

# The Black Musketeer



The Black Musketeer:  
Reevaluating Alexandre Dumas  
within the Francophone World

Edited by

Eric Martone

**CAMBRIDGE  
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P U B L I S H I N G

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I would also like to extend my gratitude to Marianne Gendron, who allowed her portrait of Dumas to serve as the cover for this book. Her painting is an adaptation of illustrator Honoré Daumier's 1860s portrait of Dumas, which emphasizes the writer's "exoticness" and Caribbean roots. Gendron created her painting in the presence of the original, which is owned privately by the Samuels family. Daumier's portrait was vetted when his initials H.D. were discovered on Dumas's lapel in the painting. The illustrator was a frequent visitor and admirer of Dumas and the two were both renowned chefs. Dumas even wrote a 2,000-page cookbook, not yet translated in its entirety into English. Gendron's portrait is the only copy made from Daumier's original, which has been exhibited only once in the past 90 years (in Berlin in 1926). Further, an image of Daumier's portrait is a rare inclusion in books on Dumas. Her captivating portrait, as an American interpretation of a French classic emphasizing Dumas's connections to the broader francophone world, provides a fitting visual introduction to the work collected in this volume. Gendron's painting, as well as other art works, can be viewed at [www.mariannegendron.com](http://www.mariannegendron.com).

Part of the material for my chapter in this collection included some of the results from my dissertation research, which was supported in part by a Bernadotte E. Schmitt Grant from the American Historical Association.

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INTRODUCTION:  
ALEXANDRE DUMAS  
AS A FRANCOPHONE WRITER

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Alexandre Dumas *père*, author of *The Three Musketeers*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*, is the most famous French writer of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In 2002, his remains were transferred to the Panthéon, a mausoleum reserved for the greatest French citizens, amidst much national hype during his bicentennial. Contemporary France, struggling with the legacies of colonialism and growing diversity, has transformed Dumas, grandson of a slave from St. Domingue (now Haiti), into a symbol of the colonies and the larger francophone (literally “French-speaking”) world in an attempt to integrate its immigrants and migrants from its former Caribbean, African, and Asian colonies to improve race relations and to promote French globality.<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this collection, to analyze Dumas in a “francophone” context means to explore Dumas as a symbol of a “French” culture shaped by, and inclusive of, its (former) colonies and current overseas departments. As we shall see, such a re-conception of Dumas has made him a major figure in debates on French identity and colonial history.

During the early modern period, the French state created a colonial empire centered in the Caribbean, which for most of the eighteenth century was a source of great wealth. After the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the 1830 conquest of Algeria, French colonial efforts turned increasingly toward Africa and Asia. A unique component of French colonial efforts, however, was the perception that the conquest of the territories did not make them merely French possessions to administer, but rather integral components of the French nation-state. The conquered peoples, therefore, became “French” (even if, in most cases, access to full civil rights was “deferred” until they reached a certain level of “civility”). Such efforts expanded the French state into a global polity, especially after 1946 when several former colonies were incorporated as full-fledged

French departments. However, the European colonial enterprise, built on the concept of modernity, necessitated the constructions of difference. As a result, the French had difficulty in conceiving individuals linked with the colonies as “French,” despite a dominant belief in a theoretically “open” French political identity, and reconciling a restricted sense of Frenchness with its new global condition.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the mid-twentieth century, individuals from the colonial world were relatively few in number within the metropole, or mainland France. As a result, debates about French identity’s “openness” could remain largely philosophical exercises.

Nevertheless, the way in which Dumas was treated by others in France during his lifetime had a profound impact on how he perceived himself and his relationship to the French Atlantic world. Dumas, born in Villers-Cotterêts on July 24, 1802, was the son of Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, a French Revolutionary War general born on the French colony of St. Domingue to Marie-Césètte Dumas, a black slave, and the Marquis Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie, a Norman aristocrat.<sup>4</sup> Davy de la Pailleterie adopted Thomas-Alexandre and took him to France. At the outbreak of the French Revolution (1789-99), Thomas-Alexandre joined the revolutionaries, having already discarded his father’s aristocratic surname in favor of that of his mother. He later served with Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt, but was captured during his return to France and held prisoner in Southern Italy. Meanwhile, the young Dumas and his mother, the daughter of an innkeeper, were left to survive on their own. Thomas-Alexandre was eventually released, but his reunion with his family was short lived as a result of his deteriorated condition from his incarceration; he died in 1806 shortly after his return.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, the young Dumas had a modest upbringing and only a rudimentary education, part of which was received from noted abolitionist, Abbé Grégoire. Due to his excellent penmanship, Dumas secured a position in Paris as a clerk to the duc d’Orléans, the future King Louis-Philippe (r. 1830-48). In Paris, Dumas sought to establish himself as a dramatist and became a leader of the French Romantic movement alongside contemporaries Victor Hugo, Georges Sand, and Alphonse de Lamartine. Dumas’s first dramatic success was *Henri III and His Court* (1829). Others soon followed, including *Christine* (1830), *Antony* (1831), *Charles VII at the Home of His Great Vassals* (1831), *Napoléon Bonaparte* (1831), *Tower of Nesle* (1832), *Kean* (1836), and *Caligula* (1837).

After achieving success as a dramatist, Dumas gained an interest in novels. He often worked with collaborators, the most famous of whom was Auguste Maquet. Before the two had a falling out, Dumas and Maquet

worked together on such celebrated works as *The Three Musketeers* (1844), *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1845-46), *The Vicomte de Bragelonne/The Man in the Iron Mask* (1848-50), *Queen Margot* (1845), *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* (1845), *Joseph Balsamo* (1846-48), and *The Queen's Necklace* (1849-50). Dumas's literary output also included a series of travel books, short stories, memoirs, poems, journals, children's books, and even a cookbook. From 1839 to 1841, Dumas and several collaborators published the popular series, *Celebrated Crimes*, a multi-volume collection of essays on famous criminals and crimes in European history. Dumas was such a prodigious writer that he was accused in *Fabrique de romans, Maison Alexandre Dumas et compagnie* (1845) of establishing a writing factory in which he placed his name on works by others. The pamphlet was written by Eugène de Mirecourt, who used the French word *nègre's* double meaning as both a black slave from the colonies and a ghostwriter to attack Dumas professionally and personally.<sup>6</sup>

As a celebrity, Dumas was the subject of much gossip. He gained a reputation for being free with his money, and despite the financial success of his works, was often in flight of his creditors. In 1846, Dumas built the lavish Château de Monte Cristo, but could only afford to live in it for a short time. He married briefly the actress Ida Ferrier, but was known for his numerous romantic conquests. Dumas also had several illegitimate children, including Alexandre Dumas *filis*, who, like his father, became a French writer.

In addition, Dumas was involved in politics. He was a republican, although he enjoyed the patronage and companionship of members of the aristocracy. Dumas was an active participant in the Revolution of 1830 that overthrew the restored Bourbon monarchy, which had been removed during the French Revolution, but restored after the fall of Napoleon in 1814 and again after his brief return to power in 1815. As a result of the 1830 revolution, the more liberal duc d'Orléans became King Louis-Philippe, the "citizen king." However, Louis Philippe was overthrown in the Revolution of 1848, paving the way for the Second Republic. Before its president, the nephew of Napoleon I, maneuvered himself into the position of emperor in 1852, Dumas attempted to launch a political career and founded the journals *Le France Nouvelle* (1848) and *Le Mois* (1848-50) to further his cause. His political efforts in both the metropole and in Guadeloupe were unsuccessful. In the 1860s, Dumas became involved in the cause of Italian unity and fought alongside Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi as one of his "red shirts."<sup>7</sup>

Despite his successes, Dumas faced forms of racial prejudice in France.<sup>8</sup> Even though he was born in France, he faced difficulty in being accepted

as “French” because of his Caribbean family origins. Contemporaries often described him as exhibiting an “African” physical appearance. Accounts focused typically on three attributes: his skin color, hair, and lips. For example, General Thiébault, who had served under Dumas’s father, described the writer in 1834 as a young man “with skin like a *métis*, frizzy and thick hair like a *nègre*, [and] African lips.”<sup>9</sup> Because of his “African” traits, Dumas was perceived widely at the grassroots level as “foreign.” He once recounted an episode in *Adventures with My Pets* in which he took an anonymous ride with an “amusing” cabriolet driver. During the drive, the two happened to discuss the department of Aisne (where Dumas was born) and the driver listed several famous men from there. However, he did not mention Dumas. When Dumas inquired about this omission, the driver replied that it was impossible for the writer to be from Villers-Cotterêts in Aisne. When Dumas asked why, the driver replied, “Dumas is not from Villers-Cotterêts...[because Dumas] is a *nègre*!” As a result, he had to be from the Congo or Senegal.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, Dumas suffered from negative comments from both enemies and friends. In 1844, for example, Balzac expressed his contempt for the “*nègre*” Dumas after one of the former’s poorly-selling serial novels was replaced with the latter’s *Reine Margot*.<sup>11</sup> The classic actress Mlle. Mars, who starred in Dumas’s early plays, disliked him because he was a Romantic as well as because of his skin color. She demanded that the windows be opened after Dumas left a room because she claimed he left an offensive *nègre* smell.<sup>12</sup> Charles Nodier, Dumas’s friend and mentor, once commented to him, “you Negroes are all the same; you love glass beads and toys.”<sup>13</sup> Dumas was also the victim of racist cartoons in the press. Cham and Nadar regularly drew Dumas as a grotesque figure by emphasizing his “African features” (i.e. lips, hair). Cham’s most (in)famous cartoon portrayed Dumas as an African cannibal stirring a pot. Such depictions were not unusual. Others include Dumas leading a parade of tribal Africans carrying his awards.<sup>14</sup>

Further, contemporaries’ debates about how to “classify” Dumas revealed French racism. Some described the “racial wars” fought within Dumas’s own person. For example, journalist Hippolyte de Villemessant declared that the white race had triumphed, for “the *nègre* had been beaten by civilized man; the impulsiveness of African blood had been tempered by the elegance of European civilization.” Consequently, “what was repulsive in...[Dumas] had been transfigured by the clarity of his intelligence and his blossoming success.” Thus, Dumas was cited as a model “of the physical perfection of several races: he had the frizzy hair and the thick lips of the *nègre*, where the European component was

revealed in his keen and witty smile; from the southern [African] race he had the vivacity of movement and words; from the northern [European] race a solid frame and broad shoulders.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, Dumas’s detractors argued the reverse. Victor Pavie, for example, claimed that “the refinements of an exuberant civilization have not been able to tame” Dumas’s black blood.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, many literary critics did not respect Dumas as a writer despite (and, perhaps, because of) his popularity, and he was never admitted to the prestigious French Academy. Consequently, this lack of critical esteem and his experiences with racism led Dumas to develop a negative self-image. In his memoirs, for example, Dumas discussed his failed attempt to win the heart of actress Marie Dorval, who instead chose his friend and rival, Alfred de Vigny. Dumas doubted that he ever had a chance. As he wrote, “Vigny is a poet of immense talent...[and] a true gentleman. That is better than me, for I am a *mulâtre*.” In another example, Dumas described himself as “never...good-looking” because he “had large brown eyes, with a dark complexion.”<sup>17</sup> As a result, underneath Dumas’s seemingly good natured public persona was a sense of melancholy that plagued him throughout his life.

Dumas died in 1870 amidst the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. After a temporary burial, his remains were relocated in April 1872 to a cemetery in Villers-Cotterêts (where they stayed until 2002).

French biographical studies on Dumas, particularly during the late-nineteenth century and first two-thirds of the twentieth century, generally downplayed the impact of his black ancestry to support the myth of a color blind French society and the perception of French culture as being the product of people of European stock, or “whites.” Dumas and his works, especially his “Drama of France,” which sought to portray the whole of French history from the early modern period to Dumas’s present as culminating in a destined republic, had been viewed as part of the French (metropolitan) patrimony and as helping to consolidate a distinct national identity.<sup>18</sup> In 1902, Hippolyte Parigot, for example, wrote a description of the musketeers as “a living sense of France”:

Fierce determination, aristocratic melancholy, a somewhat vain strength, an elegance, at once subtle and gallant – it is these qualities that make of them... an epitome of that gracious, courageous, light-hearted France which we still like to recover through the imagination... D’Artagnan, the adroit Gascon, caressing his moustache; Porthos, the muscular and foolish; Athos, the somewhat romantic *grand seigneur*; [and] Aramis...the discreet Aramis, who hides his religion and his amours, able student of the good fathers... – these four friends...typify the four cardinal qualities of our country.<sup>19</sup>

Further, Dumas was perceived as a *bon vivant*, or as one English-language biographer dubbed him, a “laughing mulatto,” whose only concerns were spending money, dining, late-night carousing, and women.<sup>20</sup> Because of its French Revolutionary heritage, the Third Republic (1871-1940) conceived itself as the source of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” (despite its colonialism) and as the birthplace of the rights of man. France thus harbored a myth that it was not “racist” like its Western counterparts. As a symbol of France, Dumas posed a conceptual dilemma because of his black ancestry and past experiences with racism during the rise of the New Imperialism and scientific racism. As a result, Dumas’s portraits and caricatures generally reflect a departure from those during his lifetime. Rather than accentuate his “black” features, it became the norm to accentuate his Caucasian features. Therefore, Dumas’s status as “symbolically white” by virtue of being part of the French heritage cast him in a contradictory role.<sup>21</sup> French intellectuals generally cited him as a popular, though not great, writer. Since black African stereotypes depicted them as “childlike,” Dumas’s work was rationalized as being written at a low intellectual level. As a result, his work, unlike that of other French Romantics, was denigrated as solely adolescent literature. This served dual (but conflicting) purposes: it encouraged young people to read Dumas, which they largely enjoyed, to instill in their impressionable minds the basics of, and love for, French history to help consolidate national sentiments. At the same time, it prevented him from being perceived as equal to truly great “French” literary figures, thereby allowing a means through which to criticize Dumas’s “Africanness” without mentioning it directly to protect his symbolic whiteness bestowed as a symbol of France.<sup>22</sup> The construction of the “francophone” Dumas was, therefore, a contemporary counterview to such conceptions of French national identity.

Meanwhile, post-World War II metropolitan immigration and migration of people from former French colonies revealed increasingly within the metropole the global France created through its colonial endeavors. The rapid increase of citizens and permanent residents from beyond the European continent put many French at unease.<sup>23</sup> How to deal with this postcolonial condition remained among France’s most significant challenges at the dawning of a new millennium.

Also complicating matters during the twentieth century was the decrease of the French state’s global influence, particularly after World War II and the subsequent loss of its colonies.<sup>24</sup> The state sought to retain its authority during and after decolonization via alternative means viewed as more in line with the changing times. The French Union, a political entity modeled on the British Commonwealth, emerged after World War II.

In 1958, it was replaced by the French Community, which provided substantial autonomy from France and room for eventual independence. By 1960, French constitutional revisions prompted by independence movements in Indochina and Algeria allowed Community members to change their constitutions and obtain independence. The International Organization of *la Francophonie* (now *La Francophonie*), formed in 1970, evolved into an organization of polities in which there is/was a historical prevalence of French language and culture to consolidate French influence.<sup>25</sup> Yet, such efforts largely situate the metropole as the active source/center of a true “French” culture adapted passively elsewhere, implying that “francophone” is an impure, or “French-like,” culture. This view maintains the colonial perception recognizing the French in the francophone, but not the francophone in the French. French culture mixed with the cultures of those it colonized; this process reconstituted *both* cultures, which themselves were mixtures of diverse, fluctuating elements. Thus, re-imagining Dumas, long-perceived as a “French” writer, as having strong connections to the “francophone” world was part of broader attempts to recognize the colonial influence on the metropole and to decentralize it as the source of “true” Frenchness. Dumas’s francophone transformation, therefore, was not intended to divorce him from (metropolitan) French culture, but to help recognize that “French” culture *is* “francophone,” or in part the construction of its former colonial subjects in both the past and present.<sup>26</sup> Postwar immigration, the changing face of France, and efforts to adapt to a limited global role all came to a head by the twenty-first century.

By the time of Dumas’s 2002 interment in the Panthéon, France was at a crossroads. There had already been many concerted (and contradictory) efforts to realize greater socio-cultural cohesion amongst diverse and marginalized groups.<sup>27</sup> As Pierre-André Taguieff has suggested, twentieth- and twenty-first century French racism emerged not from a white-black historical divide as in the United States, but as a tension between “authentic/native” citizens and increasingly-numerous “ethnic outsiders,” arriving mostly from former colonies since the end of World War II.<sup>28</sup> The Republic’s universalistic framework not only expects immigrants to assimilate fully French culture and abandon their previous identities (a difficult “request” in our global age in which multiple, complex forms of simultaneous self-identifications that can extend beyond the nation-state exist), but also refuses to recognize difference in the general view that treating all citizens equally means treating them the same.<sup>29</sup> Yet, ongoing agitation for social equality has forced France to reconsider who and what constitutes the nation. Dumas was reconfigured within this context,

celebrated by the state and society as a “francophone” writer, or a writer with connections to the French-speaking (colonial/postcolonial) world outside of metropolitan France, as part of efforts to identify past heroes of colonial origin to revise the narrative of national development to include its diverse components in the contemporary era.

Ten years after Dumas’s interment in the Panthéon, the time is ripe to reevaluate Dumas within this context of being a representative of *la Francophonie*.<sup>30</sup> The French reevaluation of Dumas, therefore, invites a reassessment of his life, works, legacy, and previous scholarship. This interdisciplinary collection is the first major work to take up this task. It is unique for being the first scholarly work to bring Dumas into the center of debates about French identity and France’s relations with its former colonies. As a result, it will be of use to students and scholars of race, minority and ethnic studies, literary studies, (post)colonial studies, Atlantic, and French and francophone studies.

## Constructing the Francophone Dumas

Publishers on both sides of the Atlantic have capitalized on Dumas’s popularity because of his interment in the Panthéon and reconceived role as a francophone writer symbolizing former French colonial populations and their positive contributions to metropolitan history and culture by reprinting his works and earlier biographies. In particular, his previously-ignored novel *Georges* (1843), his only major work with a hero of black descent that addresses colonial racism and slavery, has now joined the ranks of his major works. *Georges* (set mostly in 1824) focuses on the struggles of the biracial elite on Île de France (Mauritius) in the Indian Ocean to obtain social equality within a race-based colonial society. As a result of his rejection by the island’s white elites, the title character, a member of the island’s biracial elite, leads an unsuccessful slave rebellion. The novel was written in collaboration with Félicien Mallefille, a Creole from Mauritius, who likely supplied details about the local conditions.<sup>31</sup> The novel’s relative commercial failure possibly deterred Dumas from exploring directly themes of racism. As biographer Henri Troyat observed of *Georges*, “neither the [French] public, nor the critics were interested by this confrontation between Whites, mulattoes, and Blacks under the torrid skies of the Indian Ocean.”<sup>32</sup> Achille Gallet published the only full review of the novel in 1843. While not critical of its construction, he argued that all men who study seriously the colonies’ social state, and “not in the homilies of our philanthropists and the fantasies of our romancers,” know the “truth, that the mulatto race is inferior to the white race, as the Negro

race is inferior to the mulattoes. There are doubtless few exceptions... [Dumas] is himself clear proof."<sup>33</sup> Dumas's stance on slavery in *Georges* is also ambiguous, although he concentrated on the issue of slavery's inhumanity in several works of historical fiction in which he chose to focus primarily on different (i.e. more distant) historical eras.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, twentieth-century scholarship surrounding *Georges*, as we shall see, largely provided the foundation for the construction of Dumas as a francophone writer.

While there are several French books about Dumas in print, many are of a popular nature. Only since 2002 did he begin to be studied widely in mainstream academia. For example, there have been seven major academic collections of (predominantly French) scholarship published in Europe on Dumas from 1994 through 2010. Only one predates Dumas's interment in the Panthéon.<sup>35</sup> Such scholarship, while significant and important to our understanding of Dumas, his work, and his influence, nevertheless largely ignores Dumas's biracial and colonial heritage, which includes the issue of slavery. Of the over 100 contributions collected in the previously-mentioned works, only six focus in any detail on Dumas's Caribbean heritage or connections to the francophone world beyond the European continent.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the limited French scholarship on Dumas during the 1970s through 1990s, during attempts to deal with decolonization, new immigration, and reduced French global influence, created the intellectual foundation for the francophone Dumas of the 2000s. A brief examination of the prefaces to *Georges* reveals this evolution, since the construction of the francophone Dumas paralleled the novel's rise in prominence.

Léon-François Hoffmann's groundbreaking seventeen-page essay, "Dumas and Blacks," which served as the preface to Gallimard's 1974 folio edition of *Georges*, was the first major work in the second half of the twentieth century to assert Dumas's biracial ancestry and that he faced racism as a result, contrary to the then common perception of a colorblind France, which, in part, had served as a way for the French to declare their superiority over a United States engaged in a Civil Rights struggle. Hoffmann, too, asserted that the novel had "passed more or less unnoticed ... by scholars as well as the general public." It was "rare" for critics to mention the novel, which, consequently, had been designated a "secondary work."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, *Georges* ranked "among Dumas's best novels" and in some ways was superior to his most famous works.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it was time to give the novel its due, especially because of its cultural relevance to postcolonial French society. As Hoffmann argued, the novel was a "chronicle of a colonial society whose prejudices have far from

disappeared...Today, when the racial problem has assumed the intensity [that it has, it is even]... more important that it [*Georges*] never falls into oblivion."<sup>39</sup> Hoffmann asserted "the principle that all writers put a little of themselves in their characters." As a result, the title character, to an extent, reflected Dumas himself. This observation was not entirely novel. Jacques-Henry Bornecque had noted in his 1956 introduction to *The Count of Monte Cristo* that *Georges* was a precursor to that novel's hero, Edmond Dantès, and that *Georges* was Dumas "recreated," or "a 'double' who is his creation." A 1903 British translation also included in its introduction the assertion that *Georges*, "who suffers humiliation and discouragement because of his 'dash of the tar brush,' but faces every obstacle and insult with irrepressible energy and spirit, is a fancy portrait of Dumas himself, Dumas 'the inspired mulatto.'"<sup>40</sup> Yet, Hoffmann went further. Examining whether or not Dumas endured "racial prejudice," Hoffmann argued that despite Dumas's success, he indeed suffered from a racist metropolitan society.<sup>41</sup> He then traced Dumas's family background, emphasizing his Caribbean heritage and the slave status of his grandmother. While Dumas's Caribbean and biracial ancestry was common knowledge (even if minimalized from the late-nineteenth century onward), his slave origins had been more obscured from the public sphere. To identify someone as having biracial ancestry is not the same thing as saying that someone is descended from a slave, and both forms of identification carry different connotations.<sup>42</sup> Hoffmann strengthened Dumas's connections to the Caribbean and feelings of solidarity with French-speakers beyond the metropole by reprinting Dumas's letter to the biracial Martinican abolitionist Cyrille Bisette (in which he expressed solidarity with individuals of black descent across the globe) and his letter to the Haitian government soliciting support for a statue in his father's memory.<sup>43</sup> Finally, Hoffmann explored Dumas's "rare" inclusion of black characters in his works. He suggested that Dumas perceived biracial individuals as separate from blacks. Further, despite Dumas's sympathy for blacks, he had absorbed much of metropolitan society's stereotypes about blacks and Africa.<sup>44</sup> In conclusion, Hoffmann declared *Georges* not a "black novel," but a "mulatto novel," because its theme was not so much the abolition of slavery, but rather the "equality of races." Thus, *Georges* could be viewed as "a biographical document that illustrates Dumas's attitude toward his 'négritude' and as a historical document that well illustrates the attitudes of biracial individuals during the middle of the past century."<sup>45</sup> The overall impression of Dumas was that he was a French writer with strong connections to the former French colonial world who faced metropolitan racism. The use of "*négritude*," a reference to the intellectual movement

developed by French-speaking Caribbean and African figures during the first half of the twentieth century, linked Dumas to overseas intellectuals and implied that he was a precursor to their cultural awakening.

In addition, since the 1970s, Gilles Henry has maintained in many works the argument that *The Count of Monte Cristo* was inspired by Dumas's Caribbean family history. Literary scholar Charles Grivel has also written on Dumas's biracial background as influencing his work in indirect ways, since his heroes (like him) are "outsiders" in some form, and the writer's use of the color black. Finally, in the 1990s, Dominique Fernandez's *The Twelve Muses of Alexandre Dumas*, the first major work to describe Dumas outright as a "francophone" writer, included a chapter on the "Black Muse" as a source of Dumas's inspiration.<sup>46</sup> Writers and intellectuals steadily maintained Dumas's black colonial identity, constructing an image of the writer as symbolic of former French colonial populations. As a francophone writer, he experienced racism, and his works reflected profoundly this experience and his struggle to be treated equally. Charles Grivel, for example, asserted that Dumas's greatest crime was "the crime of color."<sup>47</sup> Didier Decoin similarly made the "odious hypothesis" that Dumas had been "an excommunicate of honors...because some blood of a black slave flowed through his veins."<sup>48</sup>

However, the most significant document to establish Dumas as a francophone writer by his bicentennial was the 1998 preface to *Georges* by Calixthe Beyala, a French writer from Cameroon. Her preface, written about a generation after Hoffmann's and notable for bearing a non-metropolitan voice, established Dumas as a writer who expressed solidarity with an African Diaspora, as a victim of racism who responded by forming pride in his blackness and cultural hybridity, and as a forerunner to later literary traditions in francophone Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>49</sup> She claimed that Dumas was a pioneer, being one of the first writers of color to pen an anti-slavery novel. The edition's marketing material, therefore, heralded it controversially as a "novel against slavery," published to coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final French abolition of slavery, which provided an opportune "time to rediscover this passionate novel." Despite facing metropolitan injustices, however, Dumas championed the French ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity; thus, he was a better "Frenchman" than those who mocked him. Further, his "French" work was really "francophone," since it mixed metropolitan and indigenous (African) styles, and was thereby symbolic of the long-standing hybridity of global France. Beyala positioned Dumas as a hero for oppressed colonial subjects and their descendants, arguing that the past

struggles he faced had not subsided; the legacies of slavery and colonialism were still faced by his contemporary brothers “in spirit.”

Beyala argued that *Georges*, still treated as a “minor work,” was receiving more attention as “the central book” for understanding Dumas the person since the 1970s. She began her preface, addressed to Dumas’s spirit, by asking forgiveness for addressing him as “Georges,” for she argued that the character was a thin cover for Dumas himself. The novel, she claimed, was Dumas’s own story, his “autobiography.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, both Georges and Dumas, “despite their fortune and talent,” earned the “the contempt of many of their contemporaries for the color of their skin.”<sup>51</sup> Beyala, like Hoffmann, recalled Dumas’s letter to Bissette to suggest that he had felt solidarity with his “brothers in blood...and friends of color.” Drawing a link between the past and the present, she asked to “speak” to Dumas in the same “spirit” as he declared, “despite a century of distance.”<sup>52</sup> Beyala observed that seemingly all of Dumas’s (white) biographers had felt compelled to debate if he suffered “from color prejudice.” She asserted, “Permit me, my dear Dumas, to respond, ‘YES!’” All the riches, fame, and glory, she argued, could not overcome being treated as a “*nègre*.” Dumas was, therefore, presented as experiencing all the “moral suffering and epic scorn that black people” have endured.<sup>53</sup>

Beyala thus argued that *Georges* was Dumas’s response to this racism, a vehicle for his “pride and revolt” against color prejudice that reflected his “*negritude*.”<sup>54</sup> She acknowledged Hoffmann’s and others’ criticism that it was a “*métis* novel” (or “mulatto novel”) that fought essentially against white prejudice toward people of biracial descent rather than blacks in general. She also conceded that the novel was not “militant” in its attack on slavery or racism and could have been more assertive in this regard.<sup>55</sup> Dumas, like how he described Georges, was a “*Nègre blanc*”; his “*négritude*” was thus mixed with his “*métissitude*.”<sup>56</sup> But, she “confessed” to Dumas, “I understand your attitude.” He was depicted as a lone (black) voice in the literary arena of his era, and it therefore took great “courage” to criticize color prejudice at all.<sup>57</sup> Beyala, in turn, condemned those who argued that Dumas was only concerned with people of multiracial descent, calling them “detractors.” The fact that Georges, a biracial character, leads the black revolt to freedom is thus of “little importance,” because it represents “the black cause.”<sup>58</sup>

Beyala also depicted the novel as against slavery and colonialism. She credited it as “one of the first [anti-slavery] books” in literary history written by a person of color. It thus occupied a crucial role in “the memories of black peoples.” She declared strongly that *Georges* was “a

condemnation of blacks' oppression," as well as "racist theories and advocates of slavery." Slavery, she argued, was a "crime" in Dumas's era revealing a "cruel" act of man toward man, treating certain people as "vulgar merchandise" based on their skin color and cultural "inferiority" by self-proclaimed "masters of the universe." Beyala thus argued that Dumas's "mulatto complex" was an attempt "to kill" this complex, itself "a fight against Western civilization" as imposed via colonialism. Therefore, "under a hierarchization of human beings" based on "their skin color and blood," Dumas provided an "indictment denouncing the prejudices which give pretext to insanity" to restore dignity to blacks and claim the liberty that they deserved. He was portrayed as criticizing the hypocrisy of his contemporaries, who praised the equality of man and allowed color prejudice.<sup>59</sup> In adopting racism, the French were not truly French; the bearers of "French" ideals were its former colonial subjects like Dumas; they sought to push France to realize itself, to create in reality the France existing in the social imaginary.

Beyala also argued that Dumas was "a visionary poet," since his work anticipated the themes of future African and the Caribbean writers. She described *Georges* as "a black novel" that revealed the "cry of revolt of the mocked," an allusion to Martinican writer Aimé Césaire's "cry" of *négritude* in *Return to the Native Land*. Further, through the portrayal of the culturally-mixed world ("a *métissé* universe") in which *Georges* occurs, Dumas "claimed already cultural *métissage*, 100 years before this notion" enlightened the pens of contemporary French-speaking African and Caribbean intellectuals. Thus, Dumas was an early advocate of "cosmopolitanism." His work was also interpreted as demonstrating African influences. He was a great storyteller, a "griot...in the grand African tradition," whose narration had "a musical quality."<sup>60</sup>

Finally, coinciding with the edition's marketing information underlining Dumas's "torment" as "a successful writer confronted with prejudices that...endure to the present day," Beyala noted that while slavery had been abolished formally, it has "changed in form" to still exist, as "humans continue to maltreat and exploit their fellow-men."<sup>61</sup> She apologized to Dumas for the "late acknowledgement" of his part of the "combat" against injustice."<sup>62</sup> Paraphrasing Dumas that the pen is "the sword of the intellectual," she asserted that he used it to attack slavery, giving blacks an "immaterial liberty" through his words that led ultimately to "their physical liberty." He thus continues to inspire those struggling to achieve equality in the present, "a little light in the black night, a little less suffering in an ocean of tears, some more respect to the unloved."<sup>63</sup> Consequently, Dumas became a symbol of a composite France, but also a

symbol of the “injustices” committed against former colonial subjects and the state’s debt to their descendants.

Such a position was controversial and challenged the lingering conservative conceptions of Dumas and his works forged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As Jean Lacouture observed, those in France who argue that Dumas was “conditioned by his *‘négritude’* [blackness]” often turn toward *Georges* as evidence, since the novel has become associated with “the prejudice of color.” As a result, “a good number of literary historians have presented the character of Georges as a self-portrait and the novel as an anti-racist tract.”<sup>64</sup> However, Lacouture argued that while one could be tempted to see in *Georges* an autobiography or a work in which Dumas contributed to the fight for the abolition of slavery and racism, “*Georges* cannot be either a self-portrait of...[Dumas] nor a manifesto for the liberation of Blacks,” for the novel is more complex and ambiguous. Lacouture pointed to the hero’s brother, a wealthy trafficker of slaves, who rescues his brother from death after the slave rebellion fails. As a result, although he is involved in the slave trade, he is a hero (rather than a villain). Further, Lacouture argued that the black slave, Laiza, the only one to be depicted as a hero, is of mixed descent (Arab and black African descent). As a result, he claimed that there was no black African character depicted heroically.<sup>65</sup> Such an argument, therefore, maintained that Dumas’s black ancestry and experiences with color prejudice were not a major influence on the novel (and by extension, his body of work), which in turn implies that Dumas could neither be perceived as a black or colonial writer.<sup>66</sup> *Georges* (and Dumas), therefore, continue to present mixed interpretations. Nevertheless, the image of Dumas articulated in Beyala’s preface was largely the Dumas celebrated by the state during his bicentennial and interment in the Panthéon, and the one that has been gaining cultural hegemony.<sup>67</sup>

## Dumas and American-Based Scholars

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, Dumas has become popular with American educators. For example, Schmoop, a website for teachers, placed *The Count of Monte Cristo* as number eleven on its “top twenty” list of books for secondary school students’ 2010 summer reading lists.<sup>68</sup> However, there are no current full-length academic studies on Dumas in print in English. The lack of widespread American scholarly interest in Dumas has stemmed largely from his works’ perception as unworthy of “serious” study.<sup>69</sup> While European scholarship has generally ignored Dumas’s relationship to the francophone world outside Europe to

focus on other areas, existing American scholarship has moved in the opposite direction. Some goals of this collection are to expand the present academic dialogue on Dumas by building on current European and American scholarship to help bring Dumas into wider multidisciplinary debates about French identity, slavery, and colonialism so poignant to contemporary France. Consequently, this collection addresses an academic oversight regarding Dumas's life and works, and provides a much-needed complimentary work to existing global scholarship on Dumas. In the English-speaking world, Dumas is best-known for his novels, rather than his plays.<sup>70</sup> As a result, this collection focuses on providing new ways of interpreting *The Three Musketeers*, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *Georges*.

The essays in this collection are categorized into two broad groups. The first group focuses on Dumas's relationship with the francophone colonial world during his lifetime, which was characterized by the slave trade, and provides a postcolonial re-examination of his work, which was impacted profoundly by his status as an individual of black colonial descent in metropolitan France. In an era in which national belonging was articulated in familial terms, Dumas's heroes are outsiders or outcasts, literally or figuratively "bastards" because of their background. The loss of his father at a young age had a profound impact on Dumas and his work, and it was his father who was the source of his pride in his black colonial heritage. Simone Dubrovic's "The Paternal Mystery of Alexandre Dumas," which analyzes the figure of the father in Dumas's *Mes Mémoires* and *Musketeers* trilogy, presents a psychoanalytical approach to the problem of remembering a father and creating a new one in the fictional work of writing. The chapter examines literature as a way of compensating for the frustrations of reality, which, in a fictional dimension, eventually completes and reintegrates some of the inevitable losses of reality by working them through. The loss of a father and the act of creating a new one reveals broader feelings of dislocation and alienation (or bastardization), a search for "home" (or "of belonging"). Such feelings, coupled with Dumas's "ostracism" from French society, show how the negative social effects of Dumas's "colonial" status and his personal loss conflated metaphorically to impact his work.

Since the majority of Dumas's fictitious heroes are outsiders, misfits, etc., and if a piece of piece of the writer is in his work, we can surmise that Dumas, too, felt like an outsider. It would seem logical to conclude that such sentiments stemmed from the racism he encountered because of his black colonial ancestry that denied him of the "French" identity to which he felt entitled. As journalist Philibert Audebrand wrote in 1888, Dumas,

despite his “face of an African,” made “fast to see himself one of the children of the [French] Revolution.”<sup>71</sup> While Dumas’s racial background did not prevent him from achieving success in France, he nevertheless suffered effects from racism in the press and in contemporaries’ attitudes toward him. As early biographer Harry Spurr argued, “all his life Dumas was taunted with his negro descent.”<sup>72</sup> In the twenty-first century, *Georges* (as his major work dealing with the role of blacks, racism, and slavery) has enjoyed somewhat of a renaissance in the United States, undergoing a reevaluation reflecting the changing French perceptions of Dumas. In light of the prevalence that *Georges* has obtained by American publishers and scholars since the early twentieth century, and its previously-mentioned role in the French construction of a francophone Dumas, the novel occupies a crucial place in this collection. Consequently, there are two chapters focusing on aspects of the novel and its influence. As a result, it is worth examining briefly the novel’s reception in the United States. American re-evaluations of the novel paralleled those in France, but with greater emphasis on Dumas’s black identity, rather than his colonial one, to deal with each culture’s respective form of prejudice.

American attention to the novel remained minimal during most of the twentieth century. African Americans, who had long expressed interest in Dumas and his works, exhibited only minor interest in *Georges* as indicative of the wider black struggle against racism.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, they provided the first notable American interest in the work. In 1914, African-American writer Charles Chestnutt, for example, delivered an address on Dumas, asserting that the French writer had a “brown complexion and... curly hair...He was not ashamed of it, often mentioned it with not the least self-consciousness...and he wrote one novel, *Georges, the Planter of the Isle of France*, of which the race problem in one of its aspects formed the motive.”<sup>74</sup> In addition, African-American scholars John F. Matheus and W.N. Rivers edited a version of *Georges* in 1936 for use in French classes.<sup>75</sup> Scholarly reviews of the work, which identified Dumas as “a noble negro,” described it as “a race novel,” or a novel focused on “the African theme,” and therefore suitable “for use in negro schools.” A reviewer for the *Journal of Negro History* even suggested that the novel’s element of racial prejudice would resonate as “experience rather than fiction.”<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, the generally unflattering depiction of blacks (i.e. slaves) in the novel, as opposed to the more positive portrait of the educated biracial planters, repeated African stereotypes. The reviewer questioned the novel’s effectiveness as a tract against racism, asking, for example, “how inspiring to young and impressionable readers of color might be the spectacle of oppressed Negroes suspending their dash to

freedom in order to drain the kegs of rum that a wily enemy has placed in their path?" Nevertheless, the heroism of the novel's biracial eponymous character outweighed such depictions, for Dumas, with "the conviction of a humanitarian," gave his hero the gumption to stand against prejudice.<sup>77</sup> Yet, the novel was not perceived as a particularly good one. In fact, one review lamented that it was "characterized by rapidity of action and thinness of plot."<sup>78</sup> Dumas was also offered several back-handed compliments for *Georges*. For example, one reviewer thought that while "from Dumas to Shakespeare is a far cry," there was nevertheless "something about the melancholy of the sensitive Georges Munier [the novel's hero] that recalls the dark outpourings of Hamlet."<sup>79</sup>

Reviews for the revised edition in 1970, however, were more positive. They attempted to emphasize Dumas's colonial heritage and established for him a role as a defender of "his race." Such reviews, therefore, sought to situate Dumas within broader African Diasporic writing against racism and colonialism in an era marked by the American Civil Rights Movement and European decolonization.<sup>80</sup> The *French Review's* reviewer, for example, commented that although *Georges* was still perceived as a "little known novel," it was relevant "despite the passing of 150 years" because it was an "early race novel." As Dumas's only work "concerned with the bars of prejudice... it fairly shouts the eternal prayer for freedom shared by all members of the human race." As a result, the novel allowed scholars to "acknowledge the impact of Dumas's concern with the social issues of a colonial régime."<sup>81</sup> Such comments implied three simple, yet complex conclusions: First, they suggested that racism existed (or, at least, had existed) in metropolitan France. Second, Dumas was a victim of this racism. Finally, he was involved actively in the fight against racism and colonialism. These two assertions weakened the French metropolitan constructions of Dumas in force at the time that depicted him as a "symbolically white" writer and *bon vivant* lacking in sophistication.

The French interest in *Georges* during the 1970s resulted in an American reprint of an English translation by Ballantine Books in 1975. Although marketed incorrectly as "never before published in the United States," the novel was described as one "of passion written from the soul."<sup>82</sup> The reprint's back cover purported melodramatically that the novel was a "fiery classic of love, obsession, and revenge," and made note of Georges's black ancestry, which isolated him from wider society, and deprived him of the (white) woman he loved. The back cover's color scheme of green evoked Shakespeare's *Othello*, in which jealousy is described as "the green-eyed monster."<sup>83</sup> However, at around the same time, historian William Cohen argued quite bafflingly in his otherwise

excellent study exposing racism in modern France that in *Georges*, “color is not an issue.”<sup>84</sup>

During the 1990s, *Georges* could still be described in an American critical literary essay as a “forgotten novel,” despite being one of Dumas’s “most important” since its “hero is black.” The novel again was described as dealing “with feelings that Dumas seems to have felt.”<sup>85</sup> Yet, unlike in France, American academic attention toward *Georges* increased during the 1990s and early 2000s in the form of doctoral dissertations and some scholarly articles as a result of contemporary notions of multiculturalism and transnational identities in our global age.<sup>86</sup>

Within the decade following Dumas’s interment in the Panthéon as a symbol of the larger francophone world, *Georges* rose in the English-speaking world from semi-obscurity to his fourth most significant work. In 2007, the Modern Library published a new English translation of *Georges* accompanied by an introduction from Werner Sollors, an established specialist in black literature, and a foreword from renowned Caribbean writer Jamaica Kincaid. The novel was depicted predictably as an early masterpiece against racism by one of the most prominent “black” French writers of the nineteenth century. One review argued that the novel was one of Dumas’s “smaller books in size, but not in stature” since it was “a timeless work of art that increases in value at the same time that it increases in age.” As a result, despite its anonymity, *Georges* was nevertheless “a literary classic.”<sup>87</sup> In his introduction, Sollors also declared that the novel was “a little-known gem” among Dumas’s works, primarily because it remained “the only novel in which Dumas—the celebrated, though at times also reviled, man of color—focuses on the color complex.”<sup>88</sup> He praised the novel’s construction and Dumas’s skill in developing the “complex” character of the eponymous hero.<sup>89</sup> Further, Sollors sought to escalate the novel’s importance by linking it with Dumas’s best-known works. For example, *Georges* was described as foreshadowing both d’Artagnan and Dantès.<sup>90</sup> Not to be outdone, Barnes and Noble Classics issued a 2008 reprint of British scholar Alfred Allinson’s 1903 translation as part of its “Library of Essential Reading,” joining the *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*.

However, the Modern Library’s and Barnes and Noble’s editions sought not only to position Dumas as an “Afro-French writer” (a term imposing American-style pluralism that accentuated Dumas’s connections to the African Diaspora to generate greater resonance amongst Americans) and as one of “the greatest writers to ever place a pen in his hand and fill blank pages with Blackened words,” but more specifically a French

Caribbean writer of biracial descent.<sup>91</sup> Despite the novel's setting in the Indian Ocean, Sollors argued that Île de France/Mauritius was a "symbolic stand-in" for Haiti.<sup>92</sup> For example, toward the novel's climax, one of Dumas's characters, a slave, stresses the Haitian Revolution's importance to rally a group of slaves toward rebellion. Yet, this sole reference to Haiti has been endowed with much significance because of recent emphasis on Dumas's black Caribbean ancestry, despite the fact that the Haitian Revolution was a popular Romantic topic.<sup>93</sup> In his introduction to the Barnes and Noble edition, Bruce Murphy, for example, claimed that Dumas was the "son of a half-*Haitian* general in Napoleon's army" and that *Georges*, while not autobiographical, nevertheless reflected Dumas's family history.<sup>94</sup> Such an anachronistic statement encouraged the view that Dumas was also part "Haitian," or at least Caribbean. Further, it implied that being "Haitian" and "French" were two separate identities in a time when such distinctions did not exist. When Dumas's father was born, "Haiti" was still St. Domingue, a French colony and a possession of the French crown and later French Republic. In addition, when St. Domingue did become independent in 1804, Dumas's father was a French citizen and a general in metropolitan France. Further, the inclusion of Jamaica Kincaid as the writer of the foreword in itself suggested a link between Dumas and *Georges* with the Caribbean. Kincaid expressed a sense of Caribbean solidarity with Dumas and his novel because of Dumas's heritage and the novel's larger issues of colonialism and color prejudice based on the perceived non-contemporaneity of the colonized.<sup>95</sup>

Drawing from the most recent scholarly reassessments of the novel, Molly Krueger Enz's chapter, "'White Negroes, Nothing More': The Ambiguous Role of the 'Mulatto' in Alexandre Dumas's *Georges*," contributes an illuminating study of the color complex, which she claims lies at the novel's core. The intricate ways in which Dumas's fictitious characters confront this complex, and the racial prejudice they encounter, complicate the story. In this chapter, Enz reveals that *Georges* is a commentary on the personal, social, and global injustices that Dumas faced during his lifetime and suggests that the parallels between the novel and the writer's own life bring to light the intricate political and social debates surrounding slavery and race in nineteenth-century France.

There is another fascinating chapter on the same novel: Claudie Bernard's "*Georges*, or the 'Mixed-Blood' Settles Scores."<sup>96</sup> While the setting of Île de France was a common exotic backdrop in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French literature, such works were in general not concerned with the issue of color prejudice. Black characters largely conformed to existing stereotypes. However, Dumas's adventure novel,

*Georges*, is a departure from this norm and is more complex than it may seem on the surface. The eponymous hero, who can be perceived as Dumas's "mouthpiece," not only criticizes color prejudice, but also its underlying ideologies. Drawing from Enlightenment and French Revolutionary notions of equality for all men, he posits the struggle against color prejudice as a fight for justice. However, Georges's quest for justice is driven by a desire for punitive justice against whites, who, by their color prejudice, betray the Revolution. Perceiving revenge as a form of retaliation against an offense that renders a wrong for a wrong to restore the balance of justice, Bernard draws on the French concept of *revanche*, or a "settling of scores" that is a reaction to a humiliation by seizing the upper hand, to argue that Georges's battle for justice shifts from one of *revanche* to one of revenge during the course of the novel. Therefore, Georges moves from confrontation with the island's white elites that he admires to reprisal against them through an alliance with their black adversaries, even though he too despises them. Consequently, a slave revolt resulting in the shedding of both black and white blood would serve as a means in which to recognize Georges's own "bastard" blood.

In the remaining chapter included in part one, "Monte Cristo Brings the Empire Home: Alexandre Dumas and the Promise of Postcolonial Philology," Indra N. Mukhopadhyay offers a new postcolonial interpretation of the classic novel and its theme of (colonial) revenge by focusing on the image of French India. While "India" has been cited as evidence of Dumas's global appeal, or "universality," following the success of the 2008 Anglo-Indian film, *Slumdog Millionaire*,<sup>97</sup> the image of colonial India in Dumas's celebrated novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, is in fact important to our understanding of nineteenth-century French culture and society.<sup>98</sup> By focusing on the foreign words Dumas's text uses to characterize the title character, Mukhopadhyay opens the novel to a philological reading that conceives it as concerned with imperialism in ways past scholarship has ignored. The chapter, therefore, explores how "reading for empire" in *Monte Cristo* allows a reassessment of its social and critical potential.

The second part of this collection, which is centered broadly around Dumas's francophone legacy, examines the way he has been remembered in the larger French-speaking (postcolonial) world, which includes metropolitan France, in the past century to explore questions about French identity in an emerging global age. Following his death in 1870, Dumas, as one of his era's most popular writers, transcended the corporal realm into that of the imagination, becoming a myth, or "a symbolically treated historical reality."<sup>99</sup> In "From the Literary Myth to the *Lieu de Mémoire*:"

Alexandre Dumas and French National Identity(ies),” Roxane Petit-Rasselle examines how Dumas’s most famous protagonists, the musketeers, became a literary myth through the countless theatrical adaptations, films, sequels, and rewritings that perpetuated the characters’ existence in the cultural environment. Through the appropriation of this myth for patriotic, national, and republican purposes, it became a “*lieu de mémoire*,” or a symbolic element of the community’s identity. As such, the “diversity” within the musketeers and their servants came to represent the regional and social diversity within metropolitan, republican France. During Dumas’s bicentennial, the collective memorial symbol of the musketeers was transferred to the persona of Dumas to represent France in its contemporary, postcolonial diversity. Such a use shows how Dumas and his musketeers continue to (re)define French identity.

Barbara T. Cooper’s subsequent chapter examines the incorporation of *The Count of Monte Cristo* in Chinese *émigré* writer Dai Sijie’s French novel, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* (2000), to examine francophone intellectuals from East Asia’s engagement with a larger French culture in the contemporary era. Cooper argues that *Monte Cristo*’s themes of (in)justice and revenge pervade Dai’s novel. Furthermore, like *Monte Cristo*, *Balzac* is set in an historically specific socio-political framework that influences and determines profoundly its protagonists’ fate (specifically, the period of Napoleon’s defeat and exile, restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, and Napoleon’s “100 Days” return to power in *Monte Cristo* and Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution in *Balzac*).

In the collection’s final chapter, Eric Martone returns to Dumas’s relationship with his father in “‘A French Precursor of Obama’: The Commemoration of General Alexandre Dumas and French Reconciliation with the Past.” The chapter examines General Dumas as a locus around which the memory of slavery and emancipation in France has been invested in the contemporary era. French overseas intellectuals’ quest to rehabilitate the French Revolutionary general in the official national memory in the 2000s on the heels of his son’s interment in the Panthéon demonstrated how specific “injustices” enacted on past individuals could be transformed into affronts to a group. General Dumas, born to a nobleman and his slave in Saint Domingue, was portrayed as one who forged the contemporary Republic. He was an integral part of French history and thus the nation. General Dumas was cast simultaneously as a symbol of French overseas citizens, embodying the memory of slavery and inequality. As such a symbol, his rehabilitation also provided overseas citizens an integral role in the nation’s development and marked the

beginning of the consolidation of the memory traditions of overseas and metropolitan France. Intellectuals led by Guadeloupean Claude Ribbe sought state honors and monuments for the general in a quest for validation of this inclusive role as well as reconciliation for past exclusion. Their efforts, which were presented as a continuation of Dumas *père's* efforts, culminated in the erection of the first European anti-slavery monument, “*Fers*” (“Irons”), dedicated to General Dumas in Paris. Consequently, reparation politics can lay the groundwork for constructing new collective memories incorporating all citizens, thereby redefining national identity.

The United States-based academics contributing to this collection include not only some of the top specialists on Dumas, but also younger scholars who have received their doctorates within the past decade and who have published notable articles and/or dissertations focusing on Dumas. The chapters in this volume, therefore, represent not only some of the best American scholarship on Dumas since his interment in the Panthéon, but also a new shift in how he and his works’ are viewed and analyzed to reflect an interpretation of the past that helps us better understand our global present. Such efforts will, hopefully, open the door for future research. Just as French studies as a whole has turned increasingly toward the wider world, so too have studies on Dumas.<sup>100</sup>

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *The Man in the Iron Mask*, however, does not exist in French. It is the last part of *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, which both British and American publishers divided into multiple books because of its length (and the popularity of the Musketeer sequels) to generate more revenue. In general, the standard American English-language translation is divided into four parts, while the standard British English-language translation is divided into three parts (*Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, *Louise de La Vallière*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*).

<sup>2</sup> See: Catherine A. Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory: Beyond Slavery and Emancipation in the French Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Françoise Vergès, *La Mémoire enchaînée: questions sur l’esclavage* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2006); Patrick Weil, ed., *L’Esclavage, la colonisation, et après...* (Paris: Éditions des Presses Universitaires de France, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> See: William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880*, reprint ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Alice L. Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and Its Empire Since 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, new ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars*