



**JUSTIN
IZZO**
**EXPERI-
MENTS
WITH
EMPIRE**

**ANTHROPOLOGY
AND FICTION
IN THE
FRENCH ATLANTIC**

**JUSTIN
IZZO**

EXPERIMENTS WITH EMPIRE

BUY

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

DUKE

THEORY IN FORMS

A Series Edited by

Nancy Rose Hunt and Achille Mbembe

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Experiments with Empire

Anthropology and Fiction in the French Atlantic

JUSTIN IZZO

DUKE

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS *Durham and London* 2019

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

© 2019 Duke University Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America on
acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Matt Tauch
Typeset in Minion Pro by Westchester Book Group

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Izzo, Justin, author.

Title: Experiments with empire : anthropology and fiction
in the French Atlantic / Justin Izzo.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2019. |

Series: Theory in forms | Includes bibliographical
references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018042312 (print) |

LCCN 2018057191 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478004622 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478003700 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN 9781478004004 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: French literature—20th century—History
and criticism. | French fiction—French-speaking
countries—History and criticism. | Ethnology in
literature. | Imperialism in literature. | Imperialism
in motion pictures. | Politics and literature—History—
20th century. | Literature and society—History—
20th century.

Classification: LCC PQ3897 (ebook) |

LCC PQ3897 .I98 2019 (print) | DDC 840.9/3552—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018042312>

Cover art: *Aerial View Of Cityscape Against Sky*, Marseille,
France. Photo by Hlne Poli/EyeEm/Getty.

DUKE
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii

Introduction: *Ethnographic Fictions in the French Atlantic* 1

- 1 Ethnographic Didacticism and Africanist Melancholy: *Leiris, Hampâté Bâ, and the Epistemology of Style* 17
- 2 The Director of Modern Life: *Jean Rouch's Ethnofiction* 55
- 3 Folklore, Fiction, and Ethnographic Nation Building: *Price-Mars, Alexis, Depestre, Laferrière* 98
- 4 Creole Novels and the Ethnographic Production of Literary History: *Glissant, Chamoiseau, Confiant* 134
- 5 Speculative Cityscapes and Premillennial Policing: *Ethnographies of the Present in Jean-Claude Izzo's Crime Trilogy* 169

Conclusion: *Empire, Democracy, and Nonsovereign Knowledges* 203

NOTES 217

BIBLIOGRAPHY 257

INDEX 273

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

Acknowledgments

It is no accident that this book traces experimental connections between different ways of knowing the world. My initial interest in this question was quite personal, sparked by graduate work at Duke as an unorthodox scholar who started his career in cultural anthropology and later moved to literature. I am deeply indebted to the people who made this move happen and to all those who supported the work that came out of it.

At Duke, Charlie Piot and Alice Kaplan put their heads together and found a way for a young anthropologist to join the Program in Literature. This switch shaped everything that came after, and I am ever grateful for their ingenuity and determination to keep me at Duke. Charlie and Alice remain inspiring interlocutors alongside other teachers and mentors at Duke who guided me, pushed me, and always excited me with new texts and ideas: Michael Hardt, Fredric Jameson, Rebecca Stein, Ken Surin, and Robyn Wiegman. The late and much missed Srinivas Aravamudan took me in as his research assistant during my last two years of graduate school and, more important, showed me what a book should look like. At all stages of my graduate career, Duke friends supported me, made me laugh, and constantly floored me with their thinking: Lindsey Andrews, Leigh Campoamor, Gerry Canavan, Kinohi Nishikawa, and Ryan Vu.

In France, Philippe Roger and Pap Ndiaye hosted me for a year at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Jean-Paul Alglave and Paul Ackermann welcomed me into their home in Paris and offered me a warm environment for reading and writing.

At Brown, the Department of French Studies has been an ideal home for me and my work as this project neared completion. My colleagues, graduate

DUKE

UNIVERSITY
PRESS

students, and undergraduates have been sources of inspiration, encouragement, and good cheer since I arrived. Other colleagues at Brown read chapter drafts or offered valuable advice: Tim Bewes, Caroline Castiglione, Nancy Jacobs, Jennifer Johnson, and Ralph Rodriguez. The Brown community, in French studies and beyond, has been a wonderfully vibrant intellectual home since my arrival in 2012. Special thanks, also, to Giovi Roz Gastaldi and Marley Kirton for helping me take screenshots of a quality I could not produce on my own.

I have been able to give several invited talks that allowed me to test out and refine several of this project's interventions in different settings. Stéphane Gerson and Herrick Chapman welcomed me at New York University's Institute of French Studies; Emmanuelle Saada, Vincent Debaene, and Madeleine Dobie invited me to participate in the "Future of French and Francophone Studies" series at Columbia's Maison Française; and Matthew O'Malley invited me to speak as part of Yale University's "Ethnography and Social Theory" colloquia.

Colleagues and friends were unfailingly generous in the time they devoted to reading parts of the manuscript, answering my questions, and offering feedback about the project as a whole. Gerry Canavan, Vincent Debaene, Sam Di Iorio, Martin Munro, and Ralph Rodriguez all read through chapters at various stages of this book's completion. Michael Dash, Charles Forsdick, and Gary Wilder gave input on matters large and small as the book took shape.

Parts of chapters 1, 2, and 4 appeared early in their life in a different form as the following articles: "Narrative, Contingency, Modernity: Jean Rouch's *Moi, un Noir*," *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, nos. 1–2 (2011): 205–20; "From Aesthetics to Allegory: Raphaël Confiant, the Creole Novel, and Interdisciplinary Translation," *Small Axe* 42 (2013): 89–99; "The Anthropology of Transcultural Storytelling: *Oui mon commandant!* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's Ethnographic Didacticism," *Research in African Literatures* 46, no. 1 (2015): 1–18; "A Question to Be Lived': Creoleness and Ethnographic Fiction," *Small Axe* 55 (2018): 137–46.

At Duke University Press, Elizabeth Ault has been steadfast in her support of this project and in her desire to bring the book through to publication while making sure it stayed true to my vision. My two anonymous readers for the press provided sharp and insightful feedback; the book is better for their suggestions and I thank them for pushing me to amplify aspects of the project that I had not initially seen.

A small group of friends has supported me at all stages of this project. I thank them for being hilarious and brilliant fellow travelers and for putting up

with me: Aaron Castroverde, Eli and Kelly Gamboa, Nick and Deena Giffen, Hanna Ihalainen, and Brantley, Helen, and Ruth Nicholson. My family has been no less supportive and indulgent: Philip Izzo and Susan Izzo, Whitney and J. R. Johnson, and Bob McCarthy. It is to all these friends and family members that this book is affectionately dedicated.

DUKE

**UNIVERSITY
PRESS**

Introduction

Ethnographic Fictions in the French Atlantic

In a 1963 interview with the journal *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, the French anthropologist and prolific documentary filmmaker Jean Rouch spoke about his work in the *cinéma vérité* style, the boundaries of realist ethnographic filmmaking, and his investment in what he called “the creation of fiction beginning from the real.”¹ For Rouch, fiction had unexpected and paradoxical origins that he explored in improvisational approaches to the conventions of ethnographic documentaries about “real” life. These were cinematic experiments that saw stories created on the fly as amateur actors and research subjects collaborated with the anthropologist behind the camera. By 1963, Rouch had already made several such “ethno-fictions” by creating improvisational filmic narratives from various research projects in preindependence West Africa—namely, Ghana, Niger, and the Ivory Coast. One of the most influential of these films was *Moi, un Noir* (1958), in which a Nigerien migrant to Abidjan speaks about his everyday life as a day laborer and his stint fighting in the French colonial war in Indochina. But he also imagines a new, transatlantic sense of self in relation to emerging African and American popular cultures, extending his identification with modernity beyond the French empire. This improvised commentary was recorded after Rouch’s visuals had already been shot. In reality, the actor Oumarou Ganda was Rouch’s research assistant at the time of filming.

What drives this impulse to push beyond the boundaries of ethnographic film as a genre and to introduce fiction into the documentary expectations

of anthropology? Rouch's initial answer to the interview prompt made in this vein humorously cites his own "laziness": it was far easier, after all, to make up stories with his African friends during the filming process than it was to debate and plan for weeks ahead of time, constructing storyboards and determining in advance how characters' roles would play out on-screen. Continuing with his gentle self-deprecation, he goes on to say that the "state of grace" of fictionalized ethnographic filmmaking caused him to develop bad habits: "It doesn't interest me to make films with a set story to tell, roles to play, and a preparation on paper. I was very impressed by the first Westerns I saw, Westerns that were improvised in the course of filming. Unfortunately, African influences took effect, since Africans are people who improvise wonderfully and who have total spontaneity in front of the camera."² Rouch's early ethno-fiction films were thus born from alchemical moments where he followed the improvisational lead of his African collaborators and research subjects. These are moments of cinematic transubstantiation, where anthropology is converted into fiction as improvisation filters through the camera lens.

This book is about anthropology, genre, and empire. It is also about the complex, interdependent, and speculative relationship between textual forms and social forms. It studies experiments between anthropology and fiction as creative ways to process colonial situations and imperial afterlives. As Rouch's example illustrates, it examines how literary writers and anthropologists in the twentieth-century French Atlantic thought through colonial and postcolonial situations by producing works of ethnographic fiction. These are generically hybrid texts, either by anthropologists whose documentary works adopt fictive elements or by fiction writers who integrate social-scientific ways of thinking (and commentary on these ways of thinking) into their artistic production. They also contain disparate formal layers that make paratextual and intertextual connections, drawing us into fields of metacritical, self-reflexive commentary.

Helena Wulff defines ethnographic fiction as "fiction built around real social, political, and historical events and circumstances."³ The idea of ethnographic fiction I work with in this book owes something to this definition, but it also involves reflexive and speculative dimensions: ethnographic fiction in *Experiments with Empire* disrupts generic categories to think critically about social-scientific and literary ways of knowing the world. But it also imagines new ways of world knowing by rearranging the geographies and histories of imperial social forms. Ethnographic fiction in this book is a concept with

speculative resonances, one that links formal experimentation with new epistemological desires.

The ethnographic fictions that feature here attempt to express and negotiate imperial situations across the presumed divide of decolonization. They offer sharp political reorderings of (post)colonial knowledge production. Further, they imagine social forms and ways of knowing that are not beholden to the limited political horizon empire offers. But in so doing they also point to the epistemological challenges and contradictions involved in understanding empire using ethnographic realism and the representative conventions of the social sciences.

Transatlantic and Transcolonial Experiments

Experiments with Empire ties the production of ethnographic fiction in twentieth-century French and Francophone letters to the question of empire as a political, epistemological, and formal problem. This connection, moreover, has geographic and historical resonances: on the one hand, tracing twentieth-century ethnographic fictions reveals a French Atlantic world that links metropolitan Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. We must begin from an Atlantic perspective to observe how these ethnographic fictions generated and participated in a broader field of thinking within and against imperial situations. On the other hand, analyzing this discursive field uncovers connections between older colonial pasts and the contemporary postcolonial present.⁴ It prioritizes experimental ambitions that transcend decolonization as a periodizing focal point.

This book's timeline moves from the late colonial period to the end of the twentieth century. More precisely, it begins in the 1930s, when Marcel Griaule led the Mission Dakar-Djibouti (1931–33) across colonial Africa and Abyssinia, and ends in the late 1990s, as debates about race and immigration in metropolitan France began to prefigure the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National in the 2002 presidential elections. This arc shows how experiments with ethnographic fiction moved across the twentieth-century decolonizing moment, beginning with the Mission Dakar-Djibouti's "promotion" of both French anthropology and the empire (as Vincent Debaene has shown⁵), and extending into the postcolonial Caribbean and Metropole. This periodization allows us to think the colonial, the imperial, and the postcolonial together

as an experimental space-time that can generate new political imaginaries and desires for new social forms.

Jean Rouch was at the forefront of post–World War II documentary filmmaking, but he was not alone in experimenting at the intersection of anthropology and fiction using colonial encounters as raw materials for imaginative textual production. Many other figures from around the French Atlantic during the twentieth century also thought deeply and transculturally about the relationship between anthropology and fiction. Several decades before Rouch began his ethnofictional experiments, for instance, the Haitian physician and ethnographer Jean Price-Mars, who studied both medicine and the social sciences in Paris, wrote his book *Ainsi parla l’Oncle* (1928) in which he urged Haiti’s elite to cease idealizing French aesthetic norms (an infatuation he famously referred to as “collective bovarysme”) and to valorize instead the creation of literature and fiction that reflected the nation’s singularity. His transatlantic argument was based on an ethnohistorical reading of African cultural survivals in New World contexts and on an aesthetic appreciation of the African origins of Haitian Vodou. Also in the Caribbean, in his seminal *Discours antillais* (1981), Édouard Glissant studied social forms left over from the transatlantic slave trade on his home island of Martinique—which had been a French overseas department for nearly four decades when the *Discours* was published—to argue for the social-scientific conditions of possibility of an authentically nationalist kind of postcolonial fiction.

Ethnographic fiction took shape on the other side of the ocean, as well. Dahomeyan author Paul Hazoumé studied at the Institut d’Ethnologie in Paris in the late 1930s, publishing his thesis research as *Le pacte de sang au Dahomey* in 1937 and his ethnohistorical novel *Doguicimi* one year later—as he reminds readers in a brief prefatory remark, this work of fiction has a social-scientific bent since it “deals with the ways and customs of the old kingdom of Dahomey.”⁶ Michel Leiris unites all the points of the triangle, as it were, since he carried out ethnographic fieldwork throughout colonial Africa on the 1931–33 Mission Dakar-Djibouti during which he wrote *L’Afrique fantôme* (1934), which sees him assimilate himself to a fictional Conradian character out of anthropological frustration. Like Hazoumé and many others, he studied at Paris’s Institut d’Ethnologie. He also completed research on race relations in the postcolonial French Caribbean, citing “the poet Édouard Glissant” in *Contacts de civilisations en Martinique et en Guadeloupe* (1955), which he wrote for the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization.⁷

Francophone writers working primarily in the domain of fiction also turned to anthropology to forge textually meaningful relationships to the French (post) colonial situation. Writing in the wake of *Ainsi parla l'Oncle*, Haitian novelists such as René Depestre and Dany Laferrière revisited concerns articulated about cultural nationalism by Price-Mars and his contemporary Jacques Roumain, a writer and novelist who studied anthropology under Franz Boas and who co-founded Haiti's Bureau d'Ethnologie with Price-Mars in 1941.⁸ Martinican author Patrick Chamoiseau credits anthropology throughout his book *Écrire en pays dominé* (1997), in which he describes his development as a fiction writer and integrates this personal story into a new ethnographic history of Caribbean literary production. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Price-Mars both make cameos in Martinican novelist Raphaël Confiant's *Le Nègre et l'Amiral* (1988), which fictionalizes everyday life on the island under Vichyst colonial rule during World War II.

Working with this experimental archive, this book addresses debates in anthropology, literary criticism, and postcolonial studies. These fields, and the questions I ask of them, offer distinct and interrelated optics through which to consider this project's main arguments. Taken synthetically, they illuminate how imperial complexities opened up stylistic opportunities and prompted experimental forms of generic hybridity.⁹ But these questions of form and style are inseparable from questions of epistemology. In the twentieth-century French Atlantic, "knowing" empire was deeply enmeshed in anthropology yet also orthogonal to it: for the literary writers and anthropologists I study here, ethnographic knowledge production had to move outside the bounds of documentary realism if it was to make sense of imperial social forms. Ethnographic realism had to confront, in a productive manner, the stylized free play of imaginative fictionality.

Alternative Anthropologies

Anthropologists famously and provocatively took up questions of ethnographic genre and form during the 1980s and 1990s, when the publication of works such as *Writing Culture* and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* put self-reflexive experimentation in the service of critiques of anthropological knowledge production. The "writing culture moment," sometimes referred to as anthropology's "textual turn," was characterized by a convergence with

poststructuralism and literary theory as anthropologists questioned their authority as knowledge producers as well as the textual conventions of ethnographic representation. In these accounts, documentary authenticity gave way in the face of what James Clifford called anthropology's "partial truths" and "true fictions," emphasizing the discipline's entanglement with fiction's Latin forebear, *fingere*, "something made or fashioned."¹⁰ Scholars have of late reanimated these questions, asking, for instance, what anthropology's literary turn still has to teach us about experimental fieldwork in the age of social media and the digital humanities or, as Michael Taussig wonders, about the underexplored formal links between fieldwork and "writing work."¹¹

Addressing this legacy in a different way, this book offers an imperial genealogy of anthropology's textual moment and extends this genealogical relationship throughout the twentieth century. Writing more than twenty-five years after *Writing Culture's* initial publication, Clifford cites the twin processes of decolonization and globalization as factors that marked the book's conditions of possibility—and he also recognizes Rouch as a "neglected inspiration."¹² This post-1960s moment of upheaval, contestation, and integration was undoubtedly essential for destabilizing the surety of anthropological knowledge claims. But we can trace the twentieth-century relationship between anthropology and fiction back farther, decentering decolonization as a focal point and observing how even in late-colonial contexts writers and intellectuals desired new anthropological epistemologies stemming from experiments with ethnography. "The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography," *Writing Culture's* iconic subtitle, have unmistakably imperial roots that also speak to postcolonial presents and futures.

This genealogy shifts some of the key terms of anthropology's textual moment. The figures I study here brought fiction and anthropology together during the twentieth century in ways that sidestepped questions of (in)authenticity and truth value. Likewise, although the chapters to come pay close attention to conditions of textual production, the experimental forms that drive this book's analyses go beyond pointing to the constructedness of ethnographic epistemologies.¹³ Instead, the experiments with ethnographic fiction considered in this book instrumentalize new generic forms to think orthogonally about empire. Imaginative creativity merges with anthropological approaches to documentary narrative, forging new ways to grapple textually with empire's ideologies and contradictions in the Atlantic world. These become alternative anthropologies of colonial and postcolonial encounters that offer novel epistemological approaches to empire and the history of the human sciences, in-

ventive renderings of ethnographic narrative form, and explorations of fiction's documentary possibilities. Alternative anthropologies are also orthogonal to empire, intersecting with imperial social forms but also veering away from them to imagine new ways of knowing and new political possibilities beyond empire's reach.

In his 1989 essay on empire and "anthropology's interlocutors," Edward Said addresses the writing culture moment and gives a dialogic cast to anthropology's constitutive entanglement with colonized peoples. For Said, the idea of interlocution can be "split quite dramatically into two fundamentally discrepant meanings": on the one hand, in the colonial context interlocution can refer to a quietist form of collaboration (here Said gives the example of so-called native *évolués* in French Algeria) or, with a nod to Frantz Fanon, to a staunch "refusal" that sees "radical antagon[ism]" as "the only interlocution that is possible with colonial power."¹⁴ On the other hand, interlocution can signal "denaturing incorporation and cooptation," a dialogue with the human sciences in which the colonized participate in a depoliticized, "antiseptic" conversation with disciplines that still police the terms of access and debate.¹⁵ This book proposes a third interlocutory mode between anthropology and the (post) colonial world, one that avoids the collaboration-antagonism axis, as well as the overly polite discussion Said describes. The writers and intellectuals I study here mobilize anthropology's imperial roots to establish new epistemologies, generic forms, historical narratives, and political imaginaries. This is both an interlocution with and a "speaking past" anthropology, a mode of address that looks beyond the discipline's representative conventions while remaining attuned to the possibilities ethnography offers for reimagining empire and for thinking beyond it.

In a similar vein, Said goes on to urge anthropologists to focus on "the amalgamation between Europe and its imperium acting together in the process of decolonization."¹⁶ Once again thinking alongside Fanon, he highlights a narrative of inseparability between the West and the decolonized world that encompasses both "a collective as well as a plural destiny for mankind."¹⁷ This model of amalgamation is crucial for understanding decolonial interdependence as humanity's horizon (and for recent historiography positioning France as an "imperial nation-state"¹⁸), but it does not go far enough: the Said-Fanon formulation misses how empire is also an experimental space-time and how narratives of amalgamation conceal alternative histories, speculative futures, and different ways of knowing the world. Alternative anthropologies call attention to the interplay between amalgamation and reimagination,

between the (post)colonial world as a space of variegated integration and one of radical invention.

The experiments with ethnographic fiction taking place in the twentieth-century French Atlantic took an expansive view of this interplay. The figures I study here are invested in generating new forms of knowledge and in creating political and epistemological connections that remained unthinkable within the confines of conventional anthropological rationality or fictional representation. For instance, Malian ethnographer and colonial civil servant Amadou Hampâté Bâ, whose work I examine in chapter 1, uses characterology in his memoirs to advocate for a linguistic universalism that repositions the French language as a decolonized vehicle for the worldwide communication of knowledge about African cultures. Or, to return to Rouch, the characters in *Moi, un Noir* inhabit transatlantic popular cultures in ways that situate them as cosmopolitan knowledge producers as well as late colonial subjects.

Imperial formations imposed new social forms on colonized populations, and the ethnographic fictions I study here seek to understand these forms but also, crucially, to imagine connections across and outside them. They thematize and interrogate their own conditions of possibility and the limitations of anthropological truth claims, but in so doing they generate new political epistemologies that are more than anti-imperial counternarratives. These ethnographic fictions urge us to revitalize our understanding of the relationship between anthropology and colonialism: historically conceived as one of complicity or domination, this relationship is also shot through with politicized and speculative free play, even with utopian desires. It produces illuminatingly self-reflexive texts that offer alternative anthropologies of imperial life worlds. Alternative anthropologies move along the grain of imperial social forms while simultaneously imagining other socialities, histories, and geographies that empire cannot countenance and to which established epistemologies remain blind.

Empire as a Formal Imperative

The idea that ethnographic fictions generate alternative anthropologies requires us to raise questions about literary/fictional form and its relationship to epistemology. More specifically, this involves thinking about how form

wrestles with empire in experimental texts that push against the expectations we bring to literary genres.

There is a growing body of scholarship on the history of French anthropology: its relationship to literature, as well as its disciplinary interaction with scientific theories of race and political ideologies of empire.¹⁹ Scholars have also begun focusing more closely on what literature has to tell us about everyday life, often thinking alongside or against anthropological theory.²⁰ As Debaene argues, twentieth-century French culture experienced an “ethnographic moment” marked by ethnography’s rise to prominence as a field science as well as an increasing openness to literary modes of writing that stood alongside more conventional anthropological monographs.²¹ This book’s scope and stakes, however, are different: first, because I argue that experimental ethnographic fictions signal to us how we can relate literary form to social form without reducing one to the other. My aim is broader, also, because experiments with ethnographic fiction encompass a colonial and postcolonial Atlantic world whose anthropological aesthetic is triangulated and not the exclusive epistemological or artistic purview of the metropole.²²

From this perspective, what demands does empire make of form, style, and generic experimentation? This book shows how empire pulls literary creativity toward an aesthetics of documentary recording, on the one hand, and toward practices of imaginative textual invention, on the other. Consider Martinican-Guyanese writer René Maran’s Prix Goncourt–winning *Batouala* (1921): billed as an “authentic Negro novel” (*véritable roman nègre*) about French Equatorial Africa (AEF), *Batouala* classifies itself according to both its fictionality and the claims it makes to a certain documentary authenticity. As Maran puts it in his introduction, he spent six years “translating” what he lived and saw as a colonial administrator in AEF into *Batouala*: “This novel is thus entirely objective. It does not even try to explain: it observes. It does not express outrage: it records.”²³

Maran’s theory of fiction involves positioning the novel as a conduit for “impersonal observation,” as a vehicle for the transparent rendering of empire’s constitutive violence in narrative prose.²⁴ In this documentary conception of literature, empire’s decadence and exploitative organization of everyday life can be communicated to a broad public in narratives that make a claim to truth value because of the revelatory impulses they express. Authorial stylistic flourishes take a back seat here to a view of fiction as recording—from this perspective the novel comes to resemble a narrativization of field notes. But

as helpful as Maran's formulation is in defining the novel as an observational document over and against the stories empire tells about itself, it has less to tell us about the relationship between documentary impulses and imaginative stylization.

Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) offers a way to shore up the stylistic elements of empire's entanglement with documentary textuality and creative invention. Césaire's masterful prose poem locates itself at the articulation of imperial geographies and the intensely personal forms of "ruination," to borrow Ann Laura Stoler's processual category, that empire wreaks on its subjects.²⁵ But we should not read *Cahier* solely in terms of its exquisite anticolonial lyricism. As the surrealist André Breton suggests in his preface written in 1943, in Césaire's poetic persona "human essence is heated to a point of maximum effervescence in which knowledge—here of the highest order—overlaps with magical gifts."²⁶ Breton argues that epistemology and imaginative creativity both come to constitute the Martinican writer's scathing poetic critique of empire. We can observe how documentary impulses intersect with the "magical gifts" of poetic lyricism in *Cahier's* opening stanzas, where the repetition of the words "in this inert town" (*dans cette ville inerte*) creates the effect of the poet guiding readers through an urban landscape that could be Fort-de-France, Martinique's capital, or any colonial city at all (and, indeed, Breton develops the metaphor of the poet as guide in his preface).²⁷ Stirring lyrical intensity is of a piece with a sense of documentary exposition since poetic language can be used to communicate knowledge of colonial conditions of living. For Césaire, then, documentary impulses are stylistic products of imaginative poetic vision.

Maran and Césaire provide two models of what happens when the desire to record and bear witness to imperial power relations confronts the stylized prerequisites for imaginative and fictional creative writing. But these models, one poetic and the other an "observational" novel, also provoke us to make broader points about empire, form, and style. The writers and anthropologists I study in this book conceive of these impulses (the documentary and the imaginative) as always already conjoined features of narratives about empire. Their ethnographic fictions suggest that it is empire's imposition of "contact"—as its originary moment, its foundational violence, and as its enduring and changeable history—that engenders the desire to document the social forms that arise from it, as well as the desire to think beyond it with an imaginative narrative grammar. Focusing on how imperial projects produce these dual desires involves attuning our critical faculties to the ways in which

empires are “concrete places” (as Gary Wilder reminds us, reworking Dipesh Chakrabarty’s arguments about European universalism²⁸) but also formal imperatives, actually existing spaces that demand innovative textual forms that rearrange established geographic and epistemological coordinates.

Imperial political rationalities require modes of knowledge in which empiricism and imaginative invention are inseparable. Making sense of this idea, as this book seeks to do, involves conceiving of imperial projects as constraints, catalysts and, crucially, as stylistic and formal challenges. Salman Rushdie, whose work is devoted to empire’s afterimages in literature, echoes this argument and the idea of two intertwined “directions” of style on which it relies. In his memoir, *Joseph Anton* (2012), he describes his search for a style and form adequate to the ideas he wanted to convey in the budding *Satanic Verses* (1988), writing that he wanted to show “not only how the East flowed into the West and the West into the East, but how . . . the imagined world, the location of dreams, art, invention and, yes, belief, leaked across the frontier that separated it from the everyday, ‘real’ place in which human beings mistakenly believed they lived.”²⁹ For the wry Rushdie, human error causes this porosity between the real world and the world of invention or, to put it in Breton’s terms, between the world of “knowledge” and that of “magical gifts.” *Experiments with Empire* offers a much stronger version of Rushdie’s point that ultimately doubles as a qualitative distinction. I view empire as a stylistic and formal problem not just to signal how distinct literary modes feed into one another, but also to observe how generic experimentation can lead literature and fiction outside of themselves and toward the social sciences. What is more, this book studies how empire provides experimental ethnographic fictions with raw materials for thinking outside of its political and epistemological terms.

(Post)colonial Theory and Imperial Countermapping

These formal challenges and the alternative anthropologies they generate offer new geographic assemblages that in turn suggest new modes of historical connectivity. What do theories of ethnographic fiction have to tell us about how generic hybridity doubles as cartographic praxis, how anthropological and fictional world making simultaneously implies imperial world mapping? Beginning from an imperial and Atlantic perspective, as I do in this book, also means beginning from the ways in which textual experiments rearrange

received organizations of space and time. These experiments cut across the actually existing boundaries of (post)colonial territories, mapping transcolonial connections that are at once idealized, spectral, and rooted; they speak to shared historical experiences and at the same time imagine new ones. Orthogonality is again the name of the methodological game: the ethnographic fictions I study here all express real geographies and lived histories, but they also play with their politicized reorganization.

If colonial “common sense” can be reimagined by “map[ping] the multiple imaginaries” that compose and destabilize it, as Stoler writes of the colonial archive, we can also imagine acts of mapping in a more straightforward manner—that is, as imaginative (re)arrangements of the geographies on which imperial formations rely.³⁰ By making this argument I am urging postcolonial studies to attune itself to the ways speculative epistemologies express geopolitical desires and new historical embodiments. These speculative conjugations of geography, politics, and history are what I refer to as processes of imperial countermapping.

Postcolonial critics have pointed to the slippages and imperfections in colonial cartographies’ mapping of imperial space, or to the relativist possibilities opened up by postcolonial confrontations with colonial geographies.³¹ Similarly, Chakrabarty points implicitly to geographies of “translation” that “problematize” supposedly universal European analytic categories (a claim Jean and John Comaroff echo in *Theory from the South* [2012]).³² Thinking about empire as an experimental space-time reveals a different kind of epistemological economy, though—one that is less invested in relativization or provincialization. Césaire once again is helpful here. In *Cahier*, he speaks of a black universalism in geographic terms that extend outward from the centers of the triangular slave trade: “And I say to myself Bordeaux and Nantes and Liverpool and / New York and San Francisco / not an inch of this world devoid of my fingerprint.” He later espouses “my special geography (*mon originale géographie*) too; the world map made for my / own use, not tinted with the arbitrary colors of scholars.”³³ For Césaire (and for the figures I study in this book), imperial geographies possess creative use value that allows him to redirect their ideologies of world mapping toward new cartographic projects.

But the writers and anthropologists who feature in this book also urge us to theorize generic creativity in relation to very real imperial formations. Textual experimentation is thus caught between acts of freewheeling geographic reconfiguration and markers that endlessly reiterate and actualize empire’s

presence. This is how we can understand Hampâté Bâ's linguistic universalism that ignores colonial frontiers but is articulated in stories about everyday life in colonial outposts, or how Rouch's characters rearrange signifiers of global modernity as they negotiate the uncertain future of imperial projects in the late 1950s. These are additions to, not replacements of, the geographies traced by imperial divisions of colonized spaces. Or, rather, they are additions doubling as superimpositions. As I see it, generic hybridity puts in place forms of cartographic layering, forging new transcolonial aggregates that do not map neatly onto imperial organizations of space—but neither do they displace or imagine them away. The work of generic experimentation, then, takes place in the push and pull that goes on between these distinct yet interrelated layers of mapping and the “forces” (to borrow Franco Moretti's argument about what maps arrange) they organize and contest.³⁴

The speculative knowledge games that give rise to palimpsestic geographies also express new configurations of historical time and new cartographic trajectories of imperial historical narratives. Acts of countermapping redirect imperial histories, uncovering geographies that were unthinkable in their time but also redistributing those histories across differently imagined (post) colonial space. On the one hand, countermapping highlights the geographic dimensions of what Stoler calls colonial “duress,” referring to the “uneven, recursive qualities” of imperial formations, their “occluded histories,” and the “indelible if invisible gash[es]” they signal in the present.³⁵ On the other hand, though, it generates a geographic field that is shot through with speculative desires and political possibilities that speak to remixed imperial histories. Countermapping is thus a re-worlding of imperial histories that also seeks to gain purchase on political futurities. This is to give a speculative tenor to David Scott's claim that “the problem about postcolonial futures . . . cannot be recast without recasting the problem about colonial pasts.”³⁶

It is along these lines that we can read, for instance, Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy about the nineteenth-century opium trade and the run-up to the First Opium War (1839–42). These novels are rich with ethnohistorical detail (Ghosh holds a doctorate in anthropology), but more to my point is that his historical anthropology dovetails with fiction to map an Indian Ocean world that converges around opium production and mercantilist imperial ideologies. His narratives and chapters flit among India, Mauritius, and China, constructing in both form and content an Indian Ocean imaginary that takes shape as much through the transoceanic movements of displaced lives as it does in the lived experience of the opium trade's imperial political economy.³⁷

To take another example, one that addresses speculative political futures, in chapter 5 I study the crime fiction of Jean-Claude Izzo and show how he maps utopian ideas of citizenship onto the fraught urban terrain of 1990s Marseille.³⁸ Here, layered forms of belonging in the city gather up French (post)colonial histories, only to disperse them again as radically open challenges to the nation-state in “Fortress Europe.” These ethnographic fictions go beyond embracing the kind of “heterotemporality” that Chakrabarty pits against the “empty and homogeneous chronology of historicism”;³⁹ they construct speculative space-times that redirect imperial histories, causing them to veer off course and through reimagined lifeworlds.

Geography and epistemology here intersect with politics and form in textual modes that overlay imaginative space-times on “commonsense” organizations of (post)colonial worlds. New epistemological cartographies in ethnographic fictions push us to liken imperial countermapping to a definition Michel Foucault gives of the statement (*énoncé*) in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, “It is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space.”⁴⁰ Countermapping “reveals,” yes, but it also creates and reorganizes. Thus, it signals how speculative knowledge projects help us access what postcolonial studies still has to tell us about new configurations—new “possible unities,” we might say—of geography, politics, and history.

.....

Put broadly, this book’s chapters focus on (post)colonial encounters as experimental impulses—that is, on the ways imperial social forms motivate textual production and orthogonal creativity. Although the chapters begin from the perspective of empire, its socialities, and its histories, they address varied cultural debates, political situations, and aesthetic possibilities for ethnographic fiction. The first two chapters address anthropology and anthropologists directly and ask how fictional forms and strategies generate speculative documentary thinking about and beyond empire. The next three chapters focus more closely on what literary writers do with anthropology, asking how novels and literary history also create alternative anthropologies that are orthogonal to imperial social forms.

Chapter 1 deals with the problems of style and characterology as they relate to the late colonial Africanist epistemologies of Michel Leiris and Amadou Hampâté Bâ. Jean Rouch’s ethnofictional turn features in chapter 2, as I turn to the ways fiction opens up new subject-object relations in anthropological

knowledge production. Erstwhile ethnographic objects can become knowledge producers in their own right, I argue, taking my cue from the ways Rouch's characters narrate their lives within and beyond the decolonizing world of the late 1950s. Chapter 3 moves us across the Atlantic to Haiti, from where anthropologist Jean Price-Mars initiated a transatlantic conversation about local knowledge and national literature that later fiction writers remixed and added to as they sought to rewrite the nation throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter 4 draws out this New World intermingling of anthropology and literary history even further, studying how Édouard Glissant and writers from the *créolité* movement read anthropology and the social sciences into histories of Caribbean literary production. Their fictions go on to reference this genealogical cross-pollination in games of intertextuality and paratextuality that reveal the postcolonial novel's anthropological history. Finally, chapter 5 returns us to the postcolonial metropole and explores how the late 1990s crime fiction of Jean-Claude Izzo invents utopian democratic life worlds that coexist with narratives of postcolonial social exclusion and widespread political malaise. The transformations in the crime novel I chart here begin from Jean and John Comaroff's observation that global crime fiction is part and parcel of a "criminal anthropology of late modernity . . . an excursion into the contemporary Order of Things—or, rather, into the metaphysic of disorder that has come to infuse the late modern world."⁴¹ The conclusion continues this outward turn and suggests implications of the book's arguments for twenty-first-century debates about politics, democracy, and postcolonial knowledge production.

My corpus is composed of texts that are representative of an Atlantic-wide engagement with ethnographic fiction, but the texts also all speculate beyond their immediate historical, geographic, and epistemological horizons. Among these diverse optics, a French Atlantic takes shape beyond supposed divisions of metropole and empire, texts by Western or non-Western intellectuals, or colonial versus "decolonized" worlds. More pertinent to my archive are tensions between experimental, self-reflexive works and more conventional texts that sometimes struggle with their heterodox interlocutors. From this perspective, the French Atlantic comes into focus as an epistemological field in which alternative knowledge projects with transoceanic reach intersect with desires for social forms that are orthogonal to empire.

Experiments with Empire is about how generic experimentation produces such intersections and about how writers and intellectuals reimagine the entanglements of anthropology and fiction with empire by pushing them toward imaginative textuality and the social sciences, respectively. But even more

fundamentally, it is about how desires to know empire generate new visions of politics and sociality, as well as new textualizations of historical time. The book thinks through these generative possibilities, studying not only how ethnographic fiction uses empire as an experimental medium, but also how anthropology and fiction imply each other in critical reconfigurations of imperial projects in our past and present.

DUKE

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Jean Rouch, *Cinéma et anthropologie*, ed. Jean-Paul Colleyn (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma-Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, 2009), 129.
- 2 Rouch, *Cinéma et anthropologie*, 131.
- 3 Helena Wulff, "An Anthropological Perspective on Literary Arts in Ireland," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, ed. Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith, and Jonas Frykman (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 538.
- 4 As Christopher L. Miller has shown, for instance, the tripartite geography of what he calls "the French Atlantic triangle" not only accounts for slavery-era theories and literatures of trafficking and abolitionism. It also allows us to flash forward into the twentieth century and consider "the rise of Francophone literature and film" in the same epistemological and aesthetic conversation: Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), x, xii.
- 5 On the Mission Dakar-Djibouti and its marketing of both anthropology and empire, see Vincent Debaene, *Far Afield: French Anthropology between Science and Literature*, trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 34–35.
- 6 Paul Hazoumé, "Foreword," in *Doguiçimi* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1978 [orig. 1938]), 13. On the publication history of *Doguiçimi* and its place in Hazoumé's career, see János Riesz, *De la littérature coloniale à la littérature africaine: Prétextes, Contextes, Intertextes* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 249–68.
- 7 See Michel Leiris, *Contacts de civilisations en Martinique et en Guadeloupe* (Paris: Gallimard and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1955), 104.
- 8 On the history of Haiti's Bureau d'Ethnologie, see Rachelle Charlier-Doucet, "Anthropologie, politique, et engagement social: L'expérience du Bureau d'Ethnologie d'Haïti," *Gradhiva* 1 (2005), accessed July 28, 2014, <http://gradhiva.revues.org/313>.
- 9 From this point of view, the theory of genre that I am working with in this book begins from the observation that what Thomas Pavel calls "the instability of generic

- categories” is not so much “puzzling” or “frightening,” as he goes on to assert, but instead begs for instrumentalization and makes a case for its creative functionality. Generic instability, then, is generic use value: see Thomas Pavel, “Literary Genres as Norms and Good Habits,” *New Literary History* 34, no. 2 (2003): 210.
- 10 James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 6.
 - 11 On the first example, see Kim Fortun, “Foreword to the 25th Anniversary Edition,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011 [orig. 1986]), xvi–xviii. On the second, see Michael Taussig, “Excelente Zona Social,” in *Writing Culture and the Life of Anthropology*, ed. Orin Starn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 150.
 - 12 James Clifford, “Feeling Historical,” in Starn, *Writing Culture and the Life of Anthropology*, 25, 31. Likewise, James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), contains chapters on Michel Leiris and Aimé Césaire, further linking empire and the French Atlantic to the writing culture moment.
 - 13 For French perspectives on ethnographic constructedness and the *Writing Culture* debates, see Colleyn, “Fiction et fictions en anthropologie,” 150–51; Vincent Debaene, “Ethnographie/Fiction: A propos de quelques confusions et faux paradoxes,” *L’Homme* 175–76 (2005): 219–32. Orin Starn helpfully reminds us that these literary-minded concerns with reflexivity, form, and epistemological constructedness were seen as “naval gazing” by critics at the time. See Orin Starn, “Introduction,” in Starn, *Writing Culture and the Life of Anthropology*, 3.
 - 14 Edward W. Said, “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 209–10.
 - 15 Said, “Representing the Colonized,” 210.
 - 16 Said, “Representing the Colonized,” 224.
 - 17 Said, “Representing the Colonized,” 224.
 - 18 See Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3–23. Wilder later revisits this idea and radicalizes it, revealing its “utopian potentiality”: see Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), xiii, 5–7.
 - 19 Alice Conklin has argued that French anthropology made an instrumentalist case for itself as a politically useful disciplinary tool for studying empire and for educating a receptive public about France’s imperial projects and aspirations: see Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 189–235. Similarly, Pierre Singaravélou refers to a “tension” and “interdependence” when speaking of the relationship between the “colonial sciences” and imperial politics. Colonial social scientists were not just pawns in a larger imperial game but actively tried to posi-

- tion themselves strategically within a growing academic field and an established colonial ideology and administration: Pierre Singaravélou, *Professer l'empire: Les "sciences coloniales" en France sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2011), 27.
- 20 See, e.g., Alison James, "Thinking the Everyday: Genre, Form, Fiction," *L'Esprit Créateur* 54, no. 3 (2014): 78–91; and Saikat Majumdar, *Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 1–36.
 - 21 Debaene, *Far Afield*, 1.
 - 22 In an interestingly anticipatory moment, Debaene actually calls for an in-depth study of (post)colonial French and Francophone ethnographic fiction: Debaene, *Far Afield*, 286–87. Cultural production in the Francophone Caribbean and West Africa accompanied anthropology's establishment as a viable tool for producing imperial epistemologies and its openness toward literature writ large. West African literature in French came of age at the same time as metropolitan anthropology and was largely aware of this disciplinary kinship. In the Caribbean, ethnographic travelogues written by surrealists such as André Breton and Pierre Mabille strongly influenced post-Négritude writing in French (and Négritude itself was influenced by the anthropology of the German Leo Frobenius, who worked in the early twentieth century). On surrealist ethnography's influence on Francophone Caribbean fiction, see J. Michael Dash, "Caraïbe Fantôme: The Play of Difference in the Francophone Caribbean," *Yale French Studies* 103 (2003): 93–105; see also J. Michael Dash, "Le Je de l'autre: Surrealist Ethnographers and the Francophone Caribbean," *L'Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 1 (2007): 84–95. On the emergence of Francophone black African literature and Négritude in relation to anthropology, see Christopher L. Miller, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 6, 10, 1–30. Miller's study is a key early book on anthropology in the Francophone (post)colonial world. He is particularly and rightly concerned with the ways in which anthropology might contribute to an ethics of Western readings of African texts; he also studies how fiction and anthropology have dealt with divergent yet interrelated visions of Africa. My interest here is indebted to this work but lies elsewhere—namely, in questions and theories of generic creativity set in a wider Atlantic context.
 - 23 René Maran, *Batouala* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1921), 9–10.
 - 24 Maran, *Batouala*, 18.
 - 25 See Ann Laura Stoler, "Introduction, 'The Rot Remains,'" in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 11.
 - 26 André Breton, "A Great Black Poet," in *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, by Aimé Césaire, ed. and trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), xii. I have consulted the French version and quote from this established English translation.
 - 27 Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, ed. and trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 2–3.

- 28 Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 10.
- 29 Salman Rushdie, *Joseph Anton* (New York: Random House, 2012), 68–69.
- 30 See Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 9.
- 31 Graham Huggan helpfully reviews these arguments in *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 21–33.
- 32 See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17–20. Jean and John Comaroff adopt a broadly similar rhetoric when they study how “Afro-modernity” is “*sui generis*” and not a byproduct of a supposedly universal European modernity: Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2012), 19.
- 33 Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, 15, 43.
- 34 See Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*, (New York: Verso, 2007), 63–64. To my point here, he argues that to work between maps of “real” spaces and “maps/diagrams of fictional worlds, where the real and the imaginary coexist in varying, often elusive proportions . . . [r]eveals [literary] form as a diagram of forces; or perhaps, even, as *nothing but force*.” The reading of imperial mapping and countermapping I propose in this book relies on a similar sort of cartographic interplay but emphasizes production and expression rather than revelation. Whereas Moretti is interested in how diagrammatic mapping lays bare relations of force, I argue that we can conceive of geography as the expression of cartographic textual desires. From this perspective, maps are not diagrams but geographic vectors of textual invention and indicators of longing for new configurations of imperial space.
- 35 See Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 6, 10.
- 36 David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 8. Reworking Scott’s argument via the category of speculation allows us to decouple experimental epistemologies and the forms of political desire they generate from the “stories of salvation and redemption” that constitute what Scott diagnoses as the utopian “horizon” and “mythos” of the anticolonial narrative writ large.
- 37 One of the more obviously anthropological passages in the trilogy is the paratextual chrestomathy Ghosh includes at the end of *Sea of Poppies* (2008). It functions as a testament to the hybridized vocabulary of the Indian Ocean world and to the words Ghosh’s protagonist “collected” throughout his life. Here anthropology meets didactic etymology in the medium of fiction: see Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (New York: Picador, 2008), 501–43. We could also consider *In an Antique Land* (1992), in which Ghosh dreamily recounts moments from his dissertation fieldwork in an Egyptian village. Here the literary instantiation of himself seems entirely the product of his informants’ perception of him—his character goes only by the nickname the villagers give him, “Ya Amitab.” This sense of characterol-

ogy links Ghosh to Amadou Hampâté Bâ, whose ethnographic memoirs I study in chapter 1. Inserted within Ghosh's text are chapters devoted to re-creating the life of a twelfth-century Indian slave from Jewish manuscripts found in the Cairo Geniza. The didactic goal of this move (reminiscent of what we see in *Sea of Poppies*) is to deploy ethnography, history, and narrative to demonstrate that Africa for centuries has been an important node in an Indian Ocean cosmopolitan and migratory imaginary. For Ghosh's more explicit thoughts on the relationship between anthropology and fiction, see Damien Stankiewicz, "Anthropology and Fiction: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh," *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (2012): 535–41.

- 38 Despite our last names, I have no known relation to Jean-Claude Izzo.
- 39 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 239.
- 40 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1982 [orig. 1972]), 87. Rey Chow cites this passage in her analysis of postcolonial "linguaging": see Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Linguaging as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 54.
- 41 Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *The Truth about Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, and Social Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), xiv–xv.

Chapter 1. Africanist Melancholy

- 1 See Michel Leiris, *Biffures* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 141. For the epigraph, I use Lydia Davis's translation of *Biffures*: see Michel Leiris, *Scratches*, trans. Lydia Davis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 119. Davis translated the first two volumes of *La règle du jeu*, and I will use her rendering wherever appropriate. All other translations from *La règle du jeu* and all translations from *L'Afrique fantôme* are mine.
- 2 Abiola Irele has written about the "novelistic" style of Hampâté Bâ's *L'étrange destin de Wangrin*, but his assertion (that this ethnographic biography reads in many ways like a novel) certainly holds true for Hampâté Bâ's ethnographic memoirs: see F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 85.
- 3 Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 50–51.
- 4 Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 80. On colonial ethnology, see Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 63–75.
- 5 On Negritude and Pan-Africanism, see, e.g., Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1–68; Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 201–55.
- 6 See Jean Jamin, "Objets trouvés des paradis perdus: A propos de la Mission Dakar-Djibouti," in *Collections passion: Exposition du 5 juin au 31 décembre 1982*, ed. Jacques Hainard and Roland Kaehr (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Musée d'Ethnographie, 1982), 79.