

Similar Means Different Ends

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Keywords: The Shawshank Redemption, the Count of Monte Cristo, Redemption

Abstract: These Two Literay Works, the Count of Monte Cristo and the Shawshank Redemption, Are about the Stories of Prison-Breaking and Both Express the Inspirational Theme: Redemption. in Human History, People Never Stop Exploring the Subject of Redemption Both in Literature and in Films. This Paper Deals with the Same Theme in the Shawshank Redemption and the Count Monte Cristo in Order to Provide Important Reference for Excellent Works.

1. Introduction

The Shawshank Redemption is an Adaptation of the Stephen King Novella *Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption*. This Film Tells a Story of a Banker, Andy Dufresn, Who Was Put into Prison for Murdering His Wife and Her Lover. in Fact, Andy Was Not the Murder But he Was Wrongly Sentenced to Life Imprison. in the Prison Shawshank, Andy Seemed to Live the Rest of His Life in Despair, But he didn't Yield to the Dark Situation, on the Contrary, he Attempted to Find New Meaning and Kept Hope for Freedom. Day by Day he Kept Digging a Wall and Tried to Dig a Tunnel with a Small Hammer and Eventually on a Stormy Night he Got Away from the Prison Successfully and Regained Freedom. Another Story *the Count of Monte Cristo* is Classic Works of the French Writer Alexandre Dumas, Which Was a Popular Fiction Well-Known for Its Plot and Drew Widespread Attention in Its Time. *the Count of Monte Cristo* Goes Like This: in the Time of Napoleon's Hundred Days Period, Edward ,a Young Sailor, Was Commissioned by the Captain to Deliver a Secret Letter to Napoleon's Party. But he Was Trapped by Two Mean Men , One Was His Love Rival, the Other Was the Sailor Who Coveted the captain's Position. Edward Was Finally Put into Prison by the Tricks of Those Two Men, in Addition, His Father Died from Frame-Up, Which Heavily Blew Him and for Which His Bright and Promising Prospect Turned into Endless Despair. Fortunately, Edward Met an Old Priest in Prison, Who Taught Him So Much That It Rekindled His Hope for Life. Edward Fled from the Prison in Disguise of the Dead Priest and Gained a Great Amount of Wealth and Started His Own Way of Redemption Afterwards. in General, Both *the Shawshank Redemption* and *the Count of Monte Cristo* Have a Common Theme: Redemption.

2. An Overview of the Shawshank Redemption

"Fight for freedom all your life" is the slogan of *The Shawshank Redemption*, which conveys the firm belief: don't give up. In the film, the belief in freedom never ceases running high under the calm sea.

This story happened in 1947 in which "hope" is the theme throughout the film. Such a documentary-like film emphasizes the prisoners' yearning for and pursuing freedom in the freedom-deprived setting with high emphasis on discipline. The film mainly tells the story of a young banker, Andy, who got so indignant that he planned to kill his wife because he found his wife had an affair with a man, but later, he gave up the idea. Eventually, just on that evening his wife and her lover were killed, and Andy was accused of the murdering, and then he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in Shawshank prison. As a young banker, Andy had a very powerful mind in commerce, due to his proficiency in financial system, he started to handle tax problems for the prison officer, and gradually became an important tool to launder money for the warden. Just at this time, a new, young prisoner came and disturbed the false peace in Shawshank prison. He told Andy that he knew the truth of the death of Andy's wife and her lover. Knowing that the young man

might prove his innocence, Andy got excited. He went to the warden, hoping the warden would help him reverse his verdict. The warden pretended to agree to help Andy, but in fact he wanted to keep Andy in Shawshank prison. The warden had the new prison killed, which pushed Andy into abyss. Andy became depressed until one stormy night he managed to break out of the Shawshank prison. After he regained freedom, Andy began his “redemption”, he not only collected the warden’s money, but also lodged an accusation against the warden. At the end of the film Andy met his fellow prisoner on the sunny beach in Mexico.

Revenge underlies the theme of the film, which promotes hope - “faith” for pursuing freedom. The film reflects the cruel reality that time is passing relentlessly while the environment will never change and how people plan the future when in despair. Just as a line in the film “If your heart is locked, you are locked wherever you are, freedom does not come from the outside, but rather from the inside”, everyone is his own master to save himself. If he chooses to give up himself, no one can take him to freedom.

3. An Overview of the Count of Monte Cristo

Edward Dantes was a young, kind and energetic sailor who was optimistic and yearned for a happy future life. He had a beautiful fiancée and amiable parents. After the death of the old captain, he became deputy captain. Before the old captain died, he commissioned Edward to deliver a secret letter to the Napoleonic party. Unexpectedly he was accused of treason because two men, one was his jealous rival, Fernand, and the other was the envious crewmate Danglars, worked out a scheme so that Dantes was arrested on his wedding ceremony and was imprisoned. The judge in charge of Edward’s case was Villefort, and Villefort found that it was his own father that received the secret letter. Villefort declared Edward a political prisoner and put him into the prison Chateau d’If, a grim island fortress off Marseilles without trial. So Edward’s bright and happy life came to an end suddenly. He was enduring the mental and physical torture in the dark prison. Edward’s love for his fiancée supported him to live on from the beginning of his prison life. But the two men killed his father and took his lover. When he was in despair, he met a fellow prisoner Abbe Faria, who taught him a lot of knowledge and correctly deduced Edward’s enemies, which brought new hope to Edward’s life. On the night when the old Abbe died, Dantes disguised himself as the old priest’s body in the bag and was thrown into the sea, finally Edward successfully escaped from the prison Chateau d’If. After regaining his freedom, Edward turned to be a powerful and mysterious Count of Monte Cristo by the large fortune he had inherited from the old Abbe, and with the knowledge he had learned from the old Abbe, he began his “path to redemption”. He arrived from the Orient to enter the fashionable Parisian world of the 1830s and avenged himself on the men who conspired to destroy him. Thus Edward completed his redemption. In this novel, revenge is not the only theme, for revenge reflects the hero’s pursuit of humanity and freedom.

4. The Comparison between the Shawshank Redemption and the Count of Monte Cristo

Both *The Shawshank Redemption* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* have a common theme of revenge, but the two works in vengeance reveal the pursuit of freedom, hope and love, greatly weakening the dark side of revenge. Even some readers think that *The Shawshank Redemption* is actually the film version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which clearly shows that the two themes and content are very similar.

4.1 Differences in the Content

Edward in *The Count of Monte Cristo* and Andy in *The Shawshank Redemption* have the same and bright future. Andy is a young and promising banker and Edward is the deputy captain on the ship Pharaoh, favored by the captain and will soon marry the beautiful bride. But the two are imprisoned for different reasons; Andy wants to revenge his wife for her affair but later gives up while his wife and lover are killed that night, so he is charged with killing and put into Shawshank prison; Edward is put into jail as a political criminal because the jealousy rivals work out a trap. As

Mr. Lu Xun says, "Tragedy means tearing beautiful things into pieces in order to be seen", in today's words they are two typical young talents and two beautiful flowers in bloom and abruptly are cut off, which is very regretful.

In addition, the two works explore such series of issues as the social justice, desire and satisfaction. In *The Shawshank Redemption* Andy says: "Outside the prison I am an honest man, as straight as an arrow, but when I become a cheater I have no choice but to go into prison." In *The Count of Monte Cristo* the kind and honest captain Edward gets into jail because of the desires of others' while the people who conspire the scheme become prominent in society. The difference between them is that the ironic nature in *The Shawshank Redemption* comes stronger. The similar plots and the totally different content constitute the same theme of the two works - freedom, hope and, redemption.

4.2 Differences in the Way of Redemption

In *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edward's way of redemption is the struggle between the individual power and the evil forces of society by means of the knowledge and wealth. This kind of redemption can be attributed to the confrontation between economic powers. With brilliant status and great fortune whoever grasps justice can win. This is what people are craving for because the weak can get stronger when obtaining a favorable turning. Just like the heroes in all knight-errant plays, they fall down the cliff or into the water but never die, instead, they unexpectedly meet the skilled person in seclusion, from whom they gain the peerless and magic power to take revenge and to save the common people. This is the hero worship that people all have; facing the hardship and setback, people wish to be favored and to be saved by destiny. This redemption can produce happiness for vengeance and a new lease of life. Though the final success is delightful, it can never touch the depth of the heart. *The Count Monte Cristo* is a moving story with exciting scenes, in general, some think it deals with vengeance while others think it is about hope. The publication of *The Count of Monte Cristo* is closely related to the social background of that time. In the 19th century, France, after the Great Revolution, was in turmoil. Nobles, civilians, or any social classes, held a wait-and-see attitude and the disturbing social state forced people to pursue something they can get from reading books. *The Count of Monte Cristo* was published in the newspaper and brought a mental peace to the French people.

In *The Shawshank Redemption* Andy's road to redemption is to fight desperately. Almost all of his perspectives on the road to war are in the dark and horrible prison, which isolates all the sources of wealth and the accidental assistance of skilled people. If the redemption in *The Count of Monte Cristo* is the struggle between the economic bases, then the redemption in *The Shawshank Redemption* is the struggle in the superstructure.

When the cage of today is hard to break, any blind expectations of the future are as unrealistic as daydreaming. And prison is the right place to bury hope and freedom. No legendary person is created in *The Shawshank Redemption*, and no fabulous wealth is waiting to be dug. People helplessly face the bare truth and they are driven to find hope in despair. *The Shawshank Redemption* is about the life-and-death fight between the individual and his ego, as the novel says, "Do not forget that there are... places... in the world that are not made out of stone, there is something... inside... that they can not get to...that is hope." Seizing hope is no different from a gambling, and the only difference between them is the stake- how much a person wants to bet and whether money or life can be lost. When weighing the advantages and disadvantages, most people take money as the standard. When Andy is fighting for hope from despair, he bets on his life. Some say the really fearful people are the fearless group of people who disdain death. If a man does not fear death, nothing can threaten him. If he does not fear death, he will not be timid and overcautious.

4.3 Similarity in Theme

The Count of Monte Cristo and *The Shawshank Redemption* both underlie prison-breaking and both express the inspirational theme: redemption. At the end of *The Count of Monte Cristo* Edward writes to Maximilian "Live, then, and be happy, beloved children of my heart, and never forget, that

until the day when God will deign to reveal the future to man, all human wisdom is contained in these two words- wait and hope.” In *The Shawshank Redemption* Andy’s path to redemption is fighting against his ego in the dark, and after all roads are cut off, he can still dig one to freedom. “Fear can hold you prisoner, hope can set you free. A strong man can save himself, a great man can save another.” This trip of redemption is the power to face the hardship directly driven by his own potential, to attain his goal without dreaming the outside power and to choose his own knowledge and expertise. So when people see Andy crawl out of the sewer and embrace the freedom in the storm, they burst into tears because they are shocked. This way of redemption comes down to the bottom of people’s heart without fancy package and without fight for wealth, and every one can reach the goal with their own perseverance and willpower. In this film there is a line “there is something... inside... that they can not get to...that is hope”. The same word “hope” in these works are expressed accidentally, which shows on the same road to redemption the same theme is equally advocated.

In sum, the same redemption in these two stories is realized in different ways. After reading one story, people feel delighted and are convinced that when they are confronted with hardship they should not feel defeated, instead, they should believe they are bound to find a way to win. After reading another story, people feel released and shocked and are convinced that even all the roads are cut off, they can still dig one with hope and perseverance.

5. Conclusion

The Shawshank Redemption and *The Count of Monte Cristo* are two stories featuring the same encouraging theme. The deep analysis of the two works can give enlightenment to people in the current situation. Pursuing freedom and love, finding rescue and fighting in desperate circumstances coincide with the current values of people. The analysis in multiple perspectives can help form correct understanding to these two works and fully play an important educational role.

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