RICE UNIVERSITY

Eleguá's Surrealist Shroud: Surrealism and Afro-Cubanism in the Negrísta works of Alejo Carpentier and Wifredo Lam

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Master of Arts

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May, 2003
ABSTRACT

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The Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) and painter Wifredo Lam (1902-1982) draw upon Surrealism in their representations of an Afro-Cuban religiosity in their early Negrísta works. Through a comparison of Carpentier's ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! (1933) and "Historia de lunas" (1933) with a selection of Lam's works of the 1940's - "The Jungle" (1942), "The Eternal Presence" (1945), "The Wedding" (1947), and "The Visitor" (1950) - this analysis uncovers how both writer and artist use collage and a surrealist mood in representing certain aspects of Afro-Cuban religiosity, specifically Abacuá ceremonial incantations, Itutu, and trance or possession. This thesis also attempts to unmask the limitations of these techniques as a representational paradigm in limning the Afro-Cuban.
Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this project without the help of many friends and family who were especially supportive during this past year: Leonard, Billye, and Evin Robbins, Maren Jiménez, Rubén Builes, Stephanie Rosenblatt, Damon Hay, David Wolfe, Enrique Zaya, Yahima Gallinart Martín, and María Pedroso Pustovoitova.

I also want to thank Beatriz González-Stephan for her unflagging support and encouragement, for more books than I could ever read, for piles of letters of recommendation, and for more things that I could possibly fit in here.

The efforts of Maarten van Delden and James D. Faubion were indispensable in the completion of this thesis. Both of their careful readings and personal attention to my questions throughout its completion were generous.

I would also like to thank the Department of Hispanic Studies for their support in funding my participation in two conferences and by, most importantly, creating a fertile and supportive intellectual environment in which to grow.
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Introduction

As a representational mode, Surrealism - whether as a fresh, combative aesthetic in the 1920-30's or as an established language in the 1940-50's - is frequently called upon in imagining an Afro-Cuban reality. As such, it was adopted and employed to read, interpret, and render Afro-Cubanism by the Cubans Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980) and Wifredo Lam (1902-1982) in their Negrísta works of the 1930's and 1940's. Both writer and artist share their long-standing associations with the continental Surrealist movements: Carpentier with Paul Eluard and Georges Bataille, and Lam with André Breton. Additionally, both had very tenuous relationships with the island, spending most of their lives on the Continent to either explore the burgeoning European avant-gardes or evade the political persecution of the Gerardo Machado (1925-1933) and Fulgencio Batista (1933-1959) regimes on the island. Like Nicolás Guillén, Carpentier and Lam sought to forge a Cuban identity of Negritud or Blackness, bringing to their works an ethnographic optic which would attempt simultaneously to represent and interpret Afro-Cuban culture within an international discourse governed by an Occidental epistemology. To this end, Carpentier and Lam adopt
strategies - both rhetorical and representational - that facilitate the incorporation of a non-Western, Afro-Cuban reality into a Western discourse and to make a relatively “foreign” religiosity comprehensible to an Occidental audience.

Carpentier’s first works came forth in the midst of the first stage of the Cuban avant-garde - a period characterized by the overbearing and despotic dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. As a member of the loosely organized assemblage of journalists and writers known as the Grupo Minorista, Carpentier found himself as much politically as aesthetically involved in affecting social change on the island. This initial conflagration of activism sought to quickly appropriate European techniques in the forging of an identity of Negritud. Thus, for many members of this group, Futurism and, especially, Surrealism were novel and confrontational representational modes. Comparing Carpentier to his contemporaries reveals a narrative approach that extensively uses vanguardist techniques in the rendering of the Afro-Cuban. _Mersé_ (1924) by Félix Soloni, _El Negrero_ (1933) by Lino Novás Calvo, and _Caniquí_ (1936) by José A. Ramos, like Carpentier’s narratives of the period, present Afro-Cuban protagonists and offer them up as characteristic of Cuban identity. However, different
from Carpentier, these call upon essentially realist and naturalist techniques in the rendering of their Afro-Cuban protagonists; only Carpentier draws significantly upon Surrealism in his formulation of an Afro-Cuban narrative. In this regard, Soloni, Novás Calvo, and Ramos share greater affinities to the regionalist novels of Rómulo Gallegos, José Eustasio Rivera, or Ricardo Güiraldes than with Carpentier’s Negrísta narratives.\(^1\) Carpentier, moreover, turns his focus to the religiosity of the Afro-Cubans, which plays a more insignificant role in the narrative of his contemporaries.

Upon Lam’s return to the island in 1941, the initial avant-garde explosion of the 1920’s and 1930’s had receded, and the vanguard techniques that it had developed had become largely accepted, synthesized, or assimilated into a cohesive aesthetic for many of the island’s intellectuals. Additionally, the nucleus of intellectuals forming the Grupo Minorista had largely disbanded as many younger artists and writers came together, eventually forming the Grupo Orígenes, which engendered the quarterly literary periodical Orígenes (1944-1956). Unlike their predecessors, members of the Grupo Orígenes — among them

\(^1\) For an analysis of the Afro-Cuban protagonist, see Pedro Barreda, The Black Protagonist in the Cuban Novel.
José Lezama Lima (1910-1976) - brought a more mature notion of island identity to their works and, thus, avoided the rough hybrids of European and autochthonous sources that characterized some Cuban works of the 1920's and 1930's. Lam, like Carpentier, differed from his contemporaries in the degree to which he called upon avant-garde techniques in the conception of his works. The most apparent exceptions to this observation would be the vanguard painters Carlos Enríquez [figs. 4, 5] and Marcelo Pogolotti [fig. 6]. Pogolotti's technique bears the mark of his Futurist and Social Realist influences, and Surrealism's effect, if any, is effectively absent from his oeuvre. Like Lam, Enríquez frequently employs a surrealistic mood in his representations, which are generally figurative portraits or landscapes. Yet, Lam truly stands out in comparison for the attention that he gives to Afro-Cuban culture and especially its religiosity, not to mention the fact that he creates an essentially unrealistic and iconic art.²

The similarities in Carpentier and Lam's relationships with the European Surrealists, as well as their use of these techniques in the treatment of Afro-Cuban

² For more thorough comparisons, see Maria Balderrama, Wifredo Lam and his contemporaries 1938-1952.
religiosity, serve as the initial stimulus for the
consideration of their respective uses of surrealist
collage and of a surrealist mood in the rendering of the
Afro-Cuban. In this analysis, I will compare the Negrísta
works of Alejo Carpentier and Wifredo Lam, giving
particular attention to their uses of collage and a
surrealist mood to represent an Afro-Cuban religiosity.
Carpentier’s first novel, ¿Écure-Yamba-ó! (1933), which
means “praise the lord” in the Cuban Yoruba dialect, and
one of his short stories of the period, “Historia de lunas”
(1933), will serve as the foundation of this inquiry into
the narrative technique of the early Carpentier. I will
call upon four of Lam’s paintings from the 1940’s - “The
Wedding” (1947), and “The Visitor” (1950) [figs. 8-11] -
to uncover how Lam employs continental Surrealism to an
Afro-Cuban end. In both cases, I will consider the author
and the artist’s respective roles as ethnographers of the
Afro-Cuban. Carpentier and Lam’s uses of Surrealism - a
movement that transcends the traditional boundaries between
media - facilitate this comparison of the narrated with the
visual. In this regard, this analysis will seek to blur
these divisions as it attempts to isolate the visual
character of the narrated and the narrated character of the visual.
"Profane Illuminations" in the Latin American Vanguard

Limits of Language: intercontinental dialogue and the marvelous real

First appearing in 1948 in the Venezuelan periodical El Nacional, Alejo Carpentier's essay "De lo real maravilloso americano" [On the Marvelous Real in America], inquires into the validity of an "authentic" Latin American aesthetic. Carpentier selects as his point of departure the seminal Spanish work Don Quijote and asks if Cervantes' innovative parody of the chivalric novel could properly belong to a Latin American tradition. Carpentier, very much the continentalist among his peers, avoids explicitly staking a claim to, or making a sweeping rejection of, the milestones of the Spanish tradition. Instead, as does that of many of his predecessors, his strategy in defining the Latin American, finds its foothold in the landscape of the New World - one in which, for Carpentier, the chimerical and fantastic of the European imaginary form a palpable reality. Thus, he offers forth Bernal Díaz del Castillo's Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España [The True History of the Conquest of Mexico] (1568)

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as "el único libro de caballería real y fidedigno que se haya escrito" (93; "the only honest-to-goodness book of chivalry that has ever been written" 83). He notes that for the conquistadors, the fantastic beings described in many of the histories of antiquity or the chivalric novels of the early Renaissance were "authentic" in the New World, for like that of Columbus and many of the other early European visitors, Díaz del Castillo’s history describes encounters prefigured in the European tradition. As a result, the Castilian chronicler finds: "dragones en sus ríos," "un mundo de monarcas coronados de plumas de aves verdes, y de vegetaciones que se remontaban a los orígenes de la tierra" (93-4; "dragons [...] in rivers," "a world of monarchs crowned with the plumes of green birds, vegetation dating back to the origins of the earth" 83). Carpentier points out that the unique Latin American landscape and the events that occur there take on "un estilo propio en cuanto a la trayectoria de un mismo acontecer" (93-4; "[their] own style, their own unique trajectories" 83). Hence, the representative mode of the marvelous real.

Whereas many critics give primacy to Carpentier’s superficial rejection of the European Surrealists’

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4 See Todorov’s La conquête de l’Amérique: la question de l’autre for an in-depth consideration of how a Eurocentric imaginary affected the first visitors’ interpretations of the Americas.
bankrupt, "monótono baratillo de relojes amelcochados" ("monotonous junkyard of sugar-coated watches" 85) in his attempt to distance the American marvelous real from Europe, his orchestration of a Latin American subject calls upon distinctly European paradigms in its conception (Carpentier 96). This comes across first in his employing a characteristically European genre in characterizing Díaz del Castillo's chronicles as a Chivalric Novel. Yet more significantly, Carpentier's choice of texts is key: Historia verdadera narrates some of the first encounters between Europeans and Americans, and exhibits the same problematic representation of an Other that characterizes a number of colonialist works. Furthermore, its pretense of "factually" chronicling these encounters, together with other elements of the text, suggest a type of crude, avant la lettre ethnographic description of the New World in which an Other is considered from a European viewpoint. It is significant, therefore, that Carpentier should call upon this text in an attempt to illustrate what he intends to frame as a seemingly autochthonous aesthetic sprouting forth from the Latin American landscape. In fact, his recipe for it relies upon an interaction between the two poles at play here - an interaction in which the Latin American landscape is read, interpreted, and translated
into a European epistemological and aesthetic framework. It is the visitor who sees it as fantastic.

This is certainly not a debilitating contradiction in Carpentier’s formulation; rather, it is an indicator of his seeing Latin American identity as resulting from a dialogue between the two continents - a dialogue in which the same power relationships governing colonialism also govern the organization and structure of Latin America’s cultural productions. Hence, the interaction between Self and Other at work in Historia verdadera de la conquista de Nueva España model similar interactions in subsequent Latin American texts, even when the author is Latin American. It seems that the colonizing language carried with it a particular optic, cosmogony, and hierarchy that would partially displace or encircle the endemic practices of the colonized. As a result, preference was given to the written word, and beyond that, to particular genres, plot structures, and certain stock, imaginary figures. This linguistic axis of colonization has been addressed throughout post-colonialist theory beginning with Aimé Césaire and, more recently, Jacques Derrida, who remarks: “‘Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine’” (2). Post-colonialism acknowledges the limiting nature of language, by which a speaker’s ability to articulate is
restricted to those latent forms already present within the
web of the colonizing language. As a result, the Other who
speaks within these discourses fails to find the necessary
language to communicate an Other experience.

_The Social Dimension of the Avant-Gardes_

With the brusque social changes that took place in
Latin America at the turn of the century, the
correspondingly rapid transfiguration of the role of art
and of the artist in society would mark the beginning of a
process of narrative transculturation that eventually
culminated in the sally of Latin American "Boom" writers of
the 1950's and 60's: Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas
Llosa, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, and José María Argüedas,
among many others.⁵ The first Avant-Gardes (1910's-1930's)⁶
comprise a watershed moment in which Latin American writers

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⁵ In _Transculturación narrativa en América Latina_, Ángel Rama follows
the trajectory of Latin American narrative from the first regionalist
novels (Doña Bárbara, La Vorágine, and Don Segundo Sombra, among
several others) until the Boom, describing a process of
transculturation that occurred in two principal stages, the first of
which took place in the 1920's and 1930's. Greater attention will be
given to the importance of this process further on when we consider the
relationship between the regionalist and the vanguardist tendencies
within the Avant-Gardes.

⁶ There are many conflicting, yet valid, perspectives on the
periodization of the Avant-Gardes in Latin America. Jorge Schwartz,
Nelson Osorio, Hugo Verani, Juan Marinello, Oscar Collazos, Celina
Manzioni, and Miklós Szabolcsi all dedicate significant effort in the
consideration of the movements' limits. Nonetheless, Schwartz and
Manzioni give the most thorough review of this question. Please see the
bibliography for their respective works.
begin to experiment with language - drawing upon not only the traditions and popular voices of their respective regions, but also the many splintered European movements. What resulted were unique and selective appropriations and re-interpretations of the continental vanguard currents, which in turn contributed to the formulation of American movements that frequently sought to address entirely different issues in their respective countries. However, the limits of Europe's influence over the Latin American movements should be carefully delineated, for it would be inaccurate to interpret the European movements as the progenitors of new and challenging aesthetic concerns in the New World.⁷ In fact, there was much Latin American avant-garde activity that did not have a European counterpart (Osorio 244).

If, then, the Latin American vanguards are to be understood as phenomena in and of themselves, which selectively drew from the European movements, how does one account for the simultaneity of their occurrences, or their international scope? As Nelson Osorio suggests, "las manifestaciones del vanguardismo hispanoamericano

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⁷ Nelson Osorio cites the example of Enrique Anderson Imbert, who, in his *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*, remarks that the various Latin American vanguards are more like "sucursales de la gran planta industrial con sede en Europa" (Anderson Imbert 16; branches of the large industrial plant based in Europe).
encuentran sus raíces ideológicas en un proceso propio de cuestionamiento crítico que se vincula al ascenso de nuevos sectores sociales en América Latina” (244; the manifestations of Latin American vanguardism find their ideological roots in an original process of critical questioning that is linked to the ascent of new social sectors in Latin America). Thus, the aesthetic experimentation of the vanguard currents grew from social restructuring that was part and parcel of the conflagration of political upheaval that swept across the continents during the first third of the twentieth century. In "Calibán," Roberto Fernández Retamar mentions a few of the important events from this era: “en 1910, Revolución Mexicana; en los años veinte y treinta de este siglo, marcha de Prestes al interior del Brasil (1925-7), resistencia en Nicaragua de Sandino, y afianzamiento en el continente de la clase obrera como fuerza de vanguardia; en 1938, nacionalización del petróleo mexicano por Cárdenas...” (Fernández Retamar 78; in 1910, Mexican Revolution; in the twenties and thirties of this century, the march of the Prestes to the interior of Brazil (1925-7), Sandino’s resistance in Nicaragua, the consolidation of the working class in the continent as a vanguard force; in 1938, the nationalization of Mexican oil by Cárdenas...).
Nelson Osorio elaborates on three areas of these changes: the increasing awareness of the interdependency of nations and the burgeoning international order brought to light through the first World War, the internal structural changes in the economies of most Latin American countries, and – to use José Carlos Mariátegui’s words – the proletarianization of the middle classes. In spite of World War I’s directly involving only Europe and the United States, the global crisis it created indirectly affected Latin American nations with or without close ties to Europe and renegotiated many of their international relationships (Osorio 228). As a result, Latin American countries began to see themselves as playing significant political roles in an international order that they could affect and by which they could be affected. Yet internally, at the turn of the century many Latin American nations began to undergo an economic restructuring that saw the dissolution of the large agrarian sectors of society, which were primarily controlled by a miniscule land-owning class – or latifundistas. This group orchestrated and exercised an oligarchic control over the political activity in their respective spheres of interest. However, with the increased mechanization of the Latin American economy, many agrarian workers abandoned the rural areas in search of
greater opportunities in the cities - a process which engendered a more politically active working class that sought to realize generally anti-oligarchic policies (Osorio 229). Due to the respective Latin American economies' dependence on the export of products and manufactured goods for the maintenance of their prosperity, the working classes were elevated to a previously unseen level of political importance and began to wield a greater degree of control over government (Skidmore and Smith 48). The resulting class conflicts would call into question the bourgeoisie's role in the political arena. Skidmore and Smith write:

The years between 1914 and 1927 saw a surge of labor mobilization. It was the high point of the anarchist, anarcho-syndicalist, and syndicalist influence, when the capital cities of every major Latin American nation were rocked by general strikes. Latin America suddenly seemed to be joining in the class confrontations shaking Germany and Russia, as well as the United States and much of the rest of Europe. It is at these critical moments - mass protests, general strikes, intensified ties between unionized and the non-unionized - that we can see clearly the nature of the working class, its organizations, and the manner in which the dominant elites chose to respond (48).

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8 Skidmore and Smith describe the growing middle/working class: "Occupationally, these consisted of professionals, merchants, shopkeepers, and small businessmen who profited from the export-import economy but who did not occupy upper-strata positions of ownership or leadership. Most often in cities, middle-sector spokesmen were relatively well educated and were seeking a clearly recognized place in their society" (47).
A key element of the changes in the size and composition of the Latin American middle class is the rise in post-secondary education shortly after the turn of the century. Universities provided the breeding ground for the generation of new political - and aesthetic - ideas. Osorio describes the resulting university reforms:

El movimiento de la Reforma Universitaria en América Latina no se planteaba una simple modernización de los programas y métodos de la docencia; fue un movimiento de carácter integral que buscaba imponer una nueva concepción de la cultura y la enseñanza en función de los intereses populares, las necesidades nacionales y la transformación social. Fue básicamente antioligárquico y antiimperialista, y a través de él se encauzó lo más radical y avanzado del movimiento popular que se veía mediatizando por la burguesía una vez que ésta asumía posiciones de gobierno (238).

[The Latin American University Reform movement did not propose only a simple modernization of teaching methods and programs; it was an integral movement that sought to put into place a new conception of culture and of education in the service of popular interests, national needs, and social transformation. The movement was essentially antioligarchic and anti-imperialist, and through it was channeled the most radical and advanced of the popular movement, which saw itself as hindered by the bourgeoisie who had assumed positions in the government.]

Thus, through these reforms key facets of the social restructuring of Latin America would emerge, one of which would take the form of the reevaluation of the aesthetic concerns that had defined previous artistic movements and a re-negotiation of the relationship between these concerns and the political dimension of Latin American identity.
Of Swans and Princesses, Airplanes and Skyscrapers: Latin American Modernismo and Vanguardism

Aesthetically, the Latin American vanguards embody a reaction to Modernismo à la Rubén Darío and to its plastic equivalent, which is best exhibited by the works of the Cuban painters Víctor Patricio de Landaluze (1828-1889), Guillermo Collazo (1850-1896), and José Joaquín Tejada (1867-1943) [Figs. 1-3]. Additionally, the vanguards seek to change the work of art’s status from that of an object removed from the reality of every-day life. Thus, in these works, there is a wholesale rejection of the “empty” aesthetic of swans, princesses, nightingales, and lute-bearing cherubs inspired by the French Symbolists and Late Romantics as the focus of vanguard works shift toward their contemporary social reality, however obfuscated it may have been rendered within these works. Modernismo is

\[9\] Some critics feel that Landaluze has a more tenuous relationship with Cuban art. He was Basque, yet spent most of his life in Cuba and — unlike many of his native Cuban contemporaries — dedicated the majority of his work to creating Costumbrista representations of Cuban folk and their traditions. Regardless of his foreign birth, his oeuvre has exercised a great deal of influence of subsequent Cuban painters.

\[10\] History is never as neatly partitioned as critics would like it to be. In reality, Modernismo contained within it the aesthetic fodder necessary to formulate Avant-Garde works, and as a result, many key precursors to the Vanguards’ militant, strident tenor came forth from the Modernismo school. Osorio cites the example of Enrique González Martínez’ “Tuércele el cuello al cisne de engañoso plumaje...” as evidencing the Avant-Garde’s roots in what is commonly regarded as a work of Modernismo (Osorio 233; twist off the swan’s neck in all its deceptive plumage...)
characterized visually by clarity of figuration, and verbally by florid and affected language and generally coherent descriptions. These works also call upon principally classical themes - the myths, histories, and dramas of antiquity - and set out to realistically render a conspicuously imaginary world. In reacting to this representational norm, the vanguardist work would move between two extremes: some would employ a similar nineteenth-century, modernista style, but fix their gaze on the Latin American landscape or regional traditions; and the others, who were influenced more by their European contemporaries, would depict predominantly fragmented images in an absurd or incongruent manner that accentuates the form or structure of the work over the content.  

With reference to the latter of the two extremes, Miklós Szabolsci notes that in the vanguardist work, the signifier exceeds the signified, time and space merge inextricably, and "sentiments" and "emotions" are neglected in favor of "passion," "laughter," "chance," and the "grotesque" ("La 'vanguardia' literaria y artística..."; 6-7). This description, of course, only generally glosses the characteristics of the vanguard work and consciously

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11 In his essay "La deshumanización del arte," José Ortega y Gasset describes the "new" art as a dehumanized art - one which is "characterized by a tendency to eliminate all that is human and to preserve only the purely artistic elements..." (43)
overlooks the numerous variations that occur even within the same tightly knit movement. As much as the avant-gardes reacted to Modernismo and its visual equivalents, they also inherited significantly from these schools in a key way. The exotic rendering of an Other, the "orientalism," or the fetishization of certain objects that characterizes both European and American fin-de-siècle works is still present in both extremes of the avant-gardes.¹² When I later consider both Carpentier and Lam’s renderings of Afro-Cuban religiosity in their respective works, I will examine their relationships to the idyllic and speciously naturalist costumbrista works which preceded them.

*A Bi-polar Vanguard*

Concerning the avant-gardes’ treatments of an Other, it becomes important here to consider Nelson Osorio’s descriptions of post-WWI Latin American cultural productions, or the period to which I have been referring as the avant-garde. He writes:

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¹² José A. González Alcantud elaborates on the influence of Costumbrismo in the Latin American Avant-Gardes in *El exotismo en las vanguardias artístico-literarias* pp.299-338. However, the organization of the text and its treatment of the Latin American Vanguards fails to interpret the movements on their own terms and, therefore, does not address Latin American activity that is not directly related to a European movement.
Un examen del conjunto de la producción literaria de la primera etapa post-modernista, la que va aproximadamente de 1918 a 1930, nos muestra que paralelamente a las tendencias que se han llamado nativistas, regionalistas, crilloistas o mundonovistas, aparecen y desarrollan las variadas manifestaciones polémicas y experimentales de lo que se conoce como Vanguardismo artístico. [...] el panorama del conjunto pueden ser consideradas como los polos extremos entre los cuales se despliega el amplio abanico de la renovación artística (240).

[An examination of the literary production of the first post-Modernismo period, that which extends approximately from 1918 to 1930, shows us that the tendencies known as nativist, regionalist, crilloista, or mundonovista appear and develop the various controversial and experimental manifestations of artistic vanguardism. [...] the panorama of this body of work can be considered as being limited by [these] poles between which a wide range of artistic renovations unfolds.]

Hence, the avant-garde in Latin America differed significantly from the European movements in that its productions vacillated between the two extremes of creating anti-oligarchic, experimental works (as in Europe) and that of formalizing its regional identities, evident in the profusion of nativist, regionalist, crilloista, and mundonovista themes. Whereas the European avant-gardes turned towards the "primitive" of Africa or the "exotic" of Asia, the Latin American movements drew upon their own regional practices. This first pole of the Latin American avant-gardes is what Jorge Schwartz has described as "vanguardia enraizada" or a rooted avant-garde: "un
proyecto estético que encuentra en su propio hábitat los materiales, los temas, algunas formas y, principalmente, el ethos que informa el trabajo de la invención" (20-1; an aesthetic project that finds in its own habitat the materials, themes, certain forms and, principally, the ethos that infuses its development). Hence, the framework of the vanguardist paradigm as conceived in Europe included within it a particular way of viewing an Other that when renegotiated on Latin American terms coincided with tendencies already present in Modernismo and became a tool for the assimilation, reinterpretation, and establishment of regional or national identity. The other pole of the Latin American tradition roots itself in the many European -isms that coalesced across the Atlantic. Many of these aesthetic innovations were adopted and adapted by Latin American artists who were influenced by Futurism, Cubism, Dada, and Surrealism, and as a result, took advantage of these representational strategies or "languages" in an attempt to render non-Western realities.

"La vanguardia enraizada": Regionalism and the Avant-Gardes

The early regionalist novels (La Vorágine (1923), Don Segundo Sombra (1926), or Doña Bárbara (1929)) to which
Angel Rama refers in his description of transcultured narrative in Latin America adhere to the nativist or criollista pole or dimension of the avant-garde: a mode in which the formal experimentations of the European vanguards were all but completely ignored in favor of a more conventional representational paradigm whose principal goal was to accurately, realistically, or naturally render the Other. For Rama, on a national level the process of narrative transculturation results from the "violent" clash between modernizing currents issuing forth from the capital and attempting to supplant regional perspectives and practices, thus provoking an art of resistance that serves to infuse the national identity with regionalist elements.

Rama writes:

Dentro de la estructura general de la sociedad latino-america, el regionalismo acentuaba las particularidades culturales que se habían forjado en áreas internas, contribuyendo a definir su perfil diferente y a la vez a reinsertarlo en el seno de la cultura nacional que cada vez más respondía a normas urbanas. (26)

[Within the general structure of Latin American society, regionalism accentuated the cultural particularities that had been forged in inner-lying areas, contributing to the definition of a distinct profile, which was simultaneously reinserted into the heart of a national culture that was increasingly receptive to urban tastes.]

Inevitably the narrative (this could be generalized to other representational modes or strategies whether verbal,
visual, or auditory) that results reveals a hybridization of "modern" and popular forms and perspectives, one that gives rise to what Rama deems a "makeshift solution" and describes as consisting in:

Echar mano de las aportaciones de la modernidad, revisar a la luz de ellas los contenidos culturales regionales y con unas y otras fuentes componer un híbrido que sea capaz de seguir transmitiendo la herencia recibida. Será una herencia renovada, pero que todavía puede identificarse con su pasado. (29)

[Making use of the contributions of modernity, revising the content of regional cultures in light of them, and, with some or other sources, composing a hybrid that can continue transmitting the heritage that is handed down. It will be a renovated heritage, but one that still identifies with its past.]

The results of the process of narrative transculturation described by Rama are manifest in three principal areas: language, structure, and cosmogony. In each of these dimensions, narrative can exhibit varying degrees of assimilation or hybridization of the merging cultures. The extent to which a narrative has fused with the autochthonous practices of its region is evidenced through the role of the Other within the conception of the narration. Rama cites the earlier regional novels as examples of less transcultured narratives. In these, the regional speech is carefully enclosed within quotations and the principal narrative voice assumes the speech of the
educated, well-mannered man of the capital explaining the simple folk of the provinces to the reader. Accordingly, many of the regional expressions will be defined in a glossary at the end of the text. In the more transcultured text, however, the narrative voice (if there is one) will identify with the regional characters instead of the reader, will adopt a popular register in recounting the events, and will not attempt to bridge the gap between the reader and the region that is being represented. Rama writes:

La que antes era la lengua de los personajes populares y, dentro del mismo texto, se oponía a la lengua del escritor o del narrador, invierte su posición jerárquica: en vez de ser la excepción y de singularizar al personaje sometido al escudriñamiento del escritor, pasa a ser la voz que narra, abarca así la totalidad del texto y ocupa el puesto del narrador manifestando su visión del mundo. Pero no remeda simplemente un dialecto, sino que utiliza formas sintácticas o lexicales que le pertenecen dentro de una lengua coloquial esmerada, característica del español americano de alguna de las áreas lingüísticas del continente. (42)

[What was before the language of popular characters and, within the same text, was opposed to the language of the writer or the narrator, inverts its hierarchical position: instead of being the exception, and of singularizing the character by submitting it to the scrutiny of the writer, it becomes the narrating voice, it spans the entirety of the text and plays the part of the narrator showing its vision of the world. But it does not just mimic a dialect; rather, it utilizes syntactical or lexical forms that belong to a specific colloquial language, characteristic of the American Spanish of one of the linguistic areas of the continent.]
The structure or organization of the lesser transcultured text generally follows that of the 19th Century French or Spanish Naturalist or Realist novel. In contrast, those texts which allow that regional practices influence their structures will take on more fragmented, cyclical, or otherwise non-linear organizations, thus evoking their affinities with an oral tradition of myths. Finally, with regards to cosmogony, the less transcultured of these texts adopts a principally Occidental ontology to rationalize any non-Western practice or belief that it sets out to represent. As a result, the supernatural will be justified — and this is especially relevant to our discussion of ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! — as the result of "chance" or even natural forces beyond the view of the characters over which these forces may be operating. In the more transcultured of these narratives, fantastic events are left to take on their own meaning and operate freely within the text without reference to an Occidental rationalization.

Hence, in general the process of transculturation — whether it be literary, musical, or plastic — is part of a general path of nation-building in which forging a unique or autochthonous voice roughly equates to an attempt to decolonize the Latin American imagination and the languages
used to represent it. The earliest of these texts mark the first pivotal, yet somewhat unsuccessful, attempts to define a Latin American subject. These texts' reliance, however, on a predominantly Occidental ontology in characterizing an Other limits their ability to break free from a European hegemony. By the 1960's, Latin American cultural productions generally represent, in varying degrees, this process carried to its extreme, and as such, manage to define themselves without relying as heavily upon reference to Europe or the United States.

It is easy to place Carpentier's early literary production in the trajectory of transculturation described by Rama. The similarities between *El Guanche* and the more conventional regional novels abound and will be explored when we turn our focus to his literary production. Placing Lam within this trajectory - although Rama refers specifically to narrative - is equally simple supposing that one account for Lam's incidence after the initial Negrísta boom in the 1930's. Rama describes the role of the avant-gardes in the narrative evolution that he identifies, and draws attention to the influence that early ethnography brings to bear in this process (40-56). He also cites the importance of the avant-gardes' experimentations with language and structure as providing
if not the impetus, then the models for the technical deviations that propelled the process of narrative transculturation. Both Lam and Carpentier - in addition to many Latin American vanguard artists - took advantage of the languages of the avant-garde in their grappling with national identity. As a result, the modernist primitivism that grew from the ethnographic optic of the European movements would take on a new meaning in the New World. Furthermore, in the case of Afro-Antillean art - whether from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Martinique or Haiti - the techniques of European modernist primitivism aid in fashioning an identity of blackness or negritud. In the treatment, therefore, of Negritud one sees the intersection of the two poles of the avant-garde described by Osorio, or the merging of the "European" (anti-bourgeois and self-referential technical experimentation) with the "American" (nativist, criollista, regionalist, mundonovista) in such a way that, in the 1930's, the interaction between these two poles would be a signature mark of Latin American cultural productions.

**Isms and Schisms: the political aesthetics of the Avant-Gardes**

Following Osorio’s conception of the period, the other pole of the Latin American avant-gardes more closely
follows the trajectory of the typically revolutionary European movements. Thus, aside from the formal qualities already described, the avant-garde work is also distinct in that it (at least initially, and even then, only partially) embodies the anti-oligarchic or anti-bourgeois social conflicts that were in the air in the 1920’s. It accomplishes this by making a privileged vantage point out of its alleged social autonomy, to which Peter Bürger alludes when he states: “It [art] is conceived as a social realm that is set apart from the means-end rationality of daily bourgeois existence” (10). He continues by remarking, “for this reason, it can criticize such an existence” (10). For Bürger, a part of avant-garde art’s attack on “daily bourgeois existence” is the critique of the “institution” of art, of which he remarks:

The concept ‘art as an institution’ as used here refers to the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works. The avant-garde turns against both—the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy (22).

As we shall see later, both Carpentier and Lam’s works challenge the “status of art in bourgeois society” through their heterodox treatments of social and especially religious taboos, which stem from their interests in
negritud. By going against the grain of traditional modes of representation in Cuba, these works superficially challenge the bourgeois stance on the role of this religion by giving it primacy in a discourse where it is traditionally viewed as superstition and witchcraft. Furthermore, the fact that these works focus on Afro-Cuban culture within a discourse about Cuban national and cultural identity determines their status as texts that purport to transform traditional notions about this identity by darkening it and underscoring its African element. This brings us to another important feature of Bürger’s general model: avant-garde art seeks to create works that serve a practical purpose. Of this, he writes:

When the avant-gardistes demand that art become practical once again, they do not mean that the contents of the works of art should be socially significant. The demand is not raised at the level of the contents of individual works. Rather, it directs itself to the way art functions in society, a process that does as much to determine the effect that works have as does the particular content (49).

As in the general model described by Bürger, Carpentier and Lam’s works present content that attempts to be “socially significant” and do so in a way that presupposes that their works could be didactic. Their treatments of Afro-Cubanism, furthermore, constitute a subtle assault on the
tastes of the more conservative constituents of the Cuban bourgeoisie.

_Negritud and the dark side of a Cuban "coctel"

In Cuba, the regional practices or traditions in which the vanguards take root, as already mentioned, are African in origin. The more than 600,000 West African slaves brought to the island in the late nineteenth century would come to comprise approximately 40 percent of the population by the early twentieth century, with the remaining 30 percent white and 30 percent mixed (either biracial or _mulato_, Chinese, or indigenous) (Skidmore 263). Hence, the largest racial category was a diverse conglomeration of West African groups, of which Yoruba, Bakongo, Ibibio, and Egbo were the most prominent. The mix of cultures that these groups brought to the island experienced a long tradition of oppression, stigmatization, silencing, eroticization, fetishization, and anthropological and sociological scrutiny, all beginning decades before the onset of the Cuban avant-gardes.

In the nineteenth century, scores of novels, short stories, and _costumbrista_ essays or sketches were written (many of them published outside of Cuba) in which slave personages serve to arouse sexual desire, to provoke pity
in a campaign to abolish slavery in the colonies, to justify their enslavement by underscoring their "need" for being properly "civilized," or as an object of ridicule and humor.¹³ As a result, when Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz first commenced his studies of the Afro-Cuban, he brought to them a problematic baggage of conflicting representational strategies that would not be resolved until his later works. Paradoxically, Ortiz first began to consider the African constituent of Cuban culture while a law student in Madrid where he saw Afro-Cuban displays in El Museo de Ultramar and read Los Criminales en Cuba by José Trujillo y Monagas (Ortiz cit. in Duno 190). The African element of the Havana underworld drove his first investigative efforts, which were initially to be entitled "La mala vida en La Habana" (Ortiz cit. in Duno 191).¹⁴ Nonetheless, Ortiz’s perspective would progress beyond his initial encounters with an intransigently positivist, late


¹⁴ In Alejo Carpentier: the pilgrim at home, González Echevarría writes: "In his early writings he is predominantly a criminologist, as the full title of his book (1906) indicates: Hampa afro-cubana: los negros brujos (apuntes para un estudio de etnología criminal) [Afro-Cuban Underworld: Black Sorcerers (Notes for a Study of Criminal Ethnology)]. [...] the book is a detailed study of witchcraft among Cuban blacks, undertaken with the avowed intention of understanding the phenomenon better in order to eliminate it quicker. Ortiz's interest is in the criminal side of witchcraft - the ritualistic killings, the necrophilia, the bizarre sexual practices - and its moral impact on society at large (since many whites were being converted)” 46-7).
nineteenth-century sociology, and would make him one of the
most vocal enthusiasts and prolific specialists on Afro-
Cuban culture, establishing the Institución Hispanocubana
de Cultura and the Sociedad de Estudios Afrocubanos. A
significant milestone of his work was a shift of emphasis
from the racial to the cultural dimension of identity
(Schwartz 626). His many studies on especially the
religious practices of Afro-Cubans would mark a turning
point in the their representation in Cuban texts. Luis
Duno writes of Ortiz:

Su importancia transcende los numerosos estudios
antropológicos que realiza sobre la presencia africana
en la cultura de la isla, y se extiende a la creación
un lenguaje para nombrar lo cubano mediante conceptos
antropológicos como "la transculturación", o imágenes
culinarias como "el ajiaco". Funda así un pensamiento
y un imaginario que nutren la discusión de lo cubano
hasta el presente, extendiéndose a los campos más
diversos del saber: la antropología, la literatura,
la crítica cultural, y el folclor cubano llevan de
algún modo un sello "ortiziano" (183).

[His importance transcends the numerous
anthropological studies dealing with the African
presence in island culture, and extends to the
creation of a language for the designation of
Cubanicity by way of anthropological concepts like
"transculturation," or culinary images like el ajiaco.
He founds, thus, a thought and an imaginary that feeds
discussions of Cuban identity until the present,
extending over into the most diverse fields of
knowledge: anthropology, literature, cultural
criticism, and Cuban folklore all in some way carry an
"ortizian" mark.]
As a result, the first Cuban Negrista poets — who in the late 1920's, began to incorporate Afro-Cuban rhythms, speech, and concerns into their works — found that Ortiz's efforts had already set the stage among the more progressive Cuban intellectuals for the coalescence of their school.\(^{15}\)

*Negritud* would become one of the defining characteristics of the avant-garde period in Cuba. The luminary poet of this movement was Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989), who in 1930 first published his *Motivos de Son*. The work received a very mixed reception. Among its strongest supporters were Ortiz and Juan Marinello — one of the founders of the vanguard *Grupo Minorista* and the *revista de avance* (1927-30) — who were intrigued by the work's use of son rhythms, popular speech, and Lucumí liturgical incantations (Kutzinski 1996; 171). On the other hand, many members of the "mulatto bourgeoisie [...]" were skeptical, even offended, voicing strong reservations about the propriety of Guillén's poetic use of the vernacular of Havana's poor blacks in conjunction with the dance form of

\(^{15}\) The first Negrista poems were actually by Puerto Rican poets and date from 1925-6. For a general gloss of the genre's lineage see: Kutzinski, Vera M. "Afro-Hispanic American literature." *Cambridge History of Latin American Literature* vol. II. ed. Roberto González Echevarría. Cambridge: UP, 1996.
the son" (Kutzinski 1996; 171). Guillén notes in the prologue to his 1931 edition:

> No ignoro, desde luego, que estos versos les repugnan a muchas personas porque ellos tratan asuntos de los negros y del pueblo. No me importa. O mejor dicho: me alegra (10).

[I do not overlook that these verses are found to be repugnant by many people because they address black and popular issues. I don’t care. Better yet: it makes me happy.]

This divergence in the reception of Guillén’s work suggests the social divisions present in 1920-30’s Cuba and reveals the patently political character of Negritud. Black culture was being introduced into the public space in a way that violated the representational norms especially of the nineteenth century. For the first time, Afro-Cubans and their culture were being presented as if they were legitimate. They were being praised and celebrated in nationalist lyrical poetry, an act that served to darken the image of Cuba’s national identity. Guillén writes:

> El negro – a mi juicio – aporta esencias muy firmes a nuestro co[c]tel. Y las dos razas que en la Isla salen a flor de agua, distantes en lo que se ve, se tienden un garfio submarino, como esos puentes hondos que unen en secreto dos continentes. Por lo pronto, el espíritu de Cuba es mestizo (10).

[The black man – in my opinion – contributes very necessary ingredients to our cocktail. And the two races, while appearing to be far apart, are joined in the depths of the ocean by an underwater cable, like those deep bridges that secretly unite two continents. And like this, the spirit of Cuba is mestizo.]
Written in 1927 and published in 1933, Carpentier’s ¡Écure-Yamba-Ô! grew from the same context as did Guillén’s work, and thus, one can imagine it receiving a similar reception were it to have been published in Cuba. Carpentier’s work is one of the few Cuban Negrista narratives of the period and, like Motivos de Son, it works to transform the Cuban imagination by offering forth an Afro-Cuban protagonist in a discourse about cultural identity. By the 1940’s, however, the idealized mulatto “cocktail” of Guillén or ajiaco of Ortiz would begin to spoil as intellectuals assumed a more critical stance towards the role of bi-racial Cubans in the formulation of a national identity, which is evidenced in Lam’s work of this period.

*Surrealism’s Profane Illuminations*

The political nature of vanguardist work is underscored by the wide use of manifestoes to profess the aesthetic and explicitly political goals of these groups. The very nature of the manifesto itself is a call to public action, a declaration of a contemporary crisis, and the proclamation of a frequently artistic solution. On the pages of the manifesto, the formal, the aesthetic, the
political, the social, and even the religious intermingle and are all presented and addressed as being interrelated and contingent. Through manifestoes and their critical reception in Latin America, one can trace and assess the influence that European movements exerted in this hemisphere. The study of vanguard manifestoes is particularly revealing in that the written word lends itself to being related more easily to the predominant discourses about national identity at the time of their respective compositions. It would be naive, however, to regard these documents as the defining gestures of the movements that they purport to frame. Rather, in this analysis, I will be working under the assumption that manifestoes generally serve as momentary manifestations of aesthetic and political trends, movements, and perspectives that extend well beyond the bounds that these documents - and their authors - attempt to contain. Thus, the "character" of a movement is understandably difficult to pin down. Our intention here, nonetheless, is not to get at the essence of the Surrealist movement, the Grupo Minorista, or Negritud, but to consider how techniques generally associated with these movements are employed in the representation of a "foreign" or sub-altern religiosity.
Latin American intellectuals awakening within their own vanguard movements were well aware of developments across the Atlantic. In 1909, a few weeks after the publication of Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto*, Rubén Darío publishes a critical review of it in *La Nación* of Buenos Aires (Schwartz 28). Indeed, if there were a “delay” in the onset of a vanguard attitude in Latin America, it would only be by weeks. Of concern here, however, is the reception of André Breton’s “Manifesto of Surrealism” (1924), one of the many documents seeking to articulate what would become the most influential European vanguard movement in the New World.

Breton’s manifesto would mark yet another revolutionary artistic response to modernity by calling for an end to its rampant positivism or what he describes as the “reign of logic.” Breton writes:

We are still living under the reign of logic: this, of course, is what I have been driving at. But in this day and age logical methods are applicable only to solving problems of secondary interest. The absolute rationalism that is still in vogue allows us to consider only facts relating directly to our experience. Logical ends, on the contrary, escape us. It is pointless to add that experience itself has found itself increasingly circumscribed. It paces back and forth in a cage from which it is more and more difficult to make it emerge (10-1).

Like many artists of his generation, Breton saw in World War I the culmination of European "progress." His reaction
would seek to isolate the root of modern ills, which he saw as the abandonment of non-rational thought or belief, or the mass secularization of European culture.

Under the pretense of civilization and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices (Breton 10).

Owing to his appreciation of Freud, Breton advocated turning to the powers of the subconscious, interpreting the masked part of the human psyche as the seat of all that is irrational, pure, and authentic. Breton turned to dreams as a possible source of artistic inspiration, but more importantly, as a potential source for the resolution of contemporary, conscious, and — especially — external problems (Breton 12). In the conscious contemplation of the subconscious or the analysis of dreams, Breton sees a necessary marriage of the external and the internal, whose interaction goes beyond the resolution of aesthetic issues and into the realm of resolving immediate social conflicts.

I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak. It is in quest of this surreality that I am going… (Breton 14).

In the "Manifesto of Surrealism," beyond articulating a surrealist stance toward civilization and art, Breton
reveals - in addition to his appreciation for marvelous art in general - the key aesthetic principles of the movement: automatic writing, juxtapositions, collage, and chance. Through these aesthetic concerns, the religious or mystical nature of the movement becomes clear. The juxtapositions of curios, objets trouvés, and other exotic pieces that decorated many a surrealist study hark back to the medieval collections of bones, shreds of cloth, and other objects in a church’s reliquary. Breton describes automatic writing as occurring only after reaching a meditative state of relaxation in which any conscious agency is sure to not interfere with the meanderings of the unconscious mind, a practice that smacks of the illuminated poets of previous eras – for example, San Juan de la Cruz – whose hands would be magically guided as if by the will of some supernatural force. As for the effects of chance, Breton sees in them the "spirit of mystification" (24). Indeed, there is something certainly mystical and supernatural in the practices commonly grouped under the heading of Surrealism, qualities which would lead Walter Benjamin to see the movement as a mass exaltation of the "profane illumination" (209).¹⁶

¹⁶ In fact, one need not search far to establish the religious preoccupations of the Surrealist movement. George Bataille was one of its most renegade members - as well as friend of Carpentier - and
Four years after the publication of Breton’s first manifesto, Carpentier would write:

Si leéis el admirable Manifiesto del Surrealismo de André Breton, sabréis los secretos de un arte mágico cuyo descubrimiento constituye el hecho poético más importante que haya tenido lugar desde la evasión literaria de Arturo Rimbaud (1983; IX; 125).

[If you read André Breton’s admirable Surrealist Manifesto, you will know the secrets of a magical art whose discovery constitutes the most important poetic deed that has taken place since the literary escape of Arthur Rimbaud.]

His praise of Breton, published one year after writing the initial draft of ¡Écuing-Yamba-Ó!, reveals his recognition of the mystical character of Surrealism, seeing in the movement “una fe intensa [...] un concepto casi religioso de las actividades intelectuales” (1983; IX; 126; an intense faith [...] an almost religious concept of intellectual activities). Surrealist poetry, moreover, describes for Carpentier “un mundo de milagros” (1983; IX; 130; a world of miracles). He concludes by describing Breton’s

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comparatively conventional Nadja as "un libro de magia contemporánea; un libro tan lleno de misterio como de fe, un libro nutrido de la creencia en una realidad superior..." (1983; IX; 130; a book of contemporary magic; a book as full as mystery as of faith, a book fueled by a belief in a superior reality...). Carpentier’s rather fawning praise of Breton and the Surrealist movement goes well beyond using terms like "mysterious" and "magic" as part of a rhetorical strategy to underscore the cohesive nature of the group and the fervency with which many of its members approach their art. Carpentier clearly recognizes in the Surrealist movement that same quality of "profane illumination" that Benjamin describes.

Lam’s more direct involvement with the Surrealists while in France and his artistic collaborations with many of its most devout members underscore the importance of the movement in his artistic development. The late 1930’s and early 1940’s would find him unquestionably integrated within the circle. However, his association with Aimé Césaire would provoke his eventual distancing from the Continental movement as his work took on a distinct political objective in the rendering of Negritud within the context of a Caribbean discourse on identity. His later
attitude towards the movement is reflected in such statements as:

I believe that my work is in constant evolution towards the interpretation of images produced in a state between wakefulness and dream... However, this does not mean that I am a Surrealist, although I accept their creative freedom. (Martinez 14)

Indeed, the “creative freedom” to which Lam refers would become a vehicle for rendering his Afro-Cuban vision of Cuban identity. For Lam - who as a child witnessed a babalao transform into a horse as he rose from the flames of a burning shack (Pouchet 200) - the Surrealist paradigm becomes a convenient system of signs for the meaningful communication of his own, comparatively fantastic cosmogony.

As did Bernal Díaz del Castillo in Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España, Carpentier and Lam interpret Latin America - in this case Cuba - for a foreign audience. Their works bring to their treatments an ethnographic optic that narrates encounters between an imagined occidental viewer and an Afro-Cuban Other. Both see religiosity as the defining element in their representations of Afro-Cubanism, and both call upon surrealist techniques to depict characteristics of these religious practices. It is in their use of Surrealism that
the trans-Atlantic dialogue of their works materializes, for - as did the earliest European chroniclers of the New World - they call upon a European representational paradigm and epistemology in their interpretations and depictions of the relatively autochthonous practices of their native Cuba.
From Self to Other: Afro-Cuba imagined in the early Carpenter

The Negrista Narratives of Alejo Carpenter

Alejo Carpenter's works of the 1920 and 30's profess to his forging these early efforts at the height of both a global and a local fascination with all that is African. There is his first novel, ¡Écue-Yamba-Ó! (1933), the Negrista short story "Histoire de Lunes" (1933), and an assortment of poems of the same period in both French and Spanish, among them "Ekoriofo," "Village," "Mystère," "Liturgia," and "Canción." This period of rampant experimentation also brought forth his collaborations with classical composers in the productions of two Afro-Cuban ballets and an opera: "La Rebambaramba" and "El milagro de Anaquillé" with Amadeo Roldán, and "Manita en el suelo" with Alejandro García Caturla. All of these works call upon vanguardist techniques in varying degrees to render their Afro-Cuban themes. Yet the treatment of these themes in a Cuban avant-garde work take on a very different meaning within in the context of the political and economic turmoil that marred 1920's and 30's Cuba. For Carpenter - in addition to the other Negrista writers and artists of the Grupo Minorista - Negritud was a gesture of resistance to the Yankee imperialism of which José Martí warned in his
polemical call to arms, "Nuestra América" (1891). These works self-consciously introduce Afro-Cuban culture into discourses about national identity in a way that upset the nineteenth-century norms of their representation. Yet paradoxically, the narratives of this period frame an ethnographic optic that steers the reader's gaze to those elements of Afro-Cuban identity deemed essential by Western viewers: race, language, and religion. Here we will consider the ethnographic dimension of two of Carpentier's Negrista narratives in their political context, focusing on how he employs surrealist techniques to render the religious facet of Afro-Cuban identity.

Carpentier and the Grupo Minorista

The twenties in Cuba was a particularly conflictive and unstable decade, which saw the formation of the island's vanguard movements amidst widespread political unrest and nascent social reforms. Calling it the "década crítica," Juan Marinello writes:

Anótese que en estos diez años ocurren hechos decisivos: fundación del Partido Comunista de Cuba, irrupción de la llamada revolución universitaria, Protesta de la Academia, publicación de Venezuela Libre, de América Libre y de La poesía moderna en Cuba, transformación positiva de Social, desarrollo y fracaso del Movimiento deVeteranos y Patriotas, apertura de la Universidad Popular José Martí,
Manifiesto del Grupo Minorista y salida de la Revista de Avance (212-3).

[One should note that many decisive things occurred in these ten years: the founding of the Cuban Partido Comunista, the eruption of the so-called university revolution, Protesta de la Academia, publication of Venezuela Libre, of América Libre and of La poesía moderna en Cuba, the positive transformation of Social, the development and failure of the Movimiento de Veteranos y Patriotas, opening of the public university José Martí, Manifesto of the Grupo Minorista and the creation of the Revista de Avance.]

Many of these projects directly or indirectly responded to the continued economic and political domination of the U.S. over Cuba. Since the island nation’s hard-won independence from Spain, Cuba’s governance was dominated by the maintenance of the U.S.’s economic and strategic interests on the island, often to the disadvantage of the nation’s mammoth lower classes. Economically, the nation’s one-export economy floated precariously on the ever-unpredictable world sugar demand and frequently fell victim to the whim of U.S. lobbying and special interest groups (Skidmore 265-70). Large portions of the means of sugar production were controlled by U.S. owners, who were also the nation’s largest single exporter (ibid.). Yet, Cuba’s dependency on the United States was also explicitly political. In the formulation of the island’s first constitutional government, the U.S. assured its legal jurisdiction over Cuban domestic affairs by coercing
lawmakers to incorporate into their new constitution the Platt Amendment, which assured the U.S. wide-ranging powers in the monitoring of the Cuban economy and government through frequent intervention in elections (264-5). Because of the close economic and political ties between the two nations, the Cuban market was flooded with American goods, and with them, traditions that were seen by many of the intellectuals of the 1920’s as corrupting Cuban national identity.

The coalescence of the loosely-organized Grupo Minorista in 1923 was the first vanguardist response to this identity crisis, and brought together intellectuals from a wide array of fields with the similar interest of affecting social change on the island through art, among them Jorge Mañach, Juan Marinello, Rubén Martínez Villena, Mariano Brull, and Alejo Carpentier. Their “Declaración del Grupo Minorista” appeared in Social in May of 1927, and painted in broad strokes their renunciations of the U.S.’s hand in Latin American politics, giving particular importance to the Yankee influence on the island:

Colectiva, o individualmente sus verdaderos componentes han laborado y laboran: Por la revisión de los valores falsos y gastados. Por el arte vernáculo y, en general, por el arte nuevo en sus diversas manifestaciones. Por la introducción y vulgarización en Cuba de las últimas doctrinas, teóricas y prácticas, artísticas y científicas. Por
la reforma de la enseñanza pública y contra los corrompidos sistemas de oposición a las cátedras. Por la autonomía universitaria. Por la independencia económica de Cuba y contra el imperialismo yanqui. Contra las dictaduras políticas unipersonales, en el mundo, en la América, en Cuba. Contra los desafueros de la pseudo-democracia, contra la farsa del sufragio y por la participación efectiva del pueblo en el gobierno. (cit. in Verani 1990: 126-7)

[Collectively or individually, its [the Grupo Minorista's] true members have worked and work: For the revision of false and washed-up values. For vernacular art and, in general, for the new art in its diverse manifestations. For the introduction and dissipation of the latest doctrines, theoretical and practical, artistic and scientific. For the opposition of professorships. For the autonomy of the university. For the economic independence of Cuba and against Yankee imperialism in Cuba. Against the excesses of the pseudo-democracy, against the farce of suffrage and for the effective participation of the people in government.]

Many of these writers - and especially Carpentier - were attuned to the latest developments in European art and literature, schooled in the works of the French Symbolists, yet closely following the trajectories of the latest Modernist or vanguardist works. A review of the tables of contents of their revista de avance (1927-30) yields the panorama of their literary and artistic associations and interests: "Mallarmé, Valéry, Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Paul Morand, Jules Supervielle, Ezra Pound, Ortega y Gasset, Unamuno, García Lorca, Alfonso Reyes, Asturias, Vallejo, Villaurrutia [...], Picasso, Juan Gris, Dalí,
Matisse, Diego Rivera, [and José Clemente] Orozco," among many others (Verani 1990: 22). As we have already seen, Carpentier in particular was taken by the surrealist movement and would draw upon their techniques in his portrayal of the Cué family in ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!. However, the degree of their veneration for the European tradition would present many of the members of the Cuban vanguard with their most significant dilemma: how can one be avant-garde (i.e. embrace the new) and, at the same time, nationalist (i.e. steeped in tradition)?17 Reflecting back specifically on ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!, Carpentier would remark that this conflict engendered a now unsatisfactory and contrived hybridism between these influences (¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! 10). Yet, as we will see when we consider "Historia de lunas," Carpentier would manage to work through this initial difficulty and produce a coherent and consistent treatment of autochthonous themes in a vanguardist mode.

The Cuban vanguard's rejection of Yankee imperialism would force them to look inward, shifting their perspective from the center, the capital, the bourgeoisie, to the periphery, the regional, the marginal, hence the Afro-Cuban. Their artistic project would take root in this

17 For a thorough treatment of this dilemma with respect to the Grupo Minorista in general, see Manzoni, Celina, Un dilema cubano: nacionalismo y vanguardia.
long-since stigmatized element of their culture and would offer it up as the nation’s only “authentic” ethos, a national identity of Negritud. In ¡Écuez-Yamba-Ó!, Carpentier writes:

Y los trabajadores y campesinos cubanos, explotados por el ingenio yanqui, vencidos por la importación de braceros a bajo costo, engañados por todo el mundo, traicionados por las autoridades, reventando de miseria, comían - cuando comían - lo que podía cosecharse en los surcos horizontales que fecundaban las paredes de la bodega: sardinas pescadas en Terranova, albaricoques encerrados en latas con nombre de novela romántica, carne de res salada al ritmo de bandoneón porteño, el bacalao de la Madre Patria y un arroz de no se sabía dónde... ¡Hasta la rústica alegría de coco y los caballitos de queque retrocedían ante la invasión de los lujones de chicle! ¡La campiña criolla producía ya imágenes de frutas extranjeras, madurando en anuncios de refrescos! ¡El orange-crush se hacía instrumento del imperialismo, como el recuerdo de Roosevelt o el avión de Lindbergh...! Sólo los negros, Menegildo, Longina, Salomé y su prole conservaban celosamente un carácter y una tradición antillana. ¡El bongó antídoto de Wall Street! ¡El Espíritu Santo, venerado por los Cué, no admitía salchichas yanquis dentro de sus panecillos votivos...! ¡Nada de hot-dogs con los santos de Mayeya! (117-8)

[And the Cuban workers and farmers, exploited by the Yankee sugar mill, defeated by the importing of low-cost workers, deceived by the entire world, betrayed by the authorities, bursting with misery, ate - when they ate - what they could harvest from the horizontal flower beds that fecundated the grocer’s walls: sardines from Terranova, canned apricots with the name of a romance novel, beef salted to the rhythm of an Argentine accordion, the salted cod fish of the Mother Land and some rice from who knows where... ¡Even the rustic coconut candies and cakes retreated before the invasion of gum balls! ¡The creole countryside already produced images of foreign fruits, ripening in soft drink advertisements! ¡Orange Crush became an instrument of imperialism, like the memory of]
Roosevelt or of Lindbergh’s plane...! Only the blacks, Menegildo, Longina, Salomé and their offspring jealously conserved an Antillean character and tradition. ¡The bongo, Wall Street’s antidote! ¡The Holy Spirit, venerated by the Cué family, did not accept Yankee sausages in their votive breads...! ¡No hot-dogs with the saints of Mayeya!

Carpentier clearly sets out to present the protagonist of ¡Écure-Yamba-Ô!, Menegildo Cué, and his traditions as the “antidote” to U.S. hegemony and to the pangs of a developing national identity, while giving particular importance to the religious dimension of the Cué family’s identity.

**Carpentier’s Ethnographic Optic**

Due to the nature of *Negritud*, these aesthetic works, especially ¡Écure-Yamba-Ô!, become ethnographic exercises in their attempts to render an Other’s reality and interpret it for the Occidental reader. In the spirit of those first Latin American “fictions” (e.g. Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera*), Carpentier provides the reader with his attempt at what Clifford Geertz has coined a “thick description.” Of which, Geertz writes: “The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts” (28). Thus, in ¡Écure-Yamba-Ô!, Carpentier frequently adopts a narrative mode that not only chronicles or records Afro-Cuban culture, but also continually
reflects upon these observations and the cultural context of the novel's Afro-Cuban protagonist in a way that attempts to bridge the gap between Self and Other and tries to "bring us into touch with the lives of strangers" (Geertz 16). However, in "Historia de lunas," Carpentier abandons this stance and attempts to provide a text that could serve more as a cultural artifact than a commentary on the Afro-Cuban. Many critics - among them González Echevarría, Luis Duno, and Amy Fass Emery - underscore the influence of Fernando Ortiz's work (especially Los Negros Brujos) in providing the sources for much of Carpentier's knowledge about Afro-Cuban culture, some finding very suggestive similarities between Ortiz and Carpentier's textual descriptions of Abacuá or Ñâñigo rites. Curiously, in Carpentier's introduction to the later reprint of ¡Ácuela-Yamba-Ó!, he emphasizes his unmediated childhood associations with the people who would later inspire many of the novel's characters (10-11).

These representations are founded on the idea that they are presenting something Other, foreign, and unfamiliar and, therefore, must adopt strategies to meaningfully portray them to their readers. Collage becomes a critical device in Carpentier's narrative in general, whose roughly hewn presence in these first
narratives is a harbinger for the more developed Baroque style of his later efforts. Through collage, Carpentier often evokes the fragmented reality of Cuban nationhood.¹⁸ Yet, as we shall discuss, Carpentier also employs collage in his attempt to capture the character of Afro-Cuban religiosity. Another important Surrealist-inspired trope that Carpentier utilizes is a surrealist mood in limning the supernatural. Thus, in both ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! and "Historia de lunas," distorted descriptions and confusing mélanges of images trigger their being read as religious visions or as supernatural occurrences.

Within the framework of the surrealist mood, Carpentier attempts to translate Afro-Cuban experience into an Occidental epistemology by adopting characteristics of the narrative primitivism described by Erik Camayd-Freixas. Camayd-Freixas delineates several narrative modes employed by Latin American writers with intentions similar to those of Carpentier, which he calls upon in both of the fictions under consideration here. Camayd-Freixas underscores the importance of a "mythical conception of time" in suggesting

¹⁸ See Emery, Amy Pass, "The 'Anthropological Flâneur' in Paris: Documents, Bifur, and Collage Culture in Carpentier's ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!" in The Anthropological Imagination in Latin American Literature. Emery draws many interesting parallels between Carpentier and the French Surrealists and focuses on his use of Fernando Ortiz in penning a national identity. However, her study of Carpentier’s use of collage does not consider the technique’s use in representing aspects of Afro-Cuban religiosity.
a primitive reality, explaining that: “In addition to circularity and repetition, structural fragmentation or the absence of a logical succession makes events appear as though governed by supernatural forces” (116-7). There is also the “mystical notion of causality,” of which he writes: “Empirical causality is constantly contaminated by a mystical one” (118). Additionally, writers will attempt to capture a “vitalist and animistic vision” by rendering personages who revere “everything telluric with respect and fear” (119). Related to the animistic vision described by Camayd-Freixas is the “unity of the human and the telluric” which is suggested through the interpenetration of the “individual, the collective, and the telluric” within the text (120). One can see how especially the absence of a logical succession of time or a synchronous or acausal relationship between events coincides with characteristics of many of the key surrealist narratives, for example Breton’s Nadja (1928) or Bataille’s Histoire de l’œil (1928), yet in a Latin American context - especially one with an ethnographic pretext - these devices serve to induce a new meaning.
¡Écure-Yamba-Ól’s Unresolved Conflicts

While jailed by the Machado regime in 1927 for his subversive political beliefs, Carpentier wrote an early version of ¡Écure-Yamba-Ól, which he would later revise and publish in Spain in 1933 during his nearly ten-year European exile. The novel is divided into three main sections, “Infancia,” “Adolecencia,” and “La Ciudad,” each of which is subdivided into several short, sub-titled chapters. Aside from the fragmentary organization suggested by these short chapters – some of which repeat descriptions of the same event from varying perspectives – the novel follows a fairly conventional path in recounting the womb-to-tomb life of its protagonist, Menegildo Cué, in the spirit of a nineteenth-century Bildungsroman. The narration follows the young Afro-Cuban guajiro as his innocence and naiveté progressively transform through a series of rites of passage that eventually culminate in his death. Beginning with his youth in a rural, sugar-cultivating community, Carpentier describes Menegildo’s

19 It is worth noting that Carpentier’s exile in France afforded him the close associations with many of the French Surrealists, especially Robert Desnos, which would find him involved in the production of Documents (1929-30), contributing a piece entitled, "La Musique Cubaine" in November of 1929. Thus, it is very easy to place Carpentier amidst the milieu of artists-ethnographers that James Clifford describes in “On Ethnographic Surrealism” (1988). For more on Carpentier’s French connections, see Emery pp. 24-42 and González Echevarría (Pilgrim) pp. 57-62.
initiation into Afro-Cuban religion, his stabbing his lover Longina's husband, the resulting imprisonment in Havana, his initiation into a ñáñigo cult, and his murder at the hands of a rival sect. Carpentier presents Menegildo as a tragic allegory of the plight of rural blacks seeking opportunities in the capital, and suggests the repetition of the same path when Longina gives birth to Menegildo, Jr. upon her return to her hometown in the wake of her lover's death. The text posits the expected oppositions between the capital and the provinces that structure so many Latin American regionalist narratives (e.g. Doña Bárbara). However, unlike Santos Luzardo bringing the mores of the enlightened city into his project of civilizing Doña Bárbara and the primitive plains that she personifies, here the tables have been turned; the city is seen as the corrupting force of the idyllic and unperturbed countryside. Carpentier's construction of life in the Cuban provinces attests to his seeing the Afro-Cubans who live there as resistant to the forces of modernization issuing forth from the North and as beings that exist

\footnote{González Echevarría tends to distance ¡Écule-Yamba-Ó! from the regionalist novels for this and other reasons (Pilgrim 65-7). Although true that Carpentier's novel inverts the opposition present in many of the regionalist novels, the opposition is still present and responsible for the tension that drives the protagonist's eventual tragic downfall. In this respect, the novel is structurally equivalent to the regionalist novel, yet with an inverse valorization. In this regard, Pedro Lastra identifies ¡Écule-Yamba-Ó!'s similarities with the other regionalist or mundonovista novels (81-3).}
outside of History. Thus, the same oppositions that would later constitute the driving forces of Los Pasos Perdidos (1953) [The Lost Steps] are prefigured in jÉcuen-Yamba-Ó! nearly two decades before.

Beginning with the novel’s title, Carpentier emphasizes the role of religion in the formulation of Afro-Cuban identity. Indeed, jÉcuen-Yamba-Ó! presents an extensive panorama of Cuban, subaltern religiosity as the backdrop in front of which Menegildo’s life unfolds, and elaborates upon many forms: the syncretic Lucumí Santería that Menegildo practices in his hometown with the babalao Beruá, the ñáñigo or Abacúá practices of his cousin “negro” Antonio, or the Espiritista ceremonies held in the house of Menegildo’s friend, Cristalina Valdés. All of these religious practices come to the forefront in the novel, and are shown to wield an enormous influence over the lives of their followers. The narration commences with the less-codified and systematic Santería practiced by Menegildo’s mother, Salomé. In Carpentier’s presentation of Santería, he suggests the intersection between medicine and religiosity that characterizes the role of the babalao in Afro-Cuban culture (80-6). Menegildo’s progressively deeper involvement in Afro-Cubanism will see his initiation into the furtive Abacúá or ñáñigo sects. Carpentier uses
Menegildo’s initiation ceremony as an opportunity to reveal the mythical foundations of the Abacuá beliefs:

En aquellos tiempos los Obones eran tres, los tambores rituales eran tres, las firmas eran tres. El cuatro no había revelado todavía su poder oculto. Tres Obones, ungidos ya por la divinidad, deliberaban misteriosamente, al pie de una palma con sombras de encaje. Pero les faltaba aún el signo divino que habría de darles fe en su misión... Ya los reyes y príncipes habían comenzado a trocar hombres negros por tricornios charolados, tiaras de abalorios, libretas y entorchados de Segunda mano, traídos por marinos rapaces, señores de urcas y galeotas. Los Obones deliberaban, sin saber que un nazacó, oculto detrás de un aroma, escuchaba sus palabras. Y he aquí que Sicanecua, negra linda, esposa del hechicero, se dirige al río Yecaneblión, llevando su cántaro al hombro. Por esos años el mundo era más acogedor. Cada casa de fibra y palma se abriría en las sabana [sic] como un Domingo de Ramos. Y Sicanecua cantaba la canción de las siete cebras que comieron siete hebras y siete lírios, cuando observó que algo bramaba, entre los juncos como un buey. ¿Buey enano, duende hoy? Y Sicanecua atrapa el prodigioso ser-instrumento, y lo encierra en su cántaro amasado con barro de calveros. Era un pez roncador como nunca se viera otro en la comarca. La mujer corre a mostrar el hallazgo a su marido-nazacó. Éste rompe el triángulo de los Obones, y les dice: "¡He aquí el signo esperado!". Con la piel de pez roncador se construye el primer Ecue-llamador. Y como ninguna hembra es capaz de guardar secretos, los tres Obones y el Nazacó degüellan a Sicanecua, y la entierran, con danzas y cantos, bajo el tronco de la palma. El número cuatro había surgido. Y desde entonces, al amparo de Ecue, los Obones fueron cuatro, cuatro los tambores, cuatro los símbolos... RRRRRrrrruuuu RRRRRrrrruuuu RRRRRrrrrrruuuu... (158-9)

[In those times there were three Obones, three drums, and three signs. Four still had not revealed its hidden power. Three Obones, already anointed by the divinity, were deliberating at the foot of a palm tree with lace shades. But they lacked some divine sign that was to give them faith in their mission... The
kings and princes had begun to trade black men for illustrious tricorns, glass bead tiaras, second-hand livery and braids, brought by rapacious seamen, sirs of hookers and galleys. The Obones deliberated, without knowing that a priest, hidden behind a huisache tree, heard their words. And here is where Sicanecua, a beautiful black woman, wife of the witchdoctor, goes to the river Yecanebión, carrying a jug on her shoulder. In those years the world was friendlier. All of the palm and fiber houses opened toward the plains as if it were Palm Sunday. And Sicanecua sang the song of the seven zebras that ate seven threads and seven irises, when she observed that something was bellowing, within the reeds, like an ox. The dwarf ox, coming around today? And Sicanecua traps the prodigious instrument-being, and encloses it in her earthen jug. It was a croaker fish as had never been seen before in the region. The woman runs to show her find to her husband-witchdoctor. This breaks the triangle of the Obones, and he tells them: “here is the anticipated sign!”. With the skin of the croaker fish, the first Ecue-caller is constructed. And as no female is capable of keeping secrets, the three Obones and the witchdoctor slit Sicanecua’s throat, and bury her, with dances and chants, below the trunk of a palm tree. The number four had come forth. And since then, under the protection of Ecue, the Obones were four, the drums four, the symbols four... RRRRrrruuuu RRRRrrruuuu RRRRrrruuuu..."

I will return to the importance of Carpentier’s recounting this legend when I later consider the dissolution of Carpentier’s authorial presence in the novel. Additionally, Carpentier suggests the interpenetrating boundaries between all of these religious beliefs when Menegildo accompanies the other members of his sect as they attend channeling ceremonies held by a Spiritist woman, Cristalina Valdés (175-8, 186-93). Through these ceremonies, the reader encounters the highly syncretic
practices of the Espiritistas, whose beliefs center on the nineteenth-century French mystic, Allan Kardec. In the Cuban Espiritismo, Orthodox Catholicism is blended with popular religious beliefs, vague scientific principles of human magnetism, Yoruba myths, and nebulous references to an array of monumental secular figures.

The text is rife with avant-garde techniques scattered in such a disarray that it is apparent that Carpentier's writing of this novel was an exercise in their possible uses. The first few chapters show the influence of Futurism by calling upon endless metaphors that blend animals and machines and by describing objects in terms of harshly connected geometrical shapes (González Echevarría 71-2). Concerning the specifically surrealist techniques in ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!, there is extensive use of collage as fragments and images are brought together to create wholes. Unlike El Reino de Este Mundo (1949), there are very few moments in the text that one could describe as being marked by a surrealist mood. However, the occurrence of this mood in the text corresponds exactly to very particular religious activity. In the chapter titled "La Decapitación del Bautista," Menegildo Cué visits the house of Cristalina Valdés, an espiritista priestess who channels the spirits of the dead, and upon one of the visitors attaining a
trance state, the narration shifts into a more laconic mode, giving nonsense descriptions that push the limits of verisimilitude. After being brutally attacked by Longina's husband, Menegildo succumbs to delirious visions while recuperating in his bed. In this section aptly entitled "Mitología," Menegildo's dream becomes a clutter of Yoruba deities freely associating with each other as muted static images that overpower Menegildo's inner dialogue. Thus, in this instance, the dream-like realm of the surrealist mood yields the most prevalent technique that Carpentier exploits: collage.

In her study of ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!, critic Amy Pass Emery argues that Carpentier uses surrealist collage "to evoke the dissonant heterogeneity of Latin American reality" which is "already fragmented, already marked by a hybrid mixture of styles" (25). She uses fragments such as this one to substantiate her observations about Carpentier's use of collage:

Entonces comenzaba la invasión. Tropeles de obreros. Capataces americanos mascando tabaco. El químico francés que maldecía cotidianamente al cocinero de la fonda. El pescador italiano, que comía guindillas con pan y aceite. El inevitable viajante judío, enviado por una casa de maquinaria yanqui. [...] escuadrones de haitianos harapientos, que surgían del horizonte lejano trayendo sus hembras y gallos de pelea. (33-4)
[Then the invasion began. Mobs of workers. American foremen chewing tobacco. The French chemist who cursed daily the boarding house's cook. The Italian angler, who ate pickled peppers with bread and oil. The inevitable itinerant Jew, sent by a Yankee machine shop. [...] squadrons of raggedy Haitians who emerged over the far horizon bringing their women and fighting cocks.]

However, there is significantly more to ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! than the plethora of nationalities and races that converge upon the island for the cane harvest. For Carpentier, collage becomes an effective means of representing Afro-Cubanism. Especially through the collage-like descriptions of altars (26, 52, 83), Carpentier evokes the syncretic character of these religious practices.

Still, aside from just representing these syncretic religious forms, Carpentier allows that they influence the way in which he represents them. The novel is a fusion of narrative voices. For the most part, there are very few shifts in focalization in the text and most of the narration is in the third person, an authorial presence that—especially in the first part of the text—continually renegotiates non-Western concepts into Western terms or rationalizes the supernatural explanations behind Afro-Cuban religious beliefs. He describes Menegildo’s musical excursions, for example, as a "primitive allegro"
La pata de ave hallada en la mitad del camino se liga precisamente al que se detiene ante ella, ya que, entre cien, uno solo ha sido sensible a su aviso. El dibujo trazado por el soplo en un plato de harina responde a las preguntas que hacemos por virtudes de un determinismo oscuro. ¡Ley de cara o cruz, de estrella o escudo, sin apelación posible! Cuando el santo se digna regresar del más allá, para hablar por boca de un sujeto en estado de éxtasis, aligera las palabras de todo lastre vulgar, de toda noción consciente, de toda ética falaz, opuestos a la expresión de su sentido integral. Es posible que, en realidad, el santo no hable nunca; pero la honda exaltación producida por una fe absoluta en su presencia, viene a dotar el verbo de su mágico poder creador, perdido desde las eras primitivas. La palabra, ritual en sí misma, refleja entonces un próximo futuro que los sentidos han percibido ya, pero que la razón acapara todavía para su mejor control. [...] Estaba claro que ni Menegildo, ni Salomé, ni Beruá habían emprendido nunca la ardua tarea de analizar las causas primeras. Pero tenían, por atavismo, una concepción del universo que aceptaba la posible índole mágica de cualquier hecho. [...] Y si alguna práctica de hechicería no daba los resultados apetecidos, la culpa debía achacarse a los fieles, que, buscándolo bien, olvidaban siempre un gesto, un atributo o una actitud esencial. (59-60).

[The bird’s foot found in the middle of the road attaches itself to precisely that person who stops before it, since, among one hundred people, only one has been sensitive to its presence. The image created by blowing in a plate of flour responds to the questions that we ask by virtue of a vague determinism. Law of heads or tails, without any possible appeal! When the saint decides to return from the beyond, in order to speak through the mouth of some subject in a state of ecstasy, the words free themselves of their vulgar ballast, of any conscious notion, of any fallacious ethics, opposed to the expression of their integral meaning. It is possible, in reality, that the saint never speaks; but the
profound exaltation produced by an absolute faith in its presence, comes to endow the word with its magical creative power, lost since the primitive eras. The word, ritual in and of itself, reflects thus a near future that the senses have already perceived, but one which reason has hoarded away to better its control. [...] It was clear that neither Menegildo, Salomé nor Beruá had embarked upon the arduous task of analyzing primary causes. But they, by atavism, had a conception of the universe that accepted the possible magical nature of any occurrence. [...] And if some work of witchcraft did not give the expected results, the fault should be attributed to the believers, who always forgot some gesture, some attribute or some necessary attitude. ]

It is clear that this narrator identifies with his presumably Western reader; he suggests that the Santeros’ beliefs in the supernatural are more likely the outcome of chance, that trance has the more plausible explanation of the believer’s blinding faith, and that the believer, in fact, attaches a magical meaning to any occurrence. Yet as the text progresses, as the locale changes from the provinces to the city, the authorial Self implicit in the initial narrative voice begins to dissolve as the text adopts a more free indirect style. Compare, for example, the legend of the three Obones cited earlier with this fragment. In the former, the narrative voice unambiguously demonstrates its sympathy with an Afro-Cuban perspective by adopting an almost mythical mode of story-telling; whereas in the latter, it seeks to understand these practices in terms of a Eurocentric rationale. Yet, these are only two
examples of the many narrative voices that Carpentier adopts in the recounting of Menegildo's life. ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! is a collage of such voices, fragmented and rearranged to create a narrative structure in which the syncretic practices of Afro-Cuban religiosity are mirrored within it. Thus, beyond the direct descriptions of these practices, the work itself attempts to represent its theme structurally.

Furthermore, actual ſáñigo or Abacuá rites involve the spontaneous formulation of dialogues using phrases from a group of sect-specific sayings, a vernacular that is commonly referred to as lengua, in statements such as "Éste tiene mucha lengua." In other words, at moments during an Abacuá ceremony, there are exchanges between members of that sect in which a dialogue is improvised from these fixed statements. Carpentier describes just such an exchange in ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!:

Mientras los nuevos permanecían recostados en el suelo, los antiguos comenzaron a acariciar los tambores. Había llegado el momento de entablar competencia de lengua, sosteniendo diálogos con las fórmulas ſáñigas apuntadas por los abuelos en las "libretas" del juego. [...]  
-Quitarse el sombrero, que ha llegado un sabio de la tierra Efó.  
-Soy como tú porque mato gallo.  
-¿Después que te enseñé me quieres sacar los ojos?  
-Sólo una vez se castra al chivo. (164)
[While the new members remained reclining on the ground, the elders began to caress the drums. The moment had arrived to strike up the competition of lengua, sustaining dialogues with the ŋáñigo formulas recorded by the grandfathers in the group's "notebook". [...]  
-Take off your hat, for a wise man has arrived from the land of Efó.  
-I'm like you because I kill cocks.  
-After I taught you, you want to rip out my eyes.  
-A goat is castrated only once.]  

Hence, a certain degree of collage is already present in the oral tradition of the Abacuá, which could be seen as an African - or Afro-Cuban - version of the Surrealists' Exquisite Corpse (or the Surrealist Exquisite Corpse as a European version of Afro-Cuban religious incantations?). Thus, the narrative collage in ¡Écue-Yamba-Ó! shares some affinity with the religious practices of the Abacuá.  

¡Écue-Yamba-Ó! is beset with unresolved tensions. The novel sets out to offer up Afro-Cuban culture as the authentic character of Cuba and exalts Afro-Cuban religious practices as the essential element of this identity. It initially brings to its project an authorial presence - a Euro-Cuban Self - that fails to escape a largely Occidental cosmogony or epistemology and uses its language to sort out all of the disturbing unexplainables of Afro-Cubanism. González Echevarría observes that, paradoxically, "pseudo-scientific discourse is inserted to justify the theology of
Afro-Cubans and in a sense to usurp its claim to priority" (Pilgrim 85). Furthermore, Menegildo's progressively deeper and deeper involvement in religion parallels - and is unmistakably intertwined with - his tragic descent and ultimate death. Thus, ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! reveals a palpable subtext that simultaneously affirms and denies Afro-Cubanism. Yet is this contradictory schism - or what González Echevarría denotes as a "crack" - in the conception of ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! to be seen as a flaw or a structural shortcoming? Or, rather, are they a reflection of the unresolved conflicts engendered by the collision of Western and non-Western perspectives that strikes at the very foundation of Cuban identity? Indeed, ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! bears witness to the dissolution of this narrative authority reporting on Afro-Cubanism to an imagined Western reader and thus evokes the narrator's similarity to Joseph Conrad's Marlow, whose journey into the Congo in search of the enigmatic Mr. Kurtz would permanently warp his own view of Western civilization. It is as if the imagined investigative pursuit of Afro-Cubanism - which throughout the novel grapples with the difficulty of representing it on its own terms - changes the subject by unmasking the inadequacies of its own representational paradigms. The fragmentation of the Self and its eventual intermingling
with the Other exhibited in Carpentier's narrative voice suggests an informant who is overcome by the hybrid, syncretic, or even schizophrenic character of its New-World identity and who embarks upon a process of becoming. The surrealist techniques of collage and a surrealist mood are the tools with which Carpentier sets out to represent Afro-Cuban religion in ¡Ecue-Yamba-Ó!, yet they become the instruments with which Carpentier will shape a Latin American subject. By the time Carpentier writes "Historia de lunas," he will have come closer to a more stable formulation of this Self as is evidenced by a more personalized and effective use of Surrealism in the rendering of the Afro-Cuban.

"Historia de lunas": from becoming to being

Originally written in French, "Histoire de lunes" was (and is) frequently overlooked in the criticism of Carpentier's work, which is certainly not a testament to the quality of the short story or to its value in figuring the trajectory of the writer's early oeuvre. In fact, the relato goes much further than ¡Ecue-Yamba-Ó! in synthesizing or assimilating the vanguardist devices with which Carpentier was experimenting in his first novel, and thereby, intimates the narrative technique of his more
mature "real maravilloso" novels and short stories: to cite just two, "Viaje a la semilla" (1944) or El Reino de Este Mundo (1949). Appearing in 1933 in the French periodical Cahiers du Sud number 157 (December), "Historia de lunas" is the only short story of this period ever published; Padura Fuentes mentions others: the relatos "El estudiante" y "El misterio del ascensor"; a vinette, "Mogote"; and a particularly "chaotic" relato, "De Sol a Sol" (267). Translations of this early piece were not available until after Carpentier’s death when a Spanish version translated by Martí Soler appeared in the author’s complete works in 1983.\(^{21}\) Unlike ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!, "Historia de lunas" appears to have escaped Carpentier’s later regretting what he describes as the "escalas y arpegios de estudiante" of his first novel (¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! 10; student’s scales and arpeggios).

As in ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó!, Afro-Cuban religion takes center stage: the story unfolds around an Afro-Cuban protagonist, Atilano; long-standing rivalries between Abacúá sects bring the narrative to its climactic close; and, the characters

\(^{21}\) All Spanish translations used here are Soler’s. The English translations are from Piedra, José. "Tale of moons." Latin American Literary Review 8.16 (1980): 63-86. Each of these translations was made directly from the French. However, Piedra’s follows the French more closely, and the extensive notes that he provides show that his is certainly better informed. The early critical responses to the text by Luis Quesada (1972) and Roberto González Echevarría (Pilgrim) are based on the French.
themselves are guided by their beliefs in the supernatural realm of the Orishas. Carpentier draws upon the same collage techniques in rendering static images that suggest a cross-section or panorama of Cuban society, which gives the story a similar dependency on imagery in constructing the protagonist’s world.22 “Historia de lunas” is of particular interest for this analysis, however, for the attention given to Afro-Cuban iconography in the development of its plot, and most importantly, for its use of a surrealist mood and a narrative primitivism (as already described by Camayd-Freixas) to evoke an Afro-Cuban cosmogony. Here, Carpentier adopts a more indirect free style, which serves to imbue the narrative voice with a consistently carnavalesque popular authority and orality that is largely absent from ¡Écua-Yamba-Ó!. Here too, in “Historia de lunas,” we witness a representation of Afro-Cuban religion which allows that aspects of the religiosity influence its mode of representation – as we will later see

22 Many critics have noted the similarities between ¡Écua-Yamba-Ó! and “Historia de lunas.” In the spirit of collage, Carpentier has salvaged several fragments from the novel and incorporated them into the short story, not to mention the reworking of some of the characters. Thus, several scenes rely upon the same collage-like cross sections of Cuban society, where several different nationalities or classes are statically juxtaposed. For more, see Jeanine Potelet’s “Surrealismo y Afro cubanismo. Historia de Lunas de Alejo Carpentier”, Leonardo Padura Fuentes’ “La magia del ciclo: notas para un cuento olvidado”, or José Piedra’s “A Return to Africa with a Carpentier Tale.”
in Lam - yet does so in a more effective manner than ¡Escue-
Yamba-ô!.

The action of "Historia de lunas" takes place in an
unnamed Cuban town that comes to life daily at 12:28 for
the arrival of a capital-bound train. Beyond the story's
title, Carpentier intimates the train's relation to the
moon through its time of arrival (twelve cycles per year
and twenty-eight days per cycle). The events unfold with
respect to the cursed Atilano, a bootblack, who - because
of the embó or curse placed upon him by a babalao - is
beset with quasi-lycanthropic transformations triggered by
the train's daily arrival. While under the influence of
the curse, Atilano sneaks through the town under night's
protection, breaks into houses, and rapes several women.
As the story unfolds, the complex nature of the curse
becomes known as Atilano's fate is inextricably linked to
his double:

Puesto que a fin de cuentas el escurridizo
[Atilano] era un árbol, un árbol que un maleficio hizo
germinar de una semilla colocada en la cabeza del
doble de Atilano; puesto que este doble de Atilano era
una gran anguila de río... (231)

[Yes, after all, the slickman was a tree, a tree that
grew from a seed which bad influences planted in the
head of Atilano's double. Since Atilano's double was
a large river eel... (68)]
The townspeople are provoked into action by the string of crimes and work together to resolve the mystery of the attacker’s identity and bring him to justice. However, when it is noticed that all of the victims belong to a since forgotten group – chivos (goats) – old rivalries are revived, feuding begins between the chivos and the sapos (toads), and the town becomes divided in conflict. As the attacker’s identity is revealed, members of that group rally to his defense and help him to prepare for his nocturnal sprees by rubbing his body down with the grease – a very suggestive act of collective sanctification – that has earned him his nickname of el escurridizo, or what Piedra has translated as the “slickman.” The conflict reaches its peak in the sixth of the eight sections that comprise the story when a chaotic, carnavalesque clash between the two factions ends in Atilano’s violently attacking the town barber who is possessed with the spirit of St. Lazarus/Babalú-Ayé. The following day Atilano is executed by the province police force who officially justify the killing by labeling him “‘un agidor rojo de los más peligrosos, que aspiraba a derribar el gobierno republicano para sustituirlo por una dictadura bolchevique’” (237; ‘a red agitator of the worst kind, attempting to overthrow the republican government and to put in its place
a Bolshevik dictatorship." 71). In the eighth and final section of "Historia de lunas," Carpenter alludes to the cyclical structure of this story and the possibility for its later repetition with the eventual return of the moon. He writes:

Ahora habría paz por unos meses. Las malas influencias de la luna se habían retirado, pues el astro entraba en uno de los triángulos del cielo que neutralizan su acción nefasta sobre la cabeza de los hombres. (238)

[Finally there could be a few months of peace. The bad influences of the moon vanished, for it had entered a heavenly triangle, dispelling its evil power over the skulls of men (72).]

In the first of the eight sections that comprise the story, we witness Atilano’s initial transformation when the seed in his head begins to germinate:

Pero justo en el momento en que el tren entraba a la estación, el árbol comenzaba a brotar. Al menos lo que el maleficio hacía brotar como un árbol. El cuerpo de Atilano estaba cubierto de tierra. De una tierra grasosa, sudorosa y roja, como la de los campos de caña. De golpe sentía abrirse la semilla en su cerebro, y raíces tibias, endureciéndose poco a poco, se iban escurriendo entre sus costillas. Una serpentina verde se desenrollaba a lo largo de la columna vertebral, para restallar secamente, como un látigo, entre sus muslos. Y el árbol crecía, más pesado que el hombre, arrastrando al hombre con él, extendiéndose sobre raíces bien aferradas a una tierra viscosa y cálida (224).

[And at the exact time the wagons entered the station, the tree began to sprout. At least the spell made certain things grow like trees. Atilano’s body was covered with dirt. Oily dirt, sweaty, red, resembling the ground where the sugar cane grows. All]
at once, he felt the seed bursting inside his brain and the warm roots getting harder, creeping into his ribs. A green snake unwinding across his spine came to a dry, whip-like stop inside his thighs. From then on, the tree would grow stronger than the man, enticing him to follow, pulling him away from the roots that clung to the pasty warm soil (63-4).

From this initial moment of "Historia de lunas," Carpentier sets up a narrative voice that tacitly accepts the supernatural as natural. Gone are the excessive rationalizations of the possibly supernatural behavior that characterize the authorial presence of ¡Écure-Yamba-O!, and in its place is a narrator who appears to clearly believe in what is happening:

Cuando un santo vivo atraviesa el pueblo, no hay que despertarlo. Cuando Jesús el peluquero se volvió Santa Bárbara por unos días, no se le molestó con preguntas inútiles. Se le pusieron alimentos al pie de un árbol, y eso fue todo. Mientras que a los hombres-caballo, a los hombres-chivo, a los árboles que caminan, a esos se les despanzurra, sobre todo si violan a las mujeres y las mujeres se placen de ello. Los escurridizos son como las serpientes: si nos topamos con ellos en el camino y no los matamos, se vuelven muy viejos y se meten al mar, todos arrugados, cubiertos de jorobas y de pelos blancos, y, como les horroriza la sal, maldicen al hombre que los ha condenado a esa perra vida... Todo lo que tiene que ver con influencias de lunas sólo puede terminar muy mal. (227)

[Whenever a living saint comes to town, it is best not to break the spell. When Jesus the barber became Santa Bárbara for a few days, no one bothered him with trivialities. His food was placed at the foot of a tree, that's all. Yet horse-men, goat-men, tree-men should be torn to pieces, more so if they rape women and women seem to enjoy it. Slickmen are like snakes, if they get in your way and you don't kill them they]
live on and on until they return to the sea, their bodies wrinkled, hunched over and covered with gray hairs, and since they are afraid of salt, they curse men for leading them into such a treacherous life...
Anyway, everything influenced by moons ends up badly (65).]

Additionally, several other narrative voices are distinguishable in the story, as, for example, when Carpentier implies the voice of one of Atilano’s victims:

No se supo hasta el séptimo día por culpa de esas putas de mujeres, que se anduvieron secretando la noticia, guardándose mucho de correr el pestillo de la ventana, en la noche. ¡Ah, trae buena suerte ser violada por un escurridizo, un animal de la sombra, el ánima sola de Eleguá, chivo de cara humana, el que cree violar, mientras una grita de placer, haciendo resbalar las falanges por su espalda untada de grasa! (225-6, our emphasis)

[The event had taken seven days to be known because women, the whores, had whispered the news among themselves at night, behind bolted windows. Oh yes! It is good luck to be raped by the slickman, the beast of darkness, poor lonely soul of Elegba, the goat with the human face, the rapist whose victims respond with cries of pleasure, fingers sliding over his greasy back! (64, our emphasis)]

As a result, no single narrative voice reigns in “Historia de lunas,” and the reader is brought into an unmediated fantastic world that is open to limitless interpretations. A surrealist mood pervades throughout the story which allows that Carpentier evoke an Afro-Cuban cosmogony with elements of the narrative primitivism pinpointed by Camayd-Freixas. The train’s arrival triggering Atilano’s transformation works to suggest an acausal relationship
between these events, and thus represents possible supernatural forces operating beyond. Moreover, "Historia de lunas" bears witness to the interfusion of the individual, the collective, and the telluric as Atilano's fate is tied to not only that of an eel, but to the town as well. The nature of Atilano's curse (the effects of the moon, the tree, and eel), furthermore, hints at the animism that characterizes the town's religious beliefs.

In "Historia de lunas," the creation of a surrealist atmosphere or mood allows Carpentier the freedom to attempt the cohesive representation of an Afro-Cuban perspective, for Surrealism seeks to free itself of the hidebound epistemological categories that had steadily guided Modern thought. Thus, within this context, all is possible for the reader: seeds can sprout within a bootblack's head, an eel immersed in a river can reek havoc upon a nearby town, and social conflicts can be portrayed as the results of supernatural disputes. The blend of narrative voices that Carpentier calls upon to render "Historia de lunas" bypasses the imposing authorial presence that presents many of the contradictions of his first narrative. Thus, the short story better approximates an unmediated cultural artifact, for it makes no explicit attempt at providing a "thick description" as does ¡Écure-Yamba-Ô!. It permits,
moreover, that Carpentier free his narrator of a blind adherence to a Euro-centric cosmogony in explaining the events that unfold in "Historia de lunas." What results is a more transculturated narrative in which a personalized vanguardism smoothes the fissures and interstices of its hybrid construction. Or does it? Especially here, the use of vanguardist techniques appeals to an essentially Occidental system of signs that has the power to evoke the supernatural within its own context.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} As such, they are rhetorical devices that indicate more about the Self than about the Other, for they reveal how the Other is imagined within a largely Occidental discourse. Nonetheless, their pervasive use in "Historia de lunas" alludes to the growing pains of an Occidental discourse whose boundaries are continually compromised through the attempted introductions of non-Western realities. ¡Écure-Yamba-Ó! and "Historia de lunas" bear witness to this expansion.

\textsuperscript{\textdegree} Jeanine Potelet's discussion of "Historia de lunas" glosses many of the double meanings of the signs called upon in Carpentier's short story. She suggests, for example, that the Pan-like descriptions of Atilano's personification of Eleguá simultaneously appeal to a European and an African imaginary, which recalls Ortiz's descriptions of the "two ghosts" of Lam's work and of Cuban religiosity in general. Indeed, there are two iconographies at work here, yet the story attempts an inversion of their usual hierarchical organization. In "Historia de lunas," the official, the Catholic, or the Orthodox has been superseded by the unofficial, the Afro-Cuban, or the Heterodox. Atilano's crimes being officially dubbed as political, nonetheless, draws attention to the newer, secular forces controlling public discourse, in which the religious - whether Catholic or Afro-Cuban - is ultimately subjugated to the political.
The Santería Aesthetics of Itutu and Trance in Wifredo Lam

A Circuitous Trek Home: on the discovery of the African in Wifredo Lam

Wifredo Lam is certainly the most recognized Cuban vanguardist painter. Although many other painters of his generation would call upon the techniques of the European movements in the forging of their styles, none exhibit significant uses of Surrealism and none have managed to influence the subsequent generations of painters to the same extent as Lam. After a nearly twenty-year sojourn in Europe, Lam's return to the island in 1941 would mark a significant moment of his career, for he had previously distanced himself from other Cuban painters. Yet with this return, Lam would find himself not only within the familiar cultural context that had inspired his first religious visions as a child, but also as a participant in the polemics among Cuban intellectuals regarding national identity. By the mid-1940's, Lam - like many Cuban intellectuals - had adopted a more self-critical stance with respect to articulating this identity, taking as his targets the many apolitical, candy-coated formulations that simultaneously mirrored and fueled the tourist's

24 Max-Pol Pouchet notes Lam's refusal to exhibit "The Jungle" among other works in an exposition of Cuban painters held in New York in 1943 (252).
imagination. In an interview with Max-Pol Fouchet, Lam remarks:

Poetry in Cuba then [...] was either political and committed, like that of Nicolás Guillén and a few others, or else it was written for the tourists. The latter I rejected, for it had nothing to do with an exploited people, with a society that crushed and humiliated its slaves. No, I decided that my painting would never be the equivalent of that pseudo-Cuban music for the nightclubs. I refused to paint cha-cha-cha. I wanted with all my heart to paint the drama of my country, but by thoroughly expressing the negro spirit, the beauty of the plastic art of the blacks. In this way, I could act as a Trojan horse that would spew forth the hallucinating figures with the power to set the imagination to work, even if it takes time. (188-9)

Looking upon Lam’s work one is immediately impressed by the absence of the hackneyed signs of Cubanismo: lascivious mulatas, drums, güiros, maracas, ruffled shirts, royal palms, beaches, tobacco, rum, nightclubs, and casinos. Lam has created a visual language totally devoid of “cha-cha-cha,” which instead draws upon a then fresh system of signs culled from the island’s religious and spiritual imagination. The visual language of the Surrealists lend Lam the tropes and paradigms to incorporate this non-Western reality into a Western (visual) discourse.

Lam first left Cuba for Spain in 1923, where he passed several years in Madrid studying the Spanish masters at the Prado. After his involvement in the Spanish Civil War, in 1938 he would seek exile in France where a letter of
introduction initiated his lengthy friendship with the one artist who would exert the most formal influence over his work, Pablo Picasso. Of his work, Lam comments:

What made me feel such empathy with his painting, more than anything else, was the presence of African art and the African spirit that I discovered in it. When I was a little boy, I had seen African figures in Mantonica Wilson’s house. And in Pablo’s work I seemed to find a sort of continuity. (Fouchet 120)

Thus, through Picasso – or through a European-mediated encounter with African culture – Lam would rediscover these elements of his past and would begin drawing upon the religious experiences of his youth under the guidance of his godmother Mantonica Wilson. Indeed, his works of 1938 bear the stamp of that influence as an oeuvre theretofore curiously free of any African reference is abruptly transformed through a deluge of works that evoke Africa through the use of dark-skinned women, foliage, masks, animals, and eventually contorted, anthropomorphic figures.

Through Picasso, Lam was introduced to many of the major figures in the European art scene: Leiris, Miró, Léger, Matisse, Tzara, Eluard, Braque, and Kahnweiler (Fouchet 251). His later associations with André Breton, Benjamin Péret, Pierre Mabille, and Max Ernst would draw him into the Surrealist movement and lead to his many artistic collaborations, among them the illustration of Breton’s
Pata Morgana (1941). France’s capitulation and the ensuing persecution of dissidents in the occupied territory would provoke Lam’s departure for Martinique in the company of Breton and Lévi-Strauss, among other significant European intellectuals of the period (Fouchet 170). While there, his association with Aimé Césaire would set in motion the metamorphosis of his rather new-found interest in Africa, imbuing his works with a more politically charged treatment of these themes, thus provoking his later critical reception to dub him a painter of “Third World liberation” and “the painter of Negritude” (Linsley 527-9, our emphasis). Upon his return to Havana in 1941, his somewhat reluctant incorporation into the Cuban intelligentsia would find him entering into island discourses of national, cultural, and racial identity, and thus constructing and articulating his own formulations of these by giving particular attention to the religious elements underpinning Afro-Cuban identity.

Double Vision: Surrealism and Afro-Cubanism in Wifredo Lam

Considering Lam’s mature works within the context of European Surrealism reveals a formal affinity between both colonized and colonizer - a two-way exchange where elements of both cultures play prominent roles in the formulation of
a cohesive whole. Stylistically, Lam's use of Afro-Cuban motifs reveals the currents of modernist primitivism present in much of Picasso's work, whereas his anthropomorphic figures rendered in a flattened, dimensionless space with a limited, ochre-saturated palette evoke associations with Joan Miró's dream-like images. However, aside from these more straightforward, formal similarities with members of the Surrealist movement, Lam's use of a surrealist mood, in addition to the technique of surrealist collage described by James Clifford, manifests a degree of play in meaning that un masks how his works lend themselves to two different readings. Here, I will focus on the culturally specific, connotative meanings of Lam's paintings in an effort to reveal the similarities and differences between Eurocentric and Afro-Cubancentric readings of these works, and thus uncover how surrealist conventions serve Lam in rendering the Afro-Cuban.

To better elucidate the historicity or cultural specificity of these works' meanings, it is important to consider Lam's role as an ethnographer of the Afro-Cuban. Assigning this function to cultural productions that, at first glance, appear to have purely aesthetic pretenses may seem like a stretch. However, if one considers the initial relationship between early (French) ethnography and
surrealism acknowledged by Clifford through his study of Bataille’s Documents, it becomes apparent that Surrealism’s often-reductive look towards the Other could have crudely didactic motives (Predicament of Culture 140).25 Accordingly, one could assess the role of allegory in these representations. In Writing Culture, Clifford explains that the role of allegory in ethnography prompts one "to say of any cultural description not ‘this represents, or symbolizes, that’ but rather, ‘this is a (morally charged) story about that” (100). Furthermore, the “transcendent meanings” that arise from the allegorical quality of these representations “are not abstractions or interpretations ‘added’ to the original ‘simple’ account rather, they are the conditions of its meaningfulness” (99). Thus, the very comprehensibility of a representation rests in its allegorical character, or its resonance with the viewer’s pre-existing understanding.

Clifford’s perspective on “morally charged” allegory parallels that of Roland Barthes’ on the connotative meanings of visual signs. For Barthes, the decoding of what an image connotes "is a matter of an almost

25 In fact, Martínez illustrates how the Cuban vanguard writers, musicians, and artists “focused their attention on the African heritage of Cuba” in their attempts to crystallize a national identity – a process that would serve to both document and perpetuate an Afro-Cuban ethos. (75)
anthropological knowledge" - in other words, a culturally specific code that allows the viewer to construct meaning from a set of signs (36). Moreover in the case of non-photographic representations, the initial analogical meaning of a sign would also call upon a certain historically specific knowledge that - as it does for the connotative meaning - comprises an ideology which "cannot but be single for a given society and history, no matter what signifiers of connotation it may use" (43, 49). Considered in concert with each other, these sets of visual signs engender a generalized rhetoric that evokes connotative meanings through metonymy, asyndeton, or other rhetorical devices (49-50). To be sure, this model for reading images demands further consideration of the narrative character of Lam's representations with regards to their reception by both European and Cuban audiences. Later, I will elaborate on the roles of allegory, or extended metaphors, synecdoche, and metonymy in the readings of Lam's works.

Lam's lengthy stay on the continent, as well as his long-standing associations with Pablo Picasso and, especially, André Breton have lent him an inseverable tie

26 For a similar semiotic reading of specifically cubist collage, see Francis Frascina's "Realism and Ideology: An Introduction to Semiotics and Cubism" in Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century.
to the European movement. Consequently, the Cuban painter is frequently featured in exhibitions with continental surrealists. In view of Lam's formal similarities to other surrealists, gauging the European reception of his work demands the consideration of how these viewers' ideologies - in the Barthesian sense - were affected by their awareness of - or at least exposure to - the tenets of Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Let us recall the manifesto's exigency to terminate the "reign of logic," and to call forth in its place the anti-logic of dreams in an effort to solve "the fundamental questions of life" (9, 11-2). For this reason, the common association of surrealism with the dark "other-world" of the unconscious mind permeates the European reading of this aesthetic, and provokes one to see these works as attempts to upset cultural norms. Clifford generalizes this phenomenon observing that surrealism is "an aesthetic that values fragments, curious collections, un-expected juxtapositions - that works to provoke the manifestation of extraordinary realities drawn from the domains of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious" (*Predicament of Culture* 118).

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27 See for example *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, cataloged by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp, or Stich, Sidra, *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art*. 
Directing our attention to the "The Jungle" (1942-4), "The Eternal Presence" (1945), "The Wedding" (1947), and "The Visitor" (1950), [figs. 8-11], I will consider how the rhetoric of these images manages to communicate an "extraordinary" reality - or surreality - to a European audience, and how they play on an established metaphor of Africa. Obviously their representation of anthropomorphic figures in a flattened and for the most part mono-chromatic space is a well-established marker of a surrealist work which - by virtue of its being associated with works by Miró or Ernst - would inevitably conjure up associations with "dreams" or the "subconscious." Clearly the foliage [figs. 8, 9] and African masks [figs. 8-11] serve as metonymies that would successfully connote the typically exotic, reductive idea of Africa that fueled the modernist primitivism characterizing so many other European works. Additionally, one could also see how the presence of knives, swords, or other weapons [figs. 9, 10] - especially once the "Africanicity" of these works was established in the viewer's mind - could only further substantiate the "Africa" synecdoche at work here by calling forth images of tribal or colonial wars. This notion of Africa would unquestionably also include a vague knowledge of ritual which could subsequently lead one to interpret the
gatherings of forms, figures, and animals as being engaged in some type of ceremony [figs. 8-10] or possibly dance [fig. 11] in which the collage of objects like the scissors [fig. 8], the bowl of food [fig. 9], the oil lamp, horseshoe, and wheel [fig. 10] serve a ritualistic purpose.

Although this analysis strictly conjectures a potential interpretation of these works, it nonetheless characterizes a verisimilar ideology which relies on Africa playing an Id-like role that - as does Said's model for Orientalism - inscribes on the effectively muted personage of Africa all that is not conscious, not rational, and not European, namely all that is savage, irrational, and exotic. This characterization of Africa designates its standing in a - at this point moribund - narrative of colonization where the process of exploitation is masked as a humanitarian deed of cultural enrichment. The very use of African motifs in these works directed towards a European audience plays upon this unspoken allegory by using the "Africanicity" of certain signs to appeal to a European taste where "any shred of black culture could effectively summon a complete world of dreams and possibilities - passionate, rhythmic, concrete, mystical, unchained: an 'Africa' " (Clifford, Predicament of Culture
136). It is also apparent how these associations of Africa with the unconscious mind make its culture all the more seductive to an aesthetic that seeks to answer "the fundamental questions of life" through its worship of the unconscious. Naturally one's interpretation of specifically Afro-Cuban culture would ground itself in this extended metaphor of Africa and its position with respect to Europe - a position best understood in terms of a Hegelian progression of culture that "ends" in the West (Europe).

Centering ourselves on the Cuban reception of Lam's work, we should consider what Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier writes of "The Jungle":

Lam comenzó a crear su atmósfera por medio de figuras en que lo humano, lo animal, lo vegetal, se mezclaban sin delimitaciones, animando un mundo de mitos primitivos, con algo ecuménicamente antillano, profundamente atado no sólo al suelo de Cuba, sino al de todo el rosario de islas. Ajena al documento, su pintura sin anécdota local no hubiera podido ser concebida, sin embargo, por un artista europeo. Todo lo mágico, lo imponderable, lo misterioso de nuestro ambiente, aparece revelado en sus obras recientes con una fuerza impresionante. [...] La realidad y el sueño se confunden. La poesía y la plástica se hacen una. Hay atmósfera de mitos y de color, plenamente original. ("Reflexiones" 304-5)

[Lam began to create his atmosphere by means of figures in which the human, the animal, the vegetable, mix without specification, animating a world of primitive myths, with something ecumenically Antillean, profoundly tied not only to the Cuban earth, but also to the entire string of islands. His
painting, without local anecdotes, could not have been conceived, however, by a European artist. All of the magical, the imponderable, the mysterious of our environment, appears revealed in his recent works with an impressive force. [...] [In the Jungle] reality and dream are confused. The poetic and the visual become one. There is an atmosphere of myth and color, completely original.]

Hence Carpentier brings to his reading his own conception of national identity by seeing in Lam’s paintings a space where the synthesis of the incongruous is characteristic of reality - a uniquely Latin American reality in which Carpentier sees the hybridization of the disjunctive as defining its ethos (Emery 25). For Cuban critic Gerardo Mosquera, Lam - in addition to other Cuban artists - focuses on the “world by means of structures of mythological thought, and by reflecting a reality where magic and myth play a very active role within contemporary problems” (“Africa in the art of Latin America” 34). Furthermore, Lam’s recounting of his childhood in an interview with Max-Pol Fouchet reveals how the young painter understood his world as one “peopled by invisible beings,” one where shadows come alive in the forms of two-headed bats, and one where he is followed by a spiritual double that would show its head in every mirror (38). In light of these perspectives on Cuban reality, one can see how the “anti-logic” of European surrealism could lend
itself to communicating Afro-Cubanism. Nevertheless, Lam’s
synthesis of the incongruous in a dimensionless dream-space
could hardly equate to an affront to the “reign of logic”
as it does for continental surrealists; rather, it
manifests an attempt to ethnographically portray the trance
state attained during the Afro-Cuban ritual of bembé.\textsuperscript{28}

Writing on the wide-sweeping importance of the trance
state in cultures where it constitutes an integral part of
one’s religiosity, Janice Boddy states:

\begin{quote}
It (trance/spirit possession) enables adherents to
explore multiple refractions of order and morality; to
distill the lessons of history; to sift, evaluate, and
situate external influences; and to respond.
Phenomena we bundle loosely as possession are part of
daily experience, not just dramatic ritual. They have
to do with one’s relationship to the world, with self-
hood - personal, ethnic, political, and moral
identity. (414)
\end{quote}

Boddy’s observations reflect Joseph Murphy’s fieldwork in
Havana where he observed that possessed mediums fulfill an
indispensable social role by offering devotees an
opportunity to receive spiritual, medical, and personal
advice (138-40). Clearly, an ethnographic representation
that seeks to comprehensively capture afrocubanism would
need to address the role of trance in Cuban society and its
ubiquitous influence on Cuban life. Justifiably, Lam’s

\textsuperscript{28} A bembé or toque de santo is a ritual used by santeros or devotees to
communicate with Orishas or deities via a human medium who becomes
possessed with the spirit’s ashé or personality. For descriptions of a
bembé, see Lydia Cabrera, El Monte (296-7).
pervasive use of a surrealist style contributes to his efficacy in rendering this non-European reality; however, the painter also offers other signs that more directly bring to light the presence of trance in these works. The horse motif [figs. 8-11] - comprised of clearly-rendered heads, hooves, and flowing manes - calls to mind the widely-held Cuban conception of spirit possession as an Orisha mounting its devotee as it would a horse, provoking him or her to enter into a trance state in which he or she is imbued with the ashé of the Orisha\textsuperscript{29} (Martínez 148).

The Afro-Cubancentric rhetoric of the images previously considered relies heavily upon the well-established iconography of Santeria in order to connote meaning to the Cuban viewer. Taking into account Martínez’s observation that "montes or maniguas, thickets, like the jungles of Africa, were home to ancestral divinities and powerful spirits and therefore places of prayers and offerings" suggests how the same foliage [figs. 8, 9] that served to accentuate the exotic for a Eurocentric reading takes on a spiritual significance for a santero viewer (91). The fact that these figures are

\textsuperscript{29} This model of spirit possession is also reflected in the language used in a bembé to describe an Orisha’s taking possession of its devotee. At one such ceremony that I had the privilege to attend while in Cuba, I heard the group of santeros say “se montó el santo”, or “the saint has mounted”.
rendered in front of a spiritually-charged backdrop calls one's attention to the ritualistic undertakings at hand in the foreground - ceremonies whose purpose is suggested by the collage of "fetishized" objects that pervade them. Divorced from their original context, these props no longer serve to fulfill their mundane uses: rather, they function as metonyms that elicit very particular associations with the deities that they represent. The metal objects [figs. 8-10] are generally associated with Ogún, the Orisha of the forge and of war, whereas fire or light [fig. 10] calls forth Shango. In the case of "The Wedding," the wheel in the lower center of the painting depicts the balance in good and bad - or itutu - that one seeks in the worship of Eleguá, the keeper of the crossroads and mediator of all interactions between the human and the divine. Also, the staff [fig. 9] connotes Osanyin, the Orisha of herbalism, magic, and the power of nature. Considering that Lucumí or Shango Order theology includes nearly 200 deities, each with his or her own spiritual domain, colors, numbers, symbols, and narratives, a comprehensive reading of these works would surely extend beyond the bounds of this analysis (Flores-Peña 8-11). Nonetheless, the visual language of Lam's work in general employs many of the same signifiers used in the creation of this culture's
altarpieces [figs. 12-15, 17] - an observation that I will consider at greater length further on.

"The Visitor"

In order to underscore the narrative character of these works, I will offer an interpretation of "The Visitor" [fig. 11] that shows how this work attempts to depict a bembé. First, we notice that the space is occupied by two anthropomorphic figures that are rendered in such a way as to suggest a great deal of movement and tension, or dance and displacement. Looking more closely at the figures individually, it becomes apparent that the white figure in the foreground is feminine; one notices her breasts rendered in three different parts of the visual plane, her hips, and her swollen abdomen possibly suggesting pregnancy. Her body is adorned with spikes and horns, and what appears to be a horse’s mane drapes her extremities. The other figure in this painting has been pushed into the background, and lacks the degree of figuration and identity of the former. In fact, aside from its being black, one of the only distinguishing characteristics of this figure is its elongated head which is very reminiscent of African masks like those used by Picasso in "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" [fig. 7]. Not only
does Lam’s choice of title for this work suggest a *bembé*, but also the characteristics of this white figure and the tension that she is creating lead one to believe that she is a visitor in this space created by Lam who is summoned forth by the figure in the background to take control of its body. The horse’s head, hooves, and hair not only suggest the metaphor of spirit possession previously described, but also call to mind the horsehair flywhisk [fig. 15] used in these ceremonies to “brush” the bad spirits off a devotee’s body. Focusing on the edges of the painting, one can see that her very human-like hands are pressing against the boundaries of, and attempting to expand and occupy the visual plane. Her tangled extremities diffuse into every area of the canvas and even appear to enter the body of the black figure in the background. Additionally, a certain polarity between the “visitor” and the “visited” is created by Lam through his use of black and white in an otherwise featureless and dimensionless space. When considering the visitor, her unquestionable maternal characteristics and white coloring also suggest that she is none other than Obatala, the Orisha of life and fertility in his feminine incarnation. Thus due to the narrative character of this work, in “The Visitor”, we witness a type of extended visual metaphor of
- or "morally charged" story about - a bembé whose representation stems from Lam's selecting this type of religiosity as a defining element of Afro-Cuban culture. Whereas these images could suggest "this is Africa" to an uninformed Eurocentric reading, they connote "this is Cuba" to a reading that contextualizes these works in the Cuban Vanguardia movement, which sought to articulate Cuban national identity.

"The Jungle"

Certainly Lam's most renowned work, "The Jungle" [fig. 8] articulates the unresolved conflicts of an artifact that probes the boundaries between Western and non-Western discourses by narrating an encounter between a presumably Western viewer and the anthropomorphic figures inhabiting a privileged, Afro-Cuban space. In this work, Lam represents four forms in front of a backdrop of dense foliage whose figuration calls to mind the many varieties of cane found on the island, all of which are used for their respective relationships to Yoruba deities. Afro-Cuban religiosity's animistic nature imbues similar thick outcroppings with a supernatural significance. Lydia Cabrera's interviews with

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30 Lydia Cabrera glosses many of these relationships in *El Monte* (365-8).
santeros and babalaos inform her descriptions of these coppices, of which she writes:

El negro que se adentra en la manigua, que penetra de lleno en un "corazón de monte", no duda del contacto directo que establece con fuerzas sobrenaturales que allí, en sus propios dominios, le rodean: cualquier espacio de monte, por la presencia invisible o a veces visible de dioses y espíritus, se considera sagrado. "El Monte es sagrado" por que en él residen, "viven", las divinidades. "Los Santos están más en el Monte que en el cielo". (El Monte, 13)

[The black man that enters into the bush, that penetrates into the "heart of the wilderness", does not doubt the direct contact that he establishes with supernatural forces which there, in their domain, surround him: any area of the wilderness, due to the invisible or sometimes visible presence of gods and spirits, is considered sacred. "The wilderness is sacred" because in it "live" the divinities. "The saints are more so in the wilderness than in the sky".]

The figures in the foreground are masses of arms, legs, and elongated torsos, twisted and rearranged in a patently fantastic corporeal array. The animal forms mix and merge with the plants in the background and are rendered as if to suggest that they too are part of this landscape. Yet these figures do not represent a strictly surrealist or even personal artistic vision, for they call to mind descriptions of santeros' extraordinary encounters in the jungle:

"En el Monte se encuentran todos los Eshu", entes diabólicos; [...] espíritus oscuros, maléficos, "que tienen malas intenciones"; "toda la gente extraña del
“All of the Eshu are found in the wilderness,” diabolical beings; [...] dark spirits, harmful, “that have bad intentions”; “all of the strange things from the other world”, phantasmal and horrible to see. [...] Also animals from the other world [...] These sylvan goblins and demons, whose breath the black man can sense in the bush, assume bizarre and horrific forms for the human eyes of the clear-sighted when they are alone in the entangled thicket. “I saw, I swear to you on my soul,” said my dear teacher José de Calazán Herrera, “the head of a black creature covered with hairs from his head to his feet like a spider, hanging by one leg from the branch of a tree.”

Here, Lam’s use of the surrealist mood permits that he present these fantastic beings within a context that provokes the viewer to read them as supernatural and fantastic. However, the arrangement and organization of these figures – all turning their heads to look upon the viewer – pull the viewer into this space and engage him/her in the activity being portrayed. In this regard, “The Jungle” marks an attempt to induct the viewer into an Afro-Cuban religious experience by (re)creating a virtual

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31 Eshu are devils, the brothers of Eleguá (Cabrera, Anagó, 123).
32 See previous footnote.
encounter with these deities and by provoking what Lam has described as a "psychic state" (Fouchet 198). Thus, through this work, the imagined viewer - like a devout santero - happens upon something supernatural in "The Jungle" and is impelled into a religious vision.

On Itutu and Collage

Following Clifford's discussion of surrealist collage, the collections of "fetishized" objects [fig. 16] that typically decorated a surrealist's study were often organized in such a way that did not describe their original purposes, "but rather the way in which exotic artifacts were consumed by European aficionados" (Predicament of Culture 136). Generalizing this statement, one can see how any instance of surrealist collage - not just these collections of curios - could constitute similar arrangements of objects that have been divorced from their original contexts, "fetishized," and organized in a manner to suggest a subconscious logic at work - be it an attempt to narrate or simply to disorient. This phenomenon is nothing new to European culture, and harkens back to the assembling of medieval reliquaries in which shreds of cloth, fragments of bones, and other objects were arranged together and imbued with religious significance.
That said, the same tradition of altar-making that inspires the arrangements of signs in Lam's works deserves further consideration. Like surrealist collage, these altars are composed of objects that are no longer intended to fulfill their original purpose. In a given altar, one could find food that will never be eaten [figs. 12-14, 17], children's toys [fig. 12], or tools or other utensils [figs. 13, 15]. As with the Surrealists, these "fetishized" objects are selected by "aficionados" and arranged according to a specific logic. In the case of santeros, these objects are positioned in order that the altar represent an equilibrium of "calm nobility" and "tension," or good and evil - the moral balance of itutu that worshipers pursue (Flores-Peña 25). For David H. Brown, Santería altars code ritual experience, and function as material manifestations of internal orders.

Aesthetically exceptional, wholly utilitarian, mundane, and natural objects may be addressed for their symbolic meanings. They are read, decoded, deciphered, or interpreted like texts for latent meanings that have their basis in prior, external, or more fundamental grounds - particularly social structure, "culture," or a subsystem like "religion," and inscribed master texts like the Bible. (81)  

Brown also underscores the role of gift exchange in the composition of altars. Of course, the extent to which Lam's virtual altar constructions call upon this activity is impossible to pin down. Lam's interviews with Max-Pol Fouchet reveal, in fact, the role of memory in the selection of objects to represent. Additionally, for descriptions of Abacuá funeral altar construction, see Lydia Cabrera, El Monte (207-10).
Lam's attention to these types of arrangements imbues his works with a similar itutu; one only has to consider the works in question here to see how they all visually connote a sense of balance through their arrangement of figures, objects, and color [cf. figs. 17, 9, 10].

What sets Wifredo Lam apart from the continental Surrealist movement is the distinct meaning he brings to the surrealist mood and to the African references in his work. I argue that Lam employed these devices in an ethnographic attempt to say something about Cuban culture and national identity, a stance that reflects Martínez's observation that "modernist primitivism provided the Cuban Vanguardia with the tools and inspiration to interpret their own African roots" (76). Furthermore, the surrealist mood serves Lam in evoking the trance state, an opinion revealed in such statements as: "I believe that my work is in constant evolution towards the interpretation of images produced in a state between wakefulness and dream" (Martínez 14). Additionally, the familiar technique of collage allows him to reveal the influence of Afro-Cuban altar-making in his art. One sees in Lam's use of a "surrealist dialect" the manifestation of the communication strategy of ethnographic allegory described by Clifford
where "strange behavior is portrayed as meaningful within a common network of symbols - a common ground of understandable activity valid for both observer and observed, and by implication for all human groups" (Writing Culture 101). Further reflecting this idea, is Lam's observation that he sees his work as a type of Trojan horse - one that he evidently utilizes to deliver a message of afrocubanism while shrouded in the familiar style of continental surrealism (Pouchet 189). Clearly, the limits of his art's comprehension reside in the ideologies that various readers may apply in their interpretations of it. Yet the fact that they lend themselves to both Eurocentric and Afro-Cubancentric readings calls attention to the double vision of these works that - like the two sides of the Janus coin - come together to create a syncretic whole.
Conclusions

In his study of Modernism, Astradur Eysteinsson identifies collage and its accompanying fragmentation as a modernist technique par excellence as he suggests that, for many of these artists and writers, collage would become a practice in "'salvaging' fragments of the past" (150). And, indeed, even the most cursory glance at any of the major modernist works - of Eliot, Joyce, or Pound - reveals their thinly veiled bibliographies, from which images, anecdotes, characters, plots, and even entire passages were extracted, polished or translated, and later reorganized into a fragmented conglomeration. Collage for many of the Surrealists - Breton, Ernst, and Dalí - became a weapon to upset the bankrupt "reign of logic" that they saw as smothering Western civilization. Through the shocking effects of collage, therefore, the continental Surrealists would attempt to chip away at the positivist foundations of modernity and to uncover a presumably lost European mysticism. However, for Lam and Carpentier collage differs from the archaeological activity carried out by many modernists or the iconoclastic sallies of the continental Surrealists, for it becomes a methodology for reflecting their present. In the case of Carpentier, collage mirrors the heterogeneity inscribed in the Latin American landscape
and the mélange of nationalities and races converging in the New World. Thus, he calls upon collage to impart the motley mix of peoples populating Cuba. Through our exploration of two of his key Negrista narratives, we have uncovered how collage — and the ensuing disorder and disorientation that it can provoke — becomes a tool not only for mimicking the structure of Abacuá ceremonial incantations, but also for fashioning a hybrid Latin American subject. For Lam, on the other hand, the mystical character with which the continental Surrealists imbued the dream-state in their works coincides with the trance state attained in Lucumí or Abacuá (Ñáñigo) bembés or toques de santo. Thus, he uses collage and its destabilizing effects to visually suggest trance and, within this state, balance elements, objects, fragments, and figures to suggest the simultaneously aesthetic and spiritual itutu that governs the composition and construction of Santería altars.

Both Lam and Carpentier call upon Surrealism as a rhetorical strategy in rendering Afro-Cubanism in an international discourse in which Cuba is relegated to the periphery, just beyond its epistemological horizons. Thus, they bring to their projects languages — both verbal and visual — that are ill-equipped for the framing of a non-Occidental reality. Through vanguardist techniques,
however, they exploit what Lam describes as their “creative freedom” to stretch the limits of this discourse through the dissemination of an Afro-Cuban reality. This ethnographic axis of their project finds Carpentier in the paradoxical double bind of concurrently affirming and rejecting Afro-Cubanism as he brings to his works the problematics of representation (primitivism, orientalism) that piggyback language. For Lam, the separation between Self and Other is visibly permeable; thus, he avoids the many mires that fetter Carpentier’s projects. In spite of their differences, Lam and Carpentier wield the aptly syntetizing technique of collage to interpret and portray the syncretic religiosity of Afro-Cubans, and in turn, to “Afro-Cubanize” an Occidental discourse.
Images


Fig. 3. José Joaquín Tejada. "La lista de la lotería," (1894) rpt. in Adelaida de Juan, Pintrua cubana: temas y variaciones. La Habana: UEAC. 1978.


Fig. 9. Wifredo Lam, "The Eternal Presence," (1945) rpt. in Max-Pol Fouquet, Wifredo Lam. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1976.


Fig. 11. Wifredo Lam, "The Visitor," (1950) rpt. in Max-Pol Fouquet, Wifredo Lam. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1976.
Fig. 12. Altar to the Ibejí in Ysamur Flores-Peña, Santería Garments and Altars. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1994.

Fig. 13. Altar to Elegú in Ysamur Flores-Peña, Santería Garments and Altars. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1994.

Fig. 15. Altar for Obatala in Ysamur Flores-Peña, *Santería Garments and Altars*. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1994.
Fig. 16. Installation of the Exhibition of Surrealist Objects, Galerie Ratton (1936), rpt. in Briony Fer, Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: art between the wars. New Haven: Yale UP, 1993.

Fig. 17. Altar for Oshun in Ysamur Flores-Peña, Santería Garments and Altars. Jackson: Mississippi UP, 1994.

Fig. 9. Wifredo Lam, "The Eternal Present," rpt. in Max-Pol Foucet, Wifredo Lam. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1976.
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The Avant-Garde and Surrealism


Alejo Carpentier


**Wifredo Lam**


