“Négritude’s Legos: Transposition, Iteration and the Migrant Text”

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The early career of Aimé Césaire marks a moment in the history of transatlantic letters when existing publishing networks open up to new racial dynamics, particularly within the American Hemisphere. Aimé Césaire was a crucial figure in opening up these networks to what eventually will become the Négritude movement. These francophone publishing networks could be characterized by the presence of non-overlapping reading publics which had access to only a partial view of Césaire’s work. Césaire used this situation to good effect. Using an eclectic range of methodologies, including but not limited to literary and book history, textual scholarship and digital humanities, I explore these networks by exploring the genesis of Césaire’s first collection of poems, Les Armes miraculeuses through all its geotemporal contingencies. I use my analysis to make the argument that Césaire’s relationship to universalism and Négritude itself was context-dependent. This talk will also serve as an opportunity to offer some remarks on the usefulness of digital humanities and textual scholarship to american and transatlantic studies.