

CABRERA, LYDIA (1899–1991)

A native of Havana, Cuba, the writer, Lydia Cabrera, was born into an educated and socially prominent family. From childhood she was immersed into the magic realism of Afro-Cuban reality through the “nanas” who took care of her and fed her with the folktales, religious stories, legends, and rhymes that filled her imagination. Living in Paris during the twenties, she published *Contes Nègres de Cuba* in French, and in 1939 the original Spanish version appeared in print. Between 1955 and 1958 three other books were published: *Refranes de negros viejos* (1955), *Anagó* (vocabulario Lucumí) (1957), and *La sociedad secreta Abakuá* (1958). The Cuban Revolution drove her into exile and much of her work has been published in Europe and the U.S. Among these are: *Anaforuana: Ritos y símbolos de iniciación en la sociedad secreta Abakuá* (1975), *Ayapá: Cuentos de jicotea* (1971), *Yemayá y Ochún* (1974), *Reglas de Congo: Palo Monte Mayombe* (1979), *Cuentos para niños, adultos y retrasados mentales* (1983), *Vocabulario Congo* (1984) *La lengua sagrada de los ñañigos* (1988). Lydia Cabrera’s works continued to be published until her death at ninety-two years of age.