

Alexandre Dumas: Historian and Storyteller

When I was thirteen years old, I read a book that changed my life. That book was Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. This brick-sized tome was handed to me by my mother, who had made it her task to make me read "the classics" and "be well-read," and so I spent our month-long vacation sitting on the sandy shore of Lake Michigan and devouring Dumas' tale. Up until that point, I had mostly read books for their plot; my idea of a good book was an entertaining tale, and most of the ones I read had happy endings. But *The Count of Monte Cristo* woke me from that childish naiveté that books are simply entertainment. Dumas understood that life is neither tragic nor always filled with happy endings, and in the bittersweet ending of *The Count of Monte Cristo* he captured the essence of what it means to be human. This book is a captivating and profound tale that evokes emotion and provokes thought, and when I realized how much meaning and truth this great story held, I fell in love with Dumas. I began to devour other novels he had written, making my way through battered copies of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Black Tulip* that I had gotten from the library. But soon, that was not enough. I did not want to simply read Dumas' works in translation. I wanted to appreciate them in their original language and to understand the life of this great writer and the context out of which his stories emerged. I decided that I wanted to dedicate myself to studying the works of Dumas as serious literary creations, and to do so, I knew that I would have to assemble a library of materials by Dumas and related to his works. And thus began my collection.

Dumas was an incredibly prolific author: he spent his entire life writing in every genre imaginable. He travelled, took part in revolutions, devoured great literary classics in most major European languages and spit all those experiences back out as captivating stories. He wrote plays, essays, poetry, novels, travelogues, memoirs, speeches, cookbooks, translations, adaptations...the list is endless. It would be impossible to collect all of the works that Dumas had read and was inspired by, as well as everything that was written about him and inspired by him. Thus, my collection is primarily concerned with Dumas as storyteller.

The French word "*histoire*" has two meanings: "story" and "history," and Dumas understood how much these two meanings were linked. He held the opinion that history makes the best stories, and his greatest works of fiction are indeed based on history. Even when he wrote non-fiction (articles, essays, memoirs and so forth), he wrote it as a storyteller, bringing alive the events and people he wrote of. Dumas had a great knowledge of history, which he learned first-hand from original historical documents, memoirs and journals by French historians such as Pierre de l'Estoile, Marguerite de Valois and Pierre de la Porte. He was also incredibly well read – well versed in great writers such as Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Moliere, Walter Scott and many others, and all that knowledge and reading made its way into his stories. He brought history alive as a tale and he told tales as well as the great writers he read. Both during his lifetime and after his death, he inspired legions of other authors to write adaptations, sequels, and prequels of his stories or to retell them from the point of view of a different character. So, as I collected, I focused on storytelling: how did Dumas transform history into fiction? Which stories did he choose to retell and how did he retell them? What was his attitude towards history and how is that attitude visible in his fiction and in his story-like non-fiction? Which stories inspired him? How have

Dumas' stories inspired others? What stories did that inspiration lead to? The books I collect are therefore primarily the works of Dumas, the major historical sources he used, the novels of other authors inspired by Dumas, as well as some amount of non-fiction about Dumas' works.

I have been assembling my collection since I was in eleventh grade of high school. I have had the good fortune to be able to visit France several times, and during each trip I went to FNAC – a French chain of stores resembling Borders – and cleaned out their Dumas section on each trip. Dumas' works are published much more in France than in the U.S., so the literature section of most FNAC stores contains quite a few volumes by Dumas, usually ones that have been recently republished with introductions and annotations by Dumas scholars. Used-book stores in France also tend to have quite a few works by Dumas, and at cheaper prices. Whenever my family visits a town with a foreign-language bookstore (Chicago's Europa Books and Schoenhof's Bookstore in Cambridge are two that come to mind) I always insist on going with the hopes of finding a Dumas tome I don't yet have. However, since Dumas was so prolific, it is impossible to keep all of his titles in print. A lot of them are lost and forgotten. Thankfully, there are two quite complete databases of the complete works of Dumas (dumaspere.com and cadytech.com/Dumas), which allow me to seek out poems, essays, introductions and other minor writings by Dumas in the volumes in which they have been published, as well as informing me of other out of print works by Dumas. These sites also have extremely valuable bibliographies of titles about Dumas and that were used by Dumas. Furthermore, the introductions and annotations of many Dumas novels contain lists of historical texts that Dumas used. Another helpful site, pasticheDumas.com, allows me to seek out those titles which were inspired by Dumas' stories. Using all these resources, I scour sites such as abebooks.com to find the titles I am looking for. I often have to wait for a particularly rare tome to appear, and have had to pay for these books to be shipped to me from all corners of the world. My holiday wish list is a long list of more expensive Dumas titles that I have been receiving, one by one, for each consecutive holiday.

I hope to continue collecting as I have been doing up until now, using the information available to me to keep steadily building my collection of titles. I also hope that someday some of the manuscripts of unpublished Dumas works, currently kept at the Auckland City Library of all places, will be published and available for me to purchase. I am also looking for a more affordable edition of the *Memoirs of Monsieur de Rochefort* – one of the major sources for Dumas' *Three Musketeers* – as well as some extremely rare sequels to Dumas' Valois Trilogy (*Queen Margot*, *The Lady of Monsoreau* and *The Forty Five*). In the meantime, I will keep hunting for those editions of Dumas novels edited by Claude Schopp that I don't yet have. I feel that I am on the way to one day having a collection that will be useful to me as I pursue my studies in graduate school and go on to work in academia. I am particularly interested in studying French Romanticism, a movement to which Dumas belonged, and in elevating Dumas to the rank of other great others of his age, such as Hugo and Balzac. Having his works at my fingertips will, I hope, aid me in this endeavour and allow me to show the genius of Dumas to the world.

Works by Dumas

This list is by no means comprehensive. Dumas was a prolific author, and I have quite a few of his titles. I have attempted here to provide an idea of the scope and variety of my collection.

Novels

Dumas, Alexandre. *La Reine Margot / La Dame de Monsoreau*. Annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1992. Condition: Good.

The above work, as well as most of the ones in this section, are annotated and introduced by Claude Schopp, a foremost Dumas scholar who also prefaces these works with historical and literary context and includes documents pertaining to the origin of the work.

--. *Les Quarante Cinq*. Annotated by Claude Schopp Paris: Robert Laffont, 1992. Condition: Good.

--. *Joseph Balsamo*. Annotated by Claude Schopp Paris: Robert Laffont, 1990. Condition: Very Good.

--. *Le Collier de la Reine/Angé Pitou*. Annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1990. Condition: Very Good.

--. *La Comtesse de Charny / Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*. Annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1990. Condition: Fair.

--. *Les Trois Mousquetaires/Vingt Ans Apres*. Annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991. Condition: Good.

--. *The Three Musketeers*. Translated by Eleanor Hochman. New York: Signet, 2006. Condition: good.

--. *Le Collier de la reine*. Annotated and prefaced by Sylvi Thorel –Cailleteau. Gallimard, 2002.

--. *Isabel de Baviere*. Coda, 2008.

--. *Georges*. Gallimard, 1974. Annotated and introduced by Leon-Francois Hoffmann. Condition: Fair.

--. *Georges*. Translated by Tina A. Kover, with an Introduction and notes by Werner Sollors. New York: Modern Library, 2008.

--. *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Trans. Lorenzo Carcaterra (?). New York: Modern Library, 2002.

This particular edition is the first Dumas novel I ever read. I purchased this book at Borders after having read it, because I knew that I wanted to own it, although this is not much of a critical edition.

--. *La Dame pale*. Gallimard, 2006.

This is the very first Dumas book in French that I purchased, on my first trip to France. It is an extract from a collection called *Les Mille et Un Fantomes (the Thousand and One Phantoms)*.

- . Olympe de Cleves. Annotated by Claude Schopp. Gallimard, 2000.
 - . Les Mille et Un Fantomes and La Femme au collier de velours. Annotated and introduced by Anne-Marie Callet-Bianco. Gallimard, 2006. Condition: fair.
 - . Le Maitre d'Armes. Introduction by Michel Cadot. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002. Condition: good.
 - . Le Trou de l'enfer/Dieu dispose. Introduced and annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Phebus, 2008. Condition: new.
 - . Les confessions d'une favorite. Preface by Dominique Fernandez, introduction by Claude Schopp. Paris: Passage du Maris, 1999. Condition: Very good.
 - . Les Mohicans de Paris. 2-volume set. Introduced and annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Phebus, 1998. Condition: New.
 - . Aventures de Lyderic. Dijon: Motifs, 2008. Preface by Francis Lacassin.
 - . Acté. Introduction and notes by Claude Aziza. Paris: Presses Pocket, 1984. Condition: Very Good.
 - . Histoires de fees et de sorcieres. Introduction and notes by Chantal Chemla. Paris: Pocket, 2002.
- This is an extremely good edition of several of Dumas' fairy tales and children's stories, published by 'POCKET,' a French publishing company that specializes in such extensive editions. These stories are painstakingly researched, introduced and explained by Chantal Chemla, who also provides literary texts that may have inspired Dumas, as well as an extensive summary of historical events at the time of publication.
- .Memoires d'une Aveugle. Memoires de la Marquise. Paris: Le vasseur et Cie, 1902 (?). condition: good.
 - . Cecile. Paris: alteredit, 2009. Condition: very good.
 - . Monseigneur Gaston Phoebus. La Tour d'Aigues: editions de l'aube, 2008.condition: very good.
 - . Othon l'archer. La Tour d'Aigues: editions de l'aube, 2007. Condition: very good.
 - . La Guerre des Femmes. Paris: Phebus, 2003. Preface by Claude Schopp. Condition: fair.
 - . La Guerre des Femmes. La Princesse de Monaco. Paris: Le Vasseur et Cie, 1902 (?). Condition: good.

Although I already owned La Guerre des Femmes, I purchased this volume because it contained La Princesse de Monaco, a rather more obscure work attributed to Dumas but believed by experts to be written by his close friend, Countess Dash, and edited by him. I found this tome on an Italian used books site whose name I no longer remember, and it came with a note from the seller that I still keep, and which says, in Italian "congratulations on your acquisition."

--. Les Blancs et les Bleus. Introduced and annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Phebus, 2006. Condition: fair.

--. Les Compagnons de Jehu. Introduced and annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Phebus, 2006. Condition: New.

--. Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine. Introduced and annotated by Claude Schopp. Paris: Phebus, 2005.

This novel, believed to be lost, was discovered by Dumas expert Claude Schopp in the National Library of France in 2005. The novel was then published with his introduction and annotations in the present edition.

--, Schopp, Claude. Le Salut de l'Empire. Preface by Claude Schopp. Paris: Phebus, 2008.

This sequel to the above title, "Le Chevalier de Sainte Hermine," was completed by Claude Schopp based on the notes Dumas left.

Theatre

--. Drames Romantiques. Lonrai: Omnibus, 2002. Prefaced and annotated by Claude Aziza.

--. Antony. Gallimard, 2002.

A critical edition of one of Dumas' most famous plays, with a preface and annotations by Pierre-Louis Rey, a bibliography, a chronology, a performance history and a summary of the play. I purchased this novel (as well as everything else the bookstore had by Dumas) at *Europa books*, a foreign language bookstore in Chicago, during one of my family's many trips to this city.

Poetry and Non-Fiction

--. Voyage en Russie. Paris: Hermann, 1960. Condition: very used.

This is Dumas' description of his travels through Russia; it contains an enormity of information about Russian history and culture in addition to Dumas' own experiences. This editions has valuable notes and an introduction by Jacques Suffel, as well as a preface by Andre Maurois, one of the foremost Dumas biographers. The text itself is in good condition, but the binding is in rather poor condition, as I have taken this book along on my travels to Russia to seek out the places Dumas went to in an attempt to trace the trail of his travels.

--. Trois Maitres/Italiens et Flamands. Paris: Le vasseur et Cie, 1902(?) Condition: Fair.

Nodier-Menessier, Marie (editor). *La Perce Neige*. A collection of poetry by some foremost 19th century poets, including a very rare poem by Dumas.

This rare collection (the only one I have found for sale to date) was purchased by me online from a Lithuanian vendor.

Les Etoiles du Monde. Paris: Garnier Freres, 1858.

This is a collection of articles by Dumas and other authors about women who have changed the course of history. Dumas contributed four articles to this work, in which his penchant for storytelling and for recounting history in a captivating manner is visible. It has a handsome binding and illustrations by G. Staal and is in excellent condition, considering that it was published during Dumas' lifetime! This book was given to me as a holiday present by my parents.

Historical Works used by Dumas

Rosset, Francois de. Histoires tragiques. Paris, Librairie Generale Francaise, 1994. Condition: Good.

This book of "moral tales" from 1614 contains a retelling of the story of Bussy d'Amboise and the Countess of Monsoreau, historical figures who became the protagonists of Dumas' novel *The Lady of Monsoreau*. This is an annotated edition that also contains a preface that places the work into historical and literary context. I purchased it online.

Sandras, Courtiliz de. Memoires de Monsieur d'Artagnan. Paris: Mercure de France, 1985. Condition: Very Good.

This fictional work, masquerading as the memoirs of D'artagnan (a real historical figure and also the protagonist of the Three Musketeers), was one of the major inspiration for Dumas' Three Musketeers. I purchased this work online.

Valois, Marguerite de. Memoires. Paris: Charpentier: 1860.

These are the Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois, more commonly known as Queen Margot. She was queen of France and the protagonist of Dumas' novel *Queen Margot*, and Dumas used her memoirs extensively when writing this novel as well as its sequels.

Non-fiction works about the works of Dumas

Dantzig, Charles. Le Grand Livre de Dumas. New York: Les Belles Lettres, 1999.

A collection of critical essays about Dumas and his works.

Lenotre, G. Le Vrai Chevalier de Maison Rouge. Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard. No date.

This work explores the history behind one of Dumas' most famous novels about the French Revolution, *The Chevalier of Maison-Rouge*. I received this rare work as a holiday present from my parents, who purchased it online.

Maud, Kari & Nanson, Phil. The Four Musketeers: The True Story of d'Artagnan, Porthos, Aramis and Athos. Tempus, 2005.

Macdonald, Roger. The Man in the Iron Mask: The True Story of the Most Famous Prisoner in History and the Four Musketeers.

The above two works are detailed books about the true history behind Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* and its sequels.

Mouton, Leo. Bussy d'Amboise et Madame de Montsoreau. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1912. Condition: poor.

This rather rare and difficult to find work tells the true story, based on historical documents, of the historical figures on whom Dumas based the protagonists of *The Lady of Monsoreau*. Due to the rarity of this work, I purchased online the first copy I could locate, which unfortunately is in rather poor condition. I plan to have it rebound.

Fiction by other authors inspired by Dumas

Blanquet, Albert. Les Amours de D'Artagnan. Paris: Edouard Blot, 1880. Condition: very good.

A sequel to the Three Musketeers that was published shortly after Dumas' death. It is illustrated and rather rare; I purchased the work online as soon as a copy became available.

Brust, Steven. The Phoenix Guards. New York: Tor, 1991.

This novel, as well as the following works by Steven Brust, are a fantasy adaptation of Dumas' *Three Musketeers* and its sequels (*Five Hundred Years After* is an adaptation of Dumas' *Ten Years After* and the three novels that follow are an adaptation of Dumas' *The Viscount of Bragelonne*, which is usually published in three parts). It is set in a fantasy world that Brust had previously created in other novels. Although he changes the plot and the gender of some characters, he still perfectly captures Dumas' writing style, the essence of his characters, and his storytelling ability.

--. *Five Hundred Years After*. New York: Tor, 1991. First edition.

--. *The Paths of the Dead*. New York: Tor, 1992.

--. *The Lord of Castle Black*. New York: Tor, 2003. With an introduction by Neil Gaiman.

--. *Sethra Lavode*. New York: Tor, 2004.

D'Almeida, Sarah. *Death of a Musketeer*. New York: Berkley Prime Crime, 2006.

--. *The Musketeers' Seamstress*. New York: Berkley Prime Crime, 2007.

--. *The Musketeer's Apprentice*. New York: Berkeley Prime Crime, 2007.

--. *A Death in Gascony*. New York: Berkeley Prime Crime, 2008

The above novels are from a series of *Musketeers Mysteries*, mystery novels that rewrite the story of the Three Musketeers to allow them to solve various crimes. Although in some ways historically inaccurate and unfaithful to Dumas' intentions, it is, on the other hand, a clever reinterpretation of some

characters and their intentions. I discovered the first book in this series at a mystery bookstore in Ann Arbor and purchased the rest from Borders and Amazon.

Kluger, Daniel. *Musketeer*. Moscow: Text, 2007. Condition: very good.

A Russian novel retelling the story of Porthos; this is a very clever and well-thought novel which completely reinterprets this character. This novel was given to my mother to pass on to me by a friend who knew of my love for Dumas.

Nimier, Roger. *D'Artagnan amoureux*. Paris; Gallimard, 1962. Condition: good.

Another title I purchased at the new and used books store Gibert Jeune in Paris, this is one of the more famous sequels to the *Three Musketeers*, which takes place fifteen years before *Twenty Years After*.

Rivais, Yak. *Milady, mon amour*. Paris: editions Jean Picollec, 1986. Condition: Good.

This is a rare and difficult-to-find novel that I purchased from a French website that only ships books to the European Union. I had it shipped to a friend who lives in Europe, who then sent it to me. It is considered one of the best novels inspired by the Three Musketeers, and is a vindication of the character of Milady, who is unjustly killed at the end of the novel.

Vayre, Charles. *La Fille de Chicot*. Paris: editions Jules Tallandier. No date given. Condition: Fair.

Williamson, Jack. *The Legion of Space*. New York: Pyramid Books, 1967. Condition: Fair.

Among the works Dumas has inspired are science-fiction adaptations of his novels. This work, in which the author combines the Three Musketeers with a Falstaff character and sets the story in space, is a fascinating work both scientifically and because it captures the essence of Dumas' characters and ideas. This is an out-of-print used edition that I purchased at Dawn Treader bookstore in Ann Arbor, Michigan.