Essay

Alexandre Dumas's *Odyssey*: Race, Slavery, Narrative

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Before the tireless deeds of the musketeers, or the vengeful fantasies of the Count of Monte-Cristo, there was *Georges*, an 1843 novel of race and slave rebellion set on the island of Mauritius. Alexandre Dumas père may have left behind few explicit reflections on race and slavery in the modern world, but he was not silent on these subjects. His paternal grandmother, Marie-Cessette Dumas, had known life as a slave in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) in the years before independence. *Georges*, I suggest, is a novel of homelessness, homecoming, and recognition. It illuminates the complexities of a problem faced by metropolitan French novelists of the nineteenth century: What manner of plot might grasp, or fail to grasp, the interlocking injustices of racism and slavery? Readers of nineteenth-century French fiction have come to know well the private dramas of men and women recorded in the novel of adultery—just as they surely recognize the grand narratives of ambition and disappointment pursued in the novel of education. It is Balzac, Flaubert, and others who have tended to dominate so many critical conversations, while Dumas has been less prominent in the literary history of the period. *Georges*, however, prompts us to consider the colonial and postcolonial dimensions of nineteenth-century French fiction.[1] The novel exposes something of the problem of narrative structure in the metropolitan fiction of colonial life—and that problem comes into sharp focus in a series of references to the Homeric *Odyssey*.

Dumas, unlike Alfred, Lord Tennyson or James Joyce or Derek Walcott, does not often figure on the long list of modern literary reflections on the *Odyssey*, but he does belong somewhere on that list.[2] What the *Odyssey* offered Dumas in 1843 was a language for

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addressing the problems of homelessness, homecoming, and recognition in a world of empires and slaves. The text is not a rewriting of Homer; rather, it adopts certain tropes and references evocative of the *Odyssey*. If we are to read *Georges* in the shadow of Homer, we must, recalling a phrase of Margaret Cohen's, "take seriously adventure forms" (3). As Cohen writes at the outset of her book *The Novel and the Sea*: "The descendants of Odysseus people an enduring, international form of modern fiction" (1). Dumas's Georges Munier, a free man of color, surely numbers among these descendants—even if the novel in which he appears struggles to imagine a home for its hero, a denouement worthy of the Homeric intertext. In her 2013 book *Black Odysseys*, Justine McConnell explores "the enormous interest in the *Odyssey* that writers of ultimately African descent have exhibited over the last seventy years" (3).[3] Beginning with Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939; *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*), she traces the influence of the Homeric *Odyssey* across a number of postcolonial contexts from Walcott to Njabulo Ndebele. Dumas belonged to a different time and place; his relation to this tradition may be ambivalent, but we can still discern the traces of its outline in *Georges*.

What are the implications of setting the novel on the island of Mauritius?[4] To be sure, the island represented an appropriate theater for a fiction devoted to the clash between British and French imperial ambitions in the early nineteenth century. Much of the novel's plot unfolds over the early years of British rule on the island: while the text opens with the Battle of Grand Port in 1810, it soon comes to focus on the year 1824. Yet the name Mauritius—used by Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century and adopted by the British in the nineteenth—is scarcely mentioned; throughout *Georges*, the island is referred to as Île de France. It is often pointed out that Mauritius was uninhabited for much of its history, "a place," as Megan Vaughan notes, "full of traces, real or fantastical, of others who had trodden there before" (1). It was, she suggests, "a profoundly cosmopolitan place," as well as "a profoundly parochial one" (2). As Richard Blair Allen has written, this was a world in which "slaves accounted for at least 75, and sometimes as much as 85, percent of the island's population between the 1730s and the 1820s" (13). French literature had visited Île de France before, notably in the form of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie* (1788; *Paul and Virginia*). That work points to the violence of slavery, and, in adopting the island as the novel's setting, Dumas aligned his fiction with Bernardin's novel.[5] In what follows, I consider the patterns and structures of a nineteenth-century novel of colonial upheaval. I do so while keeping in mind the idea that the novel form can work to obscure, or conceal, aspects of the world it claims to describe. There is a silence at the center of such metropolitan fictions as *Georges*: the voices of the enslaved are absent.

The form of intertextuality I wish to pursue proceeds through a focus on reference, trope, and plot—the latter understood, in the words of Peter Brooks, as "the design and intention of narrative" (xi). I argue that Dumas's novel reveals an uncertainty of design and intention, and that such uncertainty is bound up with the problem of giving shape to narratives of race and slavery set in the colonial world. If we expect our key terms—homelessness, homecoming, and recognition—to serve as familiar markers in the teleology of the plot of colonial life, as discrete phases in the order of narrative, we must think again: the plot at stake in *Georges* is not one of absence followed by homecoming followed by recognition—the latter term signaling, among other things, a moment in which some secret or hidden knowledge is suddenly exposed.[6] What I find is altogether more disquieting: absence, homecoming, recognition, homelessness. My argument will have three stages: first, I explore the complexity of relations between colony and metropole with regard to Dumas and *Georges*; second, I consider the ideal of homecoming articulated through reference to the *Odyssey* in connection with a number of recognition scenes; third, I turn to the flaws inherent in that ideal, and to the cruel interplay, evident throughout the text, between homecoming and homelessness. The latter term is a vital one in the history of literary criticism. Yet it seems unlikely

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that Georg Lukács was thinking of Dumas when, in *The Theory of the Novel*, he wrote of the form as the emblem of a "transcendental homelessness"—a form, that is, given to the depiction of a roving, questing subject, cut off from the organic notions of community characteristic of the lost world of Homer and the Greeks (41). Nevertheless, the phrase has a curious pertinence in the case of *Georges*.[7] Dumas's protagonist makes for an imperfect Odysseus, for his novel struggles to reconcile themes of homelessness and recognition. In the end, the idea of homelessness—so critical to theories of the modern novel—takes on a grim urgency in the context of a fiction devoted to questions of race and slavery.[8]

Two Islands

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall, in his autobiography *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands*, reflected on the ways in which the story of his own life had come to influence his sense of the gap between colony and metropole. Hall left Jamaica for Oxford in 1951: "The idea that, because I moved—irrevocably as it turned out—from one world to the other, from colony to metropole, there were no connections between them has always seemed inconceivable to me" (11). A great deal of energy has been spent, and continues to be spent, in fixing the position of the colonial and postcolonial worlds in relation to Europe and North America. Much ink has been spilled on the manner in which nineteenth-century novels negotiated this distance, projecting fantasy onto an unknown colonial territory or seizing on some "offstage" colonial space as a means of explaining or justifying sudden absences, unexpected shifts in fortune.[9] But literary biography can allow us to analyze the world of oppositions on which the distinction between colonizer and colonized depends. After all, Dumas's father, Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, had undertaken his own journey from the Caribbean to Europe, landing at Le Havre from Saint-Domingue on 30 August 1776. The grandparents of Alexandre Dumas père were a Norman aristocrat, the Marquis Alexandre Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie, and, as I have noted, an enslaved woman of African descent, Marie-Cessette Dumas.[10] Even a potted family history reminds us of the competing priorities of "routes" and "roots" in the discourse of migration and belonging. As Hall put it: "'routes' (change, movement, transformations, adaptation, being always 'in process') are just as important as 'roots', if not more so" (141).

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that nineteenth-century critics did not understand the debate about identity in terms approaching these. In critical writing on Dumas, indeed, racist discourse came to inflect judgments on literary and aesthetic matters. Eugène de Mirecourt's *Fabrique de romans: Maison Alexandre Dumas et compagnie* (*Factory of Novels: The Firm of Alexandre Dumas and Co.*) of 1845 was the most prominent example of this approach. Dumas, in this pamphlet, stood accused of plagiarism, of claiming the services of a vast number of unacknowledged collaborators. While collaboration was an important feature of Dumas's literary practice, these particular charges were leveled in the most racist terms, for the meaning of Dumas's roots—his heritage, his family, and, specifically, his grandparents—lay at the heart of Mirecourt's concerns.[11] A brief spell in prison did little to dispel Mirecourt's zeal, and he returned to the fray in 1856 with a short biography of the author of *Les trois mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*) proffering further examples of plagiarism. It is worth reflecting on this text since Mirecourt's condemnation of Dumas echoes a moment from the Homeric *Odyssey*. The 1856 work opens on the image of a traveler bound for Eldorado: "Figurez-vous un voyageur à qui l'on a fait la peinture d'un Eldorado délicieux, peuplé de villas splendides, aux jardins toujours verts" 'Picture a traveler who has been presented with the image of a delightful Eldorado, replete with splendid villas, with evergreen gardens' (*Alexandre Dumas* 7).[12] The vision of harmony is short-lived:

> Notre voyageur prend son bâton de touriste et se dirige vers ce pays ravissant.
>
> Il arrive. O spectacle affreux! Les villas, les jardins, les pelouses, les ombrages, tout est ravagé,

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> tout est flétri. Un cyclope absurde prend ses ébats au milieu de la poétique région. Sur son passage, il ne laisse que ruine et désastre.
>
> Le voyageur, c'est nous; l'Eldorado, c'est le domaine des lettres; le cyclope, c'est Alexandre Dumas. (8)
>
> Our traveler takes up his walking stick and sets off for this delightful country.
>
> He arrives to find a shocking spectacle! Villas, gardens, lawns, leafy shades—all is ravaged, withered. A preposterous cyclops frolics in the midst of this poetic land. In his wake, he leaves only ruin and disaster.
>
> We are the traveler; Eldorado is the world of letters; the cyclops is Alexandre Dumas.

The racism is not subtle. Echoes of the *Odyssey* recall to mind a story of conquest, conflict, and monstrosity—even if, ultimately, it is Odysseus who strays onto the island of the cyclops Polyphemus, and Odysseus who blinds his raging host before taking flight.

"The *Odyssey* lends itself particularly aptly to anticolonial and postcolonial responses," writes McConnell, "because the story engages with colonial enterprise" (4). It is surely this very aptness that accounts for the string of references to Homer we find in *Georges*. On one level, the novel is characteristic of much of Dumas's fiction: it follows the plight of a brilliant yet misunderstood protagonist, effortlessly superior to all those around him; he harbors a deep-seated grudge, born of some past insult, and is obsessed with the idea of vengeance. But *Georges* is often considered unique among Dumas's fictions in addressing directly themes of race and slavery. For this reason, a biographical reading has clung to the novel: in the racial language of the nineteenth century, Georges Munier and his family are perennially described as *mulâtres* ("mulattoes"), and they are victims of a racism to which Dumas himself was subjected (as the example of Mirecourt underlines).[13] The novel begins in 1810 as British naval forces struggle to wrest control of Île de France (Mauritius) from the French. Georges and his brother Jacques, children at this moment in the novel, look on as their father Pierre, a slave owner, is insulted by white contemporaries as he endeavors to defend his island home from the rapacious British. In the fracas that ensues, Georges is injured by the malicious Henri de Malmédie, the son of a white slave owner. The brothers are sent to France, where both follow utterly different paths: Jacques, a sailor, ultimately becomes captain of *La Calypso*, a slave ship; Georges, by contrast, proves to be a brilliant student and elects to live by an exacting moral code. As the narrative traces the protagonist's return to his native island some fourteen years after his departure, the text is caught between the structures of the love plot—Georges falls for Sara, a local girl[14]—and the politics of injustice: Georges leads a slave rebellion, destined to fail; he is sentenced to death, yet, with the aid of Jacques, escapes. The novel closes with Georges, Jacques, Pierre, and Sara aboard *La Calypso*, adrift on the open seas.

There is much else besides. Yet even a cursory description of the narrative is sufficient to suggest the ambivalent politics of the novel. Christopher Miller has reflected on the ways in which fictions of the slave trade written during the Restoration and July Monarchy by figures such as Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée, Eugène Sue, and Dumas himself record "the demise of abolitionist sentiment and the rise of the other priorities like 'adventure'" (175). But the task of assessing the balance between these priorities is not necessarily straightforward. Adventure fiction, in the example of *Georges*, is suspended between conflicting impulses: the demands of political engagement as opposed to the structures of the adventure form. The novel's representation of racism and slavery hints at a confusion of priorities: after all, this novel concerned with the malignancy of racism reproduces racist stereotypes; this novel of slave rebellion often elides the evils of slavery. As Claudie Bernard suggests, it is mainly personal (rather than structural) grievance that motivates Georges as he assumes leadership of the slave uprising (144). And Marlene L. Daut, drawing attention to the novel's relation to the literature on the Haitian Revolution, argues that the protagonist's focus on color prejudice obscures analysis of the economic structures of slavery and the trade in slaves.[15] The lingering sense that Dumas's novel

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fails to address the inequities of slavery as a vital aspect of early-nineteenth-century capitalism lies at the heart of Daut's approach: "Dumas's eponymous Georges," she writes, "emerges as a symbol of the failure of enlightenment thought and its outgrowth in the transatlantic abolitionist movement to deal adequately with either the economics of slavery or the theories of racial inferiority that supported it" (77).

The eponymous Georges may ultimately prove to be the symbol of that failure, but Dumas's novel also records something of the struggle over the vocabularies and structures required to give shape to narratives of slavery in July Monarchy France, and that struggle is nowhere more evident than in the vacillation between ideas of homecoming, homelessness, and recognition. The latter term is a complex one in the history of ideas. Literary critics have long considered the significance of recognition in ancient and modern contexts—its prominence for Aristotle (*anagnorisis*) and Hegel (*Anerkennung*), for example—and have debated the ways in which the Hegelian "struggle for recognition" might intersect with fictions of slavery and the slave trade.[16] The question of recognition, after all, has its own grim pertinence in the history of slavery. In a recent study of an enslaved family in France's Indian Ocean colonies, Sue Peabody dwells on the material implications of recognition and its absence: "Old Regime colonial law denied enslaved men and women formal recognition of lineage and ancestry. They bore no last names and were denied the capacity of passing an inheritance along to their children" (10). This absence of recognition—the slave denied the legal structures of family life—hangs over nineteenth-century fictions of slavery (even if its horrors are not always grasped). Reflecting on Eugène Sue's *Atar-Gull* (1831), an early July Monarchy novel of slavery and the slave trade, Miller has drawn attention to the instability characteristic of relations between master and slave: "The master/slave relationship," he writes, considering points of connection between Sue and Hegel, "is an instance of failed or nonreciprocal recognition" (292).

The intricacies inherent in that dialectical relation will take rather different form in Dumas, not least because, in *Georges*, the question of race comes to dominate the novel's treatment of the crisis of recognition: in the end, it is Georges, the free protagonist, who is bent on seeking recognition. My analysis will focus not only on the uncertainties evident in relations between characters but on the various scenes of recognition critical to the text. Fictions of slavery in French, *Georges* among them, make liberal use of recognition scenes (though not always to liberal ends). The moment of recognition, as Terence Cave has noted, reflecting on Aristotle, depicts "a shift from ignorance to knowledge," representing that fleeting instance in which "the characters understand their predicament fully for the first time" (1). One does not have to search for long to find examples. Sue's *Atar-Gull* and Victor Séjour's "Le mulâtre" (1837; "The Mulatto")—a work in which the protagonist is also named Georges—bring the question of familial recognition to the fore, highlighting fraught relations between fathers and sons (as well as masters and slaves). *Georges* too will adopt this theme—indeed, the novel will rehearse a memorable scene from the Homeric *Odyssey* as it plots the recognition of its own protagonist. There is, however, no finality in recognition to be found in *Georges*. Cave touches on the idea that scenes of recognition—he is focusing on the story of Martin Guerre—prompt crisis rather than resolve it (14), and this is the dynamic evident in *Georges*: recognition leads away from homecoming, toward homelessness.

The idea of home is thus a difficult one for Georges. Yet it is not imagined to be so for the novel's readership. The opening lines enact an inversion of the journey undertaken by the protagonist, for they promise to transport the reader from the humdrum realities of Paris to the exotic world of Île de France. These lines reveal the gap, constructed by the novel, between colony and metropole, and they take the form of a number of questions posed directly to the reader: "ne vous est-il pas arrivé," the narrator asks, "de prendre en dégoût notre climat sombre, notre Paris humide et boueux?" 'have you never despaired of our gloomy climate, of our wet, muddy Paris?' (Dumas, *Georges* 27). The novel offers up an image of home, replete with one

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of its characteristic metonyms—the reader is depicted with "le front appuyé contre votre cheminée" 'forehead resting on your mantelpiece' (27). Yet the mantelpiece is no symbol of contentment and stability: the reader is imagined dreaming of a distant paradise, hankering after "quelque oasis enchantée" 'some enchanted oasis' (27). This, we understand, is a story of two islands, two Îles de France, for that term describes both the island in the Indian Ocean and the region dominated by the city of Paris. The conspicuous use of the first-person plural in the novel's opening pages—"notre climat sombre," "notre Paris," "notre commune destinée" (28), "notre voyage" (29), "notre Europe" (37)—traces a divide between metropole and colony, for the readership is imagined always, and from the very beginning, to belong to the center, looking to the margins only for escape, or perhaps entertainment.

The narrative continues with something approaching a whistle-stop tour of key staging posts between Paris and Île de France: "Adieu, Brest! salut, Nantes! salut, Bayonne! Adieu, France!" (28). The Cape of Good Hope is briefly signaled to readers ("Nous voilà au cap des Tempêtes" [29]), before they arrive at the Indian Ocean ("Salut à l'océan Indien" [29]). The fantasy is one of impossible speed, the world between Paris and the Indian Ocean passed by with casual rapidity.[17] The reference to Nantes cannot but appear loaded, for it was from this port that so many French slave ships departed for West Africa. Glossed over with a glib swiftness, the passage between France and Île de France merely elides the difficulty—for many, the horror—of travel aboard ship. And the journey outward from Europe ends not in a vision of suffering or exploitation but with the image of hospitality. Dumas envisages the famous welcome his proverbial European traveler is destined to receive on the island: "chaque fois que vous viendrez vous-même," the narrator tells his reader, "on tuera le veau gras; car ici l'arrivée d'un hôte est une fête, comme le retour de l'enfant prodigue était un bonheur" 'each time that you come to visit . . . a fatted calf will be slaughtered, for here the arrival of a guest is cause for celebration, just as the return of the prodigal child was a delight' (36). The context of conquest is reimagined in a language of hospitality distantly familiar to any reader of the *Odyssey*. One loses count, on reading the poem, of the number of animals slaughtered and fed to Odysseus:

> Bring out the best
> pig for our guest, who comes from distant lands.
> And let us enjoy ourselves. We suffer
> in bitter toil for these white-tusked pigs,
> while others eat the food we labor for,
> and give us nothing. (Homer 345)

Dumas's reference to the prodigal child foreshadows a narrative of return vital to his novel—and this too will find an echo in the Homeric *Odyssey* (alongside the biblical allusion). To be a guest is to be away from home; to return is altogether more difficult.

The Scar

Is Georges an Odysseus for the nineteenth century? The details of Dumas's plot provide us with the beginnings of an answer: a wandering man returns to his island home following an absence of many years only to discover that he must fight to assume his rightful place in the community. And this is not all. Writing on a number of new translations of the *Odyssey*, the literary critic Colin Burrow has reflected on the idea that uncertainties about identity lie at the poem's heart: "the question that reverberates through the poem—'Who are you and where do you come from?'—is one its readers come to share. How much of the time is Odysseus of the many wiles revealing what he is, and how often is he keeping things back?" Readers of *Georges* will surely recognize the problem. The protagonist is enigmatic. His return to the island prompts a frenzy of speculation, and the young man—"cet étranger" ("this stranger"; Dumas, *Georges* 90)—is thought to be an aristocrat from France or England. The novel is structured around a series of recognition scenes, and these episodes call to mind a celebrated passage from the Homeric *Odyssey*, for Georges, like Odysseus, can be identified by a scar. Such revelations, however, are bound up with themes of race and racism. Who is Georges, and where does he come from? The question is not always

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straightforward—even if the vision of racism denounced in the novel claims to simplify radically, brutally, the complexity of identity, the individual held in a fixed order of classification. On his return to the island, Georges is compelled to reveal himself to his father, his scar offering a vital clue to his identity. But the scar, an unavoidable reference to Homer, leads to another problem—the question of whether Georges belongs on the island at all.

It is the slave Eurycleia who identifies Odysseus on his return home, for she has been tasked by Penelope with washing his feet, and, so doing, recognizes a scar on his thigh, the result of a youthful encounter with a "white-tusked boar" (Homer 437). The story of the young Odysseus's injury is artfully woven into the scene of recognition, a scene long regarded as foundational in literary history. Erich Auerbach, after all, chose to open his *Mimesis* with reflection on this moment from the *Odyssey*, memorably arguing that "the Homeric style knows only a foreground, only a uniformly illustrated, uniformly objective present" (7). The Greek world for Auerbach, in a manner reminiscent of Lukács, is marked by a sense of timelessness. As Cave describes this approach: "Suspense is absent; there are no moral or psychological tensions; uncontaminated mimesis prevails" (22).[18] There is no place for Dumas in Auerbach's history of mimetic representation, but this should not blind us to the fact that the recognition scene in *Georges* re-creates something of this decisive moment from the Homeric *Odyssey* (albeit in a melodramatic key). The scene records an interaction between father and son, and not master and slave. Following his return to the island, Georges strikes up a conversation with his father—the old man ignorant, over the early stages of their discussion, that the young man he is addressing is his own son. Georges sustains the deception for some time, but ultimately succumbs to temptation: "Et cependant, s'écria le jeune homme incapable de résister plus longtemps au sentiment qui l'agitait, vous ne m'avez pas reconnu, mon père!" "'And yet,' the young man cried, incapable of resisting the sentiment stirring within him any longer, 'you did not recognize me, father!'" (Dumas, *Georges* 102).[19]

In the contexts of slavery and miscegenation, as histories such as Peabody's underscore, the recognition of sons by fathers was a subject of profound concern. The inequalities of that relation are evident too in representations of slavery in fiction and visual culture.[20] Yet *Georges*'s engagement with such themes is oblique, for the crisis of recognition is here employed to expose divisions within a slave-owning family. The episode, moreover, seems to align Georges's fate with that of the slaves themselves: for a brief moment, the protagonist struggles to convince his father of his true identity; he struggles, in other words, to find recognition. Denial is Pierre Munier's first response.

> —Non, non, ce n'est pas Georges, dit-il; il y a bien quelque ressemblance entre vous et lui; mais il n'est pas grand, il n'est pas beau comme vous; ce n'est qu'un enfant, et vous, vous êtes un homme.
>
> —C'est moi, c'est bien moi, mon père; mais reconnaissez-moi donc, s'écria Georges; mais songez que quatorze ans se sont écoulés depuis que je ne vous ai vu; songez que j'en ai aujourd'hui vingt-six, et, si vous doutez, tenez, tenez, voyez cette cicatrice à mon front, c'est la trace du coup que m'a donné M. de Malmédie le jour où vous avez si glorieusement pris un drapeau anglais. (102)

> "No, no, you are not Georges," he said. "There is surely some resemblance between you and him, but he is not tall, he is not handsome as you are; he's merely a child, and you, you are a man."
>
> "It's me, it really is me, father; recognize me," cried Georges. "Just think that fourteen years have passed since I saw you last. Just think that, today, I am twenty-six years old, and if you have doubts, hold on, look at this scar on my forehead, the mark of the blow given to me by M. de Malmédie, the day that you so gloriously took the English flag."

The scar identifies Georges just as it identified Odysseus. It offers Georges a path back to his family, a method of proving beyond doubt that he is who he claims to be. There is a confusion of temporalities at this moment. "Recognition," writes Cave, "reaches back most often to painful or problematic narrative events hidden in the past" (22). And this is surely true of *Georges*, for the scar links the present with

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the primary scene of racial prejudice depicted in the novel: the episode in which Pierre Munier was humiliated by white contemporaries; the episode in which Georges was assaulted by Henri de Malmédie. The scene reveals too that Pierre Munier lives in an eternal present of his own, the old man unable to grasp the idea that his boy Georges has grown up. This is a vision of time suspended, and it recurs at later moments of the novel—for instance, when Georges contemplates his homeland: "toutes choses étaient les mêmes à l'île de France, quoique quatorze ans se fussent écoulés" 'all things were the same on Île de France, despite the fact that fourteen years had passed' (Dumas, *Georges* 206). Beyond the relentless march of time, Île de France is emblematic of an impulse to imagine the colonial world as the inversion of European society, somehow untroubled by the pressures of metropolitan life.

Has nothing changed? The gap between 1810 and 1824 is wide. As Dumas's narrator points out, the island is now known as Mauritius, and not Île de France; it is no longer controlled by the French, having fallen into British hands (206). Yet the persistence of racial prejudice cannot be ignored, for it represents a grim constant in the life of the island. The novel's recognition scenes, moreover, direct attention to the fraught relationship between race and belonging, even as they draw on a set of concerns—the uncertain relations between fathers and sons—prominent in the history and fiction of slavery. Pierre Munier could not immediately identify his son, his uncertainty (however fleeting) unmistakable: How can I be sure, his hesitancy seemed to suggest, that this man is indeed my child? The father, after all, had taken his son for a white man, and he is shocked to discover the truth: "Vous êtes mulâtre, vous, Monsieur?" 'You yourself are mulatto, Monsieur?' (99). The gap between father and son is lent a discomforting racial dimension: Georges, sporting the ribbon of the Légion d'honneur, is unrecognizable as a man of color even to his father. Later on, the scene of Georges's return home will be replayed, but this time his elder brother Jacques will take on the role of prodigal son:

> —Bonjour, père! . . . Bonjour frère! dit-il.
> Puis, comme ils hésitaient:
> —Eh bien, ajouta-t-il, ne reconnaissez-vous pas votre Jacques? (216; ellipsis in original)
>
> "Hello father! . . . Hello brother!" he said.
> And since they hesitated, he added:
> "Well now, don't you recognize your Jacques?"

Jacques has returned to the island to trade in slaves, and the figure of the wandering son is thus split into two. The brothers become the symbol of a paradoxical fraternity—the opponent of racial prejudice in Georges, a man who would free all slaves, reunited with Jacques, the captain of a slave ship.

Unlike Georges, Jacques bears no scar. In fact, he has quite forgotten the story of the day Georges was injured, and the younger brother is moved to remind the elder of that painful episode: "Georges releva ses cheveux et montra à son frère la cicatrice de son front" 'Georges pulled back his hair and showed the scar on his forehead to his brother' (299). Jacques responds: "Ah! oui, c'est vrai, . . .; mille tonnerres! tu as de la rancune; j'avais oublié toute cette histoire" 'Ah yes, it's true, by thunder, you do bear a grudge. I had forgotten the whole thing' (299–300). Writing of the *Odyssey*, and the moment of recognition, Cave explores the idea that the scar is the sign of unfinished narrative: "The scar," he suggests, "is a mark of treacherously concealed narrative waiting to break the surface and create a scandal; it is a sign that the story, like the wound, may always be reopened" (24). The wound, in this case, is the humiliation of the Munier family during the conflict of 1810. Pierre Munier wishes to fight alongside white islanders in defense of their homeland against the British. Yet he is met with racism: "Pas de mulâtres avec nous! pas de mulâtres!" 'No mulattoes with us! No mulattoes!' (Dumas, *Georges* 57). And that response only hardens after he distinguishes himself in combat, claiming an English flag. M. de Malmédie wants the flag for himself: "il ne sera pas dit qu'un mulâtre aura impunément tenu tête à un homme comme moi. Donnez-moi ce drapeau" 'it will not be said that a mulatto has defied a man such as

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myself with impunity. Give me the flag' (72). The young Georges strives to defend the flag won by his father and is injured by Henri de Malmédie—M. de Malmédie's son—for his trouble.

Evoking these moments from the novel, we find that the primary story of injustice, of racial prejudice, is a story of the relationship between fathers and sons. It is also a story of recognition and its absence, for Georges and his family find themselves excluded from this history of military victory, eliminated from any official narrative: "Pas de mulâtres avec nous!" This is the narrative of injustice that Georges wishes to reopen on his return to Mauritius. The scar points to a dual conflict, recalling the struggle for colonial supremacy against the British, and the violence of racial discrimination on the island itself. It is simultaneously the sign that prompts Pierre Munier to recognize Georges at the moment of his reappearance on the island and the symbol of their exclusion from part of that island community. Indeed, the scar makes visible a connection to an idea of home even as it draws attention to the fact that the protagonist has been rejected from the very place he calls home. The recognition scene, the young man reintroduced to his father after so many years, is thus unsettling. It resolves little: not only does the old man struggle to identify his son, but the means by which doubt is ultimately laid to rest—the scar—calls to mind the brutal history of racism that has seen the protagonist sent away from the island. While the motif of the scar is a vital one for grasping the link between *Georges* and the Homeric *Odyssey*, it reveals too something of the gap that has opened up between the story of Odysseus and that of Georges Munier. Recognition in Dumas cannot be a prelude to closure; it evokes distance, separation. The question of slavery and its representation in the novel tests the limits of the Odysseus plot in the colonial context: the poem may provide Dumas with a set of tropes designed to give shape to the experience of racism—yet these further unravel, and prove insufficient, as the novel grapples with the challenge of representing slavery in the Indian Ocean.

Slavery and *Patrie*

Where is Telemachus in this story? The question is not, on the surface, an especially difficult one, since Dumas elected to name one of the novel's principal characters, a slave tasked with working in the Munier household, Télémaque. That Dumas should choose to name one of his characters after Odysseus's son is striking in itself. That this man should be a slave is more curious still, for the nature of filial devotion, explored throughout the *Odyssey*, is here made to overlap with relations between slave and slave owner. This is plantation life grotesquely reconfigured as family life, the name representing the novel's most direct allusion to the crises of familial recognition so often central in the history of slavery. Unsurprisingly perhaps, Télémaque is devoted to his master, Pierre Munier, and keeps a constant watch for the return of his sons: "En ce moment Télémaque parut au pied de la montagne de la Découverte, les bras pendants, l'œil morne et la tête penchée, désespéré qu'il était de revenir encore cette fois vers son maître sans lui rapporter quelque nouvelle de l'un ou de l'autre de ses enfants" 'At that moment, Télémaque appeared at the foot of the Montagne de la Découverte, arms hanging by his sides, his expression glum, his head hanging, and disappointed that he should once again return to his master without news of one or the other of his children' (Dumas, *Georges* 103). The statement is typical of the treatment of this particular character, a figure denied the ambition and complexity of his masters. The presence of Télémaque reminds us of the influence of the *Odyssey* on *Georges*—indeed, it draws attention to the novel's attempts to graft the story of slave rebellion onto the familiar structures of the Homeric *Odyssey*. But the name has another, more immediate, antecedent.

In his 1795 play, *Le blanc et le noir* (*The White and the Black*), Charles Pigault de l'Epinoy, or Pigault-Lebrun as he was known, named the fictional leader of a slave uprising on the island of Saint-Domingue Télémaque.[21] But Pigault-Lebrun's Télémaque is rather different from the docile figure we find in *Georges*. He is a leader, for one, and he suffers few illusions about the violence of slavery: "Je ne

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vous parlerai pas des cicatrices dont vous êtes couverts" 'I will not speak to you of the scars with which you are covered' (60). This instance of apophasis is uttered in a speech delivered to fellow slaves at the very moment rebellion is set to begin—yet the remark has the effect of underlining the ambivalence of the motif of the scar in Dumas. That motif, after all, is deployed in *Georges* to outline a crisis of belonging in the novel's protagonist, and not the routine, unrecorded violence of slavery itself. It is a marker of racial discrimination, but not of slavery. The historian Lynn Hunt has written of Pigault-Lebrun's play as symbolic of the family romance, an idea she borrows from Freud to explore "the collective, unconscious images of the familial order that underlie revolutionary politics" (xiii).[22] To be sure, *Le blanc et le noir* raises ideas of distance and affinity in relations between fathers and sons. The subject is a vital one in *Georges* too. Indeed, the name Télémaque becomes indicative of an attempt to align the master/slave dialectic with the dynamic of family. Yet it also draws attention, in the case of *Georges* in particular, to the existence of a cleavage between the narrative of slavery and the plot of homecoming (even as it is adopted for the purpose of attaching one to the other). If, following Hunt, we understand the discourse of family relations to be bound up with ideas of political community, the example of *Georges* throws into relief tensions between slavery and *patrie*. If the *Odyssey* tells of a movement, slow but inexorable, toward home, toward family, the notion of *patrie*—literally, the fatherland—is uncertain, troubled even, in the context of a nineteenth-century fiction of slavery. Dumas's characters, some of them slaves, think and speak of *patrie*. That notion, however, is all too often denied them.

Georges is a novel of doubles, a story of parallel lives unfolding in concert. It is a novel of *fraternité*, Georges and Jacques brought together in pursuit of a single cause (escape from the island) despite the fact that they have pursued such different paths in life. The depiction of brotherhood is not limited to the narrative of rebel and *négrier* ("slave trader"), for a counterpoint to Georges and Jacques is to be found in the figures of Nazim and Laïza, slaves on the estate of M. de Malmédie. Captured on the island of Anjouan (or Nzwani, now part of the Union of the Comoros), these men are brothers and of noble lineage, and thus they embody that key trope in European abolitionist discourse, "the African prince fallen into slavery" (Miller 202). Nazim dreams of returning home, Laïza of fomenting a slave rebellion on the island. Both men will be freed by the benevolent Georges, and Laïza will perish in the course of the novel's violent slave uprising (Nazim, we believe, does indeed return to Anjouan). But before these narrative developments, Nazim embarks on a plan to escape Mauritius, a project he reveals to Laïza (who will not countenance departure). Alone in the forest, the brothers catch the sound of "un rossignol de Madagascar" 'a nightingale of Madagascar,' a mournful echo, it seems, of their lost homeland:

> Tous deux écoutèrent, le front mélancoliquement penché, jusqu'au moment où le musicien nocturne s'interrompit, et, s'envolant dans la direction de la patrie des deux esclaves, fit entendre les mêmes modulations à cinquante pas de distance; puis, s'envolant encore, toujours dans la même direction, il répéta une dernière fois son chant, lointain écho de la patrie, mais dont à peine, à cette distance, on pouvait saisir les notes les plus élevées; puis enfin il s'envola encore, mais cette fois, si loin, si loin, que les deux exilés écoutaient vainement; on n'entendait plus rien. (Dumas, *Georges* 145)

> Their heads bowed in a state of melancholy, both of them listened until the nocturnal minstrel broke off, and, flying away in the direction of the slaves' homeland, let out the same song some fifty paces farther on. Then, flying farther, always in the same direction, it repeated its song one last time, the distant echo of home. From this distance, one could scarcely make out even the highest notes. Finally, it flew away still farther, but, this time, so far, so far, that the two exiles listened only in vain: nothing more could be heard.

The passage touches on the problem of return, grasped only as a distant, elusive project. Yet it seems to pull that dream of return toward a European poetic tradition, not least in the evocation

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of the nightingale (a symbol, variously, of love, creativity, sorrow, nature). "Alors, la patrie?" 'And what of home?,' Nazim asks of his brother. Laïza can only respond: "Je l'ai oubliée" 'I have forgotten it' (147).

The story of Nazim and Laïza is held in tension with that of Georges and Jacques, a mirror image of the quest for belonging, for home, undertaken by the protagonist. A still bleaker vision of the (often futile) dream of return is offered at the moment of Jacques's reappearance on the island. Jacques, it seems, has come to trade in slaves, and we are told that those hailing from West Africa are of great value to the planters of Mauritius precisely because they have no hope of ever returning home: "ils n'essayent presque jamais de s'enfuir" 'they hardly ever try to escape' (215). These examples retain an ambivalent relation to the Odysseus plot articulated throughout the novel. That plot, after all, relies on a telos of homecoming inimical to the historical experience of slavery. Miller is surely correct to note that narratives of slavery written during the Restoration and July Monarchy shift all too readily toward a register of adventure. As he argues, such fictions often adopt vital aspects of abolitionist discourse (the story of the enslaved African prince, for example) only to purge these tropes of any moral force (199–200 and 205). The case of *Georges* is a curious one, for the novel stages a clash of priorities (aesthetic and political). The text, it seems, is in search of a plot, a narrative arc that might enable it to grasp both a politics of anti-racism and the demands of the adventure form. The story of Odysseus might appear to respond to those competing priorities. After all, it offers a structure for the shape of colonial narrative: a narrative of absence, homecoming, recognition.

To underpin *Georges* with a series of references to the *Odyssey* is thus to construct a set of expectations about the possibility, perhaps even the inevitability, of return to a distant homeland.[23] But here we encounter a vital problem: recognition and homecoming cannot, in this fiction of colonial life, be made to coexist, and this reveals a significant point of disjuncture with the Homeric model. "The *Odyssey*'s conjunction of recognition with homecoming," writes Sheila Murnaghan in her classic study *Disguise and Recognition in the* Odyssey, "aligns the identification of Odysseus with the entitlements of birth and possession" (10). That alignment is broken in *Georges*, for the situation of the protagonist's birth leads not to entitlement but to displacement: after all, the novel ends not with the apotheosis of homecoming but with the uncertainty of homelessness, the principal characters adrift on the high seas, directionless aboard their slave ship. They have succeeded in escaping the island, succeeded too in saving Georges from certain death—yet they must abandon the *patrie*. Georges and Sara's situation is figured, at the novel's close, as a moment of liberation—the language of freedom jarring with Georges's failure to win an end to slavery on the island. The end, however, also brings to the fore a sense of loss:

> Il faudrait s'être trouvé dans l'horrible situation à laquelle venaient d'échapper les deux amants, pour pouvoir analyser les sensations de suprême bonheur et de joie infinie qu'ils éprouvaient en se retrouvant libres sur cet immense Océan, qui les emportait loin de leur patrie, il est vrai, mais loin d'une patrie qui, comme une marâtre, ne s'était occupée d'eux que pour les persécuter de temps en temps.
>
> (Dumas, *Georges* 419–20)

> One must have found oneself in the horrible situation from which these two lovers had just escaped to be able to grasp the feelings of supreme happiness, of infinite joy, that they felt on finding themselves free on this immense ocean, which bore them far from their homeland, it is true, but far from a homeland that, like a wicked stepmother, took heed of them only to persecute them from time to time.

References to the *Odyssey* appear to foreground a set of promises about narrative closure that go unfulfilled. In the end, as Molly Enz explains, "Georges finds himself in the middle of a vast ocean without a future, excluded from his homeland forever" (392). The gendered language of home, of *patrie*, is here given expression in the term "marâtre," the wicked stepmother common to so many fairy tales. In a novel of fathers and sons, the maternal influence is noted only as the sign of persecution.

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A final observation is necessary at this juncture, for the ship on which Georges and his family conclude the novel—a slave ship—is named *La Calypso*. The vessel takes its name from the nymph of the island of Ogygia, the figure, in the Homeric *Odyssey*, responsible for detaining Odysseus for a period of some seven years. Odysseus was powerless to resist Calypso, unable to escape her island prison—as Athena's plea to Zeus in book 5 indicates: "The wretched man is stranded on an island; / Calypso forces him to stay with her. / He cannot make his way back to his country" (Homer 180). We find *Georges* frozen at this moment of the Homeric *Odyssey*, unable, in the end, to countenance the return of its protagonist to his own country, unable to construct a telos of homecoming in the context of nineteenth-century slavery. *Patrie* is elusive, unattainable. On one level, we might find something crass in that name *La Calypso*, the slave ship transformed into a mere point of reference, a method for drawing the novel into the grand classical tradition of narratives of exile and return. Something of the vessel's history is recounted in chapter 14 of Dumas's novel, and here we find a direct evocation of the *Odyssey*. The episode in question concerns Jacques's rise to the rank of captain (just as it describes the demise of his predecessor, Captain Bertrand): "Le même soir, *la Calypso*, plus oublieuse que la nymphe dont elle portait le nom, fit voile pour les Antilles, déjà consolée, en apparence du moins, non pas du départ du roi Ulysse, mais de la mort du capitaine Bertrand" 'That same evening, the *Calypso*, more forgetful than the nymph after whom she was named, set sale for the Antilles, having already found some solace, in appearance at least, not for the departure of King Odysseus, but for the death of Captain Bertrand' (Dumas, *Georges* 230). The ship, it seems, has swiftly forgotten her former captain. Yet Dumas's novel has not simply forgotten the structures of the Homeric *Odyssey*, somehow failing to return its protagonist to his home (even after so many years of absence), for the implications of the denouement are rather more significant. The novel's representation of the uneasy conjunction of recognition and homelessness, its refusal to bring recognition and homecoming into alignment, produces a narrative of profound pessimism. The Odysseus plot cannot be sustained. Yet this failure is no mere accident: it signals the novel's inability to imagine a world in which Georges has his place. There can be no triumphal conclusion in which the injustices of racism and slavery are banished from the island, for these injustices endure in the novel. Georges's path cannot be the same as that of his model: homelessness is to be his end.

The *Odyssey* continues to be a vital point of reference in the construction of narratives of movement and migration, a reference designed to distinguish the story of migration from the simple logic of tourism. An odyssey has become shorthand for a journey undertaken with great difficulty, without the habitual promise of return.[24] The reference is not always apposite, but we must not lose sight of the intricacy and nuance brought to the Homeric *Odyssey* by a critical strand of postcolonial literature. In his autobiography, Hall reflects on his long vacations from Oxford, and he recalls his reading over the summer of 1953. He read Joyce, Homer, and Stuart Gilbert (in particular, his critical study *James Joyce's* Ulysses):

> Encountering these ideas in the steaming midday heat of a tropical colonial city was like experiencing a snowstorm in a Caribbean summer. With what form of life did these strange, unconventional things connect? What circumstances had produced them? Was the way Joyce experimented with language linked to the fact that he was Irish? Or were cosmopolitanism and Irishness mutually exclusive? And, if so, why was *Ulysses* being written in Trieste? Could you compose "modern poetry" or paint an abstract work of art or write *Ulysses* in Kingston, and what would *that* mean? Actually, as is now clear, Kingston, and many locales like it, are ready-made and waiting for their Homeric reincarnations. We need only think, at this point, of Derek Walcott's *Omeros*. I can see now that the Caribbean is in some ways the prototype *mise en scène* for such an odyssey. But I couldn't see it at the time. (124)

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Does *Georges* represent a Homeric reincarnation of nineteenth-century Mauritius? Our response must be nuanced. The novel is still a portrait of colonial life written from the metropole. References to the Homeric *Odyssey* suggest a problem of narrative structure: the intertext lends itself to the representation of racial prejudice, but it bends (and snaps) when tasked with supporting the novel's reflection on slavery and *patrie*. The construction is imperfect, for the *Odyssey* cannot, in this incarnation, be remade to accommodate the fiction of slavery. That insight lies at the center of the contribution *Georges* makes to the history of European fictions of race and slavery: the novel, grounded in a series of references to the seemingly inextricable logic of homecoming, can only conclude with its opposite, an anti-*Odyssey*, a work in which recognition and homecoming are prized apart. The adventure novel, in this reading, does not depict the world as it might be but points instead to the grim persistence of structures of prejudice. The protagonist, Georges, must contend with those structures, social and literary: he is denied the denouement that seemed, for a time, to be his destiny. The vision of homelessness offered in the novel's concluding pages is thus not transcendental but mundane. We are left with the distinctly modern portrait of a defeated outcast, a political exile; he has long dreamed of home but now knows he will never return.

Notes

1. On this point, see Forsdick and Yee. Their recent intervention in the journal *French Studies* calls for "new work at the intersection of nineteenth-century French studies and postcolonial studies" (167). My essay constitutes one answer to that call. Recent years have seen the publication of a number of studies on the connections between colonialism, empire, and nineteenth-century French fiction. See, in particular, Bell; Mitchell; Prasad; and Yee. On Dumas and the politics of French imperialism, the beginnings of new critical interest are also evident in the anglophone world, not least in the historical work of Martone. See his *Finding Monte-Cristo* and, for an overview of critical reaction to *Georges*, "Alexandre Dumas as a Francophone Writer" 8–19. For studies in French, see Hoffmann; Mombert; and Desormeaux.

2. Dumas read Homer in French translation—or so he suggests in a short critique of François Ponsard's 1852 tragedy, *Ulysse*. See his "Ulysse de Ponsard" 363. Homer is referenced elsewhere in Dumas's writing, not least in his *Viva Garibaldi! Une Odyssée en 1860*. For a recent reflection on references to the *Odyssey* in the context of the early years of the French nineteenth century, and with regard to Chateaubriand in particular, see Counter.

3. In connection with this point, we should also note the title of Huggins's classic work, *Black Odyssey: The African-American Ordeal in Slavery*.

4. Critics point to a number of sources underpinning Dumas's representation of Mauritius, including Milbert's *Le voyage pittoresque à l'Île-de-France, au Cap de Bonne-Esperance et à l'Île de Ténériffe* (*The Picturesque Voyage to Île de France, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Island of Tenerife*). See Bernard 154n19.

5. On *Paul et Virginie*, see Bongie 79–125; Miller 105–06. As Bongie points out (224), Georges in fact reads *Paul et Virginie* toward the close of Dumas's novel (Dumas, *Georges* 408).

6. On recognition, see Cave 1–24. On homecoming, the question of *nostos* is a vital one in the *Odyssey*, as Murnaghan notes: "Odysseus is distinguished from other heroes by his willingness to defer the reunions with members of his family through which his homecoming will receive its full expression. He is able to endure a period of disguise during which his achievement in reaching home at last goes unrecognized. And this is what allows him to achieve the greatest success possible for a Homeric hero: *nostos*, 'return home,' after winning *kleos*, 'glory,' in the war against Troy" (2).

7. This point has been largely absent from critical discussions of the novel. One exception to this is to be found in a brief remark on Lukács in the conclusion of Racault's essay. I do not argue, as Racault does, that Dumas's protagonist embodies "la condition générale du héros romanesque" 'the general condition of the novelistic hero' in the early nineteenth century (150); *Georges* makes a distinctive contribution, prompting us to look again at the forms of homelessness relevant to the novel in France. Beyond Lukács, Martone has argued that Dumas lived with an experience of "homelessness" and "unbelonging" in his own time, not least as a consequence of the racism he experienced (*Finding Monte-Cristo* 8).

8. On homelessness and the novel, see Neubauer.

9. See, for example, Said; and, on nineteenth-century France, Yee (who reflects on "offstage spaces" in fiction [14–17]).

10. On the biography of Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, including discussion of his parents, see Reiss.

11. See Mirecourt, *Fabrique* 7. The French term *nègre*, used by Mirecourt in this racist attack, can also mean "ghostwriter." In addition, Mirecourt claimed that *Georges* had been written by the Mauritian Félicien Mallefille, an idea for which he provided no evidence (40). While not under scrutiny here, the question of collaboration continues to prompt discussion in connection with *Georges*, as it does in critical conversations about many of Dumas's most celebrated works. Mallefille, it seems, did play a role in the initial stages of the novel's development. Late in life, Dumas claimed that he had been furnished with the outlines of

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the novel by this friend and sometime collaborator. For further details, see Schopp 358–60; Mombert 241–42.

12. Throughout the essay, translations from the French are my own.

13. On the question of autobiographical readings of the novel, see Hoffmann.

14. Sara is a white Creole woman betrothed to Henri de Malmédie. On her significance in the novel, see Bernard 137–39.

15. Daut points out that Georges embodies the figure of the "inspired mulatto." As she puts it: "In the literature of the Haitian Revolution in the nineteenth-century Atlantic World, the trope of the 'inspired mulatto' describes a colonial person of color like Dumas's Georges, who has never been a slave, has been educated in France, and upon returning home to the colony finds that he still cannot escape color prejudice and therefore becomes inspired to revolt, not necessarily against the institution of slavery, but rather against the insult of color prejudice" (75).

16. On this point, see Dupuy; Miller 275–99.

17. As is hinted at in this passage, the genre of travel writing was an important one for Dumas. By the time of *Georges*, he had produced a number of travel writings, including his *Impressions de voyage* (1834; *Impressions of a Journey*).

18. The Auerbach reading has prompted much critical debate. Miles draws out a parallel, on the question of time, between Auerbach and Lukács (in particular the Lukács of *The Theory of the Novel*): "Much like Auerbach in *Mimesis*," he writes, "Lukács contrasts the time problems of modern literature with the timeless world of the Greeks" (25).

19. On the question of race in this scene, see Desormeaux's argument on love and race in Dumas, an argument that suggests the liberatory possibilities of *Georges*'s denouement.

20. On recognition, slavery, and visual culture (specifically engraving), see Grigsby 32n14.

21. On the connection between Dumas and Pigault-Lebrun, see Bernard 156n52. Bernard notes that Dumas's Télémaque is also based on the "house slaves" of *Paul et Virginie*, Domingue and Marie, and Dumas's character is occasionally described as a "domestique" (Dumas, *Georges* 352). He hails, we learn, from the Congo, and he is distinctly uncomfortable at the prospect of physical contact with Jacques, a slave trader, when the latter returns to Mauritius (217).

22. For Hunt's reflections on Pigault-Lebrun, see 172–75.

23. The close of the Homeric *Odyssey* is not without its complexities. While Odysseus does succeed in returning home, McConnell (102) and Murnaghan (106–07) note that his travels are not yet over, as indicated by Tiresias's prophecy.

24. Kingsley's *The New Odyssey: The Story of Europe's Refugee Crisis* is an example of this tendency.

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Abstract: Alexandre Dumas père left behind few explicit reflections on race and slavery in the modern world, but he was not silent on these subjects. Before the tireless deeds of the musketeers, or the vengeful fantasies of the Count of Monte-Cristo, there was *Georges*, an 1843 novel of race and slave rebellion set on the island of Mauritius. This essay explores questions of homecoming, homelessness, and recognition in the novel. It argues that the text incorporates a series of references to the Homeric *Odyssey* and that these come to illuminate the complexities of a problem faced by metropolitan French novelists of the nineteenth century: What manner of plot might grasp, or fail to grasp, the interlocking injustices of racism and slavery? After all, *Georges* does not conclude with homecoming and recognition, as the model of the *Odyssey* might imply, but with homelessness.

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