



FRIENDSHIP IN THE THREE MUSKETEERS: A THEMATIC, STRUCTURAL, AND CHARACTER ANALYSIS

FRIENDSHIP IN THE THREE MUSKETEERS: ANALISIS TEMATIK, STRUKTURAL, DAN KARAKTER

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Abstrak

*Penelitian ini menggali tema persahabatan dan loyalitas dalam *The Three Musketeers* karya Alexandre Dumas melalui analisis sastra kualitatif yang bernuansa. Dengan menelaah arsitektur naratif, alur karakter, dan motif tematik, penelitian ini berupaya menjelaskan bagaimana Dumas mengangkat persahabatan dari sekadar kasih sayang pribadi menjadi cita-cita moral yang luhur. Referensi utamanya adalah terjemahan bahasa Inggris karya Pevear (2006), yang dilengkapi dengan serangkaian wacana ilmiah tentang karya Dumas dan perspektif teoretis tentang persahabatan. Dengan menggunakan tiga pendekatan analitis, yaitu analisis tematik untuk mengungkap nilai-nilai loyalitas yang persisten, analisis struktural untuk mengkaji bagaimana struktur naratif menggarisbawahi pentingnya persahabatan, dan analisis pengembangan karakter untuk menelusuri perkembangan tokoh-tokoh penting, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa persahabatan dalam novel digambarkan sebagai suatu kebajikan yang berakar pada rasa saling menghormati, integritas moral, dan pengorbanan diri. Dumas dengan piawai memanfaatkan motif ini tidak hanya untuk mendorong alur cerita tetapi juga untuk mengkritik otoritas dan mengagungkan perlawanan etis. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini mengungkap persahabatan sebagai kekuatan dinamis dengan makna pribadi dan politik yang mendalam, mengangkatnya ke sebuah cita-cita moral dan sosial.*

Kata Kunci : persahabatan, kesetiaan, *The Three Musketeers*

Abstract

This research delves into the themes of friendship and loyalty within Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* through a nuanced qualitative literary analysis. By scrutinizing the narrative architecture, character arcs, and thematic motifs, the research seeks to illuminate how Dumas elevates friendship from mere personal affection to a noble moral ideal. The primary reference is the English translation by Pevear (2006), complemented by an array of scholarly discourse on Dumas's oeuvre and theoretical perspectives on friendship. Employing three analytical approaches, namely, thematic analysis to uncover persistent values of loyalty, structural analysis to examine how the narrative structure underscores the importance of camaraderie, and character development analysis to trace the growth of pivotal figures, the research demonstrates that friendship in the novel is depicted as a virtue rooted in mutual respect, moral integrity, and self-sacrifice. Dumas masterfully employs this motif not only to propel the storyline but also to critique authority and extol ethical resistance. Ultimately, the research reveals friendship as a dynamic force with profound personal and political significance, elevating it to a moral and societal ideal.

Keywords : friendship, loyalty, *The Three Musketeers*



INTRODUCTION

Friendship stands as a timeless and universal motif within literature, embodying profound emotional, moral, and social bonds between individuals. Throughout the course of literary history, it has served not merely as a personal feeling but also as a potent moral force that influences characters' identities, choices, and fates. Writers across diverse genres and eras have depicted friendship as a vital lens through which larger human virtues—such as justice, sacrifice, and honor—are explored and illuminated. In particular, historical fiction often elevates friendship to a stabilizing and transformative power amid turbulent political landscapes and personal struggles. A quintessential example of this is Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers* (1844), a historical adventure that chronicles the exploits of D'Artagnan and his three comrades—Athos, Porthos, and Aramis—who epitomize unwavering loyalty, brotherhood, and bravery (Birch, 2019).

Set against the backdrop of seventeenth-century France, *The Three Musketeers* transcends mere tales of daring exploits and combat. At its core, the novel celebrates the moral and emotional resilience found in true friendship, encapsulated by the legendary motto: "One for all, all for one." Through this compelling phrase, Dumas elevates friendship beyond simple companionship, framing it as a shared code of honor that often takes precedence over personal ambition and political intrigue. The relationship between D'Artagnan and the musketeers—Athos, Porthos, and Aramis—is forged through shared adversity, mutual respect, and steadfast loyalty. Their deeds—marked by sacrifice, protection, and unity—demonstrate how friendship can serve as a guiding ethical compass, helping characters navigate treachery, betrayal, and strife. The novel's literary craftsmanship, its vivid narration, expressive dialogue, and intricate plot, enables a profound and emotionally rich exploration of this bond, positioning friendship both as a central theme and as the structural backbone of the narrative.

Gaining a deeper appreciation for the nature of friendship depicted in Dumas's novel can be profoundly enhanced by referencing Aristotle's classical insights in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Kaliarinta, 2016). Aristotle delineates three distinct forms of friendship: those based on utility, those founded on pleasure, and those rooted in virtue (Cocking, 2019). Of these, friendships grounded in virtue are esteemed as the noblest and most enduring, as they are founded upon genuine admiration for each other's character and a shared dedication to moral excellence. Aristotle (2009) emphasizes that such friendships are rare yet profoundly meaningful, enduring not for what they offer materially, but for the intrinsic qualities of the individuals involved. The relationship between D'Artagnan and the Musketeers exemplifies this highest form of friendship. Their bond transcends mere convenience or fleeting gratification, instead resting on shared ideals of honor, integrity, and courage. Through their repeated trials and moral challenges, these qualities forge a connection that elevates their relationship from simple companionship to a lasting ethical alliance rooted in mutual virtue.

As a distinguished work of historical prose fiction, *The Three Musketeers* lends itself beautifully to literary analysis that emphasizes how its narrative structure and character development embody universal principles. Dumas's masterful balance of swift-paced plotlines with moral introspection exemplifies how prose fiction can be both captivating and philosophically profound. The narrative framework not only drives action and suspense but also underscores the gradual deepening of loyalty among the characters over time. Through the expressive possibilities



of the prose form, Dumas intricately constructs character arcs that depict emotional growth and ethical transformation, most notably in D'Artagnan's evolution from impulsive youth to a steadfast ally whose ideals align with those of his comrades. The prose style facilitates moments of introspection, interpersonal tension, and symbolic storytelling, all of which serve to underscore the timeless importance of friendship amidst hardship.

This *research* offers an in-depth exploration of the depiction and evolution of friendship within Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, employing a triad of literary approaches: thematic analysis, structural narrative theory, and character development within the context of historical fiction. The investigation aims to elucidate how loyalty among D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis is articulated through their personal growth, reinforced by key narrative events, and symbolized by critical moments that underscore their unbreakable bond. The scope of this research is deliberately concentrated on the camaraderie among these four protagonists, with other themes such as romance, religion, or political intrigue considered only insofar as they intersect directly with the central motif of friendship. This analysis is grounded in the English translation by Pevear (Penguin Classics, 2006) and is enriched by scholarly insights from fields including narrative theory, classical ethics, and prose fiction, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of the enduring power and complexity of friendship in this timeless work.

Ultimately, this *research* seeks to demonstrate that *The Three Musketeers* transcends its historical backdrop to embody timeless human ideals. Through Dumas's masterful craftsmanship, the novel elevates friendship beyond mere narrative function, transforming it into a profound moral principle. It enriches our appreciation of how prose fiction can eloquently explore themes such as loyalty, sacrifice, and virtue through compelling storytelling and intricate character development. By examining the work within both literary and philosophical frameworks, this research highlights the enduring significance of friendship as a fundamental pillar of genuine human connection, emphasizing its universal relevance across eras.

METHOD

This *research* adopts a refined qualitative methodology centered on literary analysis to examine the enduring themes of friendship and loyalty within Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*. Such an approach is particularly apt, as it facilitates an in-depth exploration of the narrative structure, character evolution, and underlying thematic significance (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yuniasti, 2019; Sovacool et al., 2023). The primary text analyzed is the English translation by Pevear (Penguin Classics, 2006), selected for its meticulous preservation of Dumas's original language and tone. Complementing this, scholarly articles and critical essays serve as secondary sources, offering valuable contextual perspectives that enrich the understanding of the novel's core themes.

This research adopts a descriptive and interpretive approach, engaging in meticulous close reading and detailed textual analysis. It centers on the intricate relationships among D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, with particular emphasis on scenes that depict the development of their camaraderie and loyalty. Selected passages are carefully annotated and systematically categorized to reveal how these themes unfold through dialogue, moral decisions, and symbolic gestures, providing a nuanced exploration of their evolving bonds.



Three complementary analytical frameworks are employed: thematic analysis to uncover the recurring motifs of loyalty and friendship; structural narrative analysis to explore how the plot intricately underpin these themes; and character development analysis to demonstrate how personal growth embodies moral virtues. This multifaceted approach illuminates Dumas's masterful use of prose fiction to elevate friendship as a fundamental moral and narrative cornerstone, highlighting enduring values such as trust, honor, and sacrifice with compelling clarity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Previous Research on The Three Musketeers

Previous scholarly investigations have examined various facets of *The Three Musketeers*, particularly emphasizing themes such as honor, loyalty, and political allegiance. Birch (2019), for instance, delves into the tension between friendship and the demands of political and religious commitments, illustrating how the Musketeers often face difficult choices between personal loyalty and their official duties to the state or church. While the *research* engages with notions of loyalty and social structure, it tends to treat friendship as a secondary theme rather than recognizing it as a central moral force, an emphasis this research seeks to foreground. Although Pershina (2021) does not directly analyze *The Three Musketeers*, her intertextual approach to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* within 19th-century Russian literature offers a valuable methodological model. Her work exemplifies how classical texts are reinterpreted within new ideological and cultural contexts, providing an insightful comparative framework for understanding how Dumas's novel explores moral values such as loyalty and virtue within a complex historical and political landscape.

Friendship in Literature: A Brief Overview

In literature, friendship often functions both as a vital narrative element and a moral guide. Spanning from ancient epics to contemporary stories, friendship provides an emotional and ethical foundation that shapes characters' choices and identities. Aristotle's classification in the *Nicomachean Ethics*—distinguishing friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue—serves as a valuable framework for understanding the bond among the Musketeers. Their camaraderie aligns most closely with virtue-based friendship: one rooted in mutual respect, shared peril, and a dedication to justice.

As Tyson (2015) suggests, literary friendships can also symbolize acts of political resistance. Within the context of Dumas's France—an era dominated by monarchical authority and ecclesiastical influence—friendship emerges as a potent counterforce to institutional power. The relationships depicted in *The Three Musketeers* not only propel the narrative forward but also embody ideals that challenge societal corruption and advocate for moral integrity.

Dumas's Literary Style and Historical Background

Dumas's utilization of serialized, briskly-paced storytelling exemplifies his deliberate aim to captivate a wide-ranging 19th-century French readership. Published amidst a climate of political upheaval, *The Three Musketeers* resonates with contemporary concerns surrounding loyalty, honor, and resistance. Set against the backdrop of Louis XIII's reign and the influence of Cardinal Richelieu, the narrative explores the often conflicting realms of personal allegiance and political strategy.



As Kukkonen (2020) notes, the novel's rapid pacing and episodic structure stem from its serial origins, employing narrative acceleration and tension to maintain reader engagement. These structural elements place characters under repeated moral and emotional tests, consistently reaffirming core values such as loyalty, bravery, and integrity. Furthermore, Dumas's rich historical imagination seamlessly weaves real historical figures and events into a tapestry of fictional exploits, heightening the story's authenticity and appeal.

Character Relationships and Development

The evolution of D'Artagnan's relationships with Athos, Porthos, and Aramis lies at the heart of the story. What initially manifests as rivalry, characterized by humorous misunderstandings and the anticipation of duels, gradually transforms into a profound camaraderie rooted in shared experiences and moral conviction. D'Artagnan's decision to stand alongside the Musketeers instead of engaging in conflict underscores how action, rather than mere sentiment, forges genuine friendship within the Dumasian universe. This progression exemplifies Aristotle's concept of virtue-based friendship, where bonds are cultivated through moral qualities rather than superficial ties. D'Artagnan's eventual acceptance into their brotherhood is not merely formal but genuinely earned through acts of bravery, loyalty, and integrity. His journey from outsider to essential member exemplifies the moral significance of friendship—how it influences one's identity and character beyond mere alliances.

Narrative Structure and Thematic Progression

Dumas masterfully constructs the novel around a series of escalating trials that rigorously examine the loyalty of the Musketeers, to one another and to their moral principles. The narrative unfolds through a succession of missions and crises, such as the intrigue surrounding the Queen's diamond studs and Milady's sinister treachery, each revealing the profound depth of the characters' dedication. These recurring episodes, rescue efforts, confrontations, and moral quandaries, are not mere repetitions; rather, they serve as vital thematic elements. They underscore the notion that genuine friendship requires continual renewal through acts of sacrifice.

The renowned motto, "All for one, and one for all," transcends symbolism, being repeatedly tested and reaffirmed throughout the story. Moreover, the novel's episodic structure reflects the internal evolution of its characters. D'Artagnan's maturation parallels the strengthening of his bonds with his companions. Each narrative segment functions both as a character's trial and as a reinforcement of the central themes, transforming the story into a compelling exploration of the moral resilience inherent in true friendship.

Loyalty vs. Political Power

Dumas depicts a world governed by power, deception, and concealment, where figures like Cardinal Richelieu symbolize the oppressive machinery of state control, and Milady de Winter exemplifies personal treachery. Amidst these forces, the Musketeers maintain their unwavering camaraderie, even when it entails challenging authority itself. Their steadfast loyalty to one another, often in defiance of royal or ecclesiastical commands, elevates friendship to a revolutionary act. The daring mission to retrieve the Queen's diamond studs exemplifies this ethos: the Musketeers risk their lives driven by a higher sense of honor that transcends allegiance to a corrupt system.



In this light, friendship becomes both a profound emotional bond and a form of political resistance. Dumas's narrative critiques blind obedience, proposing that genuine loyalty should be rooted in personal integrity rather than imposed hierarchies. Through this lens, he leverages friendship to challenge the legitimacy of institutional power, positioning fidelity between individuals as a nobler and more just alternative to tyranny.

Discussions

An examination of *The Three Musketeers* reveals that Alexandre Dumas's portrayal of friendship transcends mere personal connection, emerging instead as a powerful ideological statement intricately woven into the fabric of a complex historical and political landscape. The novel elevates friendship to a morally exalted force, one that not only molds individual character but also serves as a subtle critique of the dominant power structures of 17th-century France. Through the intimate camaraderie shared by D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, Dumas venerates loyalty and brotherhood as guiding principles, values that stand in stark contrast to a world rife with deception, ambition, and rigid hierarchy.

At its essence, the friendship portrayed in the novel exemplifies Aristotle's ideal of virtue-based camaraderie, a bond rooted not in utility or fleeting pleasures but in shared moral principles and mutual admiration. As the narrative unfolds—through duels, trials, missions, and sacrifices—the characters face continual tests that serve to strengthen and deepen their connection. This form of friendship is dynamic, evolving through adversity and reaffirmed through deliberate actions. Dumas masterfully employs these recurring challenges to demonstrate the resilient nature of genuine loyalty, emphasizing that such relationships are forged through deeds rather than words. In this manner, friendship becomes not merely a promise but a testament—demonstrated through action, validated by commitment.

Moreover, the evolution of D'Artagnan's character functions as a central narrative thread that underscores this theme. Initially impulsive and driven by a fierce sense of honor, he gradually matures into a man guided by steadfast principles, with his loyalty to his companions ultimately surpassing personal ambitions. This transformation is not solely shaped by external circumstances but is deeply rooted in his growing bond with the Musketeers. Through these relationships, he learns the virtues of restraint, courage, and integrity. Dumas eloquently conveys that genuine friendship possesses the transformative power to shape and elevate one's character. It is through meaningful connections with others, rather than in solitude, that individuals cultivate true ethical strength.

The novel's architecture significantly enhances this central theme. Dumas's episodic storytelling weaves a series of cycles—moments of tension followed by resolution—that serve to continually test and reaffirm friendship across a spectrum of circumstances—personal, political, and spiritual. These recurring patterns are not mere repetitions but purposeful devices that enrich the reader's understanding of loyalty from multiple perspectives. For example, in the subplot involving the Queen's diamond studs, friendship is exemplified through acts of heroic sacrifice; in the episodes featuring Milady, it emerges as a moral alliance rooted in fighting against evil; and in scenes depicting everyday companionship, it reveals itself through humor, warmth, and emotional steadiness. These repeated trials reflect the real-world imperative of constantly reaffirming one's loyalties amid temptation and fear, emphasizing that true friendship endures through continual reaffirmation and resilience.



What is perhaps most striking is how Dumas elevates friendship to stand in stark opposition to institutional authority. The characters' unwavering loyalty to each other often puts them at odds with Cardinal Richelieu's cunning political machinations and the often hypocritical morals of the church. Through this juxtaposition, Dumas transforms friendship from mere camaraderie into a powerful act of defiance—a deliberate rebellion against systemic corruption. The Musketeers' motto, "All for one, and one for all," transcends mere words; it becomes a symbol of resistance. It embodies the idea that genuine mutual loyalty among individuals carries a greater moral weight than blind obedience to an unjust or corrupt authority.

This stark contrast is vividly exemplified in the character of Milady de Winter, who embodies treachery, cunning, and the exploitation of relationships for her own advantage. Her alliances are strategic and self-centered, serving as a reflection of the political opportunism that Dumas critiques. Ultimately, her demise is brought about not by official institutions, but through the collective discernment and moral integrity of the Musketeers—underscoring Dumas's belief that true moral authority resides not in institutions, but in steadfast and principled friendships.

Furthermore, the novel resonates deeply with 19th-century audiences while simultaneously reflecting its 17th-century setting. Crafted amidst France's turbulent period of political upheaval—marked by revolutions, empires, and restorations—*The Three Musketeers* presents a nostalgic yet incisive exploration of loyalty and individual virtue. Dumas's idealized depiction of noble friendship can be interpreted as a longing for steadfast moral principles amid an era where loyalties frequently shifted and were often compromised. In this light, the novel beckons readers to contemplate which forms of loyalty are truly enduring and which are worthy of sacrifice.

In literary terms, the theme of friendship functions as a vital structural counterweight to the novel's exhilarating adventure elements. While swordplay, espionage, and travel propel the narrative with energy and momentum, it is the steady emotional foundation of genuine friendships that sustains the reader's engagement. Absent this human core, the story's action would risk becoming superficial; however, Dumas masterfully employs action to illuminate character, and character to enrich the emotional resonance of each scene. Thus, friendship emerges as the essential thread that seamlessly connects the novel's thrilling escapades with its deeper ethical vision.

Consequently, *The Three Musketeers* elevates friendship beyond mere theme, casting it as a vital moral force in constant motion. It endures trials through conflict, grows stronger through trust, and stands as a defiant challenge to authority. Through masterful literary craftsmanship—encompassing structural design, nuanced character development, and rich historical allegory—Dumas weaves an enduring ideal of loyalty that surpasses social distinctions, political loyalties, and even personal peril. In doing so, he invites readers to acknowledge the profound transformative potential of friendship, urging us to view it not merely as a private indulgence, but as a noble and vital public good.

CONCLUSION

This research delves into the motif of friendship within Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, illuminating how the author intricately constructs, tests, and ultimately affirms the enduring bonds among D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis through sophisticated narrative techniques, nuanced character development, and moral dilemmas. The analysis reveals that



friendship in the novel transcends mere sentiment; it embodies a profound ethical commitment rooted in shared principles, mutual respect, and personal sacrifice. The episodic nature of the plot underscores loyalty as a central theme, with the characters' actions consistently demonstrating a readiness to prioritize their comrades above political machinations or institutional interests. Dumas juxtaposes this noble ideal of personal loyalty against the corrupting influences of power, embodied by figures such as Cardinal Richelieu and Milady de Winter, thereby suggesting that genuine friendship serves as a potent form of resistance against moral decay. Ultimately, friendship emerges as both the moral heartbeat and the thematic core of the narrative, propelling the story forward while conveying a timeless message about the resilience of unity, virtue, and honor in the face of adversity.

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