By now, he was avidly reading the historical memoirs for which his history-conscious age, stimulated by the novels of Walter Scott, showed an insatiable appetite. He continued to write plays on both historical and contemporary subjects—*Kean* (1836) was a notable success—but he was turning increasingly to fiction. Perhaps he realized that his talents had been misdirected, for his epic plays now often read as though they ought to have been written as novels. But he was also impressed by the growing popularity of the serialized novel (the *roman feuilleton*) which had begun in 1836 with the appearance of the first cheap newspapers. Proprietors found that running popular serials was good for circulation and by the early 1840s the practice was generalized. Eugène Sue, the first great master of the genre, set new standards of cliff-hanging suspense. 'The sick postponed death until the *Mysteries of Paris* had reached its end', remarked Gautier enviously. For *The Wandering Jew* (1844–1845), which pushed up the circulation of *Le Constitutionnel* from 4,000 to 24,000 overnight, Sue was paid 100,000 francs at a time when manual workers received 3 francs a day and clerks between 1,000 and 2,000 a year.

By this time, Dumas, Without abandoning the stage, had committed himself to the *roman feuilleton* which fitted him like a glove. The genre called for suspense,

violence and high passion, black-hearted villains and doughty heroes. Novels with a historical background were as popular as those set in contemporary society, for themes and values were stereotyped. The hero, exuding effortless aristocratic superiority and sometimes nursing a murky past, went about righting wrongs in a fantasy world which caricatured the middle classes and portrayed the 'people' as exotic and dangerous. The situations reflected in a cruder form the Romantics' love of hyperbole and macabre thrills: the rise and fall of the wicked, the return and vengeance of a man wronged, the ravages of passion, imprisonment and escape, distant worship and love that overcomes all obstacles, the whole spiced with Gothic thrills and a frisson of sadism. Yet what Sainte-Beuve dismissed as 'industrial literature' had an energy and an imaginative power which more gifted 'literary' authors such as Zola and Thackeray greatly admired.

The Three Musketeers, serialized in *Le Siècle* between 14 March 1843 and 14 July 1844, was an immediate success. But even before the final episode appeared, Dumas, who regularly overcommitted himself, had begun another vast epic of adventure and revenge, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844–1845), and soon he was not only France's best-selling author but the most famous living Frenchman. He capitalized on the popularity of his Musketeers with a sequel, *Twenty Years After* (1845), and followed it with an unstoppable stream of high-impact yarns. His energy and powers of concentration were astonishing. He was unusually sociable, travelled widely, and was capable of writing under pressure for fourteen hours at a stretch. He had always been

susceptible to pretty actresses and when his five-year marriage to Ida Ferrier ended in 1844 he embarked on a new series of often stormy affairs which lasted until shortly before his death.

He earned and spent vast sums of money for which he had little regard, though he loved what money could buy. He lavished a fortune on a house at Marly-le-Roi which he called the 'Château de Monte Cristo', and another on starting up the 'Théâtre historique' which opened in December 1847. He was disarmingly likeable, had few enemies, and was the most generous of men. The Revolution of 1848 tempted him to stand as a reformist parliamentary candidate, though his politics were a curious mix of sympathy for the poor, a snobbish regard for lords and princes, and a meritocratic respect for self-made men of talent like himself. In spite of his forceful way with hecklers, he was not elected and in December voted for Louis-Napoleon's Second Republic.

By the early 1850s his extravagance and over-ambitious schemes had drained his finances. To meet his debts, he started newspapers of his own for which he provided most of the copy himself, supplied others with hugely popular *feuilletons* (including *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* (1848–1850), the final instalment of the Musketeer saga), and staged plays at the 'Théâtre historique' of which he eventually lost control. In 1850 the 'Château de Monte Cristo' was sold off to an American dentist and finally, in December 1851, using Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* as a pretext, Dumas fled to Brussels, beyond the reach of his creditors. After returning to France in 1853, he embarked on a new series of travels which took

him to Russia, where his fame had preceded him, and in 1860 to Italy where he bought guns for Garibaldi and backed the struggle for Italian unification. At 60, he was portly, as vain as ever (wherever he went he collected honours and medals, some of which he bought himself), unflaggingly creative, and unendingly vulnerable to a pretty face. He lived just long enough to see his powers fail and died of a stroke at his son's house near Dieppe on 5 December 1870.

'Prolific' is an adjective too insipid to apply to Dumas, for not even he could keep track of everything he wrote. Over a period of fifty years he published a dozen travel books and founded as many newspapers. His journalism and general works fill perhaps twenty large tomes, and there are a score of multi-volume histories, biographies, and memoirs. He was the author of over fifty plays and about ninety novels, many of them very long indeed: the three instalments of the Musketeer saga alone run to about a million and a quarter words. During his lifetime, his authorship of the books he signed was questioned and sometimes contested, most notoriously by a journalist named Jacquot who in 1845 accused him of running a 'fiction factory' staffed by paid drudges. Dumas took Jacquot to court and refuted the charges of shameless plagiarism and 'literary mercantilism', though he cheerfully admitted to using the services of 'collaborators' whose contribution, however, he always acknowledged. Some were no more than secretaries who recopied his rapidly written pages, adding punctuation and correcting minor inconsistencies. Yet from the outset, Dumas had been in the habit of working with other

writers, discussing plots and character and sometimes rewriting plays by other hands rejected by theatre managements. During the 1830s he acquired a reputation not only as a playwright but also, in Nerval's words, 'as a surgeon skilled in straightening the limbs of plays born crooked'. But he was always more than a fixer, for his reworkings were highly imaginative and unfailingly marked by the Dumas touch: simple but strong characters, melodramatic situations, and highly charged dialogue.

Dumas's association with Auguste Maquet (1813–1888), whom he met in 1838, was the most productive of his collaborations. A history teacher with literary ambitions, Maquet worked closely with Dumas in ways which are still not entirely clear. At the start, Dumas simply rewrote Maquet. Thus, immediately after their first meeting, he revised a Maquet play which was performed in 1839 as *Bathilde* under Maquet's name. But he totally transformed a short novel which Maquet had set in the early eighteenth century, and turned it into the four-volume *Chevalier d'Harmental* (1843) which he acknowledged as his own. Subsequently, Maquet's role was to write first drafts, faithfully following detailed plans and firm directives supplied by Dumas who, however, occasionally adopted suggestions from his collaborator. These drafts were changed beyond recognition as Dumas's imagination worked on them. The ninety-nine surviving pages of Maquet's manuscript outline for *The Three Musketeers* reveal that he not only supplied specific historical detail but also furnished a substantial but agreed 'treatment' which Dumas followed in parts but radically altered in others. The earlier sections of the outline have

disappeared, but Maquet's version of major episodes—the conversation heard through the stovepipe between Richelieu and Milady, the breakfast on the Bastion de Saint-Gervais, the seduction of Felton, the murder of Buckingham, and the execution of Milady—are pale reflections of what was to come. Dumas expanded Maquet's material into hundreds of pages, changing the order of events, inventing new twists, and injecting excitement, humour, and high drama into his collaborator's basic template. In 1857 Maquet successfully sued Dumas not for literary theft, which he did not claim, but for nonpayment of agreed royalties. Even so, the judgment has been used to castigate Dumas for professional malpractice, a charge which is contradicted by his open acknowledgement of the help he received. Of course Dumas was a shameless literary plunderer, for he had the same nonchalant attitude to literary property as he did to money. He borrowed and stole whatever he needed to start his imaginative juices flowing, but what he took he made his own. There is no doubt that Dumas stood in Maquet's debt, but no more so than Racine was indebted to the authors of antiquity. His unerring instinct for action and excitement, his ability to create forceful characters, and the sustained exuberance of his imagination were quite unborrowable: from these alone comes the lasting glamour of the Musketeers.

But neither man invented d'Artagnan and the Musketeers. In 1841, during a visit to Marseilles, Dumas chanced upon the first volume of *The Memoirs of M. d'Artagnan* (1700) by Courtilz de Sandras (1644–1712), an army captain who supplemented his pay by writing romances, the best of

which read like a mixture of historical chronicle and bad Defoe. Dumas was immediately struck by Courtilz's racy manner and engaging hero. He was also taken with the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis (though they appear only briefly in the pseudo-*Memoirs*). He never read beyond the first volume but promptly borrowed d'Artagnan's leave-taking, his yellow horse and the quarrel it provokes on his way to Paris, his appointment with Tréville, the first encounter with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, and the rivalry between the King's Musketeers and the Cardinal's Guards. The first half-dozen or so chapters of *The Three Musketeers* are a virtuoso improvisation on the beginning of Courtilz's pseudo-*Memoirs*. Thereafter, having got into his stride, he abandoned Courtilz, though not before converting the pseudo-d'Artagnan's predatory landlady into the sweet Constance and filching the name 'Milédi' and the brief episode in which she attempts to seduce de Wardes.

Thereafter, doubtless with promptings from Maquet, Dumas continued with his technique of amplifying anecdotes and incidents which he purloined from a variety of historical sources. He described his approach in the preface to *The Countess of Salisbury* (1838), his first serialized novel, in which he claimed modestly to 'interpret' history in such a way that historical figures would always appear in their true likenesses and not be upstaged by minor characters of his own invention. But in practice, he bent history to fit his imagination and those who made it into roles dictated by the requirements of his fiction. Richelieu, who in reality worked tirelessly for the creation of the modern French state, is merely

ruthless, sinister, and wily. Buckingham, who was arrogant and much loathed, becomes a romantic figure prepared to start a European war for the sake of a smile from the Queen of France. Dumas's habit of seeing historical issues in terms of personalities was not good history, of course, but it made history accessible and exciting. Furthermore, his overriding interest in his own creations led to severe upstaging: the heroes of *The Three Musketeers* are not the King and Queen of France or Buckingham and Richelieu but the four comrades who engage in a battle to the death with the predatory Milady de Winter. In 1854, in his *Memoirs* (v. 328–329), he explained his practice more realistically: 'I begin by making up a story. I try to make it romantic, tender and dramatic, and, when sentiment and imagination are duly provided, I hunt through history for a framework in which to set them.' He did not undertake careful research but trusted to his nose for drama, though the ample explanatory notes at the end of this volume show how seriously he strove to document his story. With *The Three Musketeers*, he seems to have started with a clear idea of d'Artagnan and Courtilz's oddly named Musketeers, together with a promising framework of historical events—the intrigues of Louis XIII's court and the siege of La Rochelle which provided a natural, thrilling climax. Thereafter, he simply trusted to his imagination. There was altogether more flair than method in his proceedings. A hint here, a suggestion there were enough to set his imagination on fire. Milady is a case in point.

All of Dumas's fiction is based on the principle of conflict, and from the outset his dramatic sense led him to seed *The Three Musketeers* with evil as a

counterweight to d'Artagnan's nobility of heart. At first, he seems to have cast Rochefort as his villain. But Rochefort remains a shadowy figure who is never given much scope to live up to his reputation as Richelieu's *âme damnée*. Instead, instinct led Dumas to an even more damnable agent of the Cardinal: Lady de Winter. Dumas's long tale seems to sprawl. It is in fact structured quite simply, for it is dominated by d'Artagnan's battle to the death with Milady which acquires an epic dimension because it is also an allegorical battle between Good and Evil. Dumas had no difficulty in building a hero and finding stirring deeds for him to carry out: duels and derring-do were his stock in trade as a novelist. But to show fathomless wickedness in a woman, he needed prompting. Of course, literature and history are full of examples of baleful females, from Astarte and Delilah to Lady Macbeth and the nest of Borgias, and Dumas draws them to our attention. Moreover, as an assiduous womanizer, he had personal experience of viperish mistresses. But rather as Frankenstein's monster grew out of bits of dead bodies, Milady acquired brilliant focus as a composite demon created out of quite specific parts. Of course, Dumas always used whatever material he had to hand and the origins of Milady are complex. But his use of three quite unrelated anecdotes reveals not only how she acquired such clarity in his imagination but also how crucial she is to the whole structure of the plot.

First he wrote her into history by attributing to her the minor episode of the diamond studs which enabled him to turn Buckingham's love for Anne of Austria into a drama. One version of the anecdote,

where the Duchess of Carlisle wields a pair of spiteful scissors, occupies half a page of La Rochefoucauld's *Mémoires* (see note to p. 137). In Dumas's hands, it expands to fill Chapters 10–23 where Richelieu's attempt to embarrass the Queen is foiled by d'Artagnan. The second structural borrowing was of a short episode of Courtilz's pseudo-*Memoirs* where d'Artagnan gets the better of the francophobic 'Milédi'. From this stems Milady's infatuation with de Wardes, a motive for her undying hatred for d'Artagnan, and revelations about her murky past which furnish Lord de Winter with good reason for imprisoning her in his castle near Portsmouth—and Dumas with another fifteen or so chapters. Finally, from another of Courtilz's apocryphal chronicles, the *Memoirs of M. Le Comte de Rochefort* (see note to p. 278), he took the idea of branding her, a deliciously melodramatic touch, adding a *frisson* of horror which darkens the whole mood of the story from Chapter 27 until the final crashing climax. Thus from these three separate sources Dumas derived the increasingly Gothic atmosphere and most of the narrative impetus: d'Artagnan is usually more occupied with countering Milady's moves than with initiating actions of his own. But just as important is his use of them to shape a subtle portrait of Milady as an intelligent, courageous, but utterly unscrupulous woman, sexually aggressive, and closed to the requirements of decency, humanity, and morality.

The Three Musketeers is, of course, an unashamedly masculine book, full of comradeship and swordplay, a celebration of a man's world. But it is also pointedly antifeminist. Women are helpless, emotional, and tender, the object and reward of male quests.