Like many artists before and after him, Paul Gauguin used the medium of the print to recapitulate and initiate ideas and images. The first lithographs (1889) and the first woodcuts (1894) both summarized the creative years which preceded and carried stylistic trends further. In the first series of ten woodcuts, which may be called the Noa Noa Suite after the manuscript they were to illustrate, Gauguin compressed much of his mythological constructions of the Tahitian past—images of his first voyage to Oceania, 1891-93. At the same time he found a medium which could not only unite the optical and abstract qualities of his paintings but also straddle the esthetics of painting and sculpture. Gauguin was passionately concerned with the creation of objects by hand—the shaping or carving of clay and wood—in which the more primitive or historically fundamental styles would again assert themselves. By contrast, painting was the expression of a civilized and conventionalized culture; Gauguin felt compelled to try to bridge the gulf that had come to separate the two ideals—and, internally, to unite the savage and the sensitive aspects of his own soul. The woodcut provided an opportunity to do this in terms of coalescing broad, decorative forms with subtle, coloristic optical description. It also allowed for the creation of a dark image which would evoke the mysterious night world Gauguin associated with Tahiti, and, by extension, with his own subconscious. And, finally, the woodcut

**TE PO (The Night)**
Woodcut, 1894. G. 15
Edition of 1921
PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

**TE ATUA (The Gods)**
Woodcut, 1894. G. 30
Edition of Louis Roy, 1894
PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

Woodcut numbers preceded by G. refer to Marcel Guérin, L'Oeuvre gravée de Gauguin. Paris, 1927... All Philadelphia Museum of Art photographs are by the staff photographer, Al Wyatt.

—EDITOR

**MANAO TUPAPAU**
*(She thinks of the Spirit of the Dead)*
Woodcut, 1894. G. 18
Edition of 1921
PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART
enhanced the suggestive and symbolic qualities of the images, for, as compared with painting, it did not demand complete, narrative compositions. The later woodcuts, in fact, display considerable fantasy elements.

The woodcuts fall into five groups. First and most important is the Nuu Nuu Suite of early 1894; these offer the greatest synthesis of style and imagery and are also the most complex compositions. These survive with more than a dozen impressions by Gauguin himself from any of the ten blocks; one often encounters instead the later editions by Louis Roy (with added color blocks) or Gauguin's son, Pola, whose painstaking experiments enabled him to capture every nuance of cutting and scraping. The next group is quite varied and probably dates from the summer and fall of 1894; of these nine, very few are represented by more than a half-dozen impressions. Most are experimental and two (Guérin numbers 36 and 42) are to be thought of as impressions from low reliefs. Illustrated are two of Gauguin's archetypical figures, Hina and Oviri (G. 44 and 48).

In 1895 Gauguin returned to the South Seas. The winter of 1895-96 witnessed a tentative return to woodcutting; a small group of five (mostly known in two or three impressions each) includes the little double image of a woman gathering fruit and the savage monster, Oviri, reproduced here.

The dating of the next group of fifteen major woodcuts is problematic. Certainly they were all executed by the end of 1899, but whether they represent a continuous effort commenced before the suicide attempt of late 1897 is impossible to say. These works are cruder than the Nuu Nuu Suite, reflecting the nature of the woods and tools available, as well as paralleling the tendency to simplify the subjects and figures in the paintings. A work such as Soyer Amoureuses (G. 58) is no longer a scene but a collection of personal symbols arranged in a decorative fashion within a curvilinear, simply textured frame. There is a simplicity which Gauguin likened to the earliest (around 1888) woodcuts he knew, and there are similarities with contemporary European decoration which need not be labored. The last batch of cuts, about fifteen, seems to fade into pure decoration, repeating single figures previously used and occasionally offering satirical themes appropriate to Gauguin's journal, Le Sourire, which they illustrated in 1899 and early 1900.

RICHARD S. FIELD
Assistant Curator of Prints
Philadelphia Museum of Art

SUMMER 1969

PAPE MOE (Mysteries Water)
Monotype and Watercolor, ca. 1894
COURTESY OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

TAHITIAN DRINKING
FROM A WATERFALL
Photograph of ca. 1885-90
COURTESY OF R. ROGER YOLLE, Paris

It is indicative of the archaic character of the monotype, oil painting, and wood relief which this photograph inspired, that they were formerly considered as being derived from some Egyptian source. Recent research (mostly by Danielsson, Gray, and Field) has shown how often Gauguin turned to contemporary photographs, how he was friendly with several photographers, and how many internal relationships are shared by old photographs and Gauguin's compositions.