

2012

Governing Readability, Or How to Read Césaire's Cabrera

Katerina Seligmann

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/inti>

Citas recomendadas

Seligmann, Katerina (April 2012) "Governing Readability, Or How to Read Césaire's Cabrera," *Inti: Revista de literatura hispánica*: No. 75, Article 21.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/inti/vol1/iss75/21>

This Estudio is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Providence. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Inti: Revista de literatura hispánica* by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Providence. For more information, please contact dps@providence.edu.

GOVERNING READABILITY, OR HOW TO READ CÉSAIRE'S CABRERA

Katerina Seligmann
Brown University

Lydia Cabrera's *Cuentos negros de Cuba* [Black Stories from Cuba] is a classic of Cuban literature whose trajectory reveals a complex, transnational cultural history. During the Cuban Revolution's famous literacy campaign of 1961, when all Cuban schools were shut down until the entire nation had learned to read, the Cuban government sponsored a massive publishing binge of a selection of 'must-read' books. Even though Cabrera had left Cuba the year before and was a known dissident of the Revolution, this book was one of those chosen to bestow upon the nation's new and renewed readership en masse. The choice indicates the book's prominence in Cuban literary history, even though it holds that promise in an odd way: it is lauded primarily for its ethnographic "value" as opposed to its literary "value"; in other words, it is broadly assumed that the book contains a collection of Afro-Cuban folklore instead of a set of *literary* texts inspired by Afro-Cuban folklore. The reason for this widely-held view is that the book was characterized as a "translation of folklore" in its preface by the most famous Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz, which has most often accompanied the book since its first Cuban edition in 1940. Ortiz's preface was not the first to accompany the book, but it seems to have been the most influential of all of its prior and subsequent ones.¹ Only twice were Cabrera's stories in question, readable in English now under the title of *Afro-Cuban Tales*, published without Ortiz's preface. The book was first published by Gallimard in Paris in 1936, four years before its Cuban debut, with the title *Contes nègres de Cuba*. This publication includes an introduction by the stories' translator, Francis de Miomandre, who was also notably the French translator of Guatemalan Nobel Prize winning author Miguel Angel Asturias and of France's modern edition of Cervantes' *Don Quijote*. Later,

in 1944, a single story from the collection was published in the Martinican cultural review, *Tropiques*, which was co-edited by Aimé Césaire—celebrated Martinican poet of the *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* [Notebook of a Return to the Native Land]—, alongside a short introduction by him. In addition to Césaire's introduction, in Cabrera's *Tropiques* publication her story was presented with its title, "Bergantino-Bergantín," alongside a supplementary title in parentheses: "(*un conte nègre-cubain*)": a shift of the original French title of Cabrera's collection of stories, *Contes nègres de Cuba*. Césaire's introduction and title shift, as I argue, interact with—or frame—Cabrera's text in ways that challenge the ways her stories had been dominantly acted upon by the titles and introductions of her two previous publications.²

I. Traveling Textual History

Although Cabrera left several accounts of the story behind her stories, very little of her perspective makes it into any of the introductions written for them. Cabrera, like Césaire, left her native land to study in Paris in 1929. She studied painting and ethnology there, and remained until 1939, when she returned to Cuba for good. During her time in Paris, she returned to Cuba several times and began informally investigating Afro-Cuban religious beliefs and practices as a participant-observer, even becoming initiated into Santería. As her story goes, her interest in Afro-Cubans was sparked by studying Japanese folklore in Paris. Japanese folk stories reminded her of the stories she had heard from the black servants employed by her wealthy, white family while she grew up. The reminiscence piqued her interest in researching Afro-Cubans, their religious practices, and their folklore more seriously.³ Cabrera states in several accounts that on one of her trips back to Paris from visiting Cuba she decided to write down from memory the folk stories the black Cubans who raised her had told her growing up.⁴ In one account, she says about these stories that she wanted to write down, "*cuentecitos sobre negros*" ("little stories about black people") for her ailing companion, the Venezuelan writer, Teresa de la Parra (Hiriart, 38). Most of the stories in the collection feature animal protagonists, and most (though not all) resemble Yoruba myths (*pataquies*) as they were told orally in Cuba. The stories were discovered by de la Parra's translator, Francis de Miomandre, who fell in love with them and first published a selection of them (including the one republished in *Tropiques* the following decade) in the Marseilles-based journal *Cahiers du Sud*, before passing them along to Gallimard to be published in Paul Morand's short story collection, "*Renaissance de la nouvelle*."

Cabrera's French acclaim was, to say the least, complicated. An ethnographically-infused fetish of Africa and its diaspora flourished in the 1930s that is popularly known as the *vogue nègre*. On the one hand, this fetish made it possible for Cabrera's stories to put Cuba on the afro-diasporic map for

French readers, and by extension, led to their validation at home. On the other hand, this fetish also set the terms of their readability. Miomandre submitted the stories to Paul Morand in 1934, just six years after Morand's own book *Magie Noir* had made primitivist caricatures of the black artists and intellectuals he had encountered traveling through the Americas and Africa. As Brent Edwards pointedly remarks, his stories "portray a unified black world ultimately determined by its *atavism*—the susceptibility of even the most seemingly civilized and modern black subject to revert at any moment to his or her 'essential' primitive nature" (164). The atavistic essentialism that colors Morand's own stories determines how Cabrera's stories are read as well. Miomandre's introduction to the stories draws on this same logic when he writes about the black Cubans who inspire Cabrera's stories: "*Les Noirs sont un peuple de poètes et de magiciens. Aucune logique scientifique, aucun concept de raison positive n'a de prise sur leur imagination*" ("The Blacks are a people made up of poets and magicians. No scientific logic, no concept of positive reason has hold over their imagination" 10).⁵ Although this sentence intends to praise blacks for their freedom from the confines of Western modernity, it nonetheless essentializes the African diaspora as an un-modern people among whom a poetic irrationality flourishes. Cabrera's stories did very well for Gallimard under this guise, selling the stories to European audiences as *both* decontextualized from the ethnic and religious origins that gave them ethnographic meaning *and* from the literary work of the author who composed them.⁶

Although Aimé Césaire and the *Tropiques* group publish Miomandre's edition of "Bergantino-Bergantin," the frontline story of Cabrera's collection, its conditions of readability are altered significantly for the magazine's readership. Given the later split between the editors of *Tropiques* over "Negritude," understood to comprise a wave of poets from the francophone black diaspora who poetically engaged with the racist construction of blackness and sought to articulate a fraught individual and collective form of subjectivity *out of* that very construction, it comes as no surprise that the magazine's texts do not promote that movement.⁷ Re-framing Afro-diasporic identity on the island was a primary part of the magazine's intellectual labor, however, and publishing Cabrera's story served this end well. In an interview with Jacqueline Leiner published in the 1978 Jean-Michel Place edition of *Tropiques' Complete Collection*, Aimé Césaire explains that the magazine was dedicated to filling a cultural void in the Antilles. He explains that the magazine was a venue for promoting and disseminating Antillean, or Caribbean, cultural productions in order to transform a Caribbean he saw as primarily participating in culture as consumers into a society of producers. Both he and Ménéil, in his own text on the magazine, "Towards a Critical Reading of *Tropiques*," assert that the intended audience of the magazine was the students of the Lycée in the Martinican capital of Fort-de-France where Césaire taught literature and Ménéil taught philosophy. As such, *Tropiques*, served to intellectually develop the editors' students in

addition to promoting Caribbean cultural productions. *Tropiques* as a cultural review was primarily a venue for poetry—overwhelmingly the poetry of Aimé Césaire—and critical essays on poetics and theories of Caribbean poetics. Among the few French writers featured in *Tropiques* are Lautréamont, Mallarmé, and Bréton (after his brief visit to Martinique in 1942). Although it was a magazine intended as a venue for Caribbean cultural production, it scantily published the works of writers from other parts of the Caribbean, making Cabrera's story, in 1944, an exceptional case of intra-Caribbean publishing in the magazine. In the "Notes" section of the magazine the previous year, it was announced that Césaire's famous *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* had been published in Cuba, translated by Lydia Cabrera and illustrated by the now famous Afro-Chinese-Cuban painter, Wifredo Lam, who had met the *Tropiques* group along with Bréton in 1942 on his way back from studying painting in France and Spain. Given that Cabrera's translation of Césaire's now monumental poem spawned its first publication in book form, her publication in *Tropiques* may be read as a sort of "returning the favor" she had bestowed on Césaire; but just as her translation involved much more than 'bestowing favor,' so too did Césaire's presentation of her story for its *Tropiques* debut.

II. How to Read Césaire's Cabrera

As Brent Edwards explains, "claiming the term *nègre*," especially as a translation, has "implications that go beyond the 'simply' linguistic" (38). This word choice, its positioning, and the other discourses it is placed in relation to are "framing gestures." It is along these lines that I understand Morand/Miomandre, Ortiz, and Césaire to do work that frames Cabrera's work. Edwards draws on David Scott to elaborate his definition of framing, but I would like to return to Scott to suggest that framing can be even more productive than Edwards indicates:

The practice of writing introductions is one that establishes what one might call a relation of "framing" and "placement." An introduction, you might say, *frames* a text by *placing* it in relation to **its** conditions of enunciability, and in relation to a system of discursivity that **governs** the production and organization of its statements. (4)

Scott's definition is particularly relevant here, as it hinges on an ambiguity pertinent to the way that introductory practices operate. Does an introduction frame a text by placing it in relation to its—the introduction's—conditions of enunciability, or does an introduction relate a text to its—the text's—conditions of enunciability? It is difficult to discern this, I argue, because introductory framing work produces the conditions of enunciability and the system of discursivity

that govern the texts they introduce, and as such, at least in part, *do that very governing*.⁸ What is particularly remarkable about Césaire's placement and introduction of Cabrera's story for *Tropiques* is that the regime of readability produced by his framing work both directly and indirectly contests the very framing regimes to which Cabrera's previous publications in France and Cuba were subjected.

Of the introductory regimes that proposed their governance over Cabrera's text, Ortiz's has proved most intractable, serving to authenticate the ethnographic quality of Cabrera's stories in each subsequent book publication of the collection and overdetermining much of the scholarship dedicated to Cabrera's work. The French edition constitutes the book's original frame, perhaps even producing its lasting title. This version was a hit in France among critics and in sales, but its introduction has never been reproduced, perhaps because it frames the stories in terms of a very specific fetish of blackness confined to the Paris of the mid-1930s. As I will demonstrate, Césaire's less stable introductory regime both directly usurps Gallimard's French titular frame and indirectly disrupts the Ortizian regime that renders Cabrera's stories cultural artifacts by repressing her creative work in authoring them.

The particular story that Césaire *et al* select for *Tropiques*, "Bergantino-Bergantín," is the most directly political of the collection, and, interestingly, is the only story that has been censored from it in Cuban publications since 1959.⁹ In it, the despotic bull king of a kingdom called Cocozumba wreaks terror on his subjects by taking all the women in the kingdom for his wives and ordering the murder of all the males born in it. This king is eventually deposed by one his sons who has been magically revived and watched over by the entire Yoruba pantheon, or the *Orishas*, until he is old and strong enough to depose the king and reinstate the previous status quo. As Emily Maguire aptly notes in her reading of this story, the way the despotic bull king appropriates all the women of the kingdom is reminiscent of plantation governance under slavery (95-7). Furthermore, as Ortiz, Césaire, and Maguire all indicate, the story takes an Oedipal turn, and I argue, one that signals the tragedy of colonial hybridity.¹⁰ The new bull king is that hybrid, the product of both a woman oppressed by the first bull regime and that oppressive bull. The story is a fairytale, of course: the bull son flawlessly succeeds in returning the order of the pre-despotic past to the kingdom. But there remains a kernel of doubt about this possibility: prior to the despotic bull king's reign, a peaceful glow worm had ruled the kingdom, and in the animal kingdom, a bull and a glow worm could not be farther apart. The story neglects to mention the species of the new bull king's mother (or any of the women of the kingdom for that matter)¹¹ but certifies that the avenging son, like his father, is also a bull. Even if the story's fairytale logic allows for peace to magically become restored to the kingdom under the new bull king, this new bull may approximate, but never become, the glow worm of the kingdom's past—just as after slavery and colonialism, the enslaved and the colonized can

never return to the past before these collective social traumas. It is a story about overcoming the tragedy of an invincible regime, which, without the Orishas' divine intervention, would have been impossible. If, as Maguire suggests, Cabrera does cultural translating in the writing of these stories (129-30), this translating may best be observed when she gives the Catholic translation, or equivalent, of each of the Yoruba deities in this story. Each time one of the deities appears, she gives first the Yoruba name and then the Cuban Catholic version. For example, when Ochún arrives on the scene, she says: "that woman was Ochún (*la Caridad del Cobre*) lady of the rivers, of the fountains, of the lakes" (*Cuentos negros* 20), and when Yemayá is introduced it is as, "Yemayá (*la Virgen de Regla*) mother of all the saints..." (21). Now, since this is the kind of translating that requires knowledge of these two Cuban-Catholic deities, it is not terribly surprising that the parenthetical translations are omitted from the French versions of the text. Why should anyone in France, or in Martinique for that matter, know about the Virgin of Charity and Copper—Caridad del Cobre, the patron Virgin of Cuba, or the copper miner's virgin; or the black virgin of the island of Regla, the patron virgin of Havana, or the fisherman's virgin? The French version does include the translations of Yoruba deities into Catholic saints that are more easily recognizable for a francophone audience, however. This cultural translating introduces the Yoruba deities to uninformed readers, providing a preliminary education in Santería, Cuba's syncretic religion that consists of Yoruba traditions blended with the worship of their Catholic deity equivalents. The translating indicates that though these stories may have African roots, they have passed through the syncretist imagination that blended Catholic "deities" (versions of the Virgin and saints) with Yoruba ones.

When this story travels to Martinique, then, how does its framing govern its readability? The supplementary parenthetical title to Cabrera's story in *Tropiques*, "(un conte nègre-cubain)," appears next to its "original" (and untranslated) title, "Bergantino-Bergantín" in both the issue's table of contents and at the top of the story itself. The parenthetical gesture is an odd move that is unique in the magazine—no other text published in it has supplementary titles such as this one. Instead of completely retitling the collection or neglecting to refer to it at all, the parenthetical title shifts the French book's title for the magazine publication, resignifying the identity production engaged in by the Gallimard title. What is the difference between "*conte nègre de Cuba*" and "*conte nègre-cubain*"? It is worth mentioning that the word "*nègre*" is used to refer to both African and Afro-diasporic cultural productions in *Tropiques*.¹² Some examples include: 1) Aimé Césaire's essay on Harlem Renaissance poetry called "*La poésie nègre aux Etats Unis*," which in the period would translate to "Negro poetry in or of the United States"; 2) "*L'art nègre*" to refer to African art in a few instances, and notably to refer to it as one of the references of Wifredo Lam's hybrid painting style, who is also referred to as a "*nègre cubain*" painter,¹³ without the hyphen; and 3) an essay on the history of the slave trade entitled "*La*

Traite de Nègres,” which would best translate to “The Slave Trade,” taking the word back to its origins as one of the variants of the linguistic corridor through which African peoples were transformed by a process of “negrification” into tradable commodities. If there is a link between *Tropiques* and what would later be known as the “Négritude” movement, the affiliation of the magazine’s pedagogical project to the tenets of the movement would lie in its deployment of the word “*nègre*,” the use of which falls somewhere between diffusing a history of slavery and using the word to refer to important cultural productions and, sometimes, to their producers. In the case of Cabrera’s story in the context of *Tropiques*, it is less significant that the word “*nègre*” also serves to frame it, and more significant that the “*de Cuba*”—which can be understood as either “of” or “from Cuba”—of both the “original” French and Cuban versions of the title has been transformed. To return to the question of what constitutes the difference of the shift, “*de Cuba*” denotes origin but also connotes a national claim to ownership, like the kind of claim that predicates the regulation of “national patrimony,” whereas relating “*nègre*” to Cuban by way of a hyphen connotes a Cuban origin while denoting the story’s claim to Cubanness, like the kind of identity claim involved in brokering national citizen’s rights for minority peoples.¹⁴ In both the French and Cuban contexts of the book publication, the title of the collection packages Cuba’s African heritage as a sort of national cultural commodity, whereas the Martinican version’s shift turns the title into an identity claim for the stories, so that they announce both an Afro-diasporic and Cuban national heritage, and as such the right to claim both of these, together. In this sense, the subtle shift of the title makes a huge difference. The editorial gesture of the hyphen illustrates how racializing language can be transformed through the use of what may otherwise seem the slightest of framing gestures.¹⁵

In Césaire’s introduction to Cabrera’s story entitled “Introduction à un conte *de* Lydia Cabrera,” he brings back the “*de*” displaced from the original French title so that instead of an introduction to a story *by* Lydia Cabrera, which would require the French word “*par*,” it is an introduction to a story “of or from” Lydia Cabrera, referring to her as the origin or proprietor of the story without actually crediting her authorship the way that a story “*by*” or “*par*” Lydia Cabrera would. In fact, in the poetically obscure framing work of his introduction, he neither explicitly admits nor dismisses Cabrera’s authorship of the story in question. He also never mentions, as both Miomandre’s introduction to the Gallimard edition of Cabrera’s stories and Ortiz’s introduction to the first Cuban edition do, Cabrera’s resolutely Spanish (read: white) origin. In the reading I present of Césaire’s introduction, I will first explain how it disrupts the work of Ortiz’s “introductory regime,” and then I will consider some of the poetic governance it proposes. Ortiz titles his introduction to Cabrera “Prejuicio,” a play on preface (*prefacio*) and judgment (*juicio*), which literally translates to “Prejudice,” announcing that what he does in it is propose his own prejudiced views on Cabrera’s stories. According to his “prejudice” then, the stories in question are

“authentic” Afro-Cuban folk stories from the Yorubá tradition that like the Yorubá religion’s syncretized Cuban version—Santería—have mutated between their Atlantic crossing and life in Cuba so that any detraction from “original” Yoruba myths in them can be traced to their displacement in the Caribbean. As such, Ortiz claims that as a good ethnographer, Cabrera “penetrated the forest of the black legends of Habana...transcribing them and collecting them.” He portrays Cabrera as an ethnographer of folklore here, and in order to address the tenor of her literary merit, he goes on to call her the stories’ white translator, with the statement: “*No hay que olvidar que estos cuentos vienen a las prensas por una colaboración, la del folklore negro con su traductora blanca*” (“It may not be forgotten that these stories have come to the press by way of a collaboration, between black folklore and its white translator”). Here, he establishes that Cabrera’s transcription work requires “translating” the texts from popular, oral Spanish into literary, Castilian Spanish. Because it is difficult to verify what *exactly* Cabrera’s role was in constructing these stories, it is rare for scholars to contest Ortiz’s authority on the matter, and they often draw attention to the style of her stories without contesting the idea that she may have made some of them up herself or intervened in the record of any of the Yoruba myths in them. Some literary scholars, such as Emily Maguire, have demonstrated shifts in Yoruba myths in several stories. Others, such as Isabel Castellanos, the anthropologist and custodian of Cabrera’s archive, note that some stories do not bear any relationship to Yoruba myths.¹⁶ One critic who has ignored Ortiz’s claims, Rosa Valdez-Cruz, argues that the psychological complexity of Cabrera’s characters indicates her act of fiction as it definitively detracts from the tradition of Afro-Cuban stories as they are passed down in Cuba (93-99). In the absence of certainty over the matter, however, Ortiz’s authority continues to reign supreme and dominantly conditions the stories’ readability. In establishing his authority over the stories, Ortiz was able to proclaim their status as cultural artifacts, recorded for the good of the Cuban nation, and attesting to the rich cultural history of its Afro-Cuban population.

Although Césaire never outright calls Cabrera the author of the story he introduces, he pays homage to her writerly work in the proclamation:

Grand is the merit of Lydia Cabrera who makes us feel with a rarely achieved intensity the desire to live (*vouloir-vivre*), fluidity and animism, *frate foco e sor l’acqua*, the tranquil and exiled character, briefly irreducible, on the margin of civilizations, of morals, of religions, of conventions, of the strange people habited by saltpeter and dawns who border the shores of the Caribbean with the ambiguous shards of their laughter

Grand est le mérite de Lydia Cabrera qui nous fait sentir avec une intensité rarement atteinte le vouloir-vivre, la fluidité, l’animisme

frate foco e sor l’acqua

Le caractère exilé et tranquille, bref irréductible, en marge des civilisations, des

morales, des religions, des conventions, de l'étrange peuple habité de salpêtre et d'aubes qui borde le rivage caraïbe des tessons ambigus de son rire. (11)

In his poetic praise of both Cabrera and the story he presents, which follows a discussion of the story as a work of poetry,¹⁷ Césaire allows the undecidable authorship of the stories to remain obscure while ascribing to Cabrera the role of transmitting a strong Caribbean-esque affect. The interjection of the almost-Italian *frate foco e sor l'acqua*, brother (or friar) fire and sister water, is a reference to a European classic, the *Cantico della creature*, by Francis of Assisi. Invoking Assisi is a curious move and reminds the discerning reader, on the one hand, that animism is part of both the African and the European literary canons.¹⁸ On the other hand, the pairing of brother (or friar) fire and sister water is a partnership of opposite personified elements that notably inverts the order of their appearance in the cantico, in which the poet first thanks God for sister water who is “very humble, precious and chaste,” and later for friar fire who “illuminates the night.” This partnership may allude to the dialogical obscurity of the story’s authorship, occurring somewhere between the African oral tradition personified by *frate fo(u)co* and the Euro-descendant scribe, *sor l'acqua*. The quick but rich work of this reference is one of the many examples in Césaire’s introduction that establishes for the story a regime of readability highly characteristic of Césaire’s poetic opus, in which unlikely elements are paired, such as saltpeter—the raw material of gunpowder and other explosives—with dawns. Here, these poetic moves serve to define the hybridity of the Caribbean peoples Césaire proposes to be the source of Cabrera’s story.

Césaire’s unstable textual government unsettles without toppling Ortiz’s prior regime by placing his introductory emphasis on both the literary and cultural value of the text. He culturally situates the text in the Caribbean, a cannon-opening gesture, but he does so in the process of firmly establishing its literary value in his own complex poetic prose. Césaire thus writes Cabrera’s story straight into the obscure relationship between collective folklore and individual literary creation, in his own, poetic, terms. Césaire’s framing of Cabrera’s text both usurps it from the fetish of its French framing and from the reduction to national ethnography achieved by its dominant framing by Ortiz. Each of these frames produced a reading that reveals a cultural context and a cultural project within that context in the long history of undoing the discursive erasure of African cultural and literary traditions in the Americas and in Europe. Césaire’s frame—albeit the most marginal of the three—provides the greatest insight into the stories and their conditions of possibility.

NOTES

- 1 My claims about the history of publishing Cabrera's stories are based on an archival study of each of these publications I conducted at the Cuban Heritage Collection of the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida.
- 2 In Derrida's interrogation of the work of a preface in "Outwork" (*Dissemination*), he argues that although a preface cancels itself out in the actual text, it "leaves a mark of erasure, a *remainder* which is added to the subsequent text and which cannot be completely summed up within it (9)." Prefaces, introductions, and those other textual framing works that Genette calls paratexts (titles, illustrations and other elements that surround a publication's main content) cannot, of course, get inside, or become part of the texts they frame, but somehow they often, strangely, manage to attach themselves to those texts, and this essay is an attempt to understand the work that causes this attaching.
- 3 This story is recorded in Hiriart's book on Cabrera, but accounts of it are also recorded in her archive at the Cuban Heritage Collection.
- 4 There are two different (and varying) accounts on file at the Cuban Heritage Collection in addition to the account recorded by Hiriart.
- 5 Paul Morand planned, incidentally, to include a collection of Nazi Stories in this collection as well, according to the unpublished records kept at Gallimard in Paris.
- 6 Cabrera's archive of letters indicates her marginality in this publication process. She learned of the publication preparation from Miomandre as she nursed Teresa de la Parra in Spain. (See correspondence from Miomandre in the Lydia Cabrera Collection, at the Cuban Heritage Collection.)
- 7 See the introduction to Michael Richardson's *Refusal of a Shadow* and A. James Arnold's article "Beyond Postcolonial Césaire" for some dispelling of the myths that hover around Négritude and Aimé Césaire's relationship to it.
- 8 Edwards draws on Scott as follows: "As David Scott has recently noted, an introduction '*frames* a text by *placing* it in relation to its conditions of enunciability, and in relation to the system of discursivity that governs the production and organization of its statements. An introduction shows how a text occupies a certain space of problems, a particular context of questions, a distinctive domain of arguments. In short, it shows what the relations are to that background of knowledge—the archive—that sustains it'" (38). Although Edwards' re-appropriation of Scott's work sustains the archive he examines quite well, the archive of prefaces under study here demand an examination of the way that prefaces along with other paratextual devices *produce*, more than situate, the readability of the texts they frame.
- 9 It was published by *Ediciones Nuevo Mundo* in 1961 and by *Letras Cubanas* in 1996, both times omitting this story and Ortiz's mention of it in his preface.
- 10 Here I have in mind David's Scott's reading of the tragedy embedded in colonial modernity in *Conscripts of Modernity*.
- 11 For a great gendered analysis of Cabrera's stories, see Odette Casamayor

Cisneros' essay, "Aproximación a ciertas representaciones de la mujer en los "Cuentos negros de Cuba."

12 Edwards offers a fantastic analysis of the socio-political significance for the appropriation of the racist term "nègre" by black francophone intellectuals, since the late 1920s, in Paris, but more research would be required to hypothesize adequately what the *Tropiques* group had in mind in their deployment of the word. Furthermore, because Miomandre never uses the word "nègre" in his introduction to the French version of the book but instead uses the term "Noir," and because his letters with Lydia Cabrera display a fervent (although terribly exoticizing) anti-racism, the Gallimard version of using the word does the "work" of commodifying the stories for a French modernist milieu obsessed with so-called primitive art and expression.

13 Notably, Lam's Chinese heritage is ignored in *Tropiques*' mentions of him.

14 See Teall for a description of the hyphen's function in associating words that are not customarily associated together.

15 Edwards's chapter "Variations on a Preface" discusses a precursor of using the hyphen to construct hybrid identities in French, namely the use of "Afro-Américaine" and "Afro-Latine" by Martinican writer Jane Nardal in 1928 (16-20). Césaire's choice to keep "nègre" instead of replacing it with "afro" can also be understood in the context of the magazine's work to re-appropriate that term and rescue it from the place of denigration it had among Martinicans of all racial backgrounds. Fanon's essay "Africans and Antillians" provides an excellent account of the transformative work Aimé Césaire did to change racial consciousness in Martinique through his appropriation and positive deployment of the word "nègre."

16 This is from an unpublished interview I conducted with Castellanos in August, 2010. Castellanos also told me that Cabrera would regularly laugh about Ortiz's preface, saying that he had no idea about the stories and how much she invented in them.

17 The introduction begins with "*Poème au désir; à la peur, à la mort, à la puissance...*" ("Poem to desire, to fear, to death, to power...") and takes the poetic theme up again with, "*Je dis que nous sommes en pleine poésie*" ("I say that we are in the midst of poetry" 11).

18 Even if Assisi's poem is not considered animist from a Catholic standpoint, the context of Césaire's allusion to him suggests reading the personification of the elements of the poem in animist terms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnold, A. James. "Beyond Postcolonial Césaire: Reading *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* Historically." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*. Vol. 44, No. 3, June 2008, pp. 258-275.

Cabrera, Lydia. "Bergantino-Bergantín (un conte-nègre cubain)." *Tropiques* 10 (Feb. 1944). pp. 11-27.

--- *Cuentos negros de Cuba*. La Habana: La Verónica, 1940.

--- *Contes nègres de Cuba*. Trans. Francis de Miomandre. Paris: Gallimard, 1936.

--- "La influencia africana en el pueblo de Cuba." *Ensayo cubano del siglo*

XX. México D.F.: Fondo de Cultural Económica, 2011.

--- "Notas sobre Africa, la Negritud y la actual poesía Yoruba." *Paginas Sueltas*. Ed. Isabel Castellanos. Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1994.

Casamayor Cisneros, Odette. "Aproximación a ciertas representaciones de la mujer en los 'Cuentos negros de Cuba'" La Ventana: Portal Informativa de la Casa de las Américas. May 19, 2005. Available: <http://laventana.casa.cult.cu/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2556>.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Fanon, Frantz. "Africans and West Indians." *Toward the African Revolution*. Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967, c. 1964.

Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane. E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, c. 1987.

Hiriart, Rosario. *Lydia Cabrera: vida hecha arte*. New York: Eliseo Torres & Sons, 1978.

Leiner, Jacqueline. "Entretien avec Aimé Césaire." *Tropiques 1941-1945: Collection Complète*. Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1978 (pp. V-XXIV).

Lydia Cabrera Collection. Cuban Heritage Collection. University of Miami. Coral Gables, Florida.

Maguire, Emily. A. *Racial Experiments in Cuban Literature and Ethnography*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011.

Ménil, René. "Pour une lecture critique de *Tropiques*." *Tropiques 1941-1945: Collection Complète*. Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1978 (pp. XXV-XXXV).

Richardson, Michael. *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*. London: Verso, 1996.

Rodriguez-Mangual, Edna. *Lydia Cabrera and the Construction of an Afro-Cuban*

Cultural Identity. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Scott, David. "Preface: The Archaeology of Black Memory: An Interview with Robert Hill." *Small Axe*, 1999.

---*Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Teall, F. Horace. "Compound Words." *Punctuation: With Chapters on Hyphenization, Capitalization, and Spelling*. New York: D. Appleton and Company. pp. 86-106.

Valdes-Cruz, Rosa. "Los cuentos de Lydia Cabrera: ¿transposiciones o creaciones?" *Homenaje a Lydia Cabrera*. Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1978.