Editor's Column

Heimatlos

Sprung from the collateral (1995): "Éveil de la conscience de race" ("The Awakening of Race Consciousness"), Paulette Nardal's classic article on the emergence of racial self-awareness among a generation of francophone Caribbean women students in France during the 1920s and 1930s, emphasizes the postwar influence of an incongruous array of writers, political activists, and intellectuals "dont les tendances d'ordre racial ont eu pour point de départ la littérature sinon les préoccupations politiques ou humanitaires" ("whose racial tendencies found their point of departure in literature if not in political or humanitarian concerns"; 28).[1]

"Certaines idées sont dans l'air" ("Certain ideas are in the air"), Nardal declares. She cites the influential "Back to Africa" movement of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association; the 1919 Pan-African Congress meetings organized in Paris by W. E. B. Du Bois and Blaise Diagne; René Maran's novel *Batouala*, which was awarded the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1921; the first Black newspapers in Paris including *Les continents* and *La dépêche africaine* (*The African Dispatch*); and histories of Guadeloupe and Martinique by Maurice Satineau and Césaire Philémon. Nardal's survey, along with a few key works of scholarship such as Philippe DeWitte's *Les mouvements nègres en France* (1985; *Black Movements in France*), gave me the core bibliographic checklist for my initial forays into the Archives nationales and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In Nardal's lengthy catalog, I was especially struck by one passing reference: "Il convient aussi de signaler un essai écrit d'un jeune Guyanais, mort aujourd'hui, 'Heimatlos' qui eut en son temps un certain succès" ("It is also appropriate to mention an essay titled 'Heimatlos' by a young Guianese man, now deceased, which achieved a certain success in its time"; 28–29). Her phrasing is tantalizingly vague; Nardal even neglects to provide the author's name. But I was above all intrigued by the title. Why would a young Guianese writer use the German word *Heimatlos* ("homeless") as the title for a work in French?

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The paucity of information seemed only to amplify the potential of this enigmatic reference. Every morning I would join the queue at the entrance to the old Richelieu building of the Bibliothèque nationale to be assigned a numbered seat at one of the long tables in the salle Ovale. While waiting for the books I requested to be delivered from the stacks, I would sometimes gaze up at the four floors of reference materials encircling the rows of readers and, high above us, the magisterial vaulted ceiling with its mosaics and oeil-de-boeuf skylights, imagining that the patron across from me who had slipped out for a *pause-café* might be replaced by C. L. R. James in 1936, researching what would become *The Black Jacobins*. Sometimes my working checklist became a daydream book, too, as I imagined artifacts I knew only as references: *Big Fella*, the Paul Robeson film based on Claude McKay's 1929 novel *Banjo*; periodicals with titles such as *Jazz-Tango* or *Bec et Ongles* (*Beak and Nails*); or the 1919 hit song "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Paree)?" *Heimatlos* was equally resonant. I imagined it as a kaleidoscope of possibilities: a meditation on the diasporic condition as an existential homelessness so profound that it could be named only through a sort of linguistic estrangement; or a response to the crisis wherein the "old parallelism of the transcendental structure of the form-giving subject and the world of created forms" had disintegrated, requiring a radically new approach to literary genre (Lukács 40–41); or an argument for the "plurality of vision" characteristic of exile, in which one sees "the entire world as a foreign land" (Said 186).

Échappatoire belle (1957): The sociologist Robert K. Merton's book *Social Theory and Social Structure* included a section titled "The Serendipity Pattern." Merton suggested that research could shape theory in unpredictable ways: "Fruitful empirical research not only tests theoretically derived hypotheses; it also originates new hypotheses. This might be termed the 'serendipity' component of research, i.e., the discovery, by chance or sagacity, of valid results which were not sought for" (168). While the "outlandish" term *serendipity* had had "little currency" since it was coined by the English man of letters Horace Walpole in 1754, Merton noted, it had quickly come to take hold in the early 1950s in popular discussions of a range of fields including history, literature, and science as a way to signal the "fairly common experience of observing an unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum which becomes the occasion for developing a new theory or for extending an existing theory. . . . A research directed toward the test of one hypothesis yields a fortuitous by-product, an unexpected observation which bears upon theories not in question when the research was begun" (169).[2] Merton added that he was currently working with Elinor G. Barber on a book-length study of the "cultural resonance in recent years of this contrived, odd-sounding and useful word" (169).

As it turned out, although they completed the initial manuscript in 1957, their remarkable collaboration would not be published until 2004, after both Barber and Merton had passed away. The study of what Walpole called "accidental sagacity" (qtd. in Merton and Barber 1) seemed to require a "strange process of indirection," not unlike serendipity itself (Hamilton 18), not only in the tortuous path of relay translations—from Persian into Italian, then French, and finally into English—of the "silly fairy tale" called *The Travels and Adventures of Three Princes of Serendip* that inspired Walpole's neologism, but also in the scholarship that would trace what Merton termed the "sociological semantics" of the word as it underwent a "subtle process of selective definition and redefinition" as it was applied over time (Merton and Barber 51). In the preface Merton penned before his death in 2003, he noted that the book had not been updated or revised, describing it as "a sort of time capsule" of an intellectual inquiry half a century earlier (ix). As James L. Schulman points out in his introduction, Merton and Barber demonstrate that "the word's history enacts its essence": the term *serendipity* comes to be "absorbed into the lexicon" because the word itself is unanticipated, anomalous, and strategic, just like the phenomenon it identifies (xxi).

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Bracket (1928): In the very first issue of *La dépêche africaine*, the periodical that Nardal describes as "le premier journal noir qui ait pu subir l'épreuve du temps" ("the first Black newspaper that was able to stand the test of time"; "Éveil" 29), there is a short, unsigned article announcing the publication of *Heimatlos*. The piece describes what is identified as "un petit livre" ("a little book") published in Paris by Eugène Figuière in the fall of 1927 as a significant intervention in current debates around the French empire:

> En ce temps de luttes où, pour berner, et pousser le peuple vers on ne sait quel nouveau massacre, quel abattoir d'hommes, l'ordinaire comédie consiste à se proclamer "partisan de la liberté"—souvent avec une majuscule—*Heimatlos* peut, et doit intéresser le monde colonial et les français qui s'inspirent des doctrines de 89. ("Heimatlos")
>
> In this time of struggle when, in order to fool the people and to propel them toward who knows what new massacre, what new human slaughterhouse, the usual comedy consists in proclaiming oneself a "partisan of liberty"—often with a capital *L*—*Heimatlos* may and must be of interest to the colonial world and to Frenchmen who are inspired by the doctrines of 1789.

The French colonial empire must no longer continue to be a "vaste champ ouvert aux louches opérations" ("vast open field for the shady operations") of adventurers and mercenaries, the notice continues: the French people must "se décide à connaitre le monde colonial, et les colonies, autrement que par des chansons frivoles, et à s'en occuper, autrement que dans l'écho des scandales. . . . Alors—et alors seulement—la vérité éclatera . . ." ("make a decision to get to know the colonial world and the colonies otherwise than through frivolous songs, and to deal with it otherwise than through the echo of scandals. . . . Then—and only then—will the truth break out . . ."; ellipses in original).

Although this teaser does not provide a name, the author is identified a few pages earlier in the roster of the paper's contributors. It includes a photo of A. Léo Cressan, who is described as a "romancier" ("novelist") and the "author of *Heimatlos*" (fig. 1).[3] (It is unclear whether his little book is in fact a novel.) The issue also includes an article by Cressan, "L'avenir d'une grande colonie" ("The Future of a Great Colony"), which shows him to be an unsparing critic of the pretensions of the imperial administration. Responding to a puff piece in the mainstream *Le journal* about Marcel Olivier, the Gouverneur général of Madagascar, Cressan scoffs at the bureaucrat's pompous declaration that the colony had been acquired so that France could "commencer notre oeuvre civilisatrice" ("begin our civilizing work"). The sole challenge, Olivier admitted, is the minor matter of the "difficulté de la main-d'oeuvre" ("the problem of the workforce"). And the administrator recently announced a solution: the reimposition of a system of forced labor. Olivier may claim to be motivated by a boundless "bienveillance" ("benevolence") toward his colonial subjects, Cressan seethes, but in fact "il est facile de se rendre compte que l'alliance entre le colon et l'indigène n'est que l'esclavage dans toute son étendue" ("it is easy to recognize that the alliance between the colonizer and the native is nothing other than slavery to the fullest extent"), and that such is "la recompense des anciens combattants malgaches qui ont versé leur sang pour la France" ("the reward of former Malagasy soldiers who spilled their blood for France") during the war.

Although *La dépêche africaine* can be described as an "assemblage hétéroclite de toutes les sensibilités réformistes du moment" ("heteroclite assemblage of all the reformist sensibilities of the moment"; DeWitte 227), Cressan is one of the more outspoken critics of the colonial administration among the contributors to the regular *La dépêche économique et sociale* page in every issue, many of whom simply lamented that the economic development of the empire had been "honteusement délaissé" ("shamefully abandoned") by the colonial administration and that "pour le plus grand bien de la métropole et des populations indigènes des colonies il faut en exploiter les richesses" ("for the greater good of the metropole and the native populations of the colonies its riches

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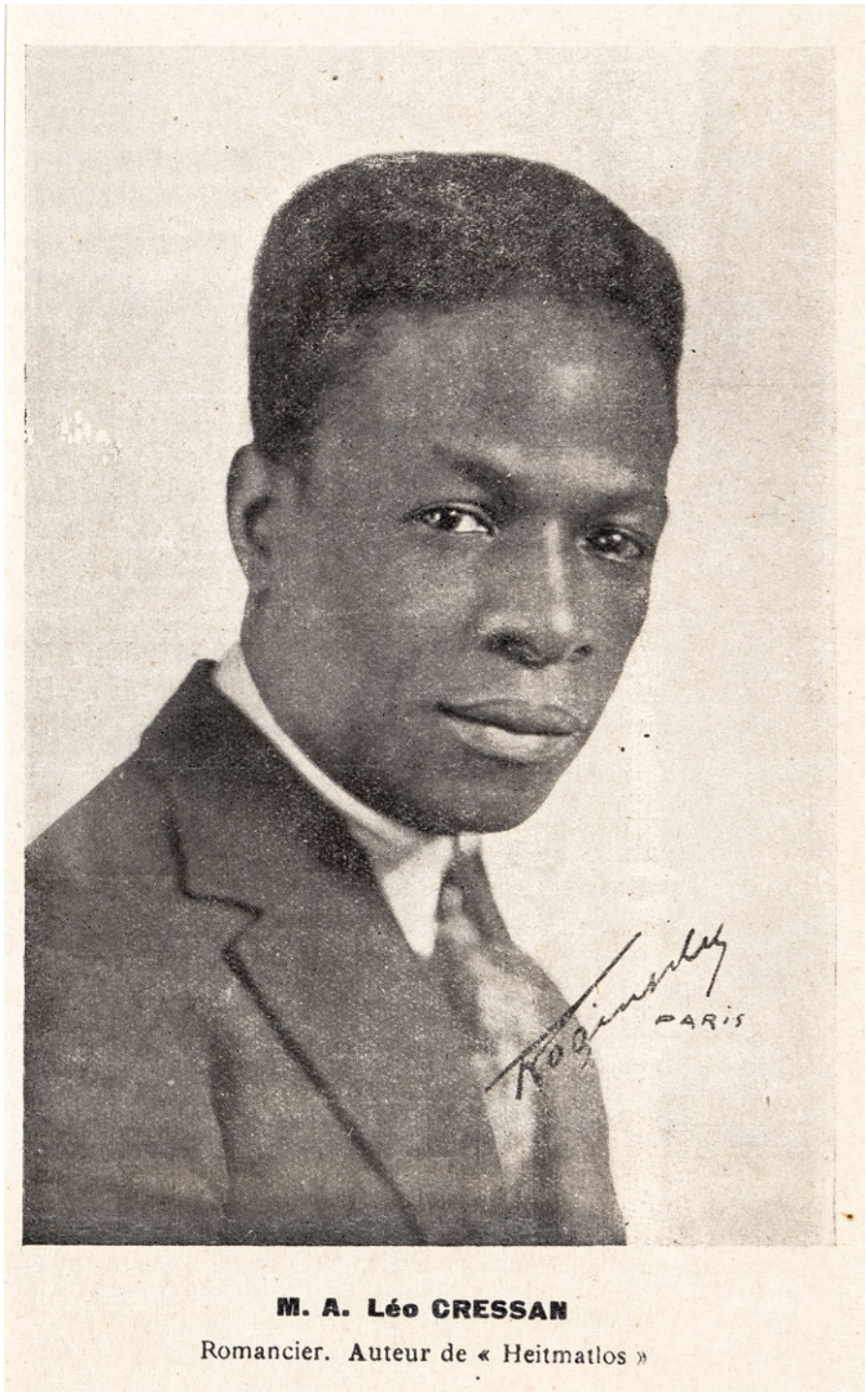


Fig. 1. A. Léo Cressan, "Nos Collaborateurs" ("Our Contributors"), *La dépêche africaine*, vol. 1, no. 1, Feb. 1928, p. 4.

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had to be exploited"; 228). In contrast, Cressan is more openly critical of the ways that racism infected the French imperialist mindset. Although he never approaches a stance that could be called anticolonialist, he criticizes the hypocrisies and delusions of administrative policy.

His article "Les colonies et la France" in the second issue is an extended attack on the notion of "la mise en valeur des colonies" ("the exploitation of the colonies"), a phrase made famous by Ministre des Colonies Albert Sarraut's 1920 book calling for a more efficient policy of economic development in the empire. For Cressan, there would never be a "mise en valeur des colonies"—in the sense of a "mise en valeur rationnelle productive de bienfaits collectifs" ("rational development resulting in collective benefits")—unless the French people "ne se débarrasse pas au plus tôt de ce reste de préjugés surannés . . . qui raidit l'homme dans la croyance d'une supériorité intrinsèque" ("do not immediately rid themselves of that remainder of outdated prejudices . . . that render a man rigid with the belief in an intrinsic superiority"). The white metropolitan French population bears the full responsibility for this failure, Cressan adds, but reassures his reader that he is not prognosticating a "rising tide of color" (alluding to Lothrop Stoddard's inflammatory 1920 manifesto). For him, imperial racism must be eradicated because it is an impediment to the construction of a universal humanism. Prejudice is one of the "simples malaises de l'enfantement d'une société plus humaine" ("simple discomforts of giving birth to a more humane society").

While the four short articles Cressan contributed to *La dépêche africaine* in 1928 begin to give a sense of a "voice"—fierce, acerbic, undaunted—in the landscape of journalistic debates around colonial policy in the period, they do not solve the mystery of his "little book." Once I had the author as well as the title and publisher, I began to seek out the volume. But there is no listing for Cressan or for *Heimatlos* in the Catalogue général of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Catalogue Collectif de France, or the catalog of the Bibliothèque Alexandre Franconie in Guyane. Nor is it listed in the OCLC Online Union Catalog, WorldCat's exhaustive repository of more than 179 million records from member libraries worldwide.

Heimatlos, I realized, may be an example of a phenomenon that is much more common than we often recognize: the lost book. Despite the relative durability of the medium, books are perishable and, as Stuart Kelly has pointed out, the entire history of publishing might be said to be haunted by loss, in myriad forms: books destroyed, books unfinished, books planned but never written, illegible books. Cressan's curio is a peculiar variant of what the poet Kevin Young calls a "shadow book—a book that we don't have, but know of, a book that may haunt the very book we have in our hands" (11). It is a book that was written and published, that even gained some notoriety in its time. But it never seems to have made it into the collection of a single library.

The way you look (1958): In their semantic excavation of the changing meanings of *serendipity*, Merton and Barber highlight what they call a "fundamental tension in the concept of accidental discovery: a tension between the attribution of credit for an unexpected discovery to the discoverer on the one hand, and to auspicious external circumstances on the other" (58). While leaving this ambiguity open, Walpole seems most concerned in the 1754 letter where he launches the term with what Merton and Barber describe as an aptitude or "faculty" (57), something others have called a "réceptivité" ("receptivity"; Jacques 119) in a person attuned to or primed for the serendipitous moment, a "quality of mind . . . that enabled the sagacious individual to take advantage of unanticipated occurrences" (Merton and Barber 109). How do you teach yourself to be ready for the unexpected?

The sidewalk is a history book (1996): I go to the Bibliothèque nationale in the morning and work there for the first part of the day. It's starting to rain as I arrive and over the course of the morning it turns into a downpour so ferocious that a muted

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but steady roar is audible from the frosted glass skylights far above the dozens of hushed researchers in the salle Ovale. But by midday the storm has mostly petered out and so, when I leave, wearing my London Fog trench coat and my black Stetson porkpie hat, I hardly notice the intermittent drizzles except when the wind picks up. I have an errand to run: I'm going to the student travel agency on the rue des Carmes in the fifth arrondissement, where I can buy a discounted train ticket to go to Aix-en-Provence to do some research in the "overseas" section of the Archives nationales. But I take my time getting there. I head south on the rue de Richelieu, through the Louvre by the pyramid, and cut over to the Left Bank, planning to walk by some used bookstores along the way.

It's chilly, no longer raining but still very windy, and one of the bookstores I'm hoping to check out seems to be closed for lunch, so I take a detour a little farther west to the Cosi shop on the rue de Seine, to have the simplest of snacks: a slice of their bread with olive oil, chives, and sea salt, warmed in a brick oven and wrapped in foil.

It turns out that I hadn't looked closely enough: the bookstore on the rue Mazarine is closed on Mondays.

I walk toward Odéon and take the rue de l'École de Médecine east past the Sorbonne toward the rue des Écoles. But when I get to the travel agency, there's a line all the way out the door. Why do I need to buy my ticket today? I decide that it can wait. And I continue my way down the rue des Écoles toward the rue Monge and Jussieu.

Once you're on the rue des Écoles, it's almost impossible to resist the impulse to take a look in L'Harmattan and Présence Africaine, two fantastic bookstores almost directly across the street from each other. I take a peek in the used book section of L'Harmattan, keeping an eye out for any of the titles on what I think of as my "short list." I treat myself to a disheveled copy of Paul Morand's exoticist 1928 travel narrative *Paris-Tombouctou*; the one I really want is another published the same year, his short story collection *Magie Noire*, which made a splash among the Harlem Renaissance intelligentsia when it was published in English translation the following year, in an edition with illustrations by Aaron Douglas. The book currently at the top of my list, though, is the French translation of McKay's *Banjo*, a book that was hugely influential for what would become the "Négritude generation" of African and Caribbean students and intellectuals in Paris in the 1930s—and the only book I've ever found to be listed as "missing" in the card catalog of the Bibliothèque nationale, as I discovered to my dismay a few days ago.

Rather content with my find, I meander north toward the quai de la Tournelle, where I walk leisurely past the green metal stalls of some of the sidewalk secondhand shops, or "bouquinistes," along the Seine. One of them has a decent selection of used jazz records, and, after talking with the gregarious owner, I buy *Masters of the Modern Piano*, a Verve compilation including tracks by Bud Powell, Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Mary Lou Williams, Paul Bley, and Cecil Taylor. I indulge because it's cheap, and because I'm curious to hear the Taylor selections (live at Newport in 1957), which I don't know, and because I let myself chat with the seller long enough that I feel obliged to get something—although I don't have a turntable in Paris.

I put the album into my shoulder bag, squint into the wind, and cut across the Pont de l'Archevêché behind Notre Dame. As I turn onto one of my favorite bridges, the Pont Saint-Louis, a little nondescript span that links the Île de la Cité and the Île Saint-Louis—the day is cold and gray and the streets are slick, but for some reason it makes me think of a warm and sunny day in April 1991 when I came across some street musicians playing there: washtub bass, trumpet, guitar, and a young American singer with a Southern accent and an infectious, gritty, late–Billie Holiday inflection (years later, thinking back, I wonder: could it have been Madeleine Peyroux, before she got her break?) that made me smile and stop to listen: *Someday, when I'm awfully low / When the world is cold / I will feel a glow just thinking of you / And the way you look tonight . . .*—the wind, in a sudden capricious gust, whips my hat right off my head and over the railing into the river. It happens so fast I don't even have time to react.

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Fig. 2. The books by Ransby and Laurière next to each other on the shelf in the stacks of Butler Library at Columbia University. Photo taken by the author.

What the leaves hear (2021): How do you teach yourself to be ready for the unexpected? I went to the stacks in Butler Library at Columbia University to check out Barbara Ransby's *Eslanda*, her finely detailed 2013 biography of Eslanda Robeson, the wife of the actor, singer, and activist Paul Robeson and a major intellectual in her own right who had studied anthropology in the early 1930s at the London School of Economics and published a fascinating travel narrative of the fieldwork she undertook in South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda in 1936. I found the book, but I didn't just grab it and leave; instead I lingered and scanned the spines of the other books on the same shelf (fig. 2). I was immediately struck by the book right next to *Eslanda*: Christine Laurière's 2008 biography of Paul Rivet, the French ethnologist who founded the Institut d'ethnologie in 1926 and later was pivotal in the transformation of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro into the Musée de l'Homme (see Conklin 100–01). Although I hadn't been looking for information about Rivet, I knew the biography might be useful for something I planned to write about Michel Leiris. Rivet had played a crucial role in the funding of the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, the celebrated French anthropological expedition that spent two years in Africa in the early 1930s, on which Leiris had served as "secretary-archivist" (see Edwards 1–3; Rivet and Rivière).

One could call this an example of serendipity in the realm of scholarly research: the experience of stumbling onto a relevant source while in the midst

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of looking for something else. It is crucial to add, however, that the process that led to my noticing the Rivet biography was not simply a matter of pure luck or accident. It is more accurate to describe it as an instance of what Daniel Liestman calls "previent grace" (526): an unexpected find made possible by the infrastructure of open-shelf library stacks and the classification system that placed the Rivet and Robeson books next to each other. The somewhat overwrought term that Merton and Barber offer for such a context is a "serendipitous sociocognitive microenvironment" (260). It's easier to describe it as an experience, as in this passage from a blog post a decade ago by the librarian Gabrielle Dean:

> Recently I went down to B-level in search of four books—titles I had come across in my reading that I was sure were going to explain the mysteries of the universe, or at least, help me answer one part of my research question. I soon found myself carrying ten books up to Circulation. Three of them were from my original list of four—but one of those I rejected as soon as I looked at it; the other seven were books that I hadn't known of, from the same general call number range. And one of these seems like it's going to be the best book of all, taking me in an unanticipated but profitable direction.

There is a significant and long-standing body of scholarship in library science that attempts to understand the precise mechanism of this familiar but somewhat murky experience (see Hyman, *Access*; Martin and Quan-Haase; Duff and Johnson). Over the past two decades, as libraries and archives have been transformed by the Internet age, a debate has also emerged as to whether this sort of fortuitous discovery has been threatened by the rapid shift to using digital materials in online rather than physical library environments. Some commentators dismiss these concerns, such as the prominent technology pundit Steven Johnson, who declared nearly twenty years ago:

> I find vastly more weird, unplanned stuff online than I ever did browsing the stacks as a grad student. . . . Thanks to the connective nature of hypertext, and the blogosphere's exploratory hunger for finding new stuff, the web is the greatest serendipity engine in the history of culture. It is far, far easier to sit down in front of your browser and stumble across something completely brilliant but surprising than it is walking through a library looking at the spines of books.

Although Johnson admits that the structure of the Internet has "eliminated" the sort of discovery that happens as a reader peruses the "alphabetical organization of the reference book," he argues that "the Web is far better at . . . following a trail of associations from some original starting point."

This may be the case, but the discussion has continued because, as Dean notes, in online searching "it can be harder to find that sweet spot of 'unexpected but relevant.'" And there is something special about that first sort of serendipitous discovery. To return to my own example, I would not have gotten from Robeson to Rivet through a keyword search, or with the help of an algorithm; I was not interested in them for the same reasons or in relation to the same research. This particular sort of serendipity involves more than a dash of "intellectual unpredictability" (Hyman, *Inquiry* 159). And it seems to depend on "unexpected adjacencies" (Wieseltier) in a *physical* sense: finding something next to something else. As they navigate the transition to the digital realm, librarians have explored multiple approaches to developing "interfaces that take advantage of proximity" to foster the particular sort of serendipity that is predicated on the previent grace of the physical stacks ("Planning"; see also Kim).

More precisely, this kind of serendipity is a matter of a productive tension between modes of physical and conceptual classification which, in my example, include the Library of Congress Subject Headings—the Rivet and Robeson books are filed under the heading GN21 as works about individual anthropologists—as well as the "miscellaneous order" of alphabetic organization, which places Rivet next to Robeson even though the books have "no conceptual relevance to one another" (Burke 105).[4] The researcher doesn't just

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read a given individual source, but instead learns to "read the shelves": to become attentive to the discrepancies and affordances of these overlapping modes of classification (Gore 76–77; see also MacNeil 32–34). Serendipity thus involves a sort of peripheral vision or "lateral thinking" (Kohn 170–71), based in what Henry Dale has described as the researcher's cultivated mindset of "alert opportunism": "Accidents of the kind which we have been discussing do not, in fact, happen to the merely fanciful speculator who waits on chance to provide him with inspiration. They come rather to him who, while continuously busy with the work of research, does not close his attention from matters outside this principal aim and immediate objective but keeps it alert to what unexpected observation may have to offer" (455).

Something for nothing, turn now (1996): I remember the day in the late fall of 1988 when I bought that Stetson porkpie for eighty dollars at the Westside Pavilion mall at Pico and Westwood in Los Angeles. I somehow convinced my father to get it as my Christmas present that year. So one day after taking a ballet class at the Stanley Holden studio a few blocks farther down Pico, I stopped by the mall to pick one out.

The dauntingly fine saleswoman was flirting with me so brazenly that I think I would have bought just about anything she proffered. When I asked her if the hat was waterproof, she answered in a conspiratorial tone. "Well, it's made out of one-hundred-percent beaver fur. And you *know* what beavers do all day. . . ."

I didn't know what to say. So I just smiled and reached for my wallet.

Eight years later, I look over the railing of the Pont Saint-Louis and watch my hat land in the Seine. For a moment I actually contemplate jumping in after it, but I come to my senses. It's February and it's cold, and the river has a sickly green tint. And I have a vague recollection that it is illegal to swim in the Seine.

Still, I think, if it comes over near one of the banks, at one of those points where you can get down to the water, maybe I could stick out an arm or a foot or a tree branch to try to get it. Much like a beaver, my beloved hat doesn't sink: it is gradually carried by the current to the west. I follow it down the Île de la Cité to the Pont Neuf and then cross over to the Right Bank. But the hat doesn't come any closer to the bank. It drifts out into the middle of the Seine as the river widens toward the Pont des Arts.

And then it starts to drizzle again. So I give up, watching my hat bob away in the direction of the Tour Eiffel.

I turn back east again along the quai du Louvre. What the hell: a few more bouquinistes, I tell myself. I'll get on the Métro at Châtelet to head home to Bastille.

Only a few of the stalls are open, and I see a couple of booksellers starting to gather their materials to protect them from the rain.

Just before Châtelet, I pause at one stall that has a number of books about African and Caribbean culture. I ask the guy there if he happens to have anything by McKay, or other translations of works from the Harlem Renaissance. He tells me that it isn't actually his stall—he's just watching it while his friend goes and gets a coffee—but the man at the neighboring stand overhears our conversation and interjects. I'm sure he has something by McKay, he tells me. I saw it the other day, right over there. He points me to a stack and I find *Quartier Noir*, the translation of McKay's first novel, *Home to Harlem*. About ten dollars, in mint condition. Of course I buy it. I remember a photo I once saw in a book about expatriate artists in Paris of McKay himself browsing at a bouquiniste in the 1920s (fig. 3). *And here you are again*, I think.

Now it really starts to pour again, and they close up the stalls. But the neighbor bouquiniste tells me to try coming back another day. He thinks his friend might have the translation of *Banjo*, too, somewhere else in his stall or in his apartment.

It keeps raining the next couple of days, and I don't go back to the quai. But on Thursday the weather is better and I give it a shot. The bouquiniste is finally there at his stall across the street from the live poultry market, talking to the

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Fig. 3. Claude McKay at a bouquiniste stall along the Seine in Paris. Sisley Huddleston, *Back to Montparnasse: Glimpses of Broadway in Bohemia*, J. B. Lippincott, 1931, p. 228. The original photo is held in the William A. Bradley papers at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

neighboring salesman I met. I don't say anything at first, but instead browse through his piles, working my way toward them. And right next to *Fleuve Profond, Sombre Rivière* (*Deep River, Dark Stream*), Marguerite Yourcenar's 1964 volume of her translations of the lyrics of African American spirituals, there it is: *Banjo*, in perfect condition like the other one. I chat with the bouquinistes

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for a while, trying to explain my dissertation research. It turns out the bookseller who'd been on his coffee break did have *Banjo* at home; after he heard about my request, he brought it to his stall just in case I came back.

Eventually we exchange au revoirs and I head home, promising to stop back by again soon. As I stroll back toward the Bastille, I contemplate the turn of events. It occurs to me that I don't think I've ever heard of someone finding something specific they were looking for at a bouquiniste. The stalls are treasured not only because they are a Paris institution, lingering stubbornly at the fringes of the tourist economy, but also because they are remnants of an outmoded and almost comically inefficient relationship to the book as commodity.

Despite their divergent missions, bookstores and libraries are organized to deliver the right item to the right reader. But the bouquinistes just don't work that way. Given their eclecticism and disorder, they are only good for browsing, almost never for searching. As the journalist Leon Wieseltier has noted, these modalities are almost diametrically opposed: "Browsing is not idleness; or rather, it is an active idleness—an exploring capacity, a kind of questing non-instrumental behavior. Browsing is the opposite of 'search.' Search is precise, browsing is imprecise. When you search, you find what you were looking for; when you browse, you find what you were not looking for."

And yet I found what I was looking for. Or I lost something that I didn't want to lose, which somehow brought me in the course of that loss to something I wanted but wasn't actively trying to find, in the thrall of strange currents of wind and water, deprivation and discovery.

Surf and turf (2009): Although some have worried that, as David S. Miall pointed out at the dawn of the Internet age, the library and the Internet are driven by what at first glance seem to be "opposed principles"—"one fostering an ethic of preservation and limited accessibility, the other an ethic of dissemination and abundance" (1406)—it may be more useful to recognize their interpenetration. As has become increasingly obvious over the past two decades, even if "we are still in transition between a scholarly economy of scarcity, in which very few periodical titles were available to more than a small number of researchers, to a scholarly economy of abundance" (Leary, "Response" 272), the fact remains that scholars will need to continue to pursue our research in multiple modes. Dean evokes her "'bilingual' ability" to move between the stacks and the Internet, and Linda K. Hughes advises us to learn to move "sideways" between print and remediated digital forms. Rather than fret about the obsolescence of the library, we need to imagine amphibious infrastructures for research.

Le tourbillon de la vie (2009): Over the years, whenever I went to France I would make a point to visit used bookstores. When I said I was looking for works in the realm of what the French used to call "la littérature coloniale" ("colonial literature") published by African and Caribbean writers in the 1920s and 1930s, booksellers would almost always respond with complete bafflement. It was simply not a recognizable category in the world of antiquarian bookstores in France. A few would occasionally suggest works by white writers who had published books on the colonies, such as André Gide, André Demaison, Maurice Delafosse, and Jean and Jérôme Tharaud. I remember that once when I asked specifically about *Heimatlos* at the Librairie Michèle Dhennequin on the rue du Cherche-Midi, I learned some new vocabulary when the salesperson declared that it was impossible to find anything put out by Eugène Figuière, the publisher of Cressan's book: their entire stock had been "mis au pilon" ("pulped") during World War II.

But as antiquarian booksellers around the world gradually made their inventories available through aggregator websites such as *AbeBooks* and *Bookfinder*, new avenues for finding old books became easily available, and from time to time I also joined the "online fishing expedition" they facilitated (Leary, "Googling" 80).

My periodic searches always provoked the same response—*no results found*—until one day in early September 2009, out of the blue, I was stunned to find a notice for *Heimatlos* through the

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International League of Antiquarian Booksellers. It was listed among the holdings of Georges De Lucenay Livres anciens, located in Cluny, a small town in eastern France. I immediately ordered it for twenty-five euros, not quite believing that after nearly fifteen years of searching, I had actually found a copy of a book that I had become convinced no longer existed.

Even before the book arrived, I emailed Georges De Lucenay to ask if he recalled where he had acquired the book. The discovery opened a new chapter in the mystery: How would the seemingly sole copy of this long-lost publication have ended up in a picturesque town in Burgundy?

De Lucenay replied the next day:

> Excellente question que la votre! Le livre m'a complètement "échappé" à cause de son titre et je vous félicite de votre perspicacité. Je l'ai acheté il y a assez longtemps et personne n'a su le voir, (pas même moi), sauf vous. Vu le nombre d'années écoulé depuis son achat je suis incapable de vous dire où et quand je l'ai acheté. . . .
>
> An excellent question! The book completely "escaped" me because of its title, and I congratulate you on your perspicacity. I bought it rather a long time ago and no one noticed it (not even me) except for you. Given the number of years that have passed since its purchase, I am unable to tell you where and when I bought it. . . .

Once I received the package in the mail, I didn't quite know what to do. The end of a search can only be anticlimactic, especially when one has every expectation that it will be interminable. I saw right away that the pages were still uncut. A slim volume: ninety-four pages. The binding was crumbling, but no one had ever read it (fig. 4). Maybe it shouldn't be read, I thought. Maybe I should let it stay in the shadows. It felt like a violation to look inside. It took me months to bring myself to take a steak knife—I don't even own a letter opener—and slice the pages open.

Volte-face (1934): The poet Léon-Gontran Damas is the best-known Guianese writer of the Négritude generation. Damas arrived in Paris as a student in the summer of 1929, and while there is no evidence that he met Cressan, he may have been aware of *Heimatlos*. In a 1968 lecture in Cuba on African influences on Caribbean literature, Damas mentions Cressan, although the examples he cites in his overview of the interwar period so closely mirror the ones in Nardal's "Éveil de la conscience de race"—Damas similarly describes *La dépêche africaine* as a periodical that "résistera l'épreuve du temps" ("would resist the test of time") and calls Cressan's book (misspelling the title as "Heimallos") "un essai qui connut quelque succès" ("an essay that met some success"; "Naissance" 186)—that one wonders whether he may not have simply paraphrased her opening paragraphs.

Whether or not Damas had read his predecessor, there are striking parallels between *Heimatlos* and the book on Guiana that Damas published in 1938, *Retour de Guyane*. Both volumes are structured as historical portraits of French Guiana and impassioned critiques of the devastating impact of French colonization on the Afro-Guianese population.

The genesis of Damas's book was unusual and remains somewhat mysterious. Although he initially enrolled in the École des Langues Orientales to study Russian and Japanese, Damas became disillusioned and dropped out, turning instead to the literary circles around Nardal and *La revue du monde noir*, as well as the young graduate students Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, who with Damas would go on to play central roles in the Négritude movement. (When Damas was sent to Martinique for high school, Césaire was one of his classmates, and the two became close even before they both continued their studies in the metropole.) In 1932 Damas began auditing classes at the Institut d'ethnologie, with an eye toward pursuing a career as an anthropologist. In the summer of 1934, even though he had not completed his training, his teachers Paul Rivet and Marcel Mauss arranged for Damas to conduct fieldwork in his native Guiana. They specifically charged him with gathering materials for a planned exhibition at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro titled "African America" that was to be organized by the German

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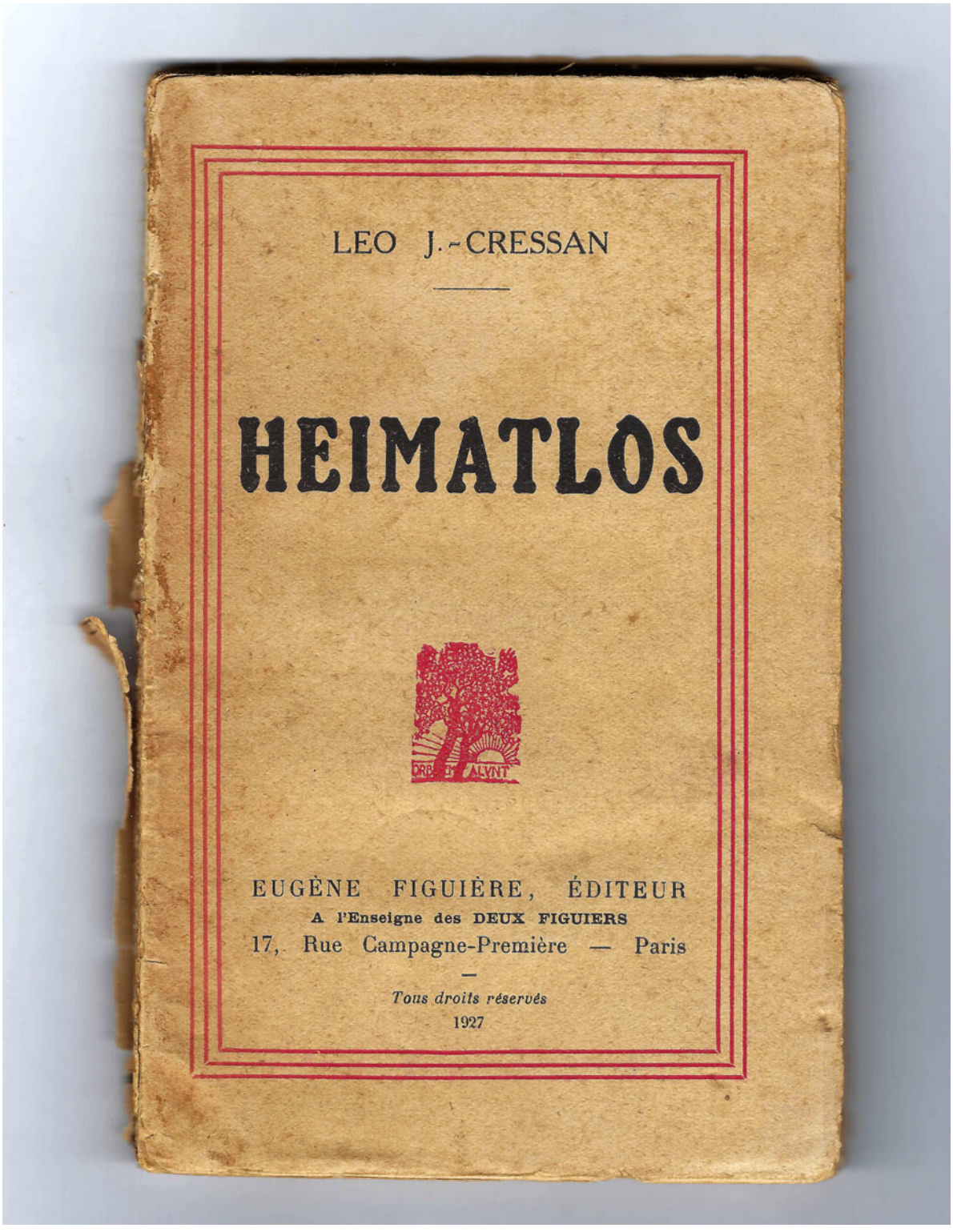


Fig. 4. Léo J. Cressan, *Heimatlos*, Eugène Figuière, 1927. Digital scan by the author.

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anthropologist Paul Kirchhoff. One section of the show was going to feature information (in Kirchhoff's description, drafted in English) on

> rebellious and run-away negroes either returning to a more or less African type of life, or founding free "republics". . . . It will range from the Bush-negroes in Surinam, molding their life after the African model, only on a lower scale, to the revolution in San Domingo, resulting in the setting-up of a modern state, and from the earliest known risings and free republics in Brazil in the first century after the beginning of slave importation, to the modern struggle against the occupation of Haïti. (qtd. in Debaene 358)

In the opening pages of *Retour de Guyane*, Damas notes that the principal task of his expedition was to study

> l'organisation matérielle et sociale des Nègres Bosh, à peu près totalement inconnue. Par Nègres Bosh, on groupe généralement: Oucas, Saramakas, Polygoudoux, Paramakas, Matawais, Quachee-Matawaïs et Bonis, sept tribus de race noire vivant dans les régions de pénétration forestière difficile chevauchant sur les Guyanes hollandaise et française, sept tribus réfractaires au moindre contact étranger et dont l'histoire remonte à l'introduction de l'esclavage en Amérique du Sud. (25–26)

> the material and social organization of the almost completely unknown *Nègres Bosh*. Under that term are generally grouped Oucas, Saramakas, Polygoudoux, Paramakas, Matawais, Quachee-Matawaïs, and Bonis, seven tribes of the Black race living in regions of difficult-to-penetrate forests straddling Dutch and French Guiana—seven tribes resistant to all contact with the outside world and whose history goes back to the introduction of slavery in South America.[5]

Damas did spend a number of weeks in Guiana, although it is not clear whether he made his way to the interior to contact members of the maroon communities he lists.[6] In *Retour de Guyane*, he says that he was compelled to redirect the project toward the confrontation with the political situation of contemporary Guiana that becomes the focus of the rest of the book: "Vivre au jour le jour, des mois durant, la vie matérielle et sociale de ces nègres restés purs; recueillir toute documentation: tel était le but de ma mission. Volontiers m'y fussé-je cantonné si, parallèlement, je n'avais eu à me pencher sur le problème que pose la Guyane française" ("To experience, from day to day and over the course of months, the material and social life of these *nègres* who have remained pure; to gather any documentation: such was the aim of my mission. And I would have stuck to it readily, if I hadn't simultaneously had to look into the problem posed by French Guiana"; 27).

Refractory echoes (1927): Among the handful of reviews of *Heimatlos* in the French press, there is a refrain that the book is something of a history of emancipation ("l'affranchissement des nègres") as well as a plea for "une évolution sociale vers un but qui serait l'édification d'une démocratie universelle" ("a social evolution toward the goal of constructing a universal democracy"; Mazel 167; see also R. M.; Fromenteau). It is true that on the first page of the preface, Cressan announces his intention to contribute to the task of building universal democracy—although, he adds, "sans jamais espérer voir le faîte de l'édifice" ("without ever hoping to see the edifice completed"; *Heimatlos* 13).

But the ideal of universal democracy is not the "idée profonde" ("profound idea"; 17) at the heart of *Heimatlos*. The book is an idiosyncratic tour of the history of colonization in Guiana from the arrival of the first European adventurers in the sixteenth century and the initial organized attempts at settlement with the founding of Cayenne in 1643 all the way through the twentieth century. The "grande gloire du peuple français" ("great glory of the French people"), for Cressan, is twofold, a promise incarnated by the transformation of the "ordre social" ("social order") brought about by the French Revolution on the one hand, and the abolition of slavery on the other (21). But he also charts the ways that French colonization has undermined and contradicted these accomplishments.

Noting the complicity of the Catholic Church in the worst excesses of colonization, as the

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French turned to the transatlantic slave trade in a determination to wring profit from this "pays riche, inconnu et inexploité" ("rich, unknown, and unexploited land"; 29), *Heimatlos* traces the establishment of a new civilization: a "civilisation à rebours" ("backward civilization"; 44), a "civilisation arbitraire, sanglante, lâche, infâme, où l'Occident raffiné, pouvait, du consentement et de la complicité tacites, de l'Europe, trainer après soi, des troupeaux de nègres sans défense, et donner libre cours à ses instincts féroces . . ." ("arbitrary, bloody, lazy, nefarious civilization, in which the refined West came, with the tacit consent and complicity of Europe, to drag in herds of defenseless *nègres* and to give free rein to its most ferocious instincts . . ."; 30; ellipsis in original). When the enslaved population revolted against the "tyrannie organisée" ("organized tyranny"; 46) of the plantations, the repression was exorbitant, a perverted "saraband" of "sombres boucheries" ("dark butcheries"; 47).

But the true subject of *Heimatlos* is not only slavery and resistance, or the ignominious history of colonization in Guiana. Surprisingly, it turns out that Cressan's "profound idea" is to explore the implications of the very same phenomenon that Damas would be assigned to study seven years later: maroon societies. In addition to the thousands who escaped from plantations in Suriname and Guiana—"petit à petit, ils se retiraient dans la forêt amazonienne" ("little by little, they retreated into the Amazonian forest"), as Damas writes, in a determined quest for "un état d'indépendance absolue" ("a state of absolute independence"; *Retour* 26)—even after the abolition of slavery in 1848 there were "réfractaires" ("resisters"), writes Cressan, who "d'insinct négligèrent les arguments spécieux de plus d'un évangéliste, et s'enfoncèrent au plus profond de la forêt vierge" ("instinctually ignored the specious arguments of more than one evangelist and plunged into the depths of the virgin forest"; *Heimatlos* 25). He continues:

> Beaucoup errèrent à l'aventure, inabordables et farouches, d'autres se groupèrent en colonie avec un chef. C'est le vie de ces hommes—avec quelques digressions—les Boni, descendants des anciens esclaves africains, que l'auteur se propose de narrer, succinctement, des origins à nos jours. (25)
>
> Many wandered in search of adventure, inaccessible and wild, while others assembled in groups under a chieftain. With a few digressions, it is the life of these men, the Boni, the descendants of former African slaves, that the author proposes to narrate succinctly from its origins to our time.

While the Boni are one of the seven "tribes" listed by Damas, Cressan employs the term (as was habitual at the time he was writing) as a name for maroon societies in general.[7] At its core, *Heimatlos* aims to accomplish what Damas would fail to do in his fieldwork: to document "l'indestructible et parfois ironique vitalité de ces groupements" ("the indestructible and at times ironic vitality of these groups"; Damas, *Retour* 73) of escaped slaves, "réfractaires à toute collaboration" ("resistant to all collaboration"; Cressan, *Heimatlos* 69) with the European settlers, maroons who maintained an entirely autonomous culture deep in the Guianese interior.

The reviews of *Heimatlos* noted its generic vacillation or instability. The little book hovers somewhere between a political tract and a fictional narrative. Cressan's opening notice to the reader that *Heimatlos* "n'est pas une pure invention" ("is not a pure invention"; 13) but instead "tout à la fois, moins un pamphlet qu'un roman, et moins un roman qu'un pamphlet" ("everything at once, less a pamphlet than a novel, and less a novel than a pamphlet"; 16) led some reviewers to call it a "pamphlet-roman" without considering exactly what that might mean (Mazel 167).[8]

My sense is that Cressan's rather perplexing self-categorization is a way of signaling the experimental qualities of the book. In contrast to Damas's, Cressan's approach to the Boni is emphatically not anthropological: there is no evidence that Cressan undertook any sort of fieldwork in the interior of Guiana or consulted any documentation of maroon culture. Instead it is literary: over the course of the text the Boni are elaborated as a figure for recalcitrance, for withdrawal, for independence,

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for an absolute and uncompromising rejection of the call to modernity. At times, Cressan even dares to ventriloquize a Boni "voice" in an extraordinary, mute but eloquent address to the assimilated Black Guianese population:

> Il est, sur les quais, comme une violente protestation du passé qui se dresse taciturne parmi la foule bruyante; et dans son langage muet il est éloquent, aigu, cruellement objectif et sensible, pour la pensée et le coeur, comme un réquisitoire. . .
>
> Il dit: "Je suis l'image vivante et embellie de ce qui fut! . . . Et pourtant regarde-moi . . . De temps immémorial, après le crépuscule des civilisations africaines, mes ancêtres traînèrent le boulet de la vie, de continent à continent, sans jamais connaître la joie . . . d'ébaucher une journée d'existence . . . Aujourd'hui, je suis libre. Je vis . . . j'accomplis simplement ma mission . . . Et pourtant c'est pour moi que le soleil se lève, c'est pour moi que dans l'incandescence des journées caniculaires, l'ombre rampe et s'étire . . .
>
> "Je suis un homme dans la nature . . .
>
> "Ma vie est sans mystère . . . J'ai pardonné beaucoup, sans jamais oublier . . . Cela, vous ne pouvez pas le comprendre . . . Mon coeur est trop immense pour se satisfaire de vos demi-mesures . . . [. . .]
>
> "Vous m'appelez 'Zami'; pour vous c'est mon seul nom parce que les hommes n'ont pas enregistré ma naissance . . . comme ils n'enregistreront pas mon décès . . . [. . .] Quand je daigne sourire, c'est de vos puérils enthousiasmes. Le souvenir de ceux qui ne sont plus est banni de votre mémoire . . . Leurs longs siècles de misère, les horribles et inutiles tortures, les humiliations plus inutiles encore qu'ils subirent, tout s'est dissipé dans votre esprit au souffle corrosive de la civilisation . . . [. . .] Moi, j'accomplis ma mission . . . je vis." (86–89)[9]
>
> On the quais, he is like a violent protestation of the past that stands taciturn amidst the noisy crowd; and in his mute language he is eloquent, sharp, cruelly objective, and as palpable, for the mind and in the heart, as an indictment . . .
>
> He says: "I am the living and embellished image of what once was! . . . And yet, look at me . . . From time immemorial, after the dusk of African civilizations, my ancestors dragged the ball and chain of life from continent to continent without ever knowing the joy of sketching out a day of existence . . . Today I am free. I live . . . I simply fulfill my mission . . . And yet it is for me that the sun rises, it is for me that, in the incandescence of sweltering days, the shadows creep and stretch out . . .
>
> "I am a man in nature . . .
>
> "My life is without mystery . . . I have forgiven much, without ever forgetting . . . This you cannot comprehend . . . My heart is too immense to be satisfied by your half-measures . . . [. . .]
>
> "You call me 'Zami': for you it is my only name, because men have not recorded my birth . . . as they will not record my death . . . [. . .] When I deign to smile, it is at your puerile enthusiasm. The recollection of those who are no more has been banished from your memory . . . Their long centuries of misery, of terrible and useless torture, the even more useless humiliations they suffered, all of it has been dissolved in your mind under the corrosive breath of civilization . . . [. . .] Me, I fulfill my mission . . . I live."

The book concludes with a kind of self-condemnation, a striking juxtaposition of those (like Cressan himself, writing in the metropole) who "acceptâmes la civilisation" ("have accepted civilization"; 85), who climb generation after generation through "les degrés qui acheminent l'homme vers la Raison" ("the degrees that carry man toward Reason"; 86), and the "heretic" counterexample of the maroon: "sous les sombres arcades des lianes enchevêtrées, dans le triste et impressionnant silence de la forêt vierge, où chaque chose a de pénibles et saisissantes sonorités, l'hérétique reste lui-même . . ." ("under the dark arcades of interwoven vines, in the sad and troubling silence of the virgin forest, where each thing reverberates with painful and striking sonorities, the heretic remains himself . . ."; 86; ellipsis in original).

Another fall, another spring (2024): What a strange and intriguing sensation, to suspect that you're the only one. That you're the only one who has the sole remaining copy of a mass-produced artifact. The end of the line. And not just the only one who has it, but also possibly the only one who's ever looked for it. What can we learn about the

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dynamics of a diasporic print culture by attending to what is discarded, what is waylaid, what is overlooked—what we miss or ignore because it speaks the wrong tongue?

It is tempting to file this singular circumstance under the mania of the collector. Possessing the only copy can be interpreted as a striving for "finitude," and in this sense "an account of the replacement of content with classification, an account of the ways in which collection is the antithesis of creation. In its search for a perfect hermeticism, the collection must destroy both labor and history" (Stewart 159, 160). From this perspective, the collector is driven by a quest for the closed system, which at its extreme can coincide with a "quest for the single or unique object" (Rheims 34). William S. Walsh's *Handy-book of Literary Curiosities* from 1893 recounts a remarkable anecdote of this compulsion:

> There is a story of a wealthy English collector who long believed that a certain rare book in his possession was a unique. One day he received a bitter blow. He learned that there was another copy in Paris. But he soon rallied, and, crossing over the Channel, he made his way to the rival's home. "You have such and such a book in your library?" he asked, plunging at once in medias res. "Yes." "Well, I want to buy it." "But, my dear sir—" "I will give you a thousand francs for it." "But it isn't for sale; I—" "Two thousand!" "On my word, I don't care to dispose of it." "Ten thousand!" and so on, till at last twenty-five thousand francs was offered; and the Parisian gentleman finally consented to part with this treasure. The Englishman counted out twenty-five thousand-franc bills, examined the purchase carefully, smiled with satisfaction, and cast the book into the fire. "Are you crazy?" cried the Parisian, stooping over to rescue it. "Nay," said the Englishman, detaining his arm. "I am quite in my right mind. I, too, possess a copy of that book. I deemed it a unique. I was mistaken. Now, however, thanks to your courtesy, I know it is a unique." The story may not be true, but it is quite true enough to point a moral with. (95–96)[10]

But it seems different when the unique possession is utterly forsaken by the world at large. Not invaluable, but valueless—no one would want it, because no one but you even has the slightest idea what it is. In such a situation, what one longs for isn't monopoly, but instead company.

Esprit de l'escalier (1930): There are a few scattered traces of the last days of Léo Cressan in the surveillance files of the French national archives, which document "activités suspectes" ("suspicious activities") among the Black students and intellectuals in the metropole in the interwar period. Cressan was not a member of the Communist-affiliated Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre, but he was friends with some of the militant activists in the Comité who edited its radical newspaper *La Race Nègre*. By the end of 1929, there were open discussions about the state of his mental health.

A spy sent a report to the Ministère des Colonies describing a Comité meeting in December where the fourteen members present expressed concern that Cressan had been "atteint de la folie des grandeurs, de la manie de la persécution et de troubles cérébraux survenus à la suite d'une méningite cérébro-spinale qu'il avait contracté à l'âge où il allait à l'École dans son pays natal à Cayenne" ("struck with delusions of grandeur, with a persecution complex, and with cerebral issues in the wake of a bout of cerebrospinal meningitis he had contracted while still a student in Cayenne, Guiana, where he was born"; Agent Joe). One of his close friends in the group, the Malian activist Tiémoko Garan Kouyaté, recounted that Cressan had claimed that he was going to win the Prix Goncourt for *Heimatlos*, and accused various officials in the Ministère de la Guerre (where he had been employed for three years as a telegraph operator at the Hôtel des Invalides before getting into repeated workplace disputes with his supervisor) of "persécutions et brimades" ("persecution and bullying"; qtd. in Agent Joe).[11] According to Kouyaté, Cressan had even attempted to commit suicide two or three times, including on one occasion when he tried to throw himself down the stairwell in Kouyaté's building.

In January 1930, another spy reported that Cressan had been committed to the Centre

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Hospitalier Sainte-Anne in the south of Paris. He was arrested after he attacked his publisher, Eugène Figuière, accusing him of being behind the failure of *Heimatlos* (Agent Paul). By the time the police arrived at the publisher's offices near the Montparnasse cemetery, Cressan had nearly strangled Figuière after beating him bloody with a cane. The psychiatrists at Saint-Anne declared him "incurable" (Agent Désiré).

After I read these surveillance reports in the Archives nationales in Aix-en-Provence, I tried to gain access to the archives at Saint-Anne, but I was informed that I would need permission from the family in order to consult a former patient's medical records. Given that Paulette Nardal described Cressan as "deceased" in 1932, it seems likely that he never left the hospital.

Stand out of the way (1979): The pathbreaking scholar Michel Fabre corresponded with Nardal in the late 1970s, asking her for information about her activities in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s. But when he questioned her about the glancing reference to *Heimatlos* in her article in *La revue du monde noir*, she was no longer able to recall anything about the author or the book. In her letter in reply, she could only offer conjecture: "*Heimatlos*—un Antillais? Peut-être à la recherche de son identité?" ("*Heimatlos*?—an Antillean? Perhaps in search of his identity?").

The most striking thing about *Heimatlos* is that, aside from the first sentence ("*Heimatlos* n'est pas une pure invention"), the title is never mentioned in the book. It is not thematized as the overarching condition of diaspora, or linked to the maroon's deliberate flight to the radical edges of the periphery, to the margins of "civilization." In his writing on *serendipity*, Merton describes the term as an example of a "self-exemplifying idea"—that is, an idea that seems to enact its own insight, that "applies to its own content or is exemplified by its own history" (*Social Theory* 231). It occurs to me that Cressan's decision to title his little book *Heimatlos* can be understood in something like this vein. Whether Cressan intended it or not, to give a French book a German word for a title is to camouflage it, to make it almost impossible to locate in a French-language literary sphere—to render it "homeless," in a sense, wrenched out of any frame that would contextualize it. As a gesture it is a way of extracting oneself from one's surroundings. The act of a heretic, in other words. But the title may also be the most appropriate echo of the profound idea at the heart of the book: the persistence of a maroon understanding that chooses oblivion, that says no, that remains itself, inviolate and self-sufficient, that vanishes into the depths of the forest, that announces its presence only by quietly taking its departure.

Brent Hayes Edwards

Notes

1. Although this article originally appeared with a facing-page English translation in Nardal's *La revue du monde noir* (*The Review of the Black World*), I have retranslated the French here in order to emphasize certain facets that are muted in the translation done by Nardal and her main collaborator, the Tuskegee Institute educator Clara Shepard. Translations throughout are mine.

2. There is a substantial body of scholarship on the role of serendipity across various fields including history, sociology, the arts, and especially the sciences (for the last, see Jacques; Kohn; Roberts).

3. The photo caption listing A. Léo Cressan as a contributor does not explain why he seems to have preferred to publish under the name Léo J. Cressan, which is the byline in all his articles in *La dépêche africaine* as well as on the cover of *Heimatlos* itself. Note also the misspelling of the book's title under the author's photo: *Heitmatlos*.

4. On the history of the Library of Congress Subject Headings, see Stone; Helton, "Making Lists" 90–91. For a related discussion of the "essential organizational distortions" of the Dewey Decimal System of subject classification, see Helton, "On Decimals" 103.

5. The word *Bosh* is an idiosyncratic spelling of *Bosch*, the Dutch word for "jungle" or "bush." Most of these maroon populations originated in Suriname (then Dutch Guiana); the Dutch referred to slaves who had escaped into the forest as *Boschnegers*, and the loan word was taken up in the French term *Nègres Bosch* as maroon communities settled in French territory. As Damas explains, "La prise de Surinam par Cassard aura néanmoins permis à bon nombre d'esclaves de déserter les plantations et de se réfugier dans l'impénétrable nuit de la forêt, d'où le nom qu'ils portent depuis: Nègres Bosh, ou nègres de la brousse, des forêts, des bois" ("The taking of Suriname by

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Cassard nevertheless allowed a good number of slaves to desert the plantations and take refuge in the impenetrable night of the forest, from which comes the name that they have since carried: *Nègres Bosh*, or Negroes of the bush, the forest, the woods"; 26).

6. No records from Damas's expedition (whether field notes, reports, or photographs or recordings) have been found in the archives of the Musée du Trocadéro (see Benoît and Delpuech 592–95).

7. The term *Boni* is in fact a misnomer: it is the name of one of the first great leaders of one of the maroon groups, the Aluku. On the history of the Aluku and on maroon societies at the border of Suriname and Guiana more generally, see Price and Price; Bilby; Hurault; and Moomou.

8. Or as one reviewer commented sarcastically: "Il se demande si c'est plus un pamphlet qu'un roman. Mon Dieu! que M. Cressan se prend donc au sérieux!" ("He wonders whether it is more of a pamphlet than a novel. My God! M. Cressan certainly takes himself seriously!"; R.).

9. The ellipses throughout the passage are Cressan's, with the exception of those in brackets, which I have used to indicate points at which the text has been excerpted.

10. Stewart calls this anecdote "a legend of collecting" and suggests that, as such, it has been recounted many times in different circumstances (160). She cites a similar story that features in Rheims's 1959 book *The Strange Life of Objects*: "One book collector, whose hobby was to buy books printed on vellum only if they were unique copies, learnt one day that a New York dealer was offering for sale a volume similar to one in his possession. He made haste to buy it, then sent for a lawyer, whom he obliged to witness the burning of the American copy. As soon as he had the official document certifying the destruction of the book, he inserted it in the front of his own copy, which became once again unique, and so achieved his peace of mind" (Rheims 34). But I see no reason to assume that there is a single apocryphal story that has been recycled by different commentators. It seems to me more likely that there may be significant variations in the narrativization of such a collector's mania (aside from the geopolitical shift from cross-Channel to transatlantic competition, the other key difference in the Rheims version is the factor of legal verification: one's collection is complete only when one obtains—and, interestingly, *retains*—proof that the duplicate has been eliminated).

11. Regarding Cressan's employment history, see Agent Lambert.

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