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A

WIFREDO LAM AND THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT GARDE, 1947-1982

by

Lowery Stokes Sims

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1995

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 1, 1995
Date

Robert Pincus-Witten
Chair of Examining Committee

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Date

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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Abstract

WIFREDO LAM AND THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT GARDE,
1947-1982
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Lowery Stokes Sims

Adviser: Professor Robert Pincus-Witten

With the emergence of multiculturalism and the interest in cross-national cultural identities in the 1980s and 90s, the career of Wifredo Lam - a Cuban artist of African, European and Chinese descent - has received wider attention in contemporary criticism. Lam's work is usually seen in the context of the School of Paris of the late 1930s, i.e. Cubism and Surrealism. His engagement of his Afro-Cuban heritage in his work between 1941 and 1946 has been recognized as a watershed moment in the evolution of the concept of primitivism, and to date has been the focal point of most Lam scholarship.

This dissertation will examine the artist's later career (1947-82). The first chapter will summarize Lam's early career in Spain, his first contact with the School of Paris, and the developments in his art in the context of the modernist movement in Cuba in the 1940s. Chapter Two will focus on Lam's relationship to the School of Paris after World War II. It will chronicle his contact with the younger

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generation of artists, i.e. the CoBrA group, the "Arte Nucleare" group in Italy, the Swedish Imaginists, and how these relationships enabled him to find a new context for his work. Lam's career in Cuba and Latin America will be the focus of the third chapter, and will elucidate the particular nature of his relationship with the post-revolutionary government in Cuba. The lesser known relationship of Lam to the New York School in the 1940s, his parallel exploration of mythic subject matter will be the subject of Chapter Four, which will include a consideration of the situation of Surrealism in the United States after 1950. In Chapter Five an analysis of Lam's work from 1946-1982 will be undertaken, summarizing the issues usually brought to bear on his work, analyzing the stylistic changes in his work, themes and motifs, and his new interest in graphic, ceramic work and sculpture. The sixth chapter will evaluate Lam's position in 20th Century Art, analyzing new critical paradigms such as multiculturalism, decolonization, and identity, that provide new contexts for his career.

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Acknowledgments

The initial research leading to this dissertation was done for the course on Surrealism taught by Dr. Robert Pincus-Witten at the Graduate Center, City University of New York in the Spring of 1981. From this research came a paper on Lam and New World Surrealism which I delivered at a symposium on Lam organized in 1984 in Havana, Cuba. The specifics of Lam's career after the 1940s came out of research for a second course taken with Professor Pincus-Witten on the decade of the 1950s in the Spring of 1985. I am immeasurably grateful to him for his sustained support and guidance throughout the researching and writing this dissertation. I also thank the other members my dissertation committe - Professors Mona Hadler, Diane Kelder and Jack Flam - for their input and encouragement.

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Luca who collaborated with Lam on poetry and graphic projects; Estaban Cobas-Puente, who knew Lam as a student in Cuba; Guido Llinas, a member of the next generation of artists in Cuba; Hugh Weiss, Norman Bluhm, Herbert Gentry, Ted Joans who knew Lam as Americans in Paris; David Hare, Mercedes Mather who met him in New York in the 1940s; Lindy Bergman, who with her late husband Edwin, met Lam in Havana in 1954, collected his work and were life-long friends; Joseph and Jory Shapiro, also collectors of Lam's work; Klaus Perls who gave him his first exhibition in New York City; and Albert Loeb, Lam's dealer in the New York in the 1950s, and whose father, Pierre, was Lam's first Parisian dealer.

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Introduction

The career of the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam (1902-1982), enacted on three continents, coincided with some of the most revolutionary changes in art and politics in the 20th Century.

Born and raised in Sagua le Grande, a small coastal town some two hundred miles south east of Havana, by the time he was about twelve years old Lam demonstrated a talent for art. His formal training began in 1916 at the Academia San Alejandro in Havana. In 1923 he went to Spain to continue his studies. There the museums and art collection of Madrid afforded Lam a sense of the wealth and breadth of art history. He was particularly attracted to Dutch, Flemish and Spanish painting from the 15th through the 19th century, and also became acquainted with prehistoric, archaic and tribal art. Lam also made contact with avant-garde circles in Madrid, and by the early 1930s the influence of Fauvism, Cubism, and Surrealism is evident in his art.

Although he had intended to go onto Paris from Madrid, because of his meager finances, and events in his personal life (he married Sebastiana (Eva) Píriz in 1929, and had a child, Wifredo, in 1930), Lam spent fifteen years in Madrid, and the small town of Cuenca some one hundred and fifty miles southeast of Madrid. In the 1920s and 30s Spain was the in throes of profound social and political changes.

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These culminated in the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic in 1932. The agrarian reform and technological development that were attempted by the new regime met with increasing resistance by Nationalist (i.e. monarchist and rightist) forces. The eventual clash between progressive and reactionary forces - which was experienced in varying degrees through the rest of Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States during the 1930s - eventually resulted in Civil War.

In the meanwhile while establishing himself as a talented portraitist and landscape painter, Lam was becoming increasingly involved in Republican politics. The early 1930s were a period of change, transition and tragedy. His wife and infant son died of tuberculosis in 1931. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) Lam enlisted in the service on the Republican side, and saw action during the siege of Madrid which began in 1937. When he suffered poisoning by toxic gas, Lam was transported to a hospital outside Barcelona. There he met Maria-Helena Holzer, with whom he would spent the next eleven years of his life. In the Spring of 1938, as the Nationalist forces began to break the resistance of this Republican stronghold, Lam decided to leave Spain.

On May 22, 1938 Lam arrived in Paris. With a letter of introduction from Manolo Hugué he contacted Pablo Picasso, who introduced him to some of the most influential figures

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on the pre-war Parisian art scene. During the next three years Lam's work would undergo a dramatic stylistic development from the Cubist inspired work of the 1930s to a more hybrid, mutable imagery that was a prelude to his distinctive style developed in Cuba between 1941 and 1946. When the German's entered Paris on June 14, 1940, Lam once again was a refugee. He made his way to Marseille where he encountered his acquaintances among the Surrealist circles. During the nine months he awaited passage out of France, Lam participated in the collaborative artistic activities of the Surrealists, which were crucial in determining the stylistic changes that would occur in his work in the early 1940s.

When Lam returned to his native Cuba in August, 1941, he entered the most significant phase of his artistic career. The visual language that he had begun to develop in Marseille, with its human, plant and animal hybrids, visual punning and doubling was merged with iconographic signifiers that allude to aspects of the African religion in Cuba. This cosmology was characterized by a synthesis and syncretization of African religious systems and Catholicism, which can be found not only in Cuba, but in Brazil and other parts of the Caribbean and the Americas.

This period, 1941-46, has been the focus of the monographs on Lam's work by Max-Pol Fouchet[1], Sebastià Gasch, Alain Jouffroy, and Michel Leiris which will be discussed in this dissertation. These studies highlight the

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significance of Lam's career in the 1940s, and the development of his signature style. Lam's relationship with Picasso and the Surrealist movement are analyzed to elucidate the more "authentic" primitivist vision he introduced to western modernism. Other publications issued during the artist's life time, including the catalogues of his 1968 retrospective organized by the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, and that of 1982 organized by the Ministry of Culture in Spain (on the occasion of the artist's 80th birthday) provide anthologies of reminiscences, extracts from earlier writings on Lam's work and poetic tributes, but no critical analyses of his work. Anna Marie Gutierrez-Obadia's 1981 dissertation, "Wifredo Lam: la quête d'une identité" (University of Paris, Sorbonne), provided an analysis of the issue of cultural identity in Lam's work.

Since Lam's death in 1982, several studies have been published which amplify the contextual aspects of Lam's work: Suzanne Garrigues Daniel's 1983 dissertation, "The Early Works of Wifredo Lam: 1941-45" (University of Maryland), interprets his imagery according to the precepts of Afro-Cuban religion and cultures. This approach to Lam's work has been admirably expanded on by Julia Herzberg, particularly in her essay for the 1992 exhibition of the work of Lam and his contemporaries in New York and Cuba, organized at the Studio Museum. Marta García Barrio-Garsd's

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1986 essay for the Lam exhibition at Galerie Albert Loeb in Paris focused on the influence of alchemy and esoteric thought on Lam's work, and his often over-looked Chinese heritage, which has been examined also by the Chinese critic Xing Xiao Sheng in the catalogue of the exhibition of Lam's graphic work which toured China in 1991.

Papers presented at the 1984 symposium on Lam's work in Havana, such as those of Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez and Manuel López Oliva present Marxist analyses of Lam's work, which were important sources for Ulrich Krempel's discussion of Lam's work in relation to colonization and Caribbean culture in the catalogue of the 1988 exhibition of Lam's work at the Nordrhein-Westfallen Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf. This aspect of Lam's work is also the focus of essays published in 1992 by Charles Merewether (for the retrospective of Lam's works on paper at the Americas Society in New York), and Gerardo Mosquera (for the retrospective of paintings at the Museo Nacional, Centro de Arte Reina Sofía). And Robert Linsley has provided a provocative interpretation of Lam's work in relationship to the politico-cultural philosophy of "Negritude" and Pan-Africanist independence movement during the 1950s and 60s, as well as the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

During his Cuban sojourn, Lam's work was also shown in New York City in the context of the mythic and totemic explorations of the nascent Abstract Expressionist group. He also found a compatible interest in Afro-Cuban culture among

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artists and intellectuals who were his contemporaries in Cuba. After World War II his particularly indigenous "primitivism" attracted a younger generation of artists, such as the CoBrA group, who found currency for their own painterly concerns in Lam's work. In articles written for Arts Magazine (1985 and 1988), Repères: Cahiers d'art contemporain (1986), and in my catalogue essays for the 1984 exhibition of Dada and Surrealist art at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the aforementioned 1992 Studio Museum exhibition I have discussed Lam's relationship to the New York School and the post-war generation of artists in the School of Paris. In the Studio Museum catalogue Guilio Blanc examined the Cuban context for Lam's stylistic development during the 1940s, as did Juan Martínez in his 1992 dissertation, "Cuban Art and the National Identity: the 'Vanguardia' Painters, 1920s-1940s" (The Florida State University). What is lacking in all these studies, however, is an in-depth examination of the last thirty-five years of Lam's creative live.

Between 1947 and 1982 Lam's career was carried out in France, Italy, Scandinavia, the United States, and Latin America and the Caribbean. He continued to explore themes and motifs that appeared in his work in the early 1940s throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Their original iconographic resonance became less specific, and at the same time increasingly self-referential. Lam's stylistic and

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technical means continually responded to his artistic explorations, as he became involved with new media, specifically ceramics, sculpture and graphics. Despite the fact that the influence of Surrealism had waned, his work continued to embody issues that were vital to specific communities of artists in the second half of this century.

The goal of this dissertation is to begin to fill in these gaps in the discussion of Lam's career. I have undertaken the chronicling of Lam's life during this period, as well as a discussion of the various critical responses to his work in the different contexts within which it was seen. For the first time such information is brought to bear on an analysis of the stylistic developments in Lam's work (including his engagement with other media during this period). To accomplish this entailed a thorough analysis of the aforementioned publications on Lam's work, which provided useful points of reference with which to begin to reconstruct the late career. I also relied on the testimony of individuals - indicated in the acknowledgements - who knew Lam. The first-hand account of Lou Laurin Lam, who shared twenty-five of Lam's last thirty-five years, was critical.

The archives which Madame Lam and her associates have been compiling since the artist's death towards a forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Lam's work was also a rich source of information. Having access to this photographic

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record of Lam's work, and the collection of exhibition catalogues and monographic studies was essential for my comprehension of his late work, and critical to my ability to formulate an appropriate stylistic analysis. I was also privy to private papers and the artist's extensive collection of articles on him and his work, which I was able to organize and evaluate. These files yielded the most complete record of Lam criticism and information for his later chronology, and this dissertation marks the first time that this material has been presented. It has also informed the revised and expanded chronology of Lam's life and work, which I prepared for the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Lam's painting.

While this study has focused on the chronicling of Lam's late career, what also has emerged is a view of "post Surrealist" tendencies in Europe, the United Stated, Latin American and the Caribbean. In this I have benefitted from the revisionist analyses of Abstract Expression by Ann Gibson, David Craven and Michael Leja, which complement the usual chronologies of modernist and post-modernist art. I have also consulted the surveys of post-World War II European and American art history which has been the focus of several exhibitions organized by the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris during the last fifteen years, including Paris/Paris, Créations en France, 1937-1957 (1981), Les Annés 50 (1988), and, most recently

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the catalogue of the exhibition, Post War Paris: Art and Existentialism, organized by the Tate Gallery, London in 1993. These studies have enabled me to project this discussion into an analysis of Lam's work as a proposed paradigm for a culturally-specific modernist art, which, it is hope, will indicate the importance of his career in the context of 20th Century Art History, and clarify the place of artists whose careers have followed a similar trajectory to that of Wifredo Lam.

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NOTES: Introduction

1. Full bibliographic reference will be provided in the main text of this dissertation, as each source is cited.

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CHAPTER 1: THE ESSENTIAL WIFREDO LAM, 1923-46

The Journey Back to Cuba: Lam's Arrival in Paris.

On May 22, 1938, Wifredo Lam arrived in Paris from Barcelona. A Cuban national, Lam had fought on the side of the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War. As he arrived in Paris, Barcelona was succumbing to the Nationalist forces.[1] In the life of Wifredo Lam history and destiny have intervened to predicate the course of his life and career in a most peculiar way. While any number of individuals - especially artists and intellectuals - would face displacement, upheaval even death because of one or more of the major global conflagrations of this century, during his lifetime Lam lived through and was directly effected by a racial war in Cuba, the First World War, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the Algerian War, and the Cuban Revolution. These experiences led him to espouse a myriad of movements in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the United States, whose agendas were predicated on social progress through an empowering of the masses.

Lam, however, rarely made public speeches, rarely signed manifestoes, and generally avoided polemical rhetoric. However, he was unwavering in his view that his art was an instrument of political and cultural liberation.

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A Cuban of African, Spanish and Chinese descent Lam managed to establish a place for himself where not many non-white artists had before. He demonstrated the possibility of personal liberation and expanded opportunity for a generation of artists, by providing a cogent and pertinent example in his career for their own painterly ambitions. This he was able to do because of the particular milieu he gained access to in Paris in the late 1930s.

Encounter with the School of Paris: Positioning the "Primitive" Within "Primitivism".

When Lam arrived in Paris in 1938 he had already spent fifteen years in Spain. During the 1920s his work was characterized by a postcard realism (fig. 1.1) as well as a florid orientalist symbolism (fig. 1.2). He also adapted post-cubist figural tendencies similar to those to be found in the School of Paris in the 1920s and among currents of contemporary Spanish art. Although the surrealist phase of his work is thought to have been initiated through his contact with the French group after 1939, Lam had experimented with biomorphism and dream imagery in the early 1930s. These images (fig. 1.3) reflect currents in Spanish surrealism in Madrid and Spain, seen in the work of Benjamín Palencia, Alfonso Olivares and Salvador Dalí.[2]

During the next few years, in the mid 1930s, Lam's work begins to show a simplification and fragmentation of form

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that resembled stain glass windows. The influence of Joaquin Torres-Garcia (who lived in Spain between 1932 and 1934) on Lam's work has been cited by Maria Lluïsa Borrás.[3] More certain is the influence of Matisse, whose impact on Lam's work during the period 1934-36 is evident in the strong outlines, sumptuous color and the exotically decorated interiors of works such as Two Nudes (fig. 1. 4).[4]

In 1936 Lam saw an exhibition of the work of Picasso which toured Spain on the eve of the Spanish Civil War. It made a great impression on him as he would reminisce later:

> The first time you look at a picture by Picasso. You are surprised by the energy of the form...more than all the artistic achievement of the old masters...what mattered to me was communication. And it was in front of Picasso's work that I at last understood: a picture is a proposal made to others. My own painting, despite my particular mental circumstances, is a general proposal - a proposal of democracy, if you like - made to all men.[5]

The impact of Picasso can be seen in the more angular, sculptural character of Lam's work after 1936. Strong outlines continue to articulate the planes of the body which now become more angular. Breasts, collarbones and shoulder blades are summarized in a zig-zag motion, approximating the formal synthesis of human anatomy seen in sculptural conventions from Africa. The faces assume a more mask-like quality: eyes slit in the fashion called "coffee bean,"[6] and the mouth as two parallel lines, as seen in La Manchega (fig. 1.5). The other distinguishing elements that appeared at this time were the elongated feet and hands, which would distinguish Lam's figures throughout his career.

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While these changes in Lam's work are most often attributed to Picasso, they may be more directly predicated on the direct observation of African art.[7] Picasso himself seems to have recognized this connection. As Lam has recounted, one of their first conversations was about an African sculpture in Picasso's collection at his studio on rue des Grands Augustins:

> After greeting me Picasso led me to a room where there were African sculptures. I was especially attracted to one - a head of a horse...[which]...seemed to be alive. "What a beautiful sculpture!" he said...and added: "You should be proud! "Why?" I asked. "Because this sculpture was made by an African and you have African blood."[8]

This exchange affirms what Lam's position will be within the context of the international art scene. Subsequently André Breton acknowledged the impact of Lam's arrival into the School of Paris in the essay he wrote for Lam's 1942 exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. Breton notes Europe's long fascination with Africa, expressed in the formal innovations of Cubism and in private and public collecting of African art. He postulates that this fascination explains why, out of any number of young painters, Picasso has shown such a vivid interest in Lam:

> Probably Picasso saw in Lam the only affirmation he could have, that of a man who had reached a similar state to his own by taking the opposite path. He [Lam] drew on the marvelous primitive within himself to achieve the highest level of perception - assimilating the most erudite training in European art, this level of perception was the point at which he made contact with Picasso who was the most accomplished master in his discipline, but who admitted that it was necessary for him [Picasso] to return to this level of perception in order to be retribalized by the marvelous.[9]

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Lam's presence in the Parisian art world coincided with two of the key conceptual elements of modernism. First, Lam, like the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo,[10] served to justify the Surrealists's preoccupation with the "merveilleux," the "marvelous," defined by René Passeron as

> The supreme aesthetic category of Surrealism. The very essence of beauty...an impassioned fusion of wish and reality..where poetry and freedom are one...[in the work of André Breton] the "sole source of eternal communication between human beings."[11]

The sources of this quality were perceived to be in primitive art, the art of children, the mentally disturbed and in intuitive or folk art. As an Cuban of African and Chinese descent, Lam by his very existence personified the "marvelous," which in the Paris of the 1920s, and 30s had been especially appreciated in the work of black performers - most notably Josephine Baker - and in the music from the United States which emanated from that community: jazz.

This taste for things "African," which Rosalind Krauss has dubbed "Black Deco,"[12] resonated in the pages of Surrealist journals. Initially evoked by the thirst to achieve spiritual revitalization and effect a rupture with academicism, this sensibility soon translated into a cultural ideology that went far beyond mere appropriation. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, in particular, members such as René Crevel, Jacques Viot, as well as Breton, questioned the assumed hegemony of European values and culture, and

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astutely examined the political and economic situation of colonized cultures.[13] Lam's work, then, defined by Breton as an authentic counterpoint to the appropriated africanism of Picasso, became in the context of surrealism the painterly manifestation of such political goals.

Interlude in Marseilles.[14]

One result of Lam's association with Picasso was an introduction to the dealer Pierre Loeb who gave Lam an exhibition in his Galerie Pierre in 1939 ("Wifredo Lam, Paintures," June 30 - July 14). Lam's exhibition was the last in Loeb's gallery in Paris before he fled the oncoming German forces. He showed in this exhibition figure studies of the later 1930s with marked Africanizing characteristics: the aforementioned Femme aux cheveux longs, 1938, Père et enfant, 1938 (fig. 1.6), Douleur de l'Espagne, 1938 (fig. 1.7), Nu Assis, 1939 (fig. 1.8), as well as other figural compositions such as Deux grands nus (fig. 1.9) which showed an opening up of the forms and an emphasis on draftsmanship versus volume.[15] This exhibition elicited an enthusiastic response from the art press. Charles Theophile noted Lam's "atavistic sense of form" which he compared to Pre-Columbian sculpture, and praised his work for its "interior rhythm" and "feeling of gravity and delicacy...an astonishing right sense of composition and spatial distribution of color values and form."[16] Writing in Le Soir, Georges Besson

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observed that Lam's "exotic themes were not new but that is not important. The essential thing is that he renews them. The seduction of his harmonic research and the grandeur of his decorative construction are incontestable."[17] This exhibition was followed by one at the Klaus Perls Gallery in New York in November, 1939, which was arranged by Perls's mother Kathe who had a gallery in Paris on the rue du Dragon.[18]

Within one year the Germans entered Paris on June 14, 1940. Lam closed his studio, and after entrusting its contents - with the exception of a few gouaches which he carried with him [19] - he fled Paris and gradually made his way to Marseille.[20] There he was reunited with Breton and a few of the Surrealists, who along with other dissident intellectuals and Nazi targets were negotiating passage out of France.[21] The eight months that Lam spent in Marseilles (July 1940 to March 1941) proved to be a crucial moment in his artistic development, for it was during this time that he executed the drawings that first manifested the hybrid imagery that would become his signature.[22]

As a group these drawings are often called the Fata Morgana drawings because several were the basis of illustrations which Lam did for Breton's poem completed in December of 1940. They are a fascinating chronicle of the terror, anxiety and uncertainty being experienced by the artist and those around them. Traumatized family groups are

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seen in several drawings: the figures literally interlocked like pieces of puzzles as they grimace, howl, and clutch at themselves and each other (fig. 1.10), while in other drawings, avatars of militarism sport hands sheathed in spiked armor (fig. 1.11).

The most interesting apparition in these drawings are the predecessors of the so-called "femme-cheval," or horse-headed woman (fig. 1.12). Initially she emanated from Picasso's Minotauromachy suite of the mid-1930s and the expressive figuration of Guernica and related paintings and drawings.[23] Elements such as the vertical alignment of eyes, multiple facial features, etc. are seem in tandem with decorative elements such as stars, branches of leaves, cart-wheels, repeated meanders, which seem more Matisse-like in character. Certain of these figures begin to manifest iconographic elements that indicate the visual punning that marries elements associated with the Caribbean with the formalism of Cubism. These include the bulbous chin which evokes both the papaya fruit and male testicles; and the flowing hair which translates variously and sometimes simultaneously as water, hair and the tail or mane of a horse.[24] The degree of inventiveness which Lam accomplishes in these composites is also evident at this time. In one of the drawings illustrating Fata Morgana (fig. 1.13), the profile of the angelic woman appears in a conglomerate of grasping, crawling creatures that gyrate around her. (This

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character, which can be seen in subsequent drawings and paintings in the period 1941-42, is based on the physiognomy of Helena Holzer, the young German-born scientist Lam met in Barcelona, and whom he would marry in 1944). The image of this besieged being is reminiscent of those of tormented sinners in Hieronymus Bosch's Garden's of Earthly Delights, a treasure of the Prado Museum, to which Lam was particularly drawn to during his years in Madrid.[25]

The Return to Cuba and Afro-Cubanism.

On March 24, 1941, Lam and Holzer, along with Breton and his family, Victor Serge and his wife, Benjamin Péret and Claude Lévi-Strauss, were among three hundred passengers who crowded onto the Capitaine Paul Lemerle bound for Martinique. After about a month they landed at Fort-de-France where they were lodged in a former hospital on Trois Isles. During their six week stay, Breton and Lam met Aimé Césaire, his wife Suzanne and René Ménil, who had just begun to publish the revue Tropiques, a journal of cultural polemics. Inspired by the example of Surrealist publications, the Césaires and Ménil were embarked on a project to define an Antillean identity as a mode of cultural liberation. It was in Tropiques that Pierre Mabille would publish the first extensive article on Lam's work in 1944.[26]

In July, 1941 the group began to disperse: Breton and

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his family to New York, Serge and his son with Lam and Holzer to the Dominican Republic from whence they continued onto Mexico. While Holzer had obtained a visa for Mexico while they were in Marseilles, Lam was not able to get one for himself in the Dominican Republic.[27] They eventually went to Cuba at the beginning of August, 1941, still intending to attempt to secure a Mexican visa for Lam. Lam and Holzer first found lodging in Havana, and by December, 1942 moved to the suburb of Marianao.[28] There Lam began to work on The Jungle, which would become his best-known work, and the first resolution of his signature style and iconography.

The works that Wifredo Lam executed between 1941 and 1945 are characterized by a peculiar melding of cubist and surrealist vocabularies with iconographic elements that allude to the cosmology and practices of African based religions that have survived in Cuba. Gerardo Mosquera has described Lam's work as "the fruit of Cuban and Caribbean culture," making him "the pioneer of a Third World performance on the contemporary stage."[29] It is "a vision of Africa-in-America."[30] In the iconography and the related stylistic developments of his work of the 1940s, Lam had come full-circle back to his youthful upbringing and education in Sagua le Grande where he had been initiated into the symbology and practices of Lucumi by the woman chosen to be his godmother, Matonica Wilson. He ultimately

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decided against continuing this training during his early adolescence.[31] When he returned to Cuba in 1941 he was able to reconnect with the traditions of his native country.[32] He described his situation:

> I went to Europe to escape from my homeland. I though this journey would resolve everything. But in Europe I encountered other problems as oppressive as those I left behind. My return to Cuba meant above all, a great stimulation of my imagination, as well as the exteriorization of my world. I responded always to the presence of factors which emanated from our history and our geography, tropical flowers and black culture.[33]

This response to what Lam called "La cosa negra"[34] did not occur in a vacuum. The influence of Lam's association with the Surrealists, and their celebration of non-western cultural manifestations has been noted. In Cuba it complemented the particular direction that modernist movements on the island took during the 1920s, 30s and 1940s. As discussed by art historians Giulio Blanc and Juan Martínez in their respective work on Cuban art,[35] starting the 1920s "Afro-Cubanismo" became a vehicle by which Cuban national identity was defined in the intellectual circles of the islands. That identity or "cubanidad,"[36] "implied bonds based on one's place of birth, citizenship and identity as members of a modern nation [i.e. Cuba]."[37] Vanguard groups such as the Grupo Minorista, whose membership included artists as well as writers and intellectuals, the Sociedad de Folklore Cubana (founded by anthropologist Fernando Ortíz, a pioneer in the study of Afro-Cuban culture), were, in the works of Blanc, "catalysts for a profound change in

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Cuban culture, one that emphasized Afro-Cuban and folkloric elements and led to their serious treatment in works of art, literature and music."[38] It was developments in European modernism that served as the impetus for what Giulio Blanc has called the "cultural renaissance" in Cuba. Closer to home accomparable interest in a national modern art could be found in Mexico, where artists of the government-suppored mural movement "documented the pre-Columbian and folk heritage of their country."[39]

These ideas were disseminated by means of literary and cultural journals. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, Nicolás Guillén had published in Camagüey Grafico and founded the review Lis to provide a forum for modernist literature and Guillén's own efforts in poetry for which he initially could find no outlets.[40] Guillén adapted the lyric conventions and rhythms of popular black Cuban music and dance traditions such as the "son," as well as popular slang and nonsense phrases was one of the most profound examples of Afro-Cubanism, and stands as a literary counterpoint to the painting of Lam and his artist contemporaries.[41] Revista de Avance, the journal of the Grupo Minorista, was published between 1927 and 1930, and about this time the literary supplement of the Diario de la Marina, the most important newspaper in Cuba at that time, was edited by José Antonio Fernández de Castro.[42] Poet and writer Alejo Carpentíer, who was closely associated with the

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Surrealists in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s, wrote on Cuban music for Documents.[43] During the 1940s, having returned to Cuba, Carpentíer became one of Lam's most important allies. Parallel developments were also occurring in music, and throughout the 1920s composers such as Alejandro Garcia Catula and Amadeo Roldan explored similar themes in their work.[44]

The artists of the so-called "Generation of 1927" who were suffused in the Afro-Cubanist movement included Manuel García Valdes (known as Victor Manuel), considered to be the founder of Cuban modernist painting, Carlos Enríquez (who spent several years in the United States and was married to the painter Alice Neel from 1925-1930), Amelia Peláez del Castal, René Portocarrero, Fidelio Ponce de Leon and Teodoro Ramos Blanco, who also spent time in the United States and was a friend of the African American poet Langston Hughes.[45] This group also numbered among its members Mario Carreño, Eduardo Abela, Antonio Gallorno, Arístes Fernandez, Jorge Arch and Marcelo Pogolotti.[46] Most of these artists had spent time in Europe or the United States, and all in one way or another posed a challenge to the academic hierarchy in Cuba, represented by the artist Leopoldo Romanach, and the Academia San Alejandro, where even Lam had studied before leaving for Spain. Their work shows a variety of stylistic tendencies to be found in the School of Paris between the two world wars, which has been adapted to the

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depiction of folk life and rural life in Cuba demonstrating its multi-racial cast.[47]

Typical of this work was the painting of Carlos Enríquez, whose evocative overlapping imagery depicting mulattos and the lush Cuban countryside, is seen in Cuban Outlaw of 1943 (Collection Mr. and Mrs. Ramón Cernuda).[48] Alfred Barr wrote that Enríquez's work "suggests the legendary violence and sensuality of his country by fusing desperados, galloping horses, figures of women and the windy, rolling Cuban landscape into tornados of iridescent color."[49] The dreamlike character of his work would have been appreciated by the Surrealists, and this type of imagery can also be seen in the work of Eduardo Abela, whose 1948 painting, Triumph of the Rumba (Museo nationcial de bellas artes, Havana)[50] again emphasizes the romantic, anecdotal aspect of Afro-Cuban life. Victor Manuel captured a similar escapist romanticism in his portraits of "racially mixed, Madonna-like peasant women, characterized by their simple line and color...[evoking]...a mood of wishful nostalgia"[51] as seen in his Tropical Gypsy of 1929 (Museo nacaional de bellas artes, Havana)[52]. Ponce de León's painting is infused with a sincere religious feeling both in subject matter and style. It evidences his appreciation of the work of Spanish artists such as El Greco and Murillo, reflected in his elongated figures, whose vibrating, tenebrous forms are inevitably painted in neutral beiges,

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ochres and grays with occasional pale blues and pinks.

In contrast to the romantic figuration, or proto-Cubism of these artists, the work of Amelia Peláez, on the other hand, featured bold colors encased in and in tandem with bold black lines that effect a dynamic decorative character to her work, and as seen in her Fishes of 1943 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)[53] was more adventurous stylistically. Peláez's still life compositions and views out of the balcony windows of her familial home in old Havana can also be seen in the work of René Portocarrero, whose work is distinguished by a richly modulated surface where the individual elements in the composition are atomized into densely colored and decorated units. His Interior del Cerra of 1943 (Private Collection)[54] shows the typical jewel-like, yet suffocating ambiance that permeates his paintings. The subject matter of Peláez and Portocarrero tends to be more intimate and personal, and what exoticism there is can be found in the ornate, private world of Cuban bourgeois life.

The work of Mario Carreño carried over the anecdotal representation of Afro-Cuban culture, but in a style which revealed an earlier post-Cubist classicism (developed in Italy in the 1920s). By the 1940s, he had evolved into a more robust, vibrant expressionism seen in his Afro Cuban Dance of 1945 (Present collection unknown).[55] At various points in his career, he, along with Roberto Diago,

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attempted a hybrid imagery, uniting vegetal and human, human and demonic presences that Lam exploited in his work. The work of Luis Martínez-Pedro and Mariano Rodriguez may also be mentioned in this context. Mariano (as he is known) achieved especial notice for his depictions of robust, bellicose roosters, whose pervasive use as a sacrificial animal in Afro-Cuban rituals, and symbolism as an affirmation of Cuban nationhood, virility, and pride, made these works literal icons of Cuban modern art.

Lam's Cuban Work in the 1940s: Mediating the Sacred and the Profane.

Lam's engagement of Afro-Cuban myth was distinguished from that of his contemporaries in its focus on capturing the experiential essence of a metaphysical world rather than engaging anecdotal detail. The stylistic character of Lam's response to and engagement of "la cosa negra" is exemplified in his work of the 1940s, particularly that of 1942-46. Its first and most impressive resolution came in his 1942-43 painting, The Jungle (fig. 1.14), which has been in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art since 1945. The composition is filled with myriad hybrids: plant and human, masked and unmasked, with accompanying accouterments that indicate the symbolic import of the whole. the rigid angles and geometry of classical Cubism's urbanized formal structures have been supplanted by a vocabulary steeped in

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the organic world of nature.

The Jungle has often been seen as a response to the dissection and angular codification of form depicted by Picasso in his Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (Museum of Modern Art, New York), painted some 35 years earlier.[56] But while a sub-plot of the Picasso is that of prostitution, Lam presents personifications of the nature-deities associated with Afro-Cuban religion.[57] What Lam has achieved is a transposition of familiar modernist modalities,[58] a strategy that Charles Merewether has described as functioning like a "hall of mirrors." He writes: "...it was not simply one culture reflecting off the other. It was rather, Afro-Cuban culture mirrored in the eyes of the West and the West mirrored in the eyes of its other -in this case Afro-Cuban culture."[59] The fact of Lam's being an Afro-Cuban in a culture that promoted its Afro-Cuban component as an expression of its national identity further complicates the refractions. The "crucial interpretive problem," writes Merewether, in considering Cuban modernists, is "how the colonial (the other) appears or is produced as a subject within European modernism, and how that modernism appears and then develops within a colonial context."[60] He comprehends the Cuban strategy of "nationalizing" the primitivist enterprise, as has been discussed by Juan Martínez, "in order to challenge the West and the colonial dynamic."[61]

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In addition to figure compositions Lam explored the rituals and customs as well as the apparitions of the possessed nature of Afro-Cuban cosmology[62] in still life compositions and landscapes. Julia Herzberg has noted that still life compositions contain "camouflaged references to the orishas and the ceremonies in their honor."[63] Thus the pipe, newspaper, bowl of fruit, city view out a window, musical instrument of Cubism, are recast by candles, horseshoes (symbol of Ogun), egg-like forms, double headed axes (symbol of Chango), double bull horns (symbol of Oya) in compositions such as Altar for Elegua (fig. 1.15). These collections of objects in Lam's work refer to altars - installations with which humans "summon and communicate with or appease the metaphysical world."[64] Altars also hold the up-tuned cupped heads that represent the mounds of cement which signify Elegua, and various fruits, banana leaves, palm fronds, etc., and animals represent offerings appropriate to each orisha.[65]

Paintings such as The Eternal Presence (fig. 1.16), one of Lam's most important compositions of the 1940s, have also been interpreted as representions of the orishas, or deities who are the focus of altar-making. While Lam has interpreted the four figures in The Eternal Presence in more secular terms,[66] Julia Herzberg has identified the four figures as (from left to right) the Yoruba orishas Oshun, Eleggua, Ogun and Ochosi:

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> Oshun, orisha of the river and fresh water deity...uses her sensuality to win conflicts. According to legend, Oshun entices Ogun out of the woods by luring him with honey, an element with which she is associated, and the bird in Oshun's hand could be interpreted as a reference to this tale. Eleggua's...presence is manifested...in the ...little round head with horns...and by the votive image at the lower right...Ogun, the warrior, blacksmith deity is symbolized by the knife in the and of the figure at the right, which when used in a ritual sacrifice is guided by the orisha's power. Ochosi, the god of the hunt and of the mysteries of the forst, keeps close company with Ogun and Elegua...In this painting the lance, one of Ochosi's symbols, serves to identify the orisha.[67]

In this painting and in The Jungle, the landscape is often an integral part of Lam's figural compositions, depicting the "dense, lush, natural wildlife of his country...anthropomorphized landscapes brought to life by natural forces...[with]...animated flora...[that]...is almost impenetrable."[68] While the interpretation of Lam's work inevitably evokes the paradigm of syncretism, it must also be remembered that much of the detail is empirically based. Photographs of the artist in the garden of the house he rented on the outskirts of Havana, show the complete roster of elements in his paintings: the broad palm trees, the hanging papaya, and the banana stands (fig. 1.17).

As Lam explored the incorporation of themes related to Afro-Cuban religions in his work between 1941 and 1946, he was also working through several stylistic modes. The paintings Lam executed in late 1941 and early 1942, such as Nude on Chair, fig. 1.18) and Holiday (fig. 1.19) show a further evolution to the conflation of human form, interior furniture and architecture, and still life elements which

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can be observed in the Marseille drawings. In some paintings, such as Déesse avec feuillage (1942, fig. 1.20), the figure is literally invaded by foliage, and the latter particular serves as a predecessor of the human/plant metamorphs of The Jungle. In these paintings the figure and the background have also become more enmeshed with one another. The episodes of drawings and painting alternate with one another in a dynamic way, and the focus of the pictorial energy retreats from the edges of the compositions and is concentrated in the center of the canvas of paper. As seen in Les yeux de la grille (fig. 1.21), the horse head in several compositions of 1942 splits open into a "t" formation, and portions of the drawing/outline/contour are painted over creating a visual course through the structure in a manner reminiscent of Cézanne's "passages." The decorative quality in these works continue to evoke Matisse. At the same time Lam was also painting single figures in pale, pastel color, which demonstrated a wide-variety of treatments of the femme-cheval. These works were often created on brown kraft paper with gouache applied thinly and dryly so that the stipples of the brush lent a textural quality to the paint surface and the color of the paper showed through the paint.

The 1942 painting, Le Bruit (fig. 1.22), is one of the earlier representations of the female figure in a specifically Caribbean locale. The figure stands in the

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middle of the composition with one hand by her side, her right hand raised to her temple. Her contained form contrasts with those in other compositions wehre the figures are more fragmented. The woman in Le Bruit begins to take on the person of an orisha or devotee, spouting two appendages out the top of her head: one half of a pair of goat horns, the other a displaced digit from her right hand. She is surrounded by a dense layering of gigantic leaves (it is difficult to decide if they are palm or tobacco leaves), which are anchored by three cane stalks. The figure begins to merge with this ambiance by sharing its color. In The Jungle (Personage with Scissors) of 1942 (fig. 1.23), a predecessor to the 1942-43 composition, the physique of the figures is more interdispersed with the surrounding vegetation. Breasts mimic fruit hanging off stalks and vice versa; limbs approximate cane stalks, and a repetition of forms suggest motion or at least a fugitive state of being. In Nude in Chair, the figure intersects with the decorative tiles of the interior and the chair from which she has risen.

The Jungle of 1942-43 was the culmination of all these tendencies in Lam's work to date: the Cubistic elements, the visual punning and mimicry and the hybridization of form. During 1943 Lam also created Malembo, God of the Crossroads (fig. 1.24), and The Green Morning, as well as Omi Obini (fig. 1.25) and Oque Orisha in which the figure is set

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within the landscape. In these and other works of 1943-45, Lam begin employing a "pointillist" style to achieve a visual integration between figure and ground in the continuous repetition of discrete daubs or strokes of vari-colored paint. This technique is also seen in still life compositions, such as Altar for Elegua, Altar for Yemanja, and Table in the Garden (fig. 1.26), to outline the forms of the compositions, which are left white, conveying the visual experience of the brilliant, reflective light of the Caribbean. It was this year also that Lam painted Oya (fig. 1.27), with loose, freely dripping paint, leaving some of the underlying pencil or charcoal lines visible. This is also observed in The Annunciation of 1944 (fig. 1.28), where the application of paint approximates watercolor, and the paint is concentrated in areas of intensity, while the rest of the images hover of the edge of perception.

Oya was also one of the paintings in which the diamond-shaped "rhomboid" heads appeared for the first time. It was to be a constant element in Lam's work from then on, and was the central compositional motif of Antillean Parade of 1945 (fig. 1.29), and several other related compositions. During this year Lam began to reduce his palette, often to a single monochromatic black or brown. In works such as Butinantes, Those of the Swinging Door and Sur les Traces (fig. 1.30), the pointillist technique is used to stipple in shades of grey and black around the objects again, so that

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the play of black and white. Positive and negative elements is used to great effect. In The Eternal Presence, also of 1945, Lam also suppresses the use of color to several radiant elements at the upper left and top edges of the painting. His sure, suave line, and sturdy modeling in this work effects figures of such compelling power, that it can be considered one of the artist's finest works.

During 1942 and 1945, therefore, Lam worked in a multitude of variations on his style. While the preceding discussion seeks to summarize the most typical manifestations, Lam also executed works of a more ponderous, and ornate character. He also recycled elements from the Africanizing work of 1938-40 for figures endowed with mask-like faces. This is especially evident in a series of depictions of seated women (fig. 1.31), in which the sturdy modeling of the heads recall Picasso's synthetic cubist period, and contrast vividly with Lam's "open-ended" rendering of the other elements in the composition. These paintings, which date from 1944, portray Helena Holzer, whom Lam married that same year.

In all of these works, Lam was grappling with the challenge of representing the metaphysical world in direct contact with the empirical one. He achieved this not only by creating a new race of metamorphic beings, but also through the devices of overlapping images, contrasting painted and unpainted surfaces, heavy with delicate lines. The most

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effective depiction of the intrusion of the metaphysical into "real" space can be found in The Watchful Spirit of 1944 (fig. 1.32), in which a room, whose ceiling, upper wall and shuttered window can be seen at the upper portion of the painting, is literally "invaded" by rhomboid and winged forms whose auric beings trail and emanate pellets of color. It is as if a portal has been opened up to admit the denizens of another world into ours. Lam would refer to such a contact point again in his 1950 painting Umbral (fig. 1.33) in which three large elongated rhomboid figures would also guard the point of entry/exit between worlds of existence.

While there are varying opinions about the extent to which Lam's work represents a theological veracity or iconographic specificity with regard to Afro-Cuban religions, there is no doubt that his use of Afro-Cuban symbology enhances the formal nature of his work with contextual meaning.[69] Lam may be described at once as believer and philistine.[70] He evoked the names of the African gods, but dared not risk breaking taboos by using sacred symbology in a profane context. This can be understood in his depiction of metaphysical forces and influences. There is for example, no traditional African means to depict the orishas. In the Americas their devotees appropriated the images of Catholic saints as surrogates for what are essentially forces of nature, forces controlling

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human existence. In Lam's symbology it would seem that the rhomboid forms represented his special way of depicting the apparition of the orishas as seen in Antillean Parade.[71]

While the origin of this form in Lam's work is not clear, there are several cultural signifiers which can be suggested. Robert Ferris Thompson, for example, has observed the recurrence of diamond shapes, also extended into criss-crosses, and triangles representing the four direction or the "four-point boundaries of the soul's orbit" in west and central African art forms.[72] In his 1976 monograph on Lam, Max-Pol Fouchet suggested that this lozenge shape also represented the vulva, and with the associated phallic symbolism of the snake (another form which appears in Lam's work in the late 1940s) would, again signal the union of male and female.[73] Fouchet continues noting that the rhomboid was an opening to admit "chthonian forces" and also observes that in Chinese symbology the lozenge is a symbol of victory.[74] The triangles which comprise these diamond shapes - and which also appear along with the rhomboid shapes - also has several meanings in esoteric belief. The inverted triangle signifies water, or the male, which in union with the right-side-up triangle (signifying fire or the female) forms a six-pointed star which connects into a hexagon representing the union of the sexes.[75] The triangle is also the central form of the hermetic scheme of the universe representing heaven, air, earth and water.[76] Julia

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Herzberg has noted that the diamond shape divided into four sections containing circles (as seen in Lam's 1947 painting, The Triangle, fig. 1.34) can relate also to the symbology of the Abakua society in Cuba known as the Ñañigos.[77] This shape also is a stylized version of the conical headdress of the Yreme or diablito (spirit of the dead) also associated with the Ñañigos, which, as noted above, appears in several works by Cuban modernists in the 1940s, including Mario Carreño's Afro Cuban Dance, Luis Martínez-Pedro's Musicos of 1948 (Private Collection)[78], and including Lam's own Composition [Ñañigo] of 1943 (fig. 1.35).

Lam's ability to synthesize such diverse cultural elements parallels the syncretism of African, European, Native American and Asian elements in Afro-Cuban culture. In Lam's 1944 painting Annunciation he presents an artful synthesis of an event associated with Christianity - i.e. the announcing to the young Mary that she is to be the mother of God - with elements from African art, and Afro-Cuban ritual practice. The figure of the Virgin at the left of the composition evidences a multiplicity of wings, and a visage that seems to divide itself between the mask-like head which sprouts hands and a snout topped by multiple candle flames, and an inverted round head. Beneath this, faintly drawn in, are several tiers of cloven feet, soem in the high-heeled footwear that Lam uses to designate the profane world. The angel of the Annunciation is the awesome

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masked figure on the right, also endowed with multiple facial planes and features. The figure is horned as well as winged, and seems to be draped in a stippled leopard-skin garment, which along with the horseshoe elements and repeated doubled horn signify an intense masculine power associated with spiritual entities such as Ogun, the orisha of war, and Chango the thunders orisha in Yoruba culture.[79]

This type of overlapping symbolism is typical of mechanism of syncretism or masking which African slaves conceived to hide their observances of their traditional rites under the cloak of Catholicism. The peculiar manifestations of masking was achieved often by an examination of comparable metaphysical qualities and powers between saints and orishas, or even more prosaic elements such as comparable color attributes or accoutrements.[80] In some cases this resulted in a type of cross-gendering, referred to above, exemplified in the masking of Chango, a male orisha, with Santa Barbara, a female saint. In Lam's work allusions to transgendering can be seen in the recurring hermaphroditic characteristics of Lam's figures, specifically the chins that mimic testicles on the femme cheval. In the way that non-Christian religions have been "demonized," Lam notes that when he was painting The Jungle his neighbors thought it was deviltry and admonished passersby not to look at the painting.[81]

As noted above, this syncretism overlaps with

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alchemical or esoteric codes, and as Marta Barrio-Garsd notes, this was a significant element in Lam's work during the 1940s:

> The idea of metamorphosis or of transmutation inherent to the alchemical process also brought the Surrealists a metaphor appropriated to describe a certain ideal of the psychic transformation of mankind. Perhaps it is because of this that, among the numerous symbols borrowed from alchemy, it is possible to find a predominance of images tied to the idea of perpetual change in the work of Lam from the period of 1942-1950.[82]

Roberto Cobas Amate, furthermore notes that "Lam achieves an incredible fusion of elements incorporating principles of European hermeticism with the African religions of the Caribbean. His work gained a new depth and universal concept to create a visual code that permitted him to freely convey these ideas in a symbolic language."[83] And Enrique Sosa Rodríguez asserts "there are a considerable number of elements common to both the Ñañigos and the manson. Like the Abakua society the masons have ranks which are classified in grades, and they consider the number seven to be sacred and having a mythic connotation."[84]

The crossovers from masonic and esoteric systems would have been reinforced not only by Lam's knowledge of this material, but also by the fact that by the mid-1940s Lam had been attended Ñañigo ceremonies with Alejo Carpentíer, Pierre Loeb and Eric Klieber.[85] Lam not only borrowed titles of paintings such as Hermès Trimegistus (1943, Private Collection, Mexico) and Chemical Wedding (1944, Private Collection, New York) from esoteric texts, he also

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manifested a strong sensibility for the occult in his work after 1946. This ability to evoke several traditions has led Gerardo Mosquera to assert: "There is no precise symbolism in Lam... His references to Afro-Cuban religious-cultural complexes are very indirect."[86] In his opinion, "Lam was only trying to transmit, through the topological medium of modern art, a cosmic vision conditioned by the living African factors in his culture of origin, and a general mystical sense that emanates from it."[87] Even Herzberg, despite her strong allegiance to a more "orthodox" reading of Lam's work, admits the possibility of a syncretistic relationship with esotericism. She particularly notes the instance of Elegua, who, like Hermes, is a messenger deity, who "facilitates communication among the gods and devotees."[88]

The Cuban Response to Lam.

Wifredo Lam returned to a cultural environment in Cuba that was not only predisposed to the developments his art would take in 1941-46, but also provided a context for the stylistic direction which had originated in Marseilles. Throughout the 1940s, when Lam was in closest contact with the Cuban avant-garde, however, he was always perceived as outside the main cliques. As Giulio Blanc reminds us, Lam's "long absence in Europe and his independent achievements made his an 'odd man out' among his Cuban contemporaries and

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the cliques that dominated the island's intellectual life beginning in the 1920s...Despite related career experiences and similar goals, Lam saw himself, and was seen by others, as a figure who stood apart. Although he was proud of his interpretation of Afro-Cuban myth, he eschewed superficial regional and ethnic classifications and the trivialization of Cuban culture."[89] Lam also had to contend with the expected social and economic position of Cubans of mixed race or African descent. As Giulio Blanc has noted: "Slavery had been abolished only in 1886, and for most white Cubans, Afro-Cuban culture was perceived as unworthy of serious consideration and even as a source of embarrassment. The guajiro [Cuban peasant often of mixed racial heritage] and colonial heritage, while viewed nostalgically as picturesque, represented a backward past."[90]

Despite the liberal sentiments of the group around the Grupo Minorista, Ortíz and his disciple, the folklorist and writer Lydia Cabrera, they too were often guilty of sentimentalized and eroticized depictions of the mulatto culture of Cuba that played squarely into the exploitative tourist culture against which Lam posed his own reclamation of Cuban culture. Given the pervasiveness of interest in Afro-Cuban culture during the 1940s, it is interesting to speculate on the development of Lam's particular political consciousness which cut through the liberal pretensions and distinguished his voice within this context. Max-Pol Fouchet

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has postulated that Lam's class consciousness had been honed by his experiences living with Spanish peasants in the hills outside Madrid, and then through his involvement in the political ferment of the Spanish Republic, and the Spanish Civil War. These experiences, notes Fouchet, revealed to him the "two faces" of Europe:

> One to borrow Lam's own terms was that of the seigneurs, the masters of material power and the possessors of the weapons needed for conquering, plundering, exploiting, colonizing. The other was that of Europe's poor...Her serfs were no different, in essence from the slaves in Cuba...But before inferring any political conclusion from this, Lam made the discovery of a **common denominator**, upon which he established his options and his work [emphasis Fouchet's].[91]

In the context of his Cuban contemporaries Lam's work, whatever its original intent, stands as a pointed alternative to the anecdotal views of Cuba, which codified the conventions of Cuban stereotypes then being exploited for the amusement of tourists, and exported for consumption by the entertainment industry in the United States and elsewhere.[92] Lam himself has noted that upon returning to Cuba from Europe in the 1940s, after an interval of almost twenty years, the social conditions of Cuban blacks and the underclass came into sharp focus for him.[93] So it might be proposed that even if Afro-Cubanism did not solve the problem of racism in Cuba, even if the consideration of Afro-Cuban culture never overcame a nostalgic romanticism, there is no question that the admission of these cultural signifiers into the overall vanguardist discourse, was liberating for African peoples throughout the diaspora, be

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they in Havana, New York, or Paris.

This paved the way for Lam to find and express his own voice. "I decided," noted Lam "that my painting would never be the equivalent of the pseudo-Cuban music for 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."[94] Suzanne Garrigues Daniel elaborates on this political issue when she interprets Lam's iconography as reflection of the political and economic situation in Cuba in the 1940s. She interprets the presence of cane stalks, broad leaves and palms fronds in Lam's work in relationship to Fernando Ortíz's 1940 study of the Cuban economy, Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar.[95] Ortíz equated "Sugar" with "slavery," and "tobacco" with "liberty," not only because of the indigenous origins of the latter versus the importation of the former, but also because of the coincidence of the importation of African slaves with the former.[96] Ortíz concludes his analysis by asserting that given the foreign domination over Cuba's sugar industry, the tobacco economy represents Cuban hegemony.[97] In this context then, the iconographical reading of Lam's work according to Afro-Cuban symbolism, is enhanced by a more subtle declaration of political intentions through the depiction of vegetation. As Daniel notes:

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> Given these racial, economic, political and historical associations with sugar cane, it is clear that the predominance of this motif in Lam's work in addition to being a symbol of femaleness, fertility and carnality is, on a socio-politico-historical level, also a symbol of slavery, exploitation, colonialism and capitalism.[98]

What sustained Lam in Cuba was the reputation he had established during his two-year residence in Paris. This was noted in a profile on him published in Diario de la Marina in August of 1941, almost immediately after he arrived in Havana from Santo Domingo. The writer makes note of his exhibition at Galerie Pierre in Paris two years earlier, and quotes extensively from the views of Charles Theophile and George Besson.[99] Lam's position within the School of Paris was happily reinforced by the arrival of Pierre Loeb and his family in Havana from Casablanca, Morocco in February, 1942.[100] Loeb and his wife Sylvie Luzzatto[101] became part of the intimate circle around Lam and Holzer, which included Carlos Riguadias and his wife Greta, Lydia Cabrera and her companion Maria Teresa Rojas, and various acquaintances who passed through Cuba at one time or another during the Second World War: Eric Klieber, Igor Stravinsky, Peter Watson, Paul Bowles and Pierre Mabille.[102]

Lam's contentious relationship with the Cuban art establishment was first overtly manifest when in 1942 he became embroiled in a conflict with Mario Carreño, José Gómez Sicre and María-Luisa Gómez Mena about the organization of an exhibition of Cuban artists, which was eventually organized at The Museum of Modern Art in 1944.

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Alfred Barr and Edgar Kaufman had visited Cuba in the summer of 1942 to survey the Cuban art scene. At this time they purchased several works by Cuban modernists (including Lam's Mother and Child of 1939), and several works were donated to the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Subsequent to that visit Lam wrote Barr saying he would not participate in the exhibition. He disgreed with the Cuban organizers, and opposed the implied ghettoization of Cuban art. His absence in the MOMA exhibition was duly noted,[103] particularly in view of the fact that during the run of that exhibition Lam was having a solo exhibition at Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, where The Jungle was seen for the first time.

Despite this disagreement, Gómez-Sicre included Lam in an exhibition of Cuban and Mexican modernist artists he organized at the Instituto Hispano-Cubano de Cultura in November, 1943, and included a chapter on Lam in his 1944 publication, Pintura cubana de hoy. For his part, Carreño discusses Lam at length in an article on Cuban painting in Latina America Libre.[104] Lam subsequently participated in several group exhibitions in Cuba and abroad (Moscow and Port-au-Prince in 1945, Mexico in 1946, Sweden and Brooklyn, New York in 1949 and Paris in 1951), and invariably his work was singled out for special attention by local critics and Cuban commentators.[105] Despite the interest in and publication and collecting of Lam's work in New York during the Second World War and the years immediately following it

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(see Chapter 4) Lam did not have a solo exhibition in Cuba until 1946, when Lydia Cabrera organized one at the exclusive Lyceum Tennis Club in Havana.

Cabrera's support was crucial, as she promoted Lam within the cultural circles of Havana in the first half of the 1940s. She published a profile on Lam in Diario de la Marina in 1943 in which she summarizes his career in Spain and Paris, and notes the various reactions to his work.[106] This profile was then excerpted for the publication accompanying Lam's 1946 solo exhibition at the Lyceum. While Cabrera in this first piece notes the seriousness of Lam's artistic enterprise and distinguishes it from mere illustration, it was not until a second article published in 1944 that she discusses the Afro-Cuban themes in his work, and the influence of the planting and vegetation in Lam's immediate surroundings on his work.[107] Lam's work was also featured in several other publications at this time. Guy Cisneros makes special reference to the significance of The Jungle painting in the Anuario Cultural de Cuba of 1943 - a full year before it was first publicly exhibited in New York. This same year a Spanish version of Aimé Césaire's epic poem, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, was published in Havana, with preliminary texts by Benjamin Péret and Lydia Cabrera and illustrations by Lam.[108] In the Spring of 1945 a work by Lam was reproduced on the cover of Origines, the vanguardist revue which succeeded Revista de Avance. On

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March 17th Nicholás Guillén published an article on Lam in Hoy, which mentioned the special interest of the Soviet critic and writer Ilya Ehrenberg in Lam's work out of the group exhibition of Cuban artists which had been sent to Moscow.[109]

In January, 1945 Pierre Mabille published an article entitled "La Jungle: de l'importance prise par la critique d'art à l'epoque contemporaine" in Tropiques, the journal edited by Aimé and Suzanne Césaire and René Ménil in Martinque. This article had been written in Havana in May, 1944 when Mabille was visiting Lam, and was at the time the most extensive and serious study of Lam's work. Mabille prefaces his discussion of Lam's work with a long prologue in which he distinguishes art crticism done to support the monetary activities of the art world, and that done to illuminate common ideals, similar ends, and express a familial spirituality (as in the case of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Surrealists). Mabille descries the fragility of such association in the face of individual egos and goals - perhaps reflecting on the situation of the dispersed Surrealist group.[110] He then launches into an indictment of European colonization and its effects specifically in the Antilles, which he designates the new Eden, noting that European, African and Asians were all transformed in this environment, while retaining memories of their respective ancestral continents.

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Mabille then reviews the events and circumstances of Lam's life, noting their first meeting at the Café Deux Magots in Paris, just after Lam had been in contact with Picasso, and their intertwined destinies in Marseilles, and the Dominican Republic. Mabille notes that when he next saw Lam in Havana he had finished The Jungle which he considered "the sign of a decisive turning point in his [Lam's] career."[111] He compares the import of this painting to the discovery of perspective in the work of the 15th century Italian artists (specifically Paolo Uccello), and notes that it is an achievement that will influence western art. Mabille claims that The Jungle will influence society in a way that goes beyond usual theological concerns directly to a higher authority. Mabille continues with a description of the ambiance of vodun rites (he is at this time the French cultural attaché to Haiti) noting that Lam work's evokes a universe where "the trees, flowers, fruits and spirits cohabit with an interrelationship that is like that of the dance."[112]

The publication of this article in Tropiques contributed to the perspective that was carefully being nurtured by the Césaires and Ménil of the uniqueness and integrity of the creole cultures of the Antilles. This "Antillean identity" was expressed, for example in Aimé Césaire's poem, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, where he writes: "I dream of a beak swollen with hibiscus and of

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virgin sentences in violet, which makes itself heard by lizards that fly to the sun."[113] The reader literally hears and smells the nostaliga for things uniquely Caribbean.[114] Lam would paraphrase the "lezards avaleurs" in the later 1940s in a painting entitled Character with lizards. Césaire cemented the Antillean context for Lam's work in his article on Lam published in Cahiers d'art in Paris in 1947.[115] He notes Lam's achievement of the physical union of man and world around him, an act which repudiates the allegation of the bastardization of Antillean culture. Césaire echoes the sentiments of Alejo Carpentíer's article on Lam, published in 1944, which Carpentíer notes that Lam's blending of human, animal and plant forms animated "a world of primitive myths with something that was ecumenically Antillean - myths that belonged not only to the soil of Cuban but the larger chain of islands."[116] Mabille article sets a prototype for the biographical approach to Lam's work which is a mixture of fact, myth and poetic allusion, which will characterize the criticism of his work for most of his career.

In 1948 Carpentíer revisited this ecumenical Antilles in his article, "Lo Real Maravilloso de America,"[117] evoking the Surrealist celebration of the "marvelous." He observed the effect of this contact with the Caribbean on the work of André Masson (who had come to Martinique on the same boat as Breton and Lam), whose drawings of unexpected

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hybrids mirror some of the drawings done by Lam in Marseilles in 1940-41. Carpentíer contrasts Masson's work with that of Lam and observes that it is in Lam's work that one finds "the magic of tropical vegetation, the profuse creation of our nature - with all its metamorphosis and symbiosis."[118] Carpentíer predicts post-war exhortations to recover humanity's lost innocence through exotic escape. As will be discussed in the next chapter, a quasi-shamanic persona was also conferred on Lam within the context of the School of Paris after the Second World War. This issue would also continue the dialogue introduced by Césaire and Carpentíer about the distinction between the authentic and the appropriated primitivism. By the 1980s, this would become a critical point in Europe and the United States as growing numbers of artists from non-European backgrounds establish a strong presence within the international art market.

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NOTES: Chapter 1.

1. For a history of the Spanish Civil War see Gabriel Jackson, The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931-39 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

2. See Lucia García de Carpi, La pintura surréalista española (1924-1936) (Madrid: Ediciones ISTMO, 1989). The stylistic affinities between Lam's surrealist works of 1929-32 and aspects of the early work of Dalí are evident. See Salvador Dalí: the early years. [exhib. cat.]. (London: South Bank Centre in association with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, and the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, 1994).

3. Maria Lluïsa Borrás, conversation with Lou Laurin Lam, Yveline Hemsi and Lowery Stokes Sims (LSS), Paris, September 19, 1989.

4. The influence of Matisse's work will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

5. Max-Pol Fouchet, Wifredo Lam (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, S.A., 1976): 108.

6. Valerie Fletcher uses this term in her essay on Lam in the catalogue, Crosscurrents of Modernism: Four Latin American Pioneers: Diego Rivera, Joaquin Torres-Garcia, Wifredo Lam, Matta (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in association with Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992): 171.

7. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the influence of Picasso and that of African art on Lam's work.

8. Wifredo Lam, "Mon amitié avec Picasso," Wifredo Lam, 1902-1982 [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1983): 13-14. (Trans. LSS.)

9. André Breton, Le surréalisme et le peinture: suivi de Genèse et perspectives artistiques au surréalisme et de fragments inédits (New York: Brentano's, Inc., 1945): 182.

10. Kahlo is quoted as saying, "I never knew I was a Surrealist until André Breton came to Mexico and told me I was one." See Hayden Herrera, Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983): 230. It might be said that Lam was in a similar situation, finding a niche, if not a clear-cut definition, of his work within Surrealist circles.

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11. René Passeron, Phaidon Encyclopedia of Surrealism (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd., and E.P. Dutton, New York, 1978): 261.

12. Rosalind Krauss, "Giacometti," in William Rubin, ed., "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern [exhib. cat.]. (New York: the Museum of Modern Art, 1984) Vol. II: 507.

13. See René Crevel, "Colonies," Le surréalisme au service de la révolution, 1 (July, 1930): 9-12; "Bobards and fariboles," also by Crevel: 178 in number 2 (October, 1930) of the same periodical, and in number 5 (May, 1933) an article by the Martinican writer Jules M. Monnerot, "A partir de quelques traits particuliers à la mentalité civilisée": 35-37. These writings would have an important influence on individuals such as the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, the Senegalese poet-politician Leopold Senghor, and their ally the Haitian writer Leon Damas. As students in Paris in the 1930s, they found through their comprehension of Surrealism and Marxism an agenda towards national hegemony in the translation of cultural initiatives into concrete political ones. See Lilyan Kesteloot, Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude, trans. by Ellen Conroy Kennedy. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974).

14. The title of this section has been borrowed from the title of Helena Holzer Benitez, Wifredo Lam: Interlude Marseilles (Copenhagen: Edition Blondel, 1993).

15. This list has been determined by the research undertaken by Maria Lluïsa Borrás, Yveline Hemsi and Eskil Lam for the forthcoming first volume of the catalogue raisonné of Lam's work.

16. Charles Theophile, "Wifredo Lam," Marianne (July, 12, 1939). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

17. George Besson, "Wifredo Lam," Le Soir, (July 12, 1939). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

18. Klaus Perls, telephone interview with LSS, New York, November, 1989.

19. Helena Holzer Benitez in conversation with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992.

20. For a description of the German entrance into Paris, specifically as it relates to Lam see Sebastiá Gasch, Wifredo Lam à Paris (Barcelona: Galeria Joan Prats): 44-46.

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21. See Benitez, op. cit. and La planète affolée: Surréalisme, dispersion et influences, 1938-1947 [exhib. cat.] (Marseille: Musées de Marseille in association with Editions Flammerion, 1986).

22. These drawings have been concentrated principally in the collection of Sara Sluger, an Argentinean who knew Lam in the early 1950s, and in a portfolio currently in the collection of Dr. Gerald Millstein of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

23. See Judi Freeman, Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie-Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar [exhib. cat.] (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Rizzoli International, New York, 1994).

24. See Lowery Sims, "Wifredo Lam: From Spain Back to Cuba," in Maria Balderrama, ed. Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries. [exhib. cat.]. (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1992): 23-24; and Suzanne Garrigues Daniel, "The Early Works of Wifredo Lam, 1941-45," (PhD. Disseration. University of Maryland, 1983. Reprint Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1991.)

25. See Fouchet, op. cit.: 74-75.

26. See Franklin Rosemont, ed., André Breton, "What is Surrealism?": Selected Writing (New York: Monad Press, 1978): 83-84, 95-96, 230-236.

27. Letter of August 2, 1941, from Lam and Holzer to the Emergency Rescue Committee. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

28. Ibid. See also Balderamma, op. cit.: 93.

29. Gerardo Mosquera, "Modernity and Africania: Wifredo Lam on His Island," in Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.] (Barcelona: Fundació Miró, 1993): 173.

30. Ibid: 174.

31. Lam's choice illustrates the conflict precipitated by the contrasting cultures of his spiritual orientation which was grounded in Africa, and that of his education and artistic training which was grounded in Europe. Lam was confronted by the bifurcation peculiar to the reality of colonized peoples: the desire to assert the integrity of one racial and cultural identity on the most basic existential level and the more sanctioned route to acceptance and advancement by assimilating into the dominant culture. By his own admission, Lam had consciously sought to distance

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himself from Lucumi, first by deciding against completing his training under his godmother, and then by leaving for Europe. "The trouble is," he would later observe, "that I'm fifty-per-cent Cartesian, and fifty-per-cent savage." (Fouchet, op. cit.: 45.) For an analysis of the politics of assimilation and acculturation see Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. by Charles Lam Markham (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), Albert Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized (New York: The Orion Press, 1965), and Hommi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," October, 28 (Spring, 1984): 131-132.

32. Even as a mulatto Lam could not have expected to have an easy time advancing in Cuban society. The social sanctions against Cubans of African and mixed parentage were formidable. Slavery persisted in Cuba as late as the 1880s. Although many African and mixed Cubans figured prominently in the struggle for independence (which came in 1902, the year of Lam's birth), by 1910 there was a growing disgruntlement among white Cubans at the social and political aspirations of Cubans of color, which were perceived to be inappropriate. The "guerrito" or "little war" of 1912 resulted in the massacre of hundreds of prominent Afro-Cubans. See Lourdes Casal, "Race Relations in Contemporary Cuba," Report No. 7: The Position of Blacks in Brazilian and Cuban Society (London: Minority Rights Group, 1984): 11-27. With regard to Lam's father, the position of "contract" labor from China in Cuba was scarcely better than that of the African slaves at whose side they worked. See Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Chinese Coolie Labor in Cuba and Peru in the Nineteenth Century: Free Labor or Neoslavery?," Journal of Overseas Chinese Studies, 2 (1992): 149-182.

33. Lam in an unpublished interview in Spanish, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

34. Ibid.

35. See Guilio V. Blanc, "Cuban Modernism: The Search for a National Ethos," Balderrama, op. cit.: 53-69, and Juan Antonio Martínez. "Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguardia Painters, 1920-1940s" (PhD Dissertation. The Florida State University, 1992. Reprint. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services.)

36. As described by Fernando Ortíz, the quality of cubanidad was "a 'condition of the soul, a complexity of sentiments, ideas and attitudes'...to be found in the quality of Cuban culture, namely its dynamic mixture of Indian, Spanish and African heritages." (Martínez, op. cit.: 80-81) In this sense, this indigenousness which characterized the Cuban, as well as the Mexican, nationalistic primitivism, is what

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distinguished it from that of Europe. See Michael Newman, "The Ribbon Around the Bomb," Art in America, 17 (April, 1983): 160-169, and Dawn Ades, Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980 [exhib. cat.] (London: South Bank Centre, 1989): 95-213. More than mere excursions into the "dark continents" of the essence of the non-European, "the other," Cuban primitivism was already firmly located in the essence of Cuban nationality. See, for example, Marianna Torgovnick for discussion of the metaphors of darkness and mystery for states of femaleness, primitiveness, otherness as codified by a number of European primitivists including Michel Leiris, Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Strauss. Torgovnick, Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

37. Martínez, op. cit.: 80.

38. Blanc, op. cit.: 57.

39. Ibid.

40. See Keith Ellis, Cuba's Nicolás Guillén: Poetry and Ideology (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985): 52-53.

41. Ibid: 65, 67-71.

42. See Blanc, op cit.: 57.

43. See Alejo Carpentíer, Chroniques. (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

44. Blanc, op. cit.: 57.

45. Ibid: 58-61.

46. See Miguel Luis Nuñez and Jorge Rigol, The National Museum of Cuba: Painting, trans. by Yury Nemetsky (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas in association with Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad, 1978).

47. See Ibid, and Blanc, op. cit.

48. Reproduced in Balderrama, op. cit.: 136, fig. 89.

49. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Modern Cuban Painters," Museum of Modern Art Bulletin XI, no. 5 (April, 1944): unpaginated.

50. Reproduced in Nuñez, op. cit.: plate 96.

51. Blanc, op. cit.: 58-59.

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52. Reproduced in Balderrama, op. cit.: 58.

53. Reproduced in Ibid: 165.

54. Reproduced in Ibid: 135.

55. Rerpoduced in Ibid: 64.

56. See John Yau, "Please Wait By the Cloak room," Arts Magazine, 63, no. 4 (December, 1988): 56-59.

57. Lam deals explicitly with prostitution - a serious social concern in Cuba in the 1940s - in his 1944 composition, The Eternal Presence. See note number 60.

58. This is perhaps most easily understood in hindsight through the work of the African American artist Robert Colescott, who developed his own re-casting of familiar compositions in the mid-1970s. In works such as George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Pages from an American History Textbook, or Natural Rhythm: Thank you Jan Van Eyck (1976), to name only two examples, Colescott recast the well-known compositions of painters Emanuel Leutze and Jan Van Eyck (The Arnolfini Wedding) with black characters to effect a conceptual coup d'état with our usual reading of these works. The substitution of a real historical African American chemist, George Washington Carver, known for his experimentation with peanuts, pointed to the neglect of the African American contribution to the history of the United States in usual school curriculum. In the other painting, the substitution of a black female for the bride addressed taboos about interracial coupling. In creating works that served as barometers for our individual social tolerances, Colescott complemented the modus operandi of Lam. Whereas Lam wanted to "depict the drama of the plastic arts of the Negro," Colescott wanted to "interject black people into art history." (See Lowery S. Sims, "Bob Colescott Ain't Misbehavin'," Artforum, XXII, no. 7 (March, 1984): 59.)

59. Charles Merewether, "At the Crossroads of Modernism: A Liminal Terrain," Wifredo Lam: A Retrospective of Works on Paper [exhib. cat.] (New York: Americas Society, 1992): 74.

60. Ibid: 15.

61. Ibid.

62. The term "Afro-Cuban" has been used as a single modifier for a range of religious manifestations in Cuba that can ben traced back to Africa. Commonly known as Santeria, what Marta Moreno Vega, Director of the Caribbean Cultural Center

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refers to as "belief systems," include several distinct dominations based on the national heritage of the Africans imported as slaves to Cuba. "Lucumi," "Ifek," and "Palo," for example refer to Yorubaland and the Calibari in Nigeria, and Ki-Kongo in what is now called Zaire. These are three of the most dominate religions in Cuba. The rituals and practices of these different religious systems often coincide and overlap in Cuba. (Marta Moreno Vega, conversation with LSS, New York, June, 1991.) See also Joseph M. Murphy, Santeria: An African Religion in America (Bronx, N.Y.: Original Publications, 1989) and Enrique Sosa Rodríguez, Los Ñañigos (Havana: Casa de las Americas, 1982).

63. Julia Herzberg, "Wifredo Lam: The Development of A Style and World View, The Havana Years, 1941-1952," Balderamma, op. cit.: 46.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Lam related to Max-Pol Fouchet that, "The figure on the left is a stupid whore. With her two mouth she feels ridiculous. From her heart comes nothing but an animal's paw. In her heterogeneity she evokes cross-breeding, the degradation of the race. The figure on the right has a knife, the instrument of integrity , but he makes no used o it, he does not fight, He suggests the indecision of the mulatto, who does not know where to go or what to do. The vessel on the right, full of rice and with a head emerging from it, represents religion, the mysteries. And in the central figure with folded limbs we can see the dream." (Fouchet, op. cit.: 204) Lam does, however, acknowledged that he inserted some elements that refer to Lucumi, citing the symbol of Chango, the Yoruba god of thunder in the upper right-hand corner of this painting. (Ibid.) This may be the double-bladed implement held in the hand which seems to emerge from an opening in the space.

67. Ibid: 44-45.

68. Ibid: 45.

69. Helena Holzer Benitez has often observed that she feel that too much emphasis has been placed on the Afro-Cuban aspect of Lam's work and not enough on his Chinese heritage, his knowledge of and interest in alchemy and esoteric thought, etc. See Marta García Barrio-Garsd, "Wifredo Lam et l'alchemie," in Wifredo Lam: dessins, gouaches, peintures [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Galerie Albert Loeb, 1987): unpaginated.

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70. See Lowery S. Sims, "Syncretism and Syntax in the Art of Wifredo Lam," Fletcher, op. cit.:221.

71. This is affirmed in considering the rhomboid shapes with radiating lines that depict the spirits that Lam captures in the ink drawings he does during his four-month stay in Haiti between December, 1945 and April, 1946. See the discussion of Lam's stylistic evolution between 1947 and 1982 in Chapter 5.

72. Robert Farris Thompson, Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas [exhib. cat.] (New York: The Museum of Africa Art in association with Prestel, Munich, 1993): 48-55.

73. Fouchet, op. cit.: 227.

74. Ibid.

75. See Herbert Silberer, Hidden Symbolism of Alchemy and the Occult Arts, trans. Smith Ely Jelliffe (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971): 194, 197.

76. See Kurt Seligmann, Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948): 105.

77. See Herzberg, op. cit.: 41.

78. Reproduced in Balderrama, op. cit.: 65.

79. See Roy Sieber, African Textiles and Decorative Arts [exhib. cat.] (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1972) for discussion of the power associations of various textures, materials and accumulation strategies in African culture.

80. See Roger Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations, trans. by Helen Sebba (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

81. Fouchet, op. cit.: 108.

82. Barrio-Garsd, op. cit.

83. "Lam lleve a cabo una increíble fusión de elementos, incorporando a las religiones negras caribeñas, algunos principios del hermetismo europeo. Su trabajo gana un nuevo espacio en profundidad y universalidad conceptual, al crear un código visual que le permite trasmitir sus ideas libremente mediante un lenguaje simbólico." Roberto Cobas Amate, "Wifredo Lam: Los Laberintos de la realidad," Wifredo Lam, 1902-1982: Obra Sobre Papel [exhib. cat.] (Mexico:

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Centro Cultural/ Arte Contemporáneo A.C, 1992): 23. (Trans. LSS.)

84. "los elementos compartidos entre ñañigos y masones son considerables...Come abakuá los masones poseen ramas, están clasificados por grados, y consideran sagrado el número siete, investido de un valor mítico." Rodríquez, op. cit.: 129. (Trans. LSS.)

85. See Balderrama, op. cit.: 93.

86. Mosquera, op. cit.: 179.

87. Ibid.

88. Herzberg, op. cit.: 44.

89. Blanc, op. cit : 68.

90. Ibid: 57.

91. Fouchet, op. cit.: 75.

92. Valerie Fletcher, "Wifredo Lam," in Fletcher, op. cit.: 179.

93. Fouchet, op. cit.: 187-188.

94. Ibid: 188-189.

95. See Daniel, op. cit.: 88-90.

96. Ibid.: 89.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid: 90. I pursued a similar analysis in my lecture on the topic of Lam's Chinese ancestry at the New School for Social Research in May 1990. I suggested that specific iconographic elements in Lam's work including the plant life may be read as an encoded political statement similar to the way political dissent was registered in China. This idea was engendered by the exhibition, Loyalty and Dissent in Traditional Chinese Calligraphy and Painting, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (March 20-September 9, 1990. For further discussion of the issue of Lam's Chinese heritage, see Chapter 5.

99. R.M., "Wifredo Lam, pintor de la inquietud," Diario de la Marina, (August, 9, 1941). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

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100. For these facts see Albert Loeb's reminiscences in Wifredo Lam, oeuvres 1938-1946 en hommage á Pierre Loeb. [exhibition catalogue}. (Paris: Galerie Albert Loeb, 1974).

101. Luzzatto was the subject of a portrait by Balthus in 1934. See Sabine Rewald, Balthus [exhib. cat.].(New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, New York, 1984): 68.

102. Helena Holzer Benitez, interview with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992.

103. Alfred Barr had to note the voluntary omission of Lam's work from the exhibition in a letter to Gaceta del Caribe in July, 1944. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

104. Mario Carreño, "Dinamism de la Plástica Cubana, Latina America Libre 1, no. 1 (October 10, 1954): 4. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

105. See Robert Coates, "The Art Galleries: Watercolors in Brooklyn," New Yorker (May 14, 1949): 61-65; Nicolás Guillén, "El ciclón en la palagana, Hoy (March 17, 1945). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

106. Lydia Cabrera, "Wifredo Lam, Pintor de Hoy," Diario de la Marina (May 17, 1943). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

107. Lydia Cabrera, "Wifredo Lam" Diario de la Marina (January 30, 1944), cited in Herzberg, op. cit: 47-48.

108. In a letter to Breton, Helena Holzer notes that it was she who worked on the translation of this poem with input from Lydia Cabrera. She also mentioned that she and Lam were interested in doing a series of translations of poets as a literary enterprise. Although this project was not pursued, Lam certainly developed a taste for working with poets. These early experiences with the work of Breton, Césaire, and Ivan Goll (for whom Lam did an illustration for a poem in 1945) led eventually to a series of collaborations with several well-poets in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. As Hanne Finsen noted in her introduction to the catalogue of his exhibition in Denmark in 1978, Lam often noted his appreciation of poetry over other kinds of writing and his preference that his work by illuminated through his collaborations with poets. (See Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.] (Copenhagen: Ordrupgaardsamlingen, 1978: 3). He noted in an interview in Cuba in the late 1970s: "I would have like to have been a writer because I think the word is the most eloquent elements that exists. But I don't think I have the gift of words. Nevertheless painting can be as eloquent.." Manuel Pereira, "Lam del Caribe," Cultura [1977]. Archives

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SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

109. Guillén, op. cit.

110. Pierre Mabille, "La Jungle," Tropiques, Vol. II (Paris: Editions Jean Michel Place, 1978): 173-174. (Trans. LSS.)

111. Ibid: 175-184. (Trans. LSS.)

112. Ibid: 185.

113. "Je rêve d'un bec étourdi d'hibiscus et de vierges sentences violettes, s'alourdissant aux lézards avaleurs de soleil..." Aimé Césaire, "Fragments d'un poème," Tropiques: 10-23.

114. Gerardo Mosquera has quoted René Portocarrero's observations on the difference in Lam's work from that of his Cuban contemporaries, evoking a similar Caribbean-ness. Portocarrero noted that Lam's paintings was "the delirium of the tropical The Caribbean tropical above all...What might be called a Cuba in which the black rules decisively. Altogether, something we have within us and that has been submerged until now." See Mosquera, op. cit.: 179-180,

115. Aimé Césaire, "Wifredo Lam de l'Antilles," Cahiers d'art, 20-21 (1945-46): 357-359.

116. Carpentíer quoted in Herzberg, op. cit.: 68.

117. Alejo Carpentíer, "Lo Real Maravilloso de America," El Nacional [1948]. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. Also published in Carpentíer, Chroniques (Paris: Gallimard, 1983): 342-349.

118. "...la magia de la vegetación tropical, la desenfenada creación de formas de nuestra naturaleza-con todas sus metamorfosis y simbiosis." Ibid.

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CHAPTER 2: LAM IN EUROPE, 1947-82

Interlude: Haiti, 1945-46.

In the Fall, 1945, at the invitation of Pierre Mabille, Wifredo and Helena Lam visited Haiti for six months (October - April, 1946). Mabille had been appointed the Cultural Attaché of France to Haiti. While in Haiti they attended the inauguration of the Institute of Culture in Port-au-Prince, and were reunited with André Breton, who came down from New York on the occasion of Lam's solo exhibition at the gallery of the Centre d'art (January 24-February 3, 1946).[1] Breton's text for the catalogue, "La Nuit à Haiti," expresses the desire to find a modern Eden in the present-day Caribbean, a quest all the more urgent in the face of the "désintégration atomique" (atomic disintegration).[2] Breton's comments were written a scant five months after the world was stunned by the news that the United States had dropped the first atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The surrender of Japan followed soon after on August 10, 1945, three months after Germany had surrendered to the Allies on May 7, 1945.

On February 23, 1946 Lam sent a note to Picasso from Haiti along with the catalogue of his exhibition at the Centre d'art. He wrote that he had received news from Pierre Loeb, who had already returned to Paris, and expressed the

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hope that he (Lam) would be able to leave Cuba the following month and see Picasso soon after that in the Spring.[3] In fact Lam was not able to leave Cuba in late June. The delay was occasioned by his first one-man exhibition in Cuba at the Lyceum or Havana Yacht Club (see Chapter 3).

When Lam finally departed Cuba in June, 1946, he went first the New York and then sailed to London on the Queen Mary on July 9th. From London he continued onto Paris and also Cannes, where he had been offered the use of an apartment belonging to Marcel Dreyfus, whose family had owned a several department stored in France before the war.[4] While the main reason for Lam's trip to Europe was to assess the post-war situation, he decides not to return at this time.[5] He does extend his stay long enough to tour Italy, Germany and Austria in the company of his friend the Cuban-born photographer Jesse Fernandez, and a Cuban friend remembered only as Maximiliano.[6]

Lam in Europe, 1946-82.

Between 1946 and 1952, Lam returned to Europe several times, invariably routing through New York City. His passage was facilitated somewhat by special passport given to him by the Ministry of Education in Cuba, which designated him a special cultural ambassador of Cuba with the portfolio of observing modern art in Europe and the United States. In 1950, he was additionally given a special stipend to help

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finance his travel. Lam took full advantage of the contacts he had made before the war, and those he would make along the way. In 1946, alone, for example he had solo exhibitions in Port-au-Prince, Havana, London, Paris, and participated in group shows in New York, Cuba, Paris and Mexico City. His pursuit of opportunities in different national arenas was to characterize his career during the next thirty-six years.

Between 1946 and 1952, the exhibitions in which Lam's work was featured indicate the extent to which his reputation had been advanced, despite the fact his relative isolation in Cuba during the war. His 1945 exhibition in Paris marked the re-opening of Pierre Loeb's Galerie Pierre.[7] The following year, his work was also included in a benefit exhibition at the Galerie Pierre organized for Antonin Artaud, who had just been released from a sanatarium. He was included in the exhibition, Les peintres de Paris at UNESCO, and in 1947, Lam's installation, Le Chevelure de Falmer was included in the first large international exhibition of Surrealism, organized by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp at the Galerie Maeght. That year Breton also included his work in a surrealist exhibition he organized in Prague, which was important for opening up an Eastern European audience for Lam's work. Lam was featured in two exhibitions at the newly-founded Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1948: Forty Years of Modern Art, 1907-1947: A Selection from British Collections, and

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40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern.[8] The exhibition from British collections also indicates that Lam's work had begun to be added to public and private collections, and was featured Collection of Contemporary European and American Paintings and Sculpture at the San Francisco Museum of Art, and 4th Summer Exhibition of Contemporary Art at the State University of Iowa, both in 1948.

Between 1946 and 1949 he participated in several exhibitions abroad, organized by the Cuban government in Russia, Mexico, and Sweden. As part of the Cuban representation at the Biennial Watercolor International Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1949, he was singled out for special mention by critic Robert Coates.[9] In 1951, Cuban reviews of the exhibition Art cubain contemporain at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, acknowledged the singular achievement of Lam internationally, and note how his career can serve as an example to younger Cuban artists.[10] This same year Lam was featured in the last group exhibition of the CoBrA group at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Liege, Belgium. Along with Miró, Giacometti and Bazaine he was included as one of the older masters/ mentors of the CoBrA group. Then in 1952, Lam was included in the exhibition L'oeuvre du XXe siècle: peintures, sculptures at the Museé national d'art moderne in Paris, had a second one-man exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary

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Art in London, and exhibited with the Swedish surrealist group, the Imaginists at the Galerie Colibri in Malmö, Sweden. By 1952, then, Lam was broadening his connections with younger artists all over Europe, as well as in Cuba, where his influence in Cuba was more wide-spread in the 1950s than it had been in the previous decade.

The most important association for Lam after the war was that he established with the Danish painter Asger Jorn. Lam may have first met Jorn in 1940, when it is thought that Breton would have put the Dane in contact with Lam for a contribution to the first issue of Helhesten, the avant-garde review that was published in Denmark during the war.[11] They made contact with one another again after the war in Paris, and before Lam found a studio on Rue Alesia in the 14th arrondisement, he often worked in Jorn's studio in Paris. After 1954, Jorn moved his family to Abisola Marina on the northwestern coast of Italy. It was through Jorn Lam was introduced to the artistic community there, and eventually brought a house and built a studio there in the early 1960s.[12] With the dissolution of the CoBrA group Lam through Jorn also became associated with the Phases group, an informal international association of artists organized by critic Eduoard Jaquer, an associate of the old CoBrA group. Lam would contribute regularly to L'arbre et l'arme the revue of the Group Phases. Any evaluation of Lam's career in the context of the post-war scene in Europe is

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definitely predicated on the comprehension of the political maneuverings of various artistic factions, and the particular configurations of artistic alliances in which Jorn involved Lam, however peripherally.

Surrealism in Europe after 1945.

The artistic world in Paris after the war was as contentious as it was polymorphic. The Surrealists-in-exile returned to find themselves in a headlong clash with former comrades, some of whom had become increasingly drawn into the fold of the Communist party during and right after the war. This effected a renewal of old antagonisms among the surrealist alliance over the nature of the movement's relationship to the Communist regime in the Soviet Union. An earlier rapprochement had been ruptured when Breton clashed with the Stalinist elements in the Soviet Union in the mid 1930s, and gravitated toward Trotsky, by then an outcast from the central party.[13] In her study of the politics of Surrealism, Helen Lewis has suggested that the renewed infatuation of European intellectuals with Communism during and after the Second World War should be seen in the context of anti-fascism, as well as an expression of opposition to the new prominence and influence of the United States in Europe after the war. She even goes so far as to suggest that the returning Surrealists were seen as agents of the Americans, a conception based solely on the fact of their

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having exiled themselves during the war.[14] If the first rupture between the Surrealists and the Communists came in the mid-1930s over artistic dogma, in the late 1940s it was acted out in the conflict between the surrealists who stayed and those who went into exile. When Breton returned to Paris, he faced harsh criticism from the surrealists of the Main à Plume group (named for the publication they put out during the war), which included Noel Arnaud, and Tristan Tzara.

Tzara in particular voiced the commitment of the dissident Surrealists to social realism, when he criticized the content of the Surrealist magazines published in America, such as VVV and View. Breton, on the other hand, was forthrightly critical of the literature of the resistance movement, which was tinged with social commentary and not "poetic" enough. He would persist in asserting the possibility of a revolutionary art that was not polemical. This fact would explain Lam's own rejection of the conventions of social realism in his work, although he steadfastly asserted his own political activism.[15] The conflict between Breton and Tzara was acted out in several boisterous public demonstrations, most notably on April 11, 1947, when Breton disrupted Tzara's lecture at the Sorbonne on the post-war situation of Surrealism.[16]

The discussion of the possibility of reconciling communism and surrealism, which had preoccupied Breton and

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the Surrealists before World War II, continued to be a point of contention after the war. The Surréalisme-révolutionaire (Revolutionary Surrealists) group, which preceded the CoBrA group asserted their conviction that "surrealist research could not be conceived outside of a social reality and for a practical revolution."[17] The Bretonian Surrealists, however, maintained their strong prejudice against social realist painting.[18] The post-war art scene in Paris, which manifested many varieties of realist or surrealist genres, also was populated with many varieties of abstraction, that critic Léon Degand classified as "materialist," "gestural" and "geometric."[19] Even art executed under the mantle of Surrealism after the mid-1940s could be described as versions of the so-called "informal" tendencies. Peter Shield, for example, has observed that the Linine (The Line) group in Denmark "looked at surrealism from an expressionist eye and worked in a new direction."[20]

Similar stylistic characteristics could be observed also in the work the CoBrA artists, which was marked by an extremely articulated abstract figuration. Many of these gestural, abstract tendencies were already in place in the late 1930s before the war. At the same time that Lam was exploring synthetic Cubism in the late 1930s, Bram van Velde was painting his brightly colored, gestural compositions, while Otto Freundlich and Maria Helena Viera da Silva explored approaches that mediated pure abstraction, and pure

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gesture with reference to figure and place. Jorn's own early paintings were rendered in a textural, expressive style which manifested an appreciation of children's art and self-taught art.[21] These art forms attracted the attention of the Surrealists, the CoBrA group and Jean Dubuffet, and by the end of the 1940s, they became the main vehicles through which European modernists identified the most "primal" source of creativity in all human beings.

The investigations of artists such as Jorn began to emphasize a more "national" rather than "ethnographic" primitivism, where the focus was on Europe's own pre-technological heritgage. Helhesten featured articles on the folk art and the prehistoric and medieval art of Scandinavia.[22] When the Revolutionary Surrealists, therefore, asserted their independence from pre-war tendencies in the School of Paris, it was more in terms of shifting the focus of the vocabulary than the syntax of surrealist art. As Ejler Bille would declare on behalf of the Host group (another avant-garde group which was a prelude to CoBrA): "During the last ten years, experimental art in Denmark seems to have succeeded in strengthening the roots which connected it with the vibrant traditions of our country without having lost its international connections."[23]

The legacy of Surrealism was also evident in the fostering of collaborations and collective creativity among

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poets, writers, painters, sculptors, etc. in the CoBrA group. These concepts continued to drive the career of Asger Jorn, long after the CoBrA group had been dissolved. Even the central organizing mechanism of the dispersed CoBrA group was founded in a will to network - to use a contemporary idiom - and it passed onto the confederated international alliances of artists which grew out of the CoBrA including the Group Phases, the Situationists, and the Movement for an International Bauhaus. As noted above, Jorn was the crucial link in all these manifestations. It was he who brought Lam into the CoBrA orbit, and insisted on his participation on some level in the exhibitions and publications of the Group Phases and the Situationists. While this connection would seem at face value specious - particularly given Lam's predilection for avoiding the day-to-day polemics of any artistic group (even the Surrealists) - the crux of the relationship was that Lam represented an important precedent for the post-war surrealist legatees in terms of the specific way in which his work engaged his own Cuban culture, thus diverting even inverting the syntax of European modernism.

Pierre Mabille recognized the position of Lam in the new post-war art world when he wrote that Lam was a progenitor of a new force in art in the May, 1949 issue of the Magazine for Art. He described the current manifestations of contemporary art in Europe and American

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as: "...for the most part unoriginal continuations of cubism, fauvism and surrealism. They have been characterized by incoherence because they have lacked personal certitude on the part of their authors."[24] Lam's work on the other hand

> achieves vehemence, a magical power and a sheer artistry...Lam succeeds in recovering and surpassing what the sorcerers of the jungle accomplished by virtue of their faith and their most secret dreams. The example Lam has set assumes a remarkable significance in contemporary art. He has proved that the road from cubism via surrealism to the future holds many an ambush, and many a blind alley. Nevertheless, it remains the sole road to that great emotional urge, which since the dawn of history has provided the fundamental source of art and poetry.[25]

Mabille doesn't just see Lam as merely a purveyor of tradition, however, Lam is also the harbinger of a new way as his "break with tradition and his technical procedures of investigation are thoroughly warranted."[26] As Alain Jouffroy would later declare, Lam's work rescued post-war art in Europe from a state of "sclerosis" by "rediscovering, and recharging totemic forms with a new meaning."[27]

Mabille's assessment that Surrealism still held the key to the future of modern art would indicate why Lam could find, on his return to Paris, a ready reception and association with a younger generation of artists interested in similar issues. The alliance of Jorn and Lam would be natural given the fact that both had "realized the position that they occupied with regard to the primitive art of their own countries...in relationship to the primitive art of the world, as were conscious of the relationship between the

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modes of primitive man and western modern culture."[28] Both artists also had been involved in an art of resistance: Jorn in Nazi-occupied Denmark, and Lam in the Spanish Civil War and the besieged world of African Cuba. Both had also reconciled modernism and nationalism through their interest in the mythic traditions of their respective nations, and coped with subject matter through a mediation of figuration and abstraction. Thus in contrast to Lam's contested relationship with the New York School (see Chapter 4), and often diffident relationship with the School of Paris and Cuban art circles, in the person of Jorn, Lam would find a more sustained ally both stylistically and conceptually.

Despite the internecine struggles, and competition from a number of other stylistic and polemical modes, the Surrealist group did manage to hold together, purging some older members[29] and attracting newer ones.[30] In the wake of the 1947 international Surrealist exhibition the Bretonian group found a continuing forum for their concerns in the Galerie Etoile Scellée established in 1952. Simultaneously, a new journal, Medium, propagated their agenda. There was an increasing internationalizing of the movement (which at times dovetailed on the other international exhibitions of the Group Phases and the Situationists in particular).[31]

Lam's own relationship with the Surrealist also changed in the period after the Second World War. While he did maintain an amicable relationship with Breton, he was not

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interested in being involved in the group activities of Surrealism. In an interview published in Venezuela in the mid-1950s, Lam rather diffidently declared:

> Surrealism wasn't really my taste...When I arrived in Paris, I was more attracted to Picasso...I then became friendly with Breton; his magnetism was irresistible. Later I became friends with Pierre Mabille and Marcel Duchamp. When I returned to Paris in 1946, I renewed these relationships and took part in the famous surrealist exhibition.[32]

In a rare appearance, he can be found in a group photograph of the Surrealists taken in 1953 at the Café de la Place Blanche.[33]

Lam continued, however, to participate in the international exhibitions of Surrealism organized by Breton and his associates. The most notable include: Eros, exposition internationale du surréalisme in 1959-60 at the Galerie Daniel Cordier, Paris, Le surréalisme, sources, histoire, affinités at Galerie Charpentier 91964), L'Ecart, absolu, XIe internationale du surréalisme at Galerie L'Oeil in 1965, and Permanance du régard surréaliste, 1920-1981, mouvement Phases in Lyon in 1981. This last exhibition indicates that concurrently his work was seen in Europe in the context of the Group Phases.[34] He also exhibited annually in the Salon de Mai beginning in 1954. In fact Lam was integrated enough into the post-World War II School of Paris, that before the creation of the Latin American art market in the late 1970s, that context was the principle one for his work.

Developments in Lam's work reflected currents in

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Surrealism in the post-war era, as the movement became increasingly preoccupied with esotericism. Although as José Pierre notes, this theme was not "une nouveauté, mais un constante" (not something new but a constant) in Surrealism. This would seem to be a parallel to tendencies in Surrealism in 1926, when esotericism was, as Pierre notes, posited in opposition to the "instances culturelles" (cultural manifestations) of the Communist Party.[35] In this context the 1947 exhibition was predicated on a similar note of subversion, according to Pierre, "involved defying established religion by focusing on the example of primitive people."[36] Pierre singles out the work of Victor Brauner and Lam as being prime examples of the spirit of the 1947 exhibition.[37] The theme of that exhibition was set out by Breton, who called for submissions based on arcane themes including the signs of the zodiac, and "a being, a category of being or a subject worthy of being given mythic life."[38] Altars were to be erected to these entities. Lam chose the subject of Falmer's Hair (Le Chevelure de Falmer, fig. 2.1) from the fourth "chant" of Lautreamont's Les Chants de Maldoror, the quintessential surrealist text.

The fourth chant is a record of Maldoror's encounter with Falmer, a man who had been hung from the gallows by his hair for three days. Barely alive, and suffocating, Falmer plead with Maldoror to cut him down.[39] In the process Maldoror cuts Falmer's hair, and the rest of the chapter is

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a recounting of his hallucinatory obsession with this individual, his hair and the horrors of physical death. Lam's interpretation was based on a synthesis of the literary text and the accoutrements of Afro-Cuban religions that complement the allusions. The installation featured a luxuriant fall of raffia in from of which was a configuration of four rotund female breasts around which swirled an arrangement of fabric. Out from each side of the poly-mammary forms extended two arms, brandishing large knives in each hand. This apparition sat on a shelf above an altar, upon which were various vessels and food stuffs similar to the offerings on personal devotional structures in Cuba. On either side of the altar were painted two "standards" in crescent forms and circular shapes. On the back wall of the alcove, above the breasts, was a crucifix hung upside down.

Although this was a sculptural presentation, the distinct manifestation of the forms, mirrored stylistic developments in Lam's work as it took on a more hieratic nature in the late 1940s, and manifested more overt esoteric references. While the references to the Afro-Cuban motifs from Lam's work of 1941-46 are evident, the objects in the installation also inspired a type of psychic angst - be sexual or horrific - with their anomalous forms and recurring sharp-edged motifs. Such a state of being was described in an article published in the 10th (and last)

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issue of CoBrA magazine. In "Pour un nouveau totemisme" Luc Zangrie bemoans the alienation experienced by humanity, which has been betrayed by its leaders and roused by prophets of doom. He takes special noted of humankind's capacity for destruction exemplified by Hiroshima. As an antidote to this condition Zangrie called for "la poésie de la résistance," where mankind would return to nature (the forest) to

> discover the dignity of the tree, the discretion of wood, and the elasticity of fiber. We ought to be like nature whose heart devours the sum. This passion, in the realm of plant life is like love, and inspires the conduct of certain wise people who recognize in nature their first ancestors and venerate nature as the essence of life.[40]

Zangrie challenges artists in particular to distance themselves from the life of the city and return to the countryside, to exult popular art as an agrarian expression, and celebrating nature as the sole painterly realm. He concludes acknowledging that some artists have already heeded this call, and the article is illustrated by a work of 1950 by Lam - a femme cheval entitled Peinture.

Lam's installation for the 1947 Surrealist exhibition indicates that he was introducing to his signature iconography based on Afro-Cuban religous symbols not only more specifically esoteric or occult nuances, but also more personal allusions. Starting in the late 1940s, Lam began to organize the space in his paintings with bands or lanes of space which created a transition from foreground to back ground - or the physical and metaphysical worlds. Shadowy

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figures which could be seen as inhabiting the two realms or locales in between. (This was distinct from the dense compositions of 1941-45, in which human, animal, plant and still life forms segued one into another to create a seemingly inseparable totality.) In his 1950 interview with Geri Trotta, Lam referred to the shadowy shapes in the background of his paintings as "diabolical birds,"[41] evoking an association with an incident from his childhood which he observed a bat, trapped in his room, fluttering about disoriented. Owing to the dim light, and the "rays of light" from the exterior, which "penetrated every crack, creating shadows, changing the space into a magic lantern and reversing all the images,"[42] the bat seemed to have two heads. This experience, according to Lam marked the moment when he became full conscious of the nature of his own existence:

> For the first time I experienced the dizziness of solitude, the distance between objects, my own size...I felt for the first time the fear of being no more than a thing, among other things, a mute presence with regard to nameless objects...It was then I first experienced the feeling of the passing of the days, of a linkage in memory, and of a time which stops for no one.[43]

Lam seems to have deliberately cultivated this experience in a photograph taken in the 1950s in which he is seen posing in front of shadows cast on the wall which take the form of a flying bird,[44] approximating the relationship between figures in background elements in such paintings as Umbral (fig. 1.33)) of 1950. This theme was even more

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explicitedly developed in a work such as When I Am Not Asleep, I Dream of 1955 (fig. 2.2), where a recumbant figure on a bed cowers beneath a bat-like shadow which zooms across the top portion of the composition. Later in the 1950s Lam gradually compresses this layered space into a more or less uni-dimensional one. Interspacial positioning is suggested by variations in intensity of line, and an exploitation of positive and negative tonal elements. It is difficult to say how much these developments were the result of his gradual withdrawal from the Parisian art scene. It does indicate, however, his involvement in the graphic medium began to effect his painting.

Lam in Italy.

In the mid 1950s Lam began to make regular visits to Italy. He had been in contact with individuals in the art world of Italy, specifically that in Milan since the early 1950s, when his winning the Premio Lissone Internazionale in 1953 brought him to the attention of a younger generation of Italian artists, especially Enrico Baj, Roberto Dangelo and Roberto Crippa of the "arte nucleare" group. These artists would form part of the artistic circle with whom Lam would be associated in Albisola and Milan.

Asger Jorn, who had moved to Albisola in 1954 was particularly influential in convincing Lam to visit Italy. Jorn had become involved in the ceramic works Albisola, and

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initiated several projects to bring artists there to experiment in this medium. Jorn's former CoBrA associate Corneille had additionally discussed these opportunities with Lam in Paris, and Tullio d'Albisola, one of the luminaries in the town had also written to Lam inviting him to visit.[45] What finally motivated Lam to visit Italy, however, was his desire to avoid the distractions of the Parisian art world, and the difficult social position he found himself in Paris at a time when France was involved in Algeria's war for independence.[46] This conflict raged between 1957 and 1962. Lam found that his appearance made him subject to continual harassment on the streets of Paris, so much so that in 1960, Lam moved into an apartment on Germana Strasse in Zurich, and began in earnest to look for a home and studio in Albisola.

Lam had divorced his second wife Helena Holzer in Havana in 1951.[47] The following year, Lam met the young Argentinean Sara Sluger in Paris, who would be his companion for the next couple of years.[48] In 1955, Lam met Lou Laurin Lam who would become his third wife in 1960. Lam was about to visit Sweden for the first time for his solo exhibition in Malmö and tried to enlist Laurin as his interpreter. Although Laurin was not able to be with him in Malmö, on his way back to Paris, Lam made a detour to Stockholm to visit her and her family, and during the next five years conducted a prolonged courtship. During this time Lam also

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initiated a relationship with a French performance artist/ actress named Nicole Raoul. She accompanied him on several trips to Cuba and Venezuela in 1956 and 57. Their son, Stephane Manuel, was born in 1958. He subsequently married Lou Laurin and they had three sons: Eskil (born 1961), Timour (born 1962) and Jonas (born 1969).

Lam's involvement with the art scene in Albisola and Italy had a rejuvenating influence on his career. He could benefit from a social atmosphere that was more sympathetic than he could find in Paris, and in that context he was able to explore new media: ceramics and graphic work. His decision to purchase a house and build a studio in Albisola after 1960 was probably a direct result of the fact that he lost him home in Marianao in the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban critic, Mario López Oliva has without irony observed that in Albisola, "Lam found a climate and landscape similar to that of Cuba...[a] locale...[which]...corresponded with his vision of nature and of Cuban life and culture."[49] Lam himself once cast his presence in Albisola as a matter of historical imperative. Noting the proximity to Genoa, the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, he noted "I have made the journey of Christopher Columbus in reverse: from the Antilles to Liguria."[50]

During most of the 1960s and 70s, Lam settled into a set year-long schedule. He would work full time in Albisola, visiting his family in Paris once a month for a week.[51]

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Even in Italy, Lam tended to shy away from the fray of the politics of the local art scenes. His studio in Albisola was far enough away from Milan and Rome, and during his periodic sojourns to Giorgio Upiglio's Grafica Uno studio in Milan, he focused on his printmaking. The most intense social scene in Albisola occurred during the summer. As Lou Lam has noted Albisola was a place where "people came through. They didn't linger there, but passed by on the way to and from Paris, Milan or Rome."[52]

In this relatively relaxed ambiance, Lam could enjoy his status as an older master in the international art scene. In 1963, he was the recipient of the Premio di Selezione sponsored by the Premi Marzotto in Valdagno. In 1971, writing about the exhibition, Due versanti dell'arte moderna: Gesto e visione, critic Angelo Dragone dubbed Lam and the three other featured artists - Matta, Hans Hartung and Georges Mathieu - "I Quattro Grandi." On several occasions exhibitions in Lam's honor were organized: for example in the summer of 1967, Rassigna di pittura e grafica: Omaggio a Lam was part of the seventh Biennale d'arte Contemporarea at San Benedetto del Tronto, and five years later in August, 1978 the exhibition, Presenze immagini, omaggio a W. Lam was organized in Montignoso. He was also one of the featured artists at the 1972 Venice Biennale. The critical acclaim from this exhibition, which will be discussed in the section of Lam criticism in this

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chapter, virtually revived Lam's career.

Lam maintained a lively exhibition schedule in Italy, in a number of galleries and museums, including [53]: Galleria Pagani del Grattacielo, Galleria l'Annunciata, Galleria Milano, Galleria Il Canale - all in Milan; Galleria dell'Obelisco and Galleria Levi in Rome; Galleria Gissi, Galleria d'arte La Bussola in Turin; Galleria Percetto in Albisola. Lam also had one person exhibitions at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna and the Museo Civico in Turin, and was included in numberous group exhibitions all over Italy, including projects related to Surrealism or fantastic art, such as: Arte fantastica at the Museo del Castello di San Giusto in Trieste in 1964, Le Muse inquietanti, Maestri del Surrealismo at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna in Turn (1967-68); Le sillabe mute della immaginazione, 12 maestri del surrealismo, Galleria Gissi, Turin (1971). His work was also included in more general surveys of contemporary art, for example: Anti-proces at the Galleria Il Canale in Venice in 1960; La figura 2 at the Galleria Toninelli in Milan, and La Pittura moderna e straniera nelle collezioni private Italiane at the Galleria Civica d'Arte in Turin, both in 1967; and Il Disegno in Europa, 1879-1970 at the Galleria Milano (1970). His work was also featured in a separate gallery in the exhibition of Latin American art at the Palazzo Collicola in Spoleto in 1963, and his ceramic work at the Arte Fiera 76 in Bologna.

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Lam's popularity in Italy was a crucial factor during his late career. There cannot be any doubt that his career would not have been sustained on the same level as it was until his death without this Italian connection. As Surrealism was historicized through the 1950s 60s and 70s, Lam tended to be relegated increasingly to the periphery of the movement. His particular brand of autochthonous primitivism had never found a comfortable niche even within Surrealism. In Italy Lam could find acceptance on his own terms, and found, as has been noted, a rejuvenation of his career in the media of ceramics and graphic work.

Lam and Scandinavia.

Lam's work was first seen in Sweden in 1949 as part of a group exhibition sent by the Cuban government. Three years later he participated in a group exhibition of the Imaginist Group[54] at the Galerie Colibri in Malmö,[55] which had been the center for Surrealist activity in Sweden since the mid-1940s. His first visit came in 1955 on the occasion of his first one-man exhibition in Scandinavia at the Galerie Colibri. This visit had such a great effect on him that he recorded his impressions in three short poems, one specifically about the Imaginist group:

The Imaginists dream
our dreams
heating up the night
of 182 days and a dawn
Ignoring the cold and its symbolism of death
with the creation

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of this youthful color
born out of the joy
of our encounter.[56]

In 1966, Lam had a second solo exhibition at the Galerie Anderson, also in Malmö. In 1974 when his graphic suite Pleni Luna was published it was exhibited at the Galerie A.H. Grafik in Stockholm. He also had exhibitions at the Galerie Börjeson in Malmö in 1975, and the Galerie Östermalm in Stockholm in 1976. In 1967, the Modern Museet in Stockholm mounted a retrospective exhibition of his work, and in 1978, an exhibition of his work was seen at the Ordrupgaard in Chalottenlund in Denmark, and the Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad Foundation in Hovikkoden, Norway. In his essay for this catalogue Per Hovdenakk, curator at the Henie-Onstad Foundation chronicles the relationship of Lam to the New York School, including his relationship with artists such as Pollock. Hovdenakk notes: "It was Lam's painting which inspired Pollock to begin studying the art of Native Americas. His work at that time showed many characteristics of the paintings of the jungle and totems in seen earlier in Lam's work."[57] Lam, concludes Hovdenakk, sets an important example for the Americans as well as the CoBrA artists in mediating traditional elements with new ones.[58]

Although Lam's reputation in Sweden had been established by the time he met the young Swedish artist, Lou Laurin in Paris in 1955, there is not doubt that his

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relationship with her was key to his maintaining a presence particularly in Sweden. Starting the late 1950s, as he conducted an extensive courtship of Laurin, and into the 1970s, he visited regularly even if only for family reason, especially in the wake of the birth of their three sons in the 1960s.

Lam in England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany and Eastern Europe.

As in France, Italy and Sweden, Lam's work in the rest of Europe was seen in the context of Surrealism, the School of Paris, and group manifestations of the CoBrA and the Group Phases. His London connection was initiated within the Surealist orbit. Lam's 1946 exhibition was at the London Gallery, the focal point for surrealist activity in London. The English Surrealist group had exhibited there together for the first time in 1937. In 1938, E.L.T. Mesens, a key figure in the Belgian Surrealist group, assumed directorship of the London Gallery. Lam exhibited there again in December, 1948 in a group show. At the same time he was included in the large survey exhibition, 40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern, at the newly organized Insitute of Contemporary Art. He had also bee included in the inagural exhibition for the ICA, Forty Years of Modern Art, earlier that year.

In 1952, Mesens organized Lam's solo exhibition at the

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ICA, and gave a lecture in conjunction with this show. The following year Lam's work was included in the exhibition, 25th Bent Forms at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, and in 1961 in Master's of Surrealism: Ernst to Matta at the Obelisk Gallery in London. His work was also seen in the London venue of the Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad Foundation collection in 1962, and for the last time, while he was still alive, in 1970 in his solo exhibition at Gimpel Fils Gallery. In his review of this exhibition, Edward Lucie-Smith observed:

> Over the years...[Lam]...has natured into an artist of considerable stature - not as inventive as Max Ernst, not as startling as Matta, but one who very seldom paints a bad or dull picture. His...show...contains a number of very recent canvases, which make use of Lam's familiar repertoire of imagery, especially the horned devil masks, which derive ultimately from Afro-Cuban legend. The greyish, rather chalky coloring of the work of the sixties has suddenly become more varied and resonant. Lam is painting better than ever.[59]

In the City Press, the reviewer picks up the matter of Lam's relationship to Matta,[60] concluding that Lam "does seem by far the most impressive of the two major, final-wave Surealists. Although he has developed little since the early days, his paintings have lost none of their strength and moderate assertiveness."[61]

Lam's work was seen regularly in Belgium in the 1950s and 60s, most notably in the last exhibition of the CoBrA group at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Liege in 1951. He was also included in 50 ans d'art moderne at the Weltaustellung in Brussels (1958), and in 7 peintres surréalistes cubains

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at the Galerie Maya in 1964. This gallery and the Galerie Dobbelhoef in Kessel hosted Lam solo exhibitions in 1969 and 79, 1980 and 81, respectively, as did the Prospect Gallery (1978), and the Galerie de Zwarte Panter in Anvers (1974). Lam's work was featured in the exhibition Phases at the Musée d'Ixelles in Brussels in 1964, which also hosted L'aventure de Pierre Loeb, la Galerie Pierre, Paris, 1924-64, organized in 1979 by the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, which also included Lam's work. His work was seen in Art du XXe Siècle at the Palais de Beaux Arts in 1977, Trésors du Surréalisme at the 21st Festival Belge d'été in Knokke-le-Zoute in 1981. That same year Lam's work was also seen in an exhibition of American and European art from the collection of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm at the Palais des Beaux Arts. Perhaps the most notorious exhibition of Lam's work in Belgium occurred in 1980, when Galerie Pieters 3 in Brussels, showed sixty paintings, all of which were forgeries. This exhibition dramatically highlighted the scope of Lam forgeries, which only escalated in number after his death.[62]

Lam exhibited twice in Documenta in Kassel, Germany in 1959 and 1964. He was also in several exhibitions at the Mathildehöhe in Darmstadt including: Zeugnisse der Angst in der Moderne Kunst in 1963 and Internationale de Zeichnung in 1964. In Hamburg he was included in Malerei des Surrealismus von den Angfang bis Heute at the Kunstverein in 1969, and

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Der Surrealismus, 1922-1942, organized by Patrick Waldberg at the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 1972. In 1966 he had his first retrospective exhibition in Germany at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hannover. A second was organized in 1969 at the Frankfurter Kunstkabinett-Hanna Bekker von Rath, and in 1971, he exhibited with Albin Brunovski at the Baukunst Galerie in Cologne.

In Switzerland, where he maintained a permanent residence from about 1960-63, Lam showed at the Galerie Krugier in Geneva in 1970, and the Galerie D. Benador in 1962. In 1966 he had a joint exhibition with Vic Gentils at the Kunsthaus in Basel. Lam's work had been shown at the Kunsthaus 1954 as part of the exhibition of the collection of Fernand Graindorge, and in 1966 Lam's work was also exhibited in the Salon International at the Galerie Pelote in Lausanne. In 1971 Lam had another solo exhibition in Zurich at the Gimpel Hanover Galeries, and that was the last time his work was exhibited in Switzerland until 1987 when the Galerie Maeght Lelong (now the Galerie Lelong) organized an exhibition of his paintings.

Perhaps the most interesting and poignant development in Lam's late career was his "return" to Spain, where he had a solo exhibition at the Galeriá Joan Prats in Barcelona in 1976. This ended almost 40 years of absence which Lam had observed as a statement of opposition to the regime of Generalissimo Francisco Franco (who died in 1975). (Lam's

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feelings about Franco Spain were so strong that he went out of his way to find alternate transit routes from Italy or France to Cuba rather than going through Madrid or Barcelona.[63]) The exhibition was a virtual homecoming to the country where he had lived for fifteen years in the 1920s and 30s, where he had married, lost his first wife and son, and where he had his most intense involvement with the politics of social change. It had been almost too long: "Wifredo Lam por primera vez in España" (Wifredo Lam in Spain for the first time) was the headline that blazoned above Santiago Amon's review of the exhibition in El país, indicating that the memory of Lam's sojourn had faded into oblivion.[64] Tele Exprés, however, published Lam's reminisces about his participation in the Spanish Civil War.[65]

Lam visited Spain again in 1980 on his way to Cuba for medical treatment after having suffered a stroke in 1978. As in 1976, the contact with Spain precipitated a wave of nostalgia, which was recorded in the Spanish press. In an interview published in El país Lam spoke in the company of his old comrade Faustino Cordón, now a respected biologist. He recounted his experience, while working on a film of his life with the Cuban filmmaker Humberto Solas in Cuba. As they recreated a scene from the Spanish Civil War, Lam recounted, he felt that he was actually in the Spain of his youth.[66] Certainly for Lam the long-awaited reconciliation

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with Spain came none too soon. As a result of this, the full history of Lam's early career is finally coming to light.[67] On the occasion of Lam's eightieth birthday (1982), the Museo nacional d'arte moderno in Madrid organized a retrospective of his work. Unfortunately Lam died in September of that year, a month before the exhibition opened in Madrid.

In 1967 Lam had a solo exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. His work was also seen in the Netherlands at the Galerie Jacques Sieverding in Twello in 1980); in Austria (notably Idole and Damonen at the Museum des XXo Jahrhunderts in Vienna in 1963); and in Finland, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Although he did not have his first solo exhibition in Eastern Europe until after his death (two in Cracow, Poland in 1985), his work was seen in Prague in 1947 in the exhibition, Mezinàrodni Surrealismus, organized by André Breton at the Galerie Tropic.[68] In 1968, his work was featured in the exhibition, Surrealismus: Le Principe de plaisir, which traveled to Brno, Prague and Bratislava. The following year he was featured in an exhibition of the collection of Baron Urvater, shown in Belgrade and Zagreb, as well as in an exhibition of the Group Phases which traveled to Cracow, Warsaw and Lublin. A second exhibition of the group traveled to Jihlava, Hradec Cracow and Brno in 1969, and in 1971 a third to Wroclaw, Sopot, Slypsk and Poznan. In 1965 his work was seen in the

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tour of the Paris Salon de Mai in Skopje and Belgrade.

Lam Criticism in Europe 1946-1948.

In France after the Second World War, critics writing about Lam tend to focus on his connections with aspects of Surrealism. As seen in the observations of a critic writing in France et Monde in 1946, there is some recognition of Lam as an independent artistic personality. It is noted that Lam's sojourn in Cuba had freed him from the influence of Picasso: "Lam redevient Lam" (Lam Becomes Lam Again).[69] Now Lam's painting "is not part of any school. In spite of the blessing of André Breton, his work escapes surrealist obedience. It is on the whole non-figurative, but figurative in detail...Lam is decidedly a sorcerer."[70] The delicacy of Lam's morphology is described in the "impalpable material, which seems to have been stolen from butterflies."[71]

For his 1953 exhibition at Galerie Maeght, Guy Marester also reaffirms Lam's independent and personal interpretation of a School of Paris vocabulary. Unlike critics in the United States and Cuba he tends to downplay the issue of Lam's Cuban identity with regard to his art: "We believe it is necessary to be careful in insisting that this plays a preponderant role. This is only one characteristic of Lam's painting, not its essence. Lam takes advantage of it, but like the Mexican artist Tamayo, tempers it in his work."[72] Marester also notes that Lam's engagement of magic is in

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line with his association with the surrealists, but that it also can reveal a possible state that we all can attain. He again emphasizes the means as well as the result of Lam's technique noting the strength of Lam's "équilibre plastique," (plastic balance) achieved through his use of a muted palette and transparent color, which complements the simplicity with which Lam creates his images.[73]

> If these images created or used by Lam reveal a sense of cruelty, their vehemence, their ultimate symbolic value, the color and the measure of space demonstrate an attempt at reconciliation. One picture seems to succumb to the many temptations which come without a doubt from Lam's origins...One of the merits of this work is that it doesn't renounce any of them but unifies them pictorially.[74]

While previous writers focus on the qualities of Lam's stylistic development, other critics focus on the philosophical and cultural aspects of his work. Benjamin Péret, writing on Lam's work in Medium, on the occasion of Lam's exhibition at the Galerie Etoile Scellée in 1955, noted:

> These beings express the eternal depth of spirit which...speak to our desires and our terror. Lam transforms these states of being in order to achieve a resolution at a higher level...These states are and have been known by all men. The difference is that the images they engender today are different from those of the past, by virtue of their integral quality, even those of death which reveals their place of origin...[Lam] is committed to capturing them not to misrepresent them but to show their primal state and that despite their ferocious seductiveness we can recognize these qualities in ourselves.[75]

That same year, on the occasion of Lam's exhibition at the Colibri Gallery in Malmö, Ingemar Gustafson, editor of Salamander, discussed the contrapuntal relationship between

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the work of Henri Rousseau and Lam:

> Ever since Rousseau painted The Dream, his vision that the jungle was the place where myth originated, has awaited confirmation. Who better than Wifredo Lam could demonstrate this? His famous painting, The Jungle, which was painted in Cuba and not in Rousseau's Jardin des Plantes in Paris - provides all the corrections of reality. The serenity and the fresh marvelousness of Rousseau's vision of Eden are replaced by a violent, suffocating ardor. The atmosphere stays the same: the height of night the inexhaustible vegetation that cannot be possessed nor controlled, the animals who appear throughout. the unstoppable growth, the heaving of the jungle.[76]

Gustafson's discussion echoes that of Breton about the relationship between Picasso and Lam. Both writers see Lam as the agent who legitimatizes or authenticates the vision, the dream, the engagement of the mythic in modern art. "The extraordinary position of Lam," writes Gustafson, "is more than anything else that of initiator...It is he who opens the 'gate of mysteries,' it is he who is our interpreter."[77]

In this context Gustafson's concept of reality is that which exists beyond empiricism in a western sense. In non-western belief systems - i.e. Afro Cuban religion - the acceptance of the active co-existence between the physical and the metaphysical effectly abolishes the hegemonic privilege of western rationalism. Phenomena usually classified as "illusion" or "delusion" gain validation. When Gustafson writes of the "vert, mordant, ardent and explosif" (verdent, mordant, passionate and explosive) nature of Lam's work and of the sensuality "which has no parallel in European painting, he echoes a familiar expression of awe in

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the face of unknown natural forces, which has been most explicitly described in the dialogues between André Breton and André Masson published in the 1948.[78]

Such perceptions of Lam's work demonstrate the imprint made by Surrealism on Lam criticism early on in his career. As the 1950s and 60s progress, and Lam forges a more independent identity, the "primitivist" context for his work is comprehended more as a manifestation of the circumstances of his own life, than as an expression of Surrealist dogma. Although existentialist thought is not usually brought to bear in discussions of Lam's work, there are parallel notions of "primordial chaos and new beginnings"[79] in the critical writings association with the quintessential post-World War II movement. As Sara Wilson has observed, a new primitivism emerged in art - outwardly expressed in the cultivation of textured paint surfaces (la pâte), and the notion of timelessness and formlessness as an expression of a return to beginnings.[80] This was especially observed in the work of Jean Dubuffet, Fautrier, and Michel Tapié.[81] Wilson notes that "this primitivism was divorced from the spoils, and 'anthropology' of the Trocadero..[and]...the exotic fascination of the returning Surrealists."[82]

While Lam rarely reacted to the exoticist interpretations of his work, he did on occasion fuel them.[83] He may indeed have augmented his public image through the perception that he just might have access to the

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powers of the deep inner mind and the other world. Writing in 1956, Christian Zervos defines Lam's role as an intermediary between Africa and Europe:

> Both apart of this life and mired in it, Lam incorporates two heterogeneous worlds. His admiration for scientific discovery, which parallels the caprices of fantasy, expands to include problems related to today's society; to express his anxiousness about deeply felt issues on behalf of individuals who have already defined the law of human conscience. Through the device of symbols Lam strives to represent the states of the soul rather than a false stimulation.[84]

François Pluchart echoes similar sentiments about Lam's work, when reviewing Lam's 1967 exhibition at the Galerie Maeght. He observes that "in his art and in his life, Lam is at turns happy, despondent, youthful and dramatic. He seems to live all at once in all the contradictions of human existence, from optimism to despair, from creation to death, Lam unites all of human destiny in an instant."[85]

Such views of Lam as alternately the modern/primitive, the man of science/man of magic reflect intellectual currents in western science over the last thirty years, in which there has been a rapprochement between analytical thought and philosophical propositions.[86] In his preface to the catalogue of the exhibition New Images of Man, organized by Peter Selz at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1959, Paul Tillich situates the artistic enterprise of the selected artists within the rediscovery of the image of man after its obliteration in certain trends in the art of the 1940s and 50s. But that image, observes Tillich, will be and

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has been since the beginning of the century suffused with negativity. Artists such as Karel Appel, Jean Dubuffet, César, Alberto Giacometti, as well as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Leon Golub writes Tillich:

> ...communicate their own concern for threatened and struggling humanity...They demonstrate the controlling power of technical forms over man by dissecting him into parts and reconstructing him, as man does with nature. They reveal the hidden presence of animal trends in the unconscious and primitive mass-man from which man comes and to which civilized mass-man may return.[87]

While Selz's choice of painters and sculptors included individuals who manifest dramatically articulated, scoured, and eaten surfaces in their work, as noted by the critical writings about Lam after 1945, similar philosophical underpinnings in Lam's work by the 1950s were perceived to be in sync with the aforementioned sentiments.

André Pièyre de Mandiarques returns to the theme of Lam as the avatar of two worlds in his 1974 essay on Lam. He compares Lam's vision of a "fantastic nature for our modern age"[88] to that of Hieronymus Bosch. He describes the artistic relationship between the two artists as

> Fraternal, they possess a common parentage in their conception of a fantastic universe that parodies our own, where recognized values are expressly disrupted, where cruelty has the force of law without stifling a type of song of love, where the pulsing of blood and the surging of strength are propelled like stream, where movement and its consequences are accelerated and exaggerated.[89]

Pièyre de Mandiarques postulates that Lam like Bosch achieves a constant shift of time and place in his art, and his descriptions are particularly apt analysis of the

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seeming constant improvisation of form which characterized Lam's work in the 1950s and 60s. What he sees in Lam's work is not really the psychological space seen in surrealist paintings, but another space that operates on its own rules. It is distinct from the Cuban countryside or the domesticated vegetation of the botanical garden in Havana where Lam first began to paint seriously. Pièyre de Mandiarques, echoes Ingmar Gustafson's distinction between Lam's jungle and the tropical locales in Rousseau's painting.[90] In his view Lam's work illuminates another aspect of the "exotic," that is the reconcilation between the metaphysical and empirical worlds, and rendering the "sur-real" to the habitual and the normal.[91]

In 1962, the Italian critic Marco Valsecchi related this aspects of Lam's art to what he perceived as the reconcilation between the "penitent yet triumphant Catholicism" and the "underlying instinct of a primordial paganism" by generation of artists in Cuban working in the 1940s.[92] Valsecchi's references to Catholicism is undoubtedly based on assumptions of a shared religious upbringing between himself as an Italian and the Cubans as heirs to an Hispanic religious tradition. His observation also deserves notice since such issues are rarely mentioned explicitly with regard to modernist issues, specifically, in this case, primitivism.

It would seem, however, that this is a long-standing

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issue within the context of the history and development of modern art and its infatuation with the primitive.[93] The chronicles of Gauguin note the perennial struggle of Catholic priests in suppressing pagan customs, practices and rituals, as well as the artist's own opposition to the "civilizing" efforts of the priests which were at odds with his own exoticist fantasies.[94] The Surrealists take the provocative stance of supporting the integrity of primitive cultures against assimilationist policies of European colonial powers.[95] But rarely in the primitive discourse is the subject of religious beliefs specifically mentioned, nor the implications of primitivism in the context of what amounted to state religions in Europe at the time. José Pierre finally broached the subject in his discussion of the implications of challenging Christianity explicit in the organizing principles of the 1947 Surrealist exhibition:

> There was certainly a great deal of humor - black humor naturally -in such an enterprise if only in the defiance which it showed to the established religions in deliberately relying on the example of the "primitive" peoples of America and the Pacific.[96]

For Valsecchi Lam's work is distinct from that of the Surrealists because rather than pursuing the myth of liberation of "erotic arousal" Lam's work "is to be understood as the magical expression of the truest nature of man" (è...da intendersi come espressione magica della natura più vera dell'uomo).[97] Valsecchi refers to Paul Klee's observation that "todays's man must reach to the heart of

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the world where the things are not yet born" (che l'uomo d'oggi deve giungere al cuore del mondo, dove le cose non sono ancora nate).[98] Lam on the other hand,

> has gone to the heart of human nature where existence manifests itself as the springboard of a dream which is incarnated in the chronicle of the ages. And it is for this reason that Lam alerts us to the existence of a disquieting state of being, first seen as a silent void from which the cipher of an ancient message can be grasped.[99]

Valsecchi's comments recall the artist's own description of the intense meditation he experienced as he begins a new painting:

> In the presence of a blank canvas, at the moment when we ready ourselves to pursue this adventure, we are suddenly overtaken by a foreboding of instability which alternates between fear and a feeling of non-existence. With difficulty we begin to act as if we have fallen into a state of mental withdrawal where the images follow one another in a rhythm that is more and more accelerated. In putting various things together as if in play we succeed in surprising an universe where knowledge is liberated, and we go into an inner realm, sinking further into the core of our being. We are then conveyed at once to the spirit of another world, which in a totally arbitrary way, disguising reality as we know it and reduces it to being a vehicle of expression.[100]

Valsecchi equates this state of being with "a world in formation, of a golden age - still unattainable - where humanity can enjoy a terrestrial paradise that has not yet been lost" (un mondo in formazione, di un'etá d'oro ancora percorsa dalla felicità di un paradiso terrestre non ancora perduto).[101] He equates the evocation of primordial worlds with the states of being evoked by the Abstract Expressionists to describe their new imagery with the premeditated outpouring of continuous creativity familiar through the description of Zen painting masters.[102]

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Another Italian critic Giorgio Kaisserlian locates Lam's draftsmanship between the "neoplatonism of the first avant-garde" and the "magic of surrealism."[103] It's "isolation of form...revives the dignity of the art of our time," and avoids "reducing it to the result of psychoanalytical exercises." [104]

> It certainly is not possible to readily find references to the forms in Lam's work in the empirical world, nevertheless, they do not have the exclusive access to the essence and truth which lies in the confrontation of the mystery of the cosmos, and the torment caused by knowledge of these things...It is the same tension that is revealed in the sphere of science, the investigation of matter beyond the spatial and temporal determinism of classical physics, and the realm of invented form outside of the scenic space of the Renaissance, which has inspired the arts.[105]

In the context of Italian criticism, Kaisserlian's reference to the spatio-temporal elements in Lam's work may be the result of the artist's association with several members of the post-war Milan avant-gardists, including Lucio Fontana whose "concreziale spaziale" works were an important presence on that scene. In view of stylistic developments in Lam's work, specifically in the medium of ceramics in the mid-1970s, this comparison is certainly not specious. In Lam's ceramic work of 1975-78 the relief aspects of his creation, the scouring and tearing of the clay, the spattering and dripping of glazes recall the textured and invaded surfaces of Baj and Fontana (fig. 2.3). It is also compatible with the cultivation on the part of the Italian artists of "art breaking its boundaries," and "creating a synthesis of all the arts," and where "space no longer

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functions in the context of the image...but becomes the arena in which images take shape."[106]

On the part of Fontana this approach was, in the words of Jan van der Marck, "a means to involve the spectator in the space beyond the confines of the picture plane... Theses [slashes] are Fontana's fanciful interpretations of the quantum theory of molecular structure in physics."[107] Fontana himself, has noted: "I want to open up space, create a new dimension for art, tie in with the cosmos as it endlessly expands beyond the confining place of the picture."[108] Certainly the mental and emotional state evoked in the contemplation of another world and other dimensions is compatible with the plumbing of the mysteries of ancestral memory in Lam's work, and parallel notions of "beginnings from nothing" derived from existentialist-inspired art theory in Paris.[109] This connection is almost clarified visually in considering the reproduction of works in an issue of Il Gesto, where a rendering of Lam's spiny cane stalks is seen along with evocation of strange, extraterrestrial landscapes in the work of J. J. Lebel, Cesare Peverelli, Manzoni, Sante Bolognini, and Baj.[110] What can be glimpsed in all these works is an awareness of a world beyond the physical, an awareness of which is seen as an alternative to the western technological, consumerist culture.

On the occasion of Lam's triumphant critical reception

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in the Venice Bienale in 1972, Gianni Cavazzini wrote about Lam:

> His painting distinguishes itself by its lucid control of a primitive germination, and exonerates itself from the exaggerated horizons of a vegetal delirium. In his mature style, the design becomes clear and the subject rugged with the steady richness of the grey and the deeper tonalities of color. The hieratic dryness of the figure contrasts with the movement of the fulsome nature which ultimately is controlled under the luminous edge which characterizes his style. [111]

Franco Passoni simply declares the presentation by Lam to be the best in the Biennale. He also makes note of Lam's "line" and "effervescent color," intense tonalities and dramatic chiaroscura.

> Surpassing all stylistic preconceptions, Lam has created his personal style which permits him to express himself completely from the point of view of plastic values. He teaches us to see the secrets of a language rich in obscure truths, characterized by the influence of African art and a continual process of metamorphosis. This explains the extraordinary and mysterious fascination of this mixture of folklore and modernism that has stirred up such interest at this time in the Biennale.[112]

Luigi Lambertini echoes similar sentiments: "Nature takes on a divine persona, and there is no longer any distinction between the realm of animals and that of plants. This drama unfolds in the life of the most varied and hidden forms, and manifests itself completely through a natural return to one's origins at a moment when each thing, each phenomenon is part of a ritual and magic causes it to be born, to live and to die.[113]

On the occasion of Lam's 1975 exhibiton at the Galleria Nuova Sagittario in Milan, Luigi Cavallo asserts that at a

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time of cultural and aesthetic mediocity, Lam's work has "the sense of the collective voice of the past which expresses itself in its precise style and the primitive values expressed in a repetitive simplicity. It would be more correct to say 'primordial' when referring to the philosophical quality of his work."[114] This exhibition was accompanied by a lavish catalogue, in which some of the most interesting work of Lam's career are illustrated, including Le corps miroir de l'âme (1968, Private collection, Milan), and Embro pour Yemanja (1969, fig. 2.4). The quality of these works, according to Cavallo "gives the exhibition a consistent poetic dignity...The drawing, always the determinate element in Lam's painting, is enriched by a fluid graphic quality, and develops like spontaneous, evocative narration, almost like an elaborate alphabet from the past...And in these most recent paintings, he deciphers the meaning of ruprestrian glyphs."[115]

This catalogue was one of several monographic studies of Lam's work which were published in the 1970s. The first was Michel Leiris's Wifredo Lam, published in 1972 by Fratelli Fabbri. In his essay for the catalogue Leiris starts out by noting that the infatuation of two Surrealists adherents, in particular - Robert Desnos and Antonin Artaud - with Cuba predicated the reception of Lam in the Parisian art world in 1938. He goes on to analyze the character of Lam's imagery, which for him is based on memory

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rather than dogma: "...on ...the magic he glimpsed in his childhood, along with ancient mythologies and the...synthesis made by Western occultism."[116] Although Leiris's opinion of Lam's knowledge of Afro Cuban religion runs counter to most contemporary analyses of Lam's work (see Chapter 1), he does indicate the intricacies of Lam's own syncretism with the myriad influences on his life and art. "Lam's mind," he notes, was "unclouded by dogmatism, sought realization in all directions."[117] In spite of all the categories used to characterize Lam's art, in the final analysis Leiris thinks that Lam was motivated "by a single burning desire to abolish his limitations and to eliminate those divisions which smother life not only in the Antilles, but virtually everywhere." In any case, at this point in his career, Lam's earlier symbolism is "complete assimilated," and " no longer needs to be 'conscious,' or even symbolic," and "has now become essentially a poetic element that is valid in and by itself."

> More than just a combination of folklore and modernism...Lam's work is a compromise...a conjunction of tradition and revolution: a revolutionary renewal (self-affirming and projecting toward an unanimously shared future) of the distant traditional past that has been assimilated and will be the original soil on which man, as he becomes universal, will build."[118]

Critic Dario Micacchi would complete the analysis of Lam's position in the international art scene when he wrote in 1976 that in this act of assimilation, Lam joined artists such as Matta and Torres Garcia in transforming the European

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avant garde into a new form of art, a form which Micacchi compared to jazz music.[119]

In his monographic study of Lam also published in 1972 by Georges Fall in Paris, Alain Jouffroy similarly notes the distinctiveness of Lam's work, noting that it "eludes all traditionally analysis."[120] Jouffroy dismisses the usual roster of adjectives used to describe Lam's work, i.e. magic, phantoms, primitive wonder, witchery, idols, goddesses, etc. as "no help to one who would like to communicate in the language of today...These words, in fact, have meaning in the very circumscribed context of a particular culture, and when they correspond to a combination of rites, of beliefs and customs lived by people. Lam's work...extends beyond them while at the same time reconciling them."[121] The solution, then, according to Jouffroy is the "invention of another critical language which would reconcile song, recitative, epic, hymn, elegy, novel, essay and prose poem."[122] He then opts for his own methodology in writing about Lam.

Jouffroy observes Lam's own elusiveness about the critical analysis of his work.[123] Jouffroy, therefore, attempts to establish a basis for a psychological profile on Lam. He asserts that Lam has invented a fourth race, and therefore has to be continually "born and reborn...in all the situations in which he has had to invent his life in order to survive, to adapt himself to new countries, in

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order to find himself."[124] This "quest for identity...seems as though it will never end, because it blends with the quest of all those who dedicate themselves to a personal revolution in order to outstrip an ever-deferred social revolution."[125] Lam, Jouffroy observes, "was...one of the first men of the Third World...to grasp the latent relationship that exists between the invention of the greatest western paintings and the invention found in the art of all primitive communities. Close to and remote from both, he reconstructs dialectically, and in an identical present, the unity broken by centuries of conquest and slavery."[126]

Jouffroy's analysis is the sequel to that of Breton, written in 1942, in which he examines both the diadic relationship between Picasso and Lam, and the implications of Lam's presence on the international art scene for the primitivist enterprise. Jouffroy continues this discussion by noting that Lam is a "revolutionary individual" who accomplished his own revolution "without waiting for the historical facts that would crystalize a revolution."[127] His painting, The Jungle, is "the first revolutionary plastic declaration of the Third World...and a prophet announcement of its awakening on a world scale."[128] Five years earlier, on the occasion of the Salon de Mayo in Havana (see Chapter 3), Jouffroy had held the Cuban revolution up as the one which had been long awaited by the

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European intelligentsia after the Second World War. Lam's own pictorial revolution is reflected in his art which "obeys no tradition, and pays no worship [to other styles]."[129] In this distinctive place Lam "constantly weaves a relationship between East and West, the Old and the New World...[and]...changes this...collective thinking into a universe of individual signs, immediately identifiable... To see a painting of Lam is to look at the immensity of universal languages, and to admire the unifying and clarifying part that it play in it."[130]

The best-known work on Lam is still the 1976 monograph edited by Max-Pol Fouchet from interviews and conversations with Lam. It is one of the most complete statements by the artist of his life and work. But Fouchet has a particular point of view in situating Lam's life and career, which he outlines in the beginning of the book: "to show that it is a world in which aesthetic value and philosophical significance are inseparable."[131] In reviewing the key moments of personal and political revolt and change in this century, Fouchet singles out that which occurred in our comprehension of the subconscious. He uses the chartering of this realm of existence as a metaphor for the encounter of Europe, African, Asia and the Americas in the 16th Century: "The twentieth century found its America and its Indies in the subconscious, its Columbus in Freud.."[132] This analogy allows Fouchet to situate Lam's own narrative about his life

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and work so that political and aesthetic events have a direct causal relationship with it. Through this method the revolt of the subconscious becomes the catalyst for social revolution, which in turn, leads to the particular appreciation of primitive life and culture. This then provokes an interior revolution on the part of primitive peoples to reclaim hegemony over their cultures. Lam is the personification of that revolution.[133]

> History constantly repeats the same tale of the conquered race entering the homes of its conquerors and filling their abodes with objects in which the aesthetic appearance hides their vindicating power. The paradox became absolute when works by people who were exploited and disdained in their own land began to be admired...the ancestral statues invaded the very capitols of their invaders...Modern art - and in particular painting - could hardly remain indifferent to those opposing movements of domination and deliverance.[134]

While Fouchet notes the remarkable lack of political engagement in western modernism - with the exception of Picasso in specific instances.[135] Lam, on the other hand, for Fouchet is clearly "the soul of an age that fights for justice, for the liberation of long-suppressed realities."[136] In his second chapter, Fouchet provides one of the first extensive considerations of Cuban history as a context for Lam's life. He surveys the conditions of colonization, slavery, and Chinese contract labor. At the conclusion of this chapter, however, he clarifies his position on the influence of Lam's racial ancestry on his work:

> No creative artist escapes certain fatalities, nor is he dependent on them, unless he so chooses. To separate Wifredo

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> Lam from his origins would be as unreasonable as to find in those origins a determinism from which his work could not escape. Either position would prevent us from seeing Lam's creativity progress towards a myth of man and telluric forces, towards a noble legend of which his painting is the herald.[137]

In the subsequent chapters Fouchet skillfully places Lam's narrative within his discussion of the historical context for that story, concluding with a rather compressed summary of the artist's life and work after 1947.

Lam's 1976 exhibition in Spain was reviewed by the critic Santiago Amon, who discusses a range of the usual topics in Lam criticism: Lam's relationship to Picasso, the particulars of his racial make-up and his connection to the Surrealist movement. For the first time in about two decades there is some consideration - however brief - of the "oriental" nature of Lam, which for Amon is indicated in the simplification of form and the "anonymous" backgrounds of his paintings.[138] Amon concludes that in the melange of influences from African art, Picasso and Chinese culture, that Lam's art is difficult to classify, and, more interestingly, minimizes Lam's relationship to Surrealists:

> If Surrealism can be dealt with on the three fronts identified by Wieland Schmid, they would include: the tendency to create according formal invention and pure association, the creation of multiple figures, and the coexistence of abstract and "indefinite" qualities. [139]

He concludes by noting that Picasso's fabled comment to Lam - "Tu y yo tenemos una sangre commun." (You and I have common blood.) - was more a recognition on the part of Picasso that Lam was a genuine talent, than an attempt to

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establish a familial relationship, as it is interpreted by other critics.

In 1979, the Centre Pompidou organized a documentary exhibition of works related to The Jungle, on loan from the Museum of Modern. This exhibition was a Parisian homecoming of a sort for Lam. He had suffered a stroke the previous year, and was by then resettled in Paris. He had been absent from the Parisian scene so long, however, that Alain Jouffroy could open his review with a deadpan observation: "Et Lam expose rarement en France" (Lam rarely exhibits in France).[140] The brevity of the collective memory of the Parisian art scene was revealed as Jouffroy also claimed that this was the first transatlantic visit of The Jungle, when in fact it had been see in Paris in 1952 in the exhibition, L'oeuvre du XX siècle: peintures et sculptures, at the Musée nationale d'art moderne.[141] The stereotyping of Lam had reached the point that Jouffroy could only resort to irony in his discussion of the circumstances of the creation of the painting and the irony of the way it was exhibited at the Centre Pompidou. He did, however, set the stage for the reclamation of Lam in the context of the 1980s when artists of African, Latin American, Native America and Asian descent attained a more prominent presence in western modernism. Jouffroy alludes to the fact that artists such as Lam no longer have to excuse their ethnicity or their birthright, because the onus for change, he states, is on

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the west:

[The Jungle] was the first painting to evoke the thunder, the cultural revolution which caused the chiefs of industry to lose sleep. It is the victorious Guernica of a liberated man. [Lam] does not extol and ideology, except that of an effusively enthusiastic generosity which more so than religion, will one day unite all cultures.[142]

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NOTES: Chapter 2.

1. For the history of the Centre d'art in the promotion of Haitian painting, see Seldon Rodman, Renaissance in Haiti: Popular Painters in the Black Republic (New York: Pelligrini and Cudahy, 1948): 5-10.

2. André Breton, Lam [exhib. cat.] (Port au Prince: Centre d'art, 1946).

3. Letter from Lam to Picasso, February 23, 1946, Archives Musée Picasso.

4. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February, 1993.

5. Helena Holzer Benitez, interview with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992. In retrospect Lam's decision not to return to Europe after the war may have contributed to the disintegration of his relationship with Holzer. She was forced to leave Cuba and go to New York to find work in her field of specialty, scientific research, which was not available to her in Cuba.

6. Ibid. These facts were confirmed by Fernandez's widow, France Mazin Fernandez, in conversation, Paris, March, 1993. Some of the archival evidence for Lam's itinerary is evident from the home movies Lam made on this trip which is in the collection of Lou Laurin Lam.

7. The following summary of Lam's exhibition history is based on research compiled by Yveline Hemsi for the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Lam's work.

8. At this time, the ICA, London was housed in the former Academy Cinema, renamed Academy Hall. See Roland Penrose, Scrap Book, 1900-81 (New York: Rizzoli, 1981): 142-143.

9. Robert Coates, "The Art Galleries: Water Colors in Brooklyn," The New Yorker (May 14, 1949). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

10. See R.V. Gindertale, Diario de la Marina (April 15, 1951). Clipping from the archives of SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

11. See Cobra, 1945-1951 [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1982): 44-46.

12. Lou Laurin Lam, interviews with LSS, Paris, February-March, 1993.

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13. Breton was in contact with Trotsky when he visited Mexico in 1938. Trotsky had fled there and found refuge with Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. After thwarting an attempt to assassinate him on May 24, 1940, Trotsky was finally killed by a close associate of Rivera's three months later. See Hayden Herrera, Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo (New York Harper & Row Publisher, 1983): 295, 297. This discussion of the politics of Surrealism has been informed by Helen Lewis, The Politics of Surrealism (New York: Paragon House Publisher, 1988).

14. Lewis, op. cit.: 164-175.

15. Lam in an unattributed and unpublished interview in Spanish. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

16. See Lewis, op. cit.: 164-165.

17. "..le recherche surréaliste ne peut être conçue qu'au contact de la réalité sociale et pour une mise en practique révolutionnaire." René Passeron quoted in Agnès Angliviel de la Beaumelle, "Cobra," Paris/ Paris, 1937-1957 [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1981): 148.

18. See Lewis, op. cit.: 127.

19. See Lépm Degand, Abstraction/ Figuration: langage et signification de la peinture, intro. by Daniel Abadie (Paris: Editions Cercle d'art, 1988): 10-11.

20. Peter Shield, "Au Danemark," in La planète affolée; Surréalisme, Dispersion et In fluences, 1938-1947: 206.

21. See Sims, "Wifredo Lam: From Spain Back to Cuba," in Balderrama, op cit.: 24, 26.

22. See note number 12.

23. Cobra, 1945-51: 52.

24. Pierre Mabille, "The Ritual Painting of Lam," Magazine of Art 42 (May, 1949): 188.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Alain Jouffroy, "The Paris International Avant-Garde," New Art Around the World: Painting and Sculpture (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1966): 95

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28."... prendre conscience de la position qu'occupait l'art primitif de son pays...par rapport à l'art primitif mondial, et d'avoir aussi quelques notions de relations entre les mobiles de l'homme primitif et la culture occidentale moderne." Shield, op. cit.: 205.

29. Among the most notable Matta and Hérold.

30. For example, Toyon, Hantaï, Adrien Dax and writer José Pierre who became Breton's heir as the chronicler and apologist for the group.

31. See Dawn Ades, Dada and Surrealism Reviewed [exhib. cat.], with an introduction by David Sylvester and essay by Elizabeth Cowling (London: Westerham Press, 1978).

32. Amy B. Courvoisier, "El pintor a la selva 'cazando colores,'" [1956-57]. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

33. See Paris/ Paris, 1937-1957: 144-145.

34. The Phases group came together in 1952 at the initiative of Eduoard Jaquer to create an international network of post-Surrealist tendencies in European art, including CoBrA, Rixes, and Surréalistes Révolutionnaires. A partial listing of sites and dates of exhibitions of the Phase group, in which Lam participated, includes: Studio Paul Fachetti, Paris, 1954; Galerie Kleber, Paris, 1956, Stedelijk Museu, Amsterdam, 1957; Galerie Neue Parnass Jähling, Wüppertal, 1958; Galleria Schwartz, Milan 1961; Galerie du Ranelagh, Paris, 1963, and Musée d'Ixelles, Brussels, 1964. This list was prepared from the exhibition history compiled by Yveline Hemsi for the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Lam's work.

35. José Pierre, L'univers surréaliste (Paris: Editions Aimery Somogy, 1983): 246.

36. "dans une telle entreprise quand ce ne serait que par le défi qu'elle lance aux religions constituées en s'appuyant délibérément sur les exemples des peuples 'primitifs.'" Ibid. (Trans. LSS.)

37. Ibid: 246-247.

38. Breton in Le surréalisme en 1947: exposition internationale du surréalisme [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Editions Pierre à feu, Maeght Editeur, 1947): 138. (Trans. LSS.)

39. Lautrémont, Maldoror (Les Chants de Maldoror), trans. by Guy Wernham (New York: New Directions Books, 1965): 173-207.

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40. Luc Zangrie, "Pour un nouveau totemisme," Cobra: Revue internationale de l'art experimental 10 (September, 1951): 22-23. (Trans. LSS.) Suzanne Césaire evoked a similar image of "homme-plant" to celebrate the black Martinican who has been reunited with his (or her) native culture. See section on Lam and the issue of Antillean identity in Chapter 5.

41. Geri Trotta, "Wifredo Lam Paints a Picture," Art News 49 (September, 1950): 52.

42. Fouchet, op. cit.: 41.

43. Ibid: 48.

44. Reproduced Balderrama, ed., Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-1952: 84.

45. See Arrizo Cameriana, ed., Jorn e Albisola: dalla cermica alla sculptura (Albisola: Comune di Albissola Marina, 1988), and Riveria Notte: Settimanate di informazione turista XV, no. 28 (August, 15, 1970): 4. Tullio d'Albisola was the nephew of the founder of Futurism, Marinetti.

46. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989.

47. The divorce resulted from the strain of separation enforced by the immigration policies with regard to persons of Asian descent to the United States where Helena had to settle to work in her chosen field. See Trotta, op. cit. Also Helena Holzer Benitez, interview with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992, and New York, February, 1993.

48. Sluger reminisced about those years in an interview published in Cuba in the 1980s, recalling their friendship with Picasso, and her travels with Lam to Cuba. She appears in a photograph of an interview of Sophie Barbet, director of the Galerie Etoile Scellée in Havana with José Baragaño.

49. "...en Albisola, Lam buscaba la cercanía con el clima y el paisaje de Cuba. Cuentan que allí communicaba a quienes le conocían su visíon de la naturaleza, la vida y las culturas cubanas.." Mario López Oliva, "Albisola Mare en Wifredo Lam," Gramna (September 14, 1986). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.) Lam's reputation in Cuba during the 1960s and 70s also had an impact on his career in Italy. Although he was not involved in the day-to-day realities of revolutionary Cuba, he was not unwilling to be its supporter in the rest of the world. Besides organizing the reinstallation of the 1967 Paris Salon de Mai in Havana that same year, and organizing a delegation to attend the

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1968 Cultural Congress in Havana (see Chapter 3), Lam was also instrumental in fostering relations between Italy and Cuba. Consequently when the Cuban government recognized Lam by issuing a stamp with the image of his 1955 painting Abstract Painting (originally commissioned by the owners of the then Hilton Hotel, now the Havana Libre) - the local syndicate of ceramicists presented Lam with a golden stamp in recognition of this honor. See C. Calcagno, "L'estate artistica ad Albisola," Cronica di Savona (August 14, 1965). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

50. "Ho compinto insomma il tragitto inverso di Cristoforo Colombo: dalle Antille alla Liguria." Lorenzo Vicenti, "Mi credevano lo stregone che beve sangue," Oggi illustrato, no. 25 (July 17, 1972), pp. 86-88. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.) His observation was made almost twenty years before the celebration of the quincentennial of Columbus's arrival in the New World. Lam further demonstrated his awareness of this event in the graphic suite, Meta de Chango (published by Muni Arte in Madrid), which he completed in 1982 to commemorate the quincentennial.

51. Lou Laurin Lam interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989.

52. Laurin has described the routine of the Lam family in Albisola: "Afternoons and evenings were often taken up.. with socializing, with entertaining visiting collectors, dealers, artists and friends." Lam would spend time each morning with local shop keepers and fishermen and workers discussing politics and the world situation. He would read up to seven papers a day. After lunch, Lam would work alone, while Lou and Adelita and the Children played at the beach. (Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February-March, 1993.) Lam's integration into the daily life in Albisola was undoubtedly comparable to that he enjoyed during his years in Spain and in Cuba. He also participated in various ceremonial events on the local art scene, and even won notice for his culinary prowess winning a prize for his version of minestrone soup. (See "Wifredo Lam vince un premio di cucina," Cronica di Savona (June 13, 1973): 7. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris).

53. This summary is based on that which has been published in Fouchet, and also the exhibition history compiled by Yveline Hemsi.

54. The Imaginists were a group of Swedish artists interested in Surrealism who organized in the town of Malmö in Sweden. The group consisted of: Max Water Svanberg, Carl Otto Hultén, Gosa Kriland and Cners Osterlin. The work of the Malmö surrealists, as well as that of a second group

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based in Halmstad encompassed a variety of surrealist styles, showing the influence especially of Dalí, Ernst and Brauner. (See Ragnar von Holten, "En Suède," in La planète affolée, pp. 227-231). Lam's association with the Imaginists came at a time to fill the void of the demise of the CoBrA group.

55. The Galerie Colibri was founded by Carl Otto Hultén, who also started its publishing arm, Editions Image.

56. Los imaginistas soñado
nuestros sueños
cálientan la noche
de 182 dias y una aurora
desafiando el frió y su simbolo de muerte.
Con la creación
de este color joven
noche la alegria
del encuentro.
This poem was published in the February 7, 1957 issue of El Nacional in Caracas. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

57. "Ce furent les tableaux de Lam qui incitèrent Pollock à commencer l'étude sérieuse de l'art Américain ancien, c'est-à-dire de l'art des Indiens. Ses oeuvres de l'epoque présentent de nombreux traits communs avec les tableaux de jungle et de totéms de l'oeuvre antérieure de Lam." Per Hovdenakk, "Multiforme comme la vie même," Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.] (Copenhagen, 1978): 12.

58. Ibid.

59. Edward Lucie-Smith, "Personal Vision," Sunday Times (October 11, 1970). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

60. Matta had an exhibition at the London Arts Gallery from July 29-August 22, 1970. (See Matta. [exhibition catalogue] (Paris, Centre Pompidou, 1985): 312.) Lam's exhibition at Gimpel Fils was October 6-24. Both artist's show were then on view at the New York branches of these galleries.

61. "Wifredo Lam," City Express [1970], Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

62. See Lowery Stokes Sims, "Caveat Emptor: Lam fakes Revealed," Latin American Art, 2, no. 2 (Spring, 1990): 62.

63. See letter from Lam to Carlos Franqui, March 26, 1967, Archives of SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. Even after travel to Cuba became complicated due to the diplomatic manueverings in the wake of the Cuba revolution, Lam persisted in his

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boycott of Spain.

64. Santiago Amon, " Wifredo Lam, por primera vez in España," El País (November 19, 1976): 23. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

65. Sempronio, "Lam, en Barcelona," Tele-Exprés. (November 23, 1976). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

66. Lasse Söderberg, "Wifredo Lam, de paso por España," El Pais (August 9, 1980): 3. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

67. See Maria Lluïsa Borrás, "Lam en España," Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.] (Madrid: Museo Nacional, Centro de Arte Reina Sophia, 1992): 43-47.

68. See Ades op. cit. and Pierre op. cit. about the dissemination of Surrealism in this area before and after the Second World War.

69. "Wifredo Lam ne peint que la nuit," France et Monde (1946). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

70. Ibid. (Trans. LSS.)

71. Ibid.

72. "...il faut se garder, croyons nous, d'insister sur un rôle prepondérant qu'ils joueraient. Ils caractérisent cette peinture, ils ne la constituent pas. Wifredo Lam les utilise mais les tempère come peut faire d'elements analogues dans son oeuvre le Mexicain Tamayo." Guy Marester, "Oeuvres récentes de Wilfredo Lam à la Galerie Maeght," Le Soir [March, 1953], Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.) Thomas Hess, writing in Art News in 1948 poses similar questions about the nature of racial or national identity in Lam's work and also compares Lam's painting with that of Tamayo.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. "...ces êtres s'emploient à exprimer ce fond éternal de l'esprit qui, dans toutes les langues et sur tous les tons, parle tour à tour de désir et de terreur...Ces états que Lam transfigure pour y apporter une solution à un niveau supérieur à celui de leur élévation nouvelle, afin de les entraîner dans un mouvement ascensionnel continu, sont ceux qu'ont connu et que connaissent tous les hommes. Seules les images qu'il engendrent diffèrent aujourd'hui de ce qu'elles étaient hier, ici de ce qu'elles sont là, non par leur

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contenu mais par leur aspect, de même qu'un merle, par example, révèle son lieu d'origine par son plumage...Lam n'entend pas les recouvrir de nouveaux oripeaux, mais au contraire arracher à chacun d'eux ce qui pouvait dissimuler sa véritable nature...Il est attaché à leur capture, non pour les dompter mais pour les montrer à l'état sauvage et dans leur captivante fureur, afin que nous puissions les reconnaître en nous." Benejamin Péret, "Lam," Medium, no. 4 (January, 1955): 29. (Trans. LSS.)

76. Ingeman Gustafson, "Wifredo Lam," Salamander 3 (1956): 29. (Trans. LSS.) Lam offered his opinion of the work of Rousseau to Max-Pol Fouchet, carefully distinguishing his painterly enterprise from that of Rousseau:"About the Frenchman, Lam noted, He was a magnificent painter, but not the same kind of painter as me. He does not condemn what happens in the jungle...Look at my monsters and the gesture they make. The one of the right [in The Eternal Presence] is flaunting its rump, like she was an obscene whore. Look at the scissors, too, in the upper right hand corner [of The Jungle]. My idea was the represent the spirit of the Negroes in the situation in which they found themselves. I have used poetry to show the reality of acceptance and protest." (Fouchet, op. cit.: 199.)

77. Ibid.

78. André Breton, Martinique, charmeuse de serpent, ed. by Jean Jacques Pauvert ([Paris: Jean Jacques Pauvert, 1992). The title refers both to the experiences of Breton and Masson on Martinique in the Spring/early Summer, 1941, and to the painting Charmeuse de serpente by Henri Rousseau. Breton and Masson discuss the untamed vegetation of the tropics and note that the arbitrariness sought in the surreal landscape finds there its definition. Masson admits to feeling disoriented in this arbitrary wildness, recalling the hapless sailor on one of Captain Cook's expeditions who found himself at a disadvantage on encountering a "voluptuous reverie" in the embraces of an island woman, which substituted for the lack of a common language. The notion of helpless surrender - be it to tabooed physical pleasure, deep-seated "dark" desire, the unknown of non-physical entities - continues to fuel the western imagination even a century after Freud. (See Torgovnick, op. cit.

79. Sara Wilson, "Paris Post War: In Search of the Absolute," in Frances Morris, Paris Post War: Art and Existentialism [exhib. cat.] (London: Tate Gallery, 1993): 29.

80. Ibid: 28, 33, 44.

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81. Ibid.

82. Ibid: 34. This "existentialist" primitivism, similar to that evoked by Luc Sangrie, was "characterized by a skepticism which replaced former modernist certitude about the technological age." (Bibd.)

83. See Vicenti, op. cit.

84. " ...hors de la vie et dans la vie...Lam a enfermé dans une même synthèse deux mondes hétérogènes. Son admiration pour les découvertes de la science qui sollicitent tous les caprices de sa fantaisie s'est élargie jusqu'à embrasser les problèmes relatifs à la constitution sociale d'à présent; jusqu'à représenter ses anxiétés devant les conditions poignantes faites aux peuple qui arrivent déjà à epéler la loi de la conscience...à l'aide de signes, Lam s'evértue à represénter non pas des états de surexcitation factice, mais des états d'âme..." Christian Zervos, "Dessins de Wifredo Lam," Cahiers d'art, 31-32 (1956-57): 355-356. (Trans. LSS.)

85. François Pluchart, Combat, no. 7.027 (January 23, 1967): 7. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS).

86. See Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics (New York: Bantam Books, 1977) for the scientific perspective, and M. Scott Peck. People of the Lie (New York: Simon and Shuster, Inc., 1983) for the psychological one.

87. Peter Selz, New Image of Man [exhib. cat.] (New York The Museum of Modern Art, 1959): 10.

88. André Pièyre de Mandiarques, "Wifredo Lam: Mythologies," XXe siècle, XXXVI, no. 43 (December, 1974): unpaginated. (Trans. LSS.)

89. "...fraternals, ils tiennent à une parenté dans la conception d'un univers merveilleux et parodique où les valeurs reconnues sont renversées exprès, où la cruauté a force de loi sans étouffer un sort de chant d'amour, où la pulsion du sang et la montée de la sève sont poussées, comme on pousse la vapeur, où les mouvements et les effets sont accelérés et augmentés." Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Marco Valsecchi, Lam, dipinti, pastelli, acqueforti [exhib. cat.] (Milan: Galleria l'Annunciata, 1962). (Trans. LSS.)

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93. Lam himself had forsaken his Catholic upbringing by the time he arrived in Spain in the 1920s. This was to cause a problem when it came time to solidify his union with his first wife Sebastiana Periz who wanted to get married in the Catholic Church. Lam quoted Lui Buñuel in describing his own position: "Thank God, I'm an atheist!" (Fouchet, op. cit.: 86.)

94. See Segalen, op. cit.: 135-41.

95. See Monnerot, op. cit.

96. Pierre, op. cit: 246.

97. Valsecchi, op. cit.

98. Ibid.

99. "...pottebbe dire: giungere al cuore della natura umana, dove l'esistenza si manifesta come sorgente di un sogno che tende a incarnarsi nella cronaca del mondo. Ed è per questo che Lam avverte a volte uno stato inquieto dell'essere, come se fossero gli occhi affissi a un vuoto insondabile da cui dovrebbero giungere le cifre dal un messaggio remoto." Ibid. (Trans. LSS.)

100. Wifredo Lam, "Oeuvres récentes de Wifredo Lam," Cahiers d'art, 26 (1951): 186.

101. Valsecchi, op. cit.

102. Ibid.

103. Lam [exhib. cat.], essay by Giorgio Kaisserlian (Milan: Galleria Pagani del Grattacielo, 1959): unpaginated.

104. Ibid.

105. "Non si potrà certamente trovare dei riferimenti facili, nel mondo sensible, alle forme di Lam, eppure esse non intendono accaparrarsi l'essere e la verità nei confronti del mistero del cosmo e del travaglio della conoscenza... E'la stessa tensione che rivelano, spalancando, nell'ambito scientifico, l'indagine sulla materia oltre i determinisimi spazio-temporali della fisica classica, ed aprendo all'arte il regno delle forme inventate, oltre lo spazio scenico della figura rinascientale." Ibid. (Trans. LSS.)

106. Jan van der Marck, Baj, Fontana, Mazoni [exhib. cat.] (New York: Marisa del Re Gallery, 1989): unpaginated.

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107. Ibid.

108. Ibid.

109. Morris, op. cit.: 26.

110. Il Gesto, number 3 (September, 1958): unpaginated. Il Gesto was one of many in an international group of periodicals that promoted the agenda of the Phases Group.

111. "La sua pittura si precisa in un lucido controllo delle germinazioni primitive e si dispiega fra gli amplissimi orizzonti del delirio vegetativo. Nella stagione della maturità il disegno si fa netto e la materia scabra nella ricerca costante dei grigi e delle tonalità basse. La secchezza ieratica delle figure si contrappone alla mobilità di turgori naturali che si prosciugano sotto il taglio luminoso dello stile." Giannai Cavazzini, "Alechinsky e Lam: migliori in pittura," Gazetta di Parma. (August 12, 1972): 3. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

112. "Pur essendo al di sopra d'ogni preconcetto stilistico, Lam ha ormai creato un suo stile personale che gli permette d'esprimersi compiutamente, dal punto di vista plastico, aprendo ai nostri occhi i segreti d'un linguaggio ricco di verità oscure, caratterizzato dall'influenza dell'arte negra e dalla metamorfosi continua...Ecco dunque spiegate le ragioni d'un fascino misterioso e straordinario nato da un misto di folklore e modernismo, che tanto interesse suscita in questi giorni all Biennale Veneziana." Franco Passioni, "Il pittore cubano, amico di Picasso," L'eco della Stampa (August 3, 1972). Archives, SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

113. "La natura diventa personnaggio, divinità; fra il regno animale e quello vegetale non vi è più alcuna distinzione. La vicenda, quel drammatico dispiegarsi della vita nelle forme più varie e riposte, si palesa allora nella sua completezza con un ritorno naturale alle origini, a quando ogni cosa, ogni fenomeno era parte di un rito e la magia aiutava a nascere, a vivere e a morire." Luigi Lambertini, " Alla Biennale di Venezia: Altri Stranieri," Giornale di Bergamo (August 19, 1972). Archives of SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

114. "...il senso di una parola coltivata nei decenni, che si esprime con la precisione e la reiterata semplicità dei valori primitivi. Sarebbe più giusto dire primigeni se ci si riferisse alla qualità filosofica della sua opera." Luigi Cavallo, "Dipinti recenti di Lam," La Nazione (June 6, 1975). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

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115. "Il disegno, sempre determinante nel quadro di Lam, si intreccia con limpida grafia, si estende come narrazione spontanea, evocativa, quasi modulo di un alfabeto elaborato nei decenni, e in questi ultimi quadri arrivato alla spaglia significazione del graffito rupestre." Ibid. The term "rupestrian," was also adopted by the Cuban artist Ana Mendieta to describe the evocations of Pre-Columbian glyphs of female figures in her own work (See Ana Mendieta: Rupestrian Sculptures/ Escultras rupestres [exhib. cat.] essay by Gerardo Mosquera (New York: A.I.R Gallery, 1981). Mendieta was a great admirer of Lam and the coincidence is telling.

116. Michel Leiris, Wifredo Lam (New York: Abrams, 1971): unpaginated.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Dario Micacchi, "La Giungla di Wifredo Lam," L'unità (February 28, 1976): 3. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

120. Alain Jouffroy, Lam (Paris: Editions Georges Fall, 1972): 25.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid.

123. The artist's strategies, Jouffroy notes, include "perpetual about-faces," and a manner of conversation in which Spanish, French and Italian are used simultaneously. Geri Trotta also noted this multi-lingual communicative mode. See Trotta op. cit: 43.

124. Jouffroy op. cit.: 29.

125. Ibid.

126. Ibid: 34.

127. Ibid: 36.

128. Ibid: 54.

129. Ibid: 45.

130. Ibid.

131. Max-Pol Fouchet, Wifredo Lam (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, S.A., 1976): 6.

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132. Ibid.

133. Ibid: 7.

134. Ibid: 12.

135. Ibid: 16.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid: 28.

138. Amon, op. cit.

139. "Si el surréalismo es susceptible de verse fragmentado etres frentes, cuales los que propone Wiedland Schmid, corresponde a Lam su inscripcion en el primero de ellos: aquella tendencia que, a través de la invención formal y por pura asociación, crea múltiples figuras, portiendo de lo abstracto y de lo indefinido." Ibid. (Trans. LSS.)

140. Alain Jouffroy, "Le Tonnere du Tiers-Monde," Maintenant, 3 (March 26, 1979): 34.

141. See Marester op. cit.

142. "Ce tableau, le premier, a fait retenir le tonnerre du Tiers-Monde, la révolution culturelle qui empêche de dormir les chefs d'industrie les plus comfortables. C'est the Guernica victorieux d'un homme libre. Il ne relève d'aucune idéologie, sinon celle de l'enthousiasme violent de la générosité qui, par-delà les religions, réconciliera peut-être un pour toutes les cultures." Ibid. (Trans. LSS.).

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CHAPTER 3: LAM IN CUBA AND LATIN AMERICA, 1947-1982

Lam and La Cubanidad.

In 1980 Lam was photographed for Cuban newspapers participating in a demonstration of solidary with the Castro regime at the time of the Mariel boat lift. Lam sits in a wheel chair and holds a placard. The photograph is eerily reminiscent of one of the ailing Frida Kahlo, taken in 1954 when she participated in a pro-Communist demonstration just one month before she died.[1] "Marxism Will Give Health to the Sick," the title of one of Kahlo's very late paintings, could as well be the caption of the photograph of Lam, who was at the time in Cuba to receive medical attention for the infirmities suffered in the aftermath of a stroke, which occurred in Italy in late summer, 1978.

During 1980-82 Lam visited Cuba two times for this purpose. This period marked a final consolidation of Lam's image as the foremost painter of Cuba in Cuba. When he died in 1982, his ashes were buried in Colon Cemetery in Havana, in the special section for fallen heros of the revolution. Two years later, when the Ministry of Culture in Cuba inaugurated the first Bienal of Havana, the plans for a new art center in old Havana dedicated to Lam for the study of Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Africa were unveiled before an international assembly. On this occasion also

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there was an international symposium on Lam's work - the first to explore his life and art in depth.[2]

The manufacturing of Lam as the quintessential Cuban artist, and by extension the prototypical Latin American artist, stands as a complementary and corrolary story to that of Lam within the context of the School of Paris and the art scene of the United States. Since the 1980s, with the institutionalization of Latin American art an exhibition and market category within the international art scene, Lam's Cuban identity has tended to supersede all other contexts for his work. For Lam his relationship with his homeland must have been fraught with ambiguity as he aspired to maintain his reputation within a larger arena, and also to be a faithful son of Cuba. "I'm just a peasant from Sagua le Grande," he would declare to an interviewer in Cuba in 1977.[3] As such he had to contend with a myriad of professional, personal, social and political anachronisms rife in the period after 1959.

Lam and the Cuban Art Scene, 1946-58.

As noted in Chapter 2, Lam had his first solo exhibition in Havana in April, 1946, a full five years after his return from Europe. It was organized by Lydia Cabrera at the Lyceum or the Havana Yacht Club. Cabrera's 1943 article on Lam was the main text of the exhibition brochure. It also included statements and excerpts of writings on Lam's work

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on comments on Lam by a number of his close associates including Breton, Césaire, Mabille, Benjamin Péret, Christian Zervos, as well as George Besson and Charles Théophile - both of whom had reviewed Lam's first Paris exhibition in 1939. The American critic Robert Coates, who would single out Lam's work in his review of the Watercolor Biennial at the Brooklyn Museum in New York in 1949, was also quoted. A review of the exhibition in Información notes that Lam's work conveys a social expression, a universal message, and a "subpictorial" resonance that is similar to that which can be discerned in "classical art."[4] The reviewer discerns the influence of El Greco in the "vertical frenzy" of Lam's linear rhythms, and in what is perceived to be Lam's aspirations to express the "infinite." Special note is also made of his sense of design, "which is not decorative, but in a certain way architectural and calculated." This, observes the reviewers, allows Lam to combine the old with the modern in a manner which should continue to "bear fruit."[5]

The exhibition at the Lyceum was certainly long overdue. Lam had already had solo exhibitions in New York at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1942, 1944 and 1945. He was also included in many group exhibitions at the gallery, and had been reviewed each time in New York magazines and newspapers. Two of his works had been purchased for the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York - Mother

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and Child (1939, fig. 5.7), and The Jungle (1942-43, fig. 1.14) - and on several occasions Lam's work had been singled out from official exhibitions of contemporary Cuban artists sent abroad. Within Cuban Lam had taken a leadership role in the founding of the Comité de Artistas Plásticas de Ayuda el Pueblo Español in 1945. He was Vice-President of the Symphony Society by the end of the 1942, and participated in the fund-raising project for the restoration of the Church of Santa Maria del Rosario. He exhibited in the Salón Internacional de Acquarlas y Gouaches, executed drawings for the Gaceta del Caribe in 1944, did the cover of Origines and was singled out for notice by critics Guy Perez Cisneros, the poet Nicolás Gullién and José Gomez Sicré, who included a chapter on Lam in his Pintura Cubana de Hoy, published in 1944.

Despite all this activity, Lam's relationship with his Cuban contemporaries was conflicted. As Guilio Blanc has observed he was seen as a late-comer to the well-established modernist scene.[6] He also antagonized many influential people when he refused to participate in the exhibition of Cuban artists organized at the Museum of Modern Art in 1942. In a letter to Breton he noted his conflict with the organizers of the exhibition, and Alfred Barr had to publish a letter in Gaceta del Caribe explaining that Lam's absence from the exhibition was the artist's own decision.[7] Although Lam did participate in other group exhibitions of

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Cuban art abroad in the 1940s, this incident left and lingering bad feeling among artistic circles. As late as 1953 an editorial, written in response to an Argentine critic's written questions about Lam's absence from the Cuban representation at the Venice Biennale, made a point of listing all the exhibitions that Lam had refused to participate in from 1944 to 1952.[8]

Among the group exhibitions Lam did participate in the years immediately after the war included Exposición de pintura Contemporanea Cubana, organized in 1946 by the Dirección de Relaciones Culturales in Cuba, and the Exposición de Pintura Cubana Moderna at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. In 1949 Lam's work was also included in a group exhibition of the Agrupación de Pintores y Escultores Cubanos at the Lyceum in Havana (he was also a founding member of this group of modernist artists), and Exposición de Cuadros de Pintores Cubanos at the Salónes del Ateno in Cienfuegos. That same year his work was in the Cuban section of the Biennial International Water Color Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York, and the exhibition, Moderna Kubanska Mälere at the Lilijevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm, Sweden.

Chronologies of Lam's career usually characterized the period, 1946-1952 as a transitional one in his career, when he is re-establishing his contacts in Europe, and intensifying his relationship with the New York art scene

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now through personal contacts - all the while withdrawing from the Cuban scene. The definite break comes, so indicate the chronologies, when Lam establishes a permanent residence in Paris in 1952. The fact is that Lam continued to maintain close ties with Cuba throughout the 1950s until the Cuban Revolution in 1959. In 1950 the Cuban government awarded him a special visa which gave Lam a wide berth to travel and "undertake studies of the development of modern painting in...the United States, France and Italy."[9] Lam continued to carry this visa and his passport throughout the 1950s, and the initial award also included a stipend for expenses. Lam also maintained his residence in Marianao until 1959 Cuban revolution. This enabled him to spend extended periods of time in Cuba each year through 1958.

In 1950 Lam had his second solo exhibition in Cuba at the Parc Central in Havana in October, 1950.[10] In his review of the exhibition, Angel Lazaro made note of the comments made by visitors to the exhibition. From evocations of the more monstrous vision of Goya, to suppositions about evidence of his Chinese identity, there was a general consensus that "Lam is the most talented painter ever produced by Cuba."[11] He also notes that "all the young painters of the new Cuban school of painting agree that Lam is the best of all of them!"[12] Lázaro also ruminates about the stylistic affinities of Lam's work, doubting whether it is either cubist or surrealist, but noting that it is

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"imbued with a magical quality which sustains it...The truth is that each of Lam's paintings need their own space to clear away all extraneous visual elements so that they can exist in their own universe."[13]

Jorge Mañach similarly uses the reaction of the public to the exhibition as the basis of his own comments.[14] In response to a hypothetical question on behalf of the visiting public, Mañach launches on an extensive rumination on issues of taste, imitation and naturalness in contemporary art, and strategies to startle the public through shock. Mañach affirms the perogative of the artist to explore new terrains in art even if the results are shocking and not readily likeable to the general public.[15] Lam's art exemplified this role:

> No one is obliged to like his work, nor can he be accused of being interested in pleasing everyone. What he tries to express in his painting, as does Ponce de Leon or Amelia Peláez, is a realm of feeling not merely the visual world. And feeling, with this primal emotion of sentimentality, which is part of rudimentary and shared experience, but with the particular artistic emotion in which there is a feeling for pure places forms, such as the linear rhythm, hints of geometric austerity, the caprices of invention to create mass and outline, the parade of sobriety or the opulence of color. This is put to the service of the creative imagination, or an imagination which doesn't create capriciously except in order to transmit most eloquently a mysterious interior experience.[16]

However, having asserted Lam's common purpose with that of his contemporaries Mañach distinguishes the nature of that "Interior experience" in the case of Lam: "It consist of the most profound intimacy with centuries of lineage and culture which is evoked in his work."[17] The elements of "lineage

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and culture" in Lam's case is of course his dual African and Chinese heritage. Mañach observes that the latter can be discerned in Lam's "purely linear eloquence" (elocuencia puramente lineal), the former in "this primal, chaotic, magical and sensual energy" (ese vigor primigenio, caótico, mágico, sensual).[18] For Marcelo Pogolotti, Lam's work is the last stage in the evolution of a romantic sensibility, represented in the European tradition that includes the "dionysian concept" of Nietzche, the "intuitiveness" of the Douanier Rousseau, "the vital impulse" of Bergson, the "irrational cover of mysticism" of Brémond, the unconscious automatism of Breton, and what Schopenhauer defines as the "direct reflection of the will."[19] Although Lam is not the only Cuban painter to demonstrate these qualities, Pogolotti adds, he is undoubtedly the best known exponent. In it contrasts of "culture and nature," "refinement and savagery," "apollonian and dionysian" qualities Lam's work achieves for Pogolotti a syncretism, which is particular to a tropical sensibility."[20]

The following year Lam had a retrospective exhibition of work executed between 1938 and 1950 (Lam y nuestro tiempo: Paris, 1938 -Habana, 1951) at the Galería Sociedad Nuestro Tiempo. The text for the catalogue was written by Carlos Franqui, a young writer and typographer, who would be an important contact for Lam with the Castro regime after the 1959 revolution. Lam was also in a group exhibition of

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drawings at the Galería de Artes Plásticas, and was the recipient of the first prize at the Salón nacional de pintura y sculptura y grabado de la Habana. In 1951, his work was also featured in the exhibition, Art Contemporain Cubain, at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris. Although his representation in the exhibition was relatively modest, one of his ink drawings was reproduced on the cover of the catalogue. A critic writing in Visions magazine in Havana that the examples of his work in this exhibition hardly did justice to his "international stature and preeminent position among his Cuban contemporaries."[21] This was the situation despite the fact that Fernando Ortíz's monographic study of Lam's work, published a year earlier, would seem to have indicated a final reconciliation between Lam and the Cuban cultural establishment.[22]

Through the mid 1950s Lam continued to exhibit in Cuba. He became the mentor of the next generation of modernist artists - the group "Los Once", whose members included the next generation of Cuban modernists: Guido Llinás, Mario Vilar, Moïse Alvarez, Joaquin Texidor, Zoila Oliva, Luis Dulgaides Noda, Dinorah Novoa and Mario Carreño. In 1955, he was invited by the students in the Faculty of Social Sciences to exhibit his work at the University of Havana. This exhibition coincided with a student strike against the Batista government, and was closed when the struggle broke out into full-scale rebellion.[23]

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There was no indication of the politics that would surround Lam's work in the interview he did with Rafael Súarez Solis in Diario de la Marina in January, 1955, upon a return trip from Europe.[24] Rather Lam and Súarez Solis analyze and discuss recent trends in art in Europe, and Lam offers some interesting observations about some of the main figures in the post-war art scene:

> One finds in Paris all those who have something new to say. There they all are, awaiting the messages - critics, salon-goers, museum people, everyone. And no one has to be sincere or good, which is to say they remain ignorant.[25]

Lam is particularly uncomplimentary about Dubuffet and his "Art brut":

> This Dubuffet is an Alsatian wine-maker who started to paint without having pursued any training. He paints directly from the tube, and lets it fall onto the surface of the painting, searching for a pictorial effect. It is not animated by any intelligence, rather by the intention to produce God knows what, as an animal acts from intuition or instinct.[26]

On the other hand Lam has a special appreciation for the work of the Spanish artist, Antoni Tapies, whose work he notes serves

> to demonstrate the intelligence in "art brut," and its affinities with art in North American called "staining" (manchismo), and in Europe "tubism" (tubismo) in which linear elements are made directly from the tube of paint without being mixed on a palette. The French critics call it - without malice and with all respect - a stew.[27]

Lam also distinguishes himself from the surrealists by using the term "subrealismo" to describe his own work. This refers to his view of himself as outside of a specific artistic movement and "as a man. Because all artists are, each in their own epoch. We all are, if we exist as more than just

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an exterior, very much in touch with ourselves."[28]

In a 1954 interview with Carlos Franqui, Lam reacts to continuing critical resistance to his work, alluded to by Jorge Mañach in 1950. Lam expresses his disdain for Cuban critics who dismiss the value of his current work: "I can confirm with the same words as those of the Cuban Dadaist Picabia: 'I am not bitter because my work is not accepted by the people whom I never want to meet.'"[29] In this interview Lam promotes the notion that his work expressed a particular quality of Cuban-ness (what Juan Martínez describes as "lo cubano" or "cubanidad"[30]):

> I believe my paintings reflect our life. Our complexes and the idiosyncracy of our people, with their rhythm and sensuality manifested in our music and dance; the sugar cane in which alternates our misery as well as our wealth; our beliefs and superstitions; the inequality among races, the lack of integration between our economic situation and our psychology; and our climate and geography with their beauty and violence; the cacophony which characterizes our common condition. There is no parallel for the well-known phrase: "No problem" in my paintings. There are problems in them...If certain people wish to compromise by ignoring such terrible truths, we can't take them seriously. They desire only our compassion.[31]

This is probably the most direct reference that Lam had made up to that time to the social and economic problems of pre-revolutionary Cuba. It is certainly a searing indictment of class and racial hierarchies which would not be matched until the publication of his commentary on the situation in Cuba in the 1940s and 50s in the 1976 monograph by Max-Pol Fouchet.

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The Public Commissions.

Despite the volatile political situation in Cuba during the second half of the 1950s Lam continued to use Havana as a base, particularly as he began to travel and exhibit in Venezuela and Mexico (1955-57). He completed several mural projects in Cuba and Venezuela at this time. In 1950 he was one of seven Cuban artists, including Amelia Peláez, René Portocarrero, Carlos Enríquez, Jose Rigol, Carmelo Gonzalez and Enrique Moret, who were commisioned to do murals for the Esso Standard Oil Company building in Havana. For his project, Lam executed a large-scale composition (fig. 3.1), similar in scale and feeing to the 1948 Grand Composition (fig. 3.2). The inauguration of the murals inspired a variety of responses. Gastón Baquero, for example, hailed the foresight of this public support for Cuban artists - which was sorely lacking on the island - and also evaluated the achievement of each artist.[32] Vicente Diego echoed similar sentiments, while taking this opportunity to critique modern architecture and city planning for its "lack of human sensibility." To alleviate this situation Diego notes, "It is necessary to bring new perspectives to the habits which represent the most energetic traditions of humanity," that is to say "the arts in general, music, and the plastic arts that are utilitarian."[33]

While he is less impressed with the exterior of the Esso building, Diego finds the interior, decorated with the

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commissioned murals, to be important historically.[34] While Baquero discusses the artists in groups to distinguish their various stylistic approaches (Lam is grouped with Peláez and Portocarrero as representing the best of Cuban art[35]), Diego singles out Lam's mural for special mention:

> There is a moment when mankind is in touch with the most difficult and esoteric aspect of his imagination. This occurrence in the artists reveals in infinite intellectual aspect that always endures if its development coincides with the shared aspirations of its cultural interest.[36]

Diego ends his article with a philosophical and formal rumination on decorative murals noting: "The mural as a decorative element ought to respond to careful planning which will yield the best results" (El mural como factor decorativa...debe responder a un cuidadosa planifícación de la que se obtengan los mejores resultados").[37]

Jorge Mañach also hails the singularity of the Esso project noting the scarcity of public murals in Cuba.[38] He surveys the conditions which have encouraged the development of mural paintings throughout human history, and questions whether Cuba has "enough national determination" (la plenitud voluntariosa de nación) to pursue a similar course of development.[39] Since the most prominent cultural forms in Cuba have been the novel and poetry, Mañach wonders whether the predilection for lyricism and intimacy in these forms can be the springboard for the creation of a form of communication, such as the mural, that could engage a national Cuban ethos. Up to this point, observes Mañach,

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Cuban murals have not equalled the robust and engaging quality of Mexican murals.[40] If this is a subtle indictment of the Esso murals as a group, Mañach does single out the work of Lam, as an exception:

> Lam's work...is filled with epic, primitive elements. They are symbols of an earth mother and a culture, whose ethnic roots defy familiar aesthetic judgements...Lam's mural has a dynamism like that which emanates from the earth's own geological activity, and is magical at the same time.. It has a mysterious figuration, which shudders with seismic force, transversed by subterranean entities, lightning, inhabited by primordial beings, across which fly fatal darts, while small horned monsters lay in wait in the darkness...and most of all the painting of Lam fulfills the essential role of a mural, which is to complement the architecture, to deepen and broaden its severe space, to open to walls as if to reveal a fourth dimension.[41]

As Mañach observes, of all the murals in the Esso building, Lam's is the only one (as seen in contemporary photographs) which engages the space more specifically than as walls for painting. With the exception of Portocarrero's obsessively decorative depiction of a female nature entity, the other murals show various aspects of country life in Cuba, which contrast with the pristine modernist look of the Esso building. While the other murals create their own distinct spaces within their confines, Lam's composition spans floor to ceiling and across an entire wall. Although he limits his palette to tans, blues, and whites, and flat, geometric shapes, these seem to be more complementary to the interiors constructed of chrome, particle board and linoleum. He even accommodates a doorway, so that it seems to suggest an opening into another spatial realm in his

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composition ("the fourth dimension"). He works with the actual perspective of the room by drawing a triangular plane at the bottom of the composition which seems to function as a continuation of the floor space of the room, tilting upward to a pointed apex off of which the firm ground drops dramatically. Lam's usual cast of winged, horse-headed humanoid figures with disembodied hoofed feet and horse hind quarters hover, suspend, and zip across, through and up and down the space. At the door jamb, a profiled femme cheval peers over her right shoulder into the space of the room, and a large oval-headed, horse-ended female regards the spectator expectantly, as an arrow aims at the door knob. Several other arrows fly along the periphery of the door.

In 1956 Lam was commissioned to do a painting for the Hilton Hotel in Havana (now known as the Havana Libre). Abstract (fig. 3.3) featured an arrangement of diamond-shaped rhomboids linked together by linear, rope-like elements. The Cuban government later made a stamp of this work in 1965. That same year he was commissioned to do two architectural murals - one for the Retiro Medical in Havana (fig. 3.4), the other for the Botanical Garden in Caracas (fig. 3.5). Although Lam decided to execute both as mosaics in ceramic tile imported from Italy, their conceptions are radically different. While the mural for the Retiro Medical consists of several artfully placed diamond, rhomboid or three-armed star shapes against a white background, the

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Botanical Garden mural shows overlapping cut-out curlicues, floral elements and each surface is decorated in a sprightly manner. The evolution of these atypical shapes can be glimpsed in a series of drawings which feature a similar exploration of these forms in a format that resembles stain-glass windows.[42]

Lam's Cuban Apologists 1950-82.

Lam found a ready audience in the popular press in Cuba and Venezuela during the 1950s. His arrivals and departures in both countries was often noted with the fanfare usually reserved for music and film stars and other celebrities. (Lam, In fact, consorted for a time with Guido Lollabrigida ,brother of the Italian actress.) Profiles on Lam published in magazines such as Gente and Semana in Cuba only enhanced his star status.[43] Mario Carreño discussed Lam's work in his article "Dinamica de la Plástica Cubana" in Latina America Libre. He makes notes of Lam's early mixture of "the negro epoch" (la epoca negra) of Picasso and "some Surrealist themes" (algunas temas surréalistas), in his work before his reacquaintance with the color of the tropics.[44] Carreño attributes the character of Lam's work to his "oriental ancestry" (ascendencia oriental) which was the decisive factor in effecting the changes in his work.[45] Many of the commentaries on Lam seem to defend him from quick comparison with Picasso. For example, Rufino Tamayo

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was quoted by René R. Leal as noting that he found Lam to be an important painter who was finding his own style.[46]

Lam also found new critical supporters who wrote extensive analyses of his work, clarifying various issues with regard to influence and the stylistic nature of his work. Whereas writers in the 1940s - such as Cabrera and Carpentíer - stressed Lam's artistic pedigree on the international art scene, the writers of the 1950s refined his relationship with the Cuban art scene and Cuban culture. Perhaps the most important work published on Lam in the 1950s was Wifredo Lam y su obra vista à traves de significados criticós, published by Fernando Ortíz. Other works by Carlos Franqui, José Baragaño and Edumuno Desnoes expand the view of Lam's work within the Cuban art context.

With a reputation of over four decades of study of African culture in Cuba, Ortíz was eminently equipped to evaluate Lam's work within that context. His study provides a complete summary of critical themes evokes in writings on Lam: i.e. the influence of his Chinese and African heritage, the role and evidence of African culture in Cuba, the influence of African art, etc. Like Lydia Cabrera, Ortíz resists a close iconographical reading of Lam's symbology as relating to African Cuban religious elements. (In this regard Edmundo Desnoes would declare in 1963 "Lam never uses symbols in an orthodox sense."[47]) Ortíz observes that while Lam's work "alludes to voodoo, Santeria, ñañigos, and

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"African natives and rebels," there are additional allusions: "Lam can evoke at times certain objective details of African liturgy, but only as a means to facilitate his subjective inclinations toward the most serious levels of thought."[48] Ortíz and Desnoes, in particular, treat Lam's imagery in terms of geographical appropriateness, in terms of nativist sentiments, as a celebration of the New World as an entity and identity equal to that of the old. They are quite deliberate in their perception of the implications of this point of view. In effect it parallels that of the Surrealists who redrew the map of the world - emphasizing areas such as Alaska, Mexico, the Caribbean and the Pacific, while deleting the United States and most of Europe - to indicate their priorities in evaluating cultural expressions in the world.[49] As Desnoes bserved:

> The wonderful exuberance of Lam's paintings comes out of a fresh vision of our world. Sometimes Lam is accused of indulging in exoticism, and this is because we do not recognize the importance of the sugar cane which he details in his work. We have seen so much cane, and so many sensuous women and fruits, and men with desire in their eyes that we can be jolted by his vivid imagery. It disturbs us that we are reacquainted with a world that has been part of our everyday lives all this time in his painting.[50]

Lam, it would seem, had indeed achieved his goal of "disturbing the dreams of the exploiters." But, reconciling the fact of the exotic aspects of life in the Caribbean with the sensational connotations it had the European context was difficult. Even Ortíz would be preoccupied with what he conceived as the specifically erotic nature of Lam's work,

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interpreting it as an allusion to the sensuality of the female, as perceived in nature. In Caribbean culture this was embodied particularly by the mixed race or mulatto woman. Ortíz evokes Juan Larrea[51] in noting the complementary element of a strong masculinity in Lam's work symbolized by the visual punning of elements such as knife blades, thorny or spiked forms, etc.[52]

Ortíz compares the bestiary and hybrid creatures in Lam's work with Greek and Roman mythology, medieval art, as well as aspects of the art of China and Africa.[53] He also evokes Medieval European and Islamic poetry in analyzing these "phantasms" that are variously angelic or diabolical. Like other Cuban critics, Ortíz side-steps the issue of surrealism, suggesting instead for Lam's work categorizations such as "metaphysical," "metapsychological" or "ultra-real."[54] He ultimately locates the source of Lam's "prehistoric" expression in the "teleplasmic phase of mystical conception."[55] The primal nature of Lam's sensibility is seen as connecting this the prehistory of the Caribbean, when, according to Ortíz, "Magma was concretized by animatism, when the imagination gave everything figuration, and visible form, corporealized the incorporeal by means of artistic metaphor."[56] Ortíz's positioning of Lam's primitivizing as primordial and psychic - a more profound state of the "tribal" - expands the specifically ethnic of national context for Lam's work, without obscuring

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its specific roots and nuances. Desnoes responds by noting that, "Lam understand this as a civilized man and brings his Antillean world to the sensibility of Paris, London or New York. It is his world - albeit exploited and humble - that affirms his equality."[57]

But Ortíz also betrays himself at that moment very much a man of his time, desirous of returning to a primal innocence. In this, he reflects other contemporary writing on Lam, in which this sentiment is often inexorably connected to the engagement of the landscape.[58] This genre in Lam's work becomes the most potent metaphor for Cuban nationality as the Afro-Cubanism of the period between the wars matures into a full blown struggle to determine Cuba's destiny. If in the context of the School of Paris Lam fulfilled the primitivist fantasies of the Surrealists and other artists looking for the lost Eden; if in New York his work complemented totemic and mythic interests; in Cuba, Lam's work increasingly was seen in the context of nationalist aspirations, especially on the part of the intelligentsia. As early as 1946, José Hernández Menses had positioned Lam's work as a response to the trend of dehumanization in art, which was the theme of the work of José Ortega y Gasset.[59] But after noting the personal and ancestral aspects of Lam's metaphorical engagement of "la selva," the incarnation of the Cuban landscape as the dwelling place of the African orishas, he shifts the focus

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to individuals such as himself, who are Cubans of European descent:

> We have completely separated ourselves from our own land, and have substituted its dynamism with a false sense of order, that is derived from Europe...Wifredo Lam...has come to show us our own essence. Are we able to see it?[60]

Menses's remarks herald a more complete synthesis of the intellectual ideals of Cuban modernism. Like Aimé Césaire in Martinique, Menses locates the national ethos of Cuba in the landscape - specifically the Africanized, Aboriginal concept of the landscape - thus distinguishing Cuban national ethos from that of Europe.[61] Ortíz, furthermore, appreciated that the uniqueness of that Cuban identity came from its "dynamic mixture of Indian, Spanish and African heritages."[62]

In his 1958 monograph on Lam, José Baragaño employs similar metaphors, and his approach to Lam's work shows his own appreciation of a range of conceptual approaches to the metaphysical world.[63] As much as he renders homage to the black gods of Egypt and Africa[64], he evokes the world of imagination embodied in the legendary era of Lemurian enlightenment.[65] His conceptualization of "El mundo de Lam" includes the landscape space as a metaphor for an alternate state of being as well as consciousness. He writes about those paintings in Lam's oeuvre in which "this expansion and contraction" (esa expansión y contracción) can be observed:

> In the bush, for example, thrives a total expansion. In spite of all the happiness there, evil does exist, but there are ways to confront it so that our divine origins can bring us to that state of dionysian happiness.[66]

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Whereas Menses saw the Cuban landscape as an intregral component of an uniquely Cuban ethos, Baragaño sees it as a site where humanity is able to get in touch with its "divine origins."[67]

Baragaño also established a pedigree for Lam's work out of European Romantic and Symbolist movements, evoking such personalities of Gerard Nerval, Alfred Kubin, as well as Bosch, Goya, Velasquez and Lautreamont.[68] These individuals figure variously in the Surrealist pantheon,[69] and in Larrea's 1944 study of Surrealism in the Americas.[70] Baragaño is anxious to situate Lam's work within this tradition, even to the point of paradoxically superseding his previous emphasis on its Cuban-ness.

> The integrity of Lam's work is reinforced by the fact that his work expresses all of these elements: a continuity within the innovations in painting, a clear knowledge of the ability of mankind to willfully aspire to an ideal and the worthiness to demonstrate its demeanor without prejudice. Lam's painting is revolutionary, with plastic and mythic character.[71]...Like Artaud, Lam refuses to enter into the phenomenological fact of existence because he knows that this entails submerging oneself into the void. He accepts the solution of submitting to the transformation of instantaneous action into its eternal struggle.[72]

Baragaño frames the discussion about the African aspect of Lam's work in the context of the opposition that Yoruba thought poses to European rationalism. It is through this synthesis of both values that Baragaño conceives Lam and all Cubans to be in a "privileged position." "It is a perfectly conceived encounter of a divine unity and the smallest component of the universe."(Es el encuentro de lo

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perfectamente delineado para una unidad divina y de lo planeado para una atomización de la divinidad).[73] He echoes Breton and the Césaire in their view of the Caribbean as a place where a natural balance between the physical and the metaphysical are attained.[74] In 1948 André Breton had declared that the Surrealist landscape was embodied in the tropics.[75] As has been discussed, in a related vein in 1942, Suzanne Césaire defined the recuperated Martinican as a hybrid straight out of surrealist (i.e Lam-ian) invention: "L'homme de plante," who in balance with the rhythm of the life of the universe found in nature.[76]

The notion of a return to nature and a natural state within nature, was a concept that preoccupied segments within the post-war European art scene (see discussion of CoBrA and Luc Zangrie's article on a new totemism in Chapter 2). The inflection of national identity was a fluid factor in all these approaches. As has been discussed that element had attracted individual artists of the post war generation in Europe to Lam's work, however, as the 1950s progressed the specifics of the Cuban landscape metaphor and Afro-Cuban metaphysics in Lam's work became more syncretized and internationalized. A comparison of the painting, Manigua of 1958 (fig. 3.6), which is discussed by Baragaño in his monograph, with Omi Obini, executed in 1943, the distinction is clear. Whereas the work of the 1940s evokes the presences of the African nature gods by showing a masked head, hands,

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feet (human and cloven) interdispersed within the cane stalks and palm fronds, Manigua shows only a dense interplay of cane stalks. This painting and several similar compositions executed in 1958-59 (known collectively as La Brousse, figs. 5.37, 5.38) demonstrate a gleaning of Lam's vocabulary of the 1940s, in which an element of geographic-specificity is retained while the theological entities have been suppressed.

Robert Linsley has, additionally, interpreted several paintings of the 1950s - Early Hours of the Dawn and We Are Waiting (fig. 5.44) - as harbingers of the political developments in Cuban society in the late 1950s.[77] As these works manifest a similar "secularization" of the 1940s content, this development in Lam's work may be seen as a refocusing of his cultural critiques of the previous decade towards a statement of political support for the Castro regime. This was specifically manifest in the titling of a 1959 work, La Sierra Maestra (fig. 3.7), after the mountain range in southeastern Cuba where Castro bivouacked his forces.

Lam and Revolutionary Cuba.

Baragaño's book on Lam was published as the political crisis in Cuba deepened. Lam himself spent a few months in Cuba at the beginning of 1958, and experienced firsthand the curfews and random searches that were part of daily life.

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When he left in April it would be five years before he would return. With the ascendancy of the forces of Fidel Castro in January, 1959, he lost his house, what possessions he left behind in Cuba, and his paintings were nationalized by the government and deposited in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. These events signaled the fact that Lam's life in Cuba, as it had been for the previous eighteen years, was over.

Lou Laurin Lam has described the situation in Cuba when she and Lam arrived there after spending several months in Mexico (November, 1957-February, 1958). Many of Lam's neighbors had left the Marianao district where his house was because of the build-up of the military forces in the nearby base. "People were uneasy and there were constant rumors of air raids."[78] One evening she and Lam left Marianao to go to dinner at a friend's house. Their driver did not know the way, and as he searched for the house, they were stopped by soldiers, brandishing weapons, who demanded identification. After about two months, they decided to move into Havana proper and lived in the apartment of Lam's sister, Augustina.

During this period several of Lam's friends were arrested, detained and interrogated by the police, and he himself had several additional encounters with the police. Finally in April, Lam and Laurin decided to leave for Miami, and flew out in the midst of the general strike called for

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that day. They went onto New York, and after about ten days returned to Europe. Between April of 1958 and April, 1963, Lam did not visit Cuba. The Castro government did contact him early on about assuming the post of Minister of Culture, but he decided that he did not want to get involved in government work.[79] During this time, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, Lam became increasingly involved with the artistic community in Italy. After he and Laurin married in New York in 1960, they lived in Switzerland for about two years.[80]

If Lam was a supporter of the goals of the Cuban Revolution, with regard to social and economic equality and justice, his relationship with the regime was suffused with ambivalence. On the one hand he celebrated Castro's victory in 1959 in his painting La Sierra Maestra. On the other hand, he had to contend with the fact that the contents of his house and studio in Havana had been nationalized by the government. This turn of events was barely salvaged by the elaborate homecoming welcome he received in 1963, on which occasion, the government organized an exhibition of works that had been left in Cuba. This visit was covered in numerous articles and reviews in the local press. The young Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes published an interview and memoir in Revolución, in which he reminisces about his meeting Lam, staying in Lam's house in 1951-52, and describes the contents of the artist's extensive library.[81]

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In this article, as in others published at this time, Lam is clearly determined to predicate the terms by which his art should be seen within the context of the new Cuban situation - the Marxist culture of post-revolutionary Cuba. He begins by asserting the inherently revolutionary nature of modern art:

> With regard to life, modern painting is a revolutionary activity....We need it in order to transform the world into a more humane place where mankind can live in liberty...We must accept these things with passion. It means that we must live imaginatively.[82]

Lam revitalized the aspirations of modernist artists to effect social change, a goal that had predicated such alliances attempted by the Suprematists and Constructivists with the Soviet regimes in the 1920s and 30s, and the Surrealists and the Stalinists in the mid-1930s.[83] When Alejo Bettran asked Lam what he thought of the assertion by the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet[84] that Picasso is the best exponent of social realism, Lam immediately went on the defensive to deflate the assumed superiority of realism within revolutionary - i.e. communist cultures:

> I don't understand where social realism begins in relation to other movements of realism. If the goal of socialism is to struggle for a better situation and to create harmony among men, then my painting is also socialist.[85]

He had declared to Edmundo Desnoes earlier, "The violence in my painting is a force similar to that which drives the revolution" (La violencia en mi pintura es la misma fuerza que impulsó a la Revolución).[86]

Coinciding with Lam's 1963 visit to Cuba, Edmundo

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Desnoes also published his monographic study of Lam's work, Azul y Negro. In this work, Desnoes also positions Lam's work within an Antillean ethos. Like Aimé Césaire, Desnoes salutes Lam's encapsulating of the peculiar mestizo culture of the Antilles, as well as his metaphorizing of its terrain:

> The paintings which reveal the sensuality of the tropics have an impastoed surface, and are bathed in the blue light of the Impressionists, and the architectural solidity of Cézanne and the Cubists. In his painting, [Lam] combines cyclones, plant life - such as cane stalks, leaves and fruits - horses, parrots, cloven-hoofed beings, and human beings - earthy women, men with desire in their eyes, and frightened children. The playful exuberance of Lam's canvases offer a fresh vision of our world.[87]

Desnoes founnd a revolutionary corollary for Lam in the work of the Cuban patriot and poet José Martí. He compares Lam's response to the reencounter with his native land after a prolonged absence with that of Martí, who had been exiled due to his activities towards the independence of Cuba from Spain.

Desnoes quotes from Martí's De Cabo Haitiano a dos Rios, Martí's celebration of the richness of the Caribbean terrain in relation to patriotism, which prefigures such metaphors in the work of Césaire and Lam, in particular, as manifestations of self-affirmation and national pride in the so-called Third World in the decades after World War II. Desnoes defends both Martí and Lam from accusations of exoticism which resulted from the effusiveness with which they both celebrated their reintroduction to the "the most

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spiritual landscape in the world" (paisaje de lo que méa ama en del mundo).[88] According to Desnoes their work "is not the exotic description of a foreigner, but that of a passionate son upon his return" (No es la descripción exótica de un extranjero, sino del hijo apasionado que regresa).[89]

I think of The Jungle of Lam when I read this in Martí: "The people gather their hammocks, lie down in the cane fields, gather candles, and harvest the cane to be fermented at the sugar mill into a liqueur for coffee. They work barefoot." And [also when I read] "The sun shines after the fresh rain, the oranges cluster on their delicate branches: the tall grass covers the moist ground, this white tree trunks here and there obscure the green forest from the bottom of the blue sky; the delicate rattan bushes intertwine in spirals of equal arcs, as if made by man. It falls to earth from on high, swinging in the air: fruits is taken from a tree, clear water is drunk, the crickets screech in the full sunlight.[90]

Desnoes's choice of poet-equivalent for Lam's work must have pleased the artist. According to Lou Laurin Lam he also preferred to have the meaning of his work implied in juxtaposition to the images he created in collaboration with various poets throughout the 1940s until the end of his career.[91] He often mentioned a wish to have been a poet and tried his hand at poetry many times.[92] Desnoes's choice of Martí was obviously quite deliberate: Martí was one of the most important heroes of Cuban independence, and was celebrated as a paradigmatic figure for the aspirations of the 1959 Revolution. He was also, like Lam, of mixed race. By associating Lam's work with that of Martí, Desnoes affirmed - even guaranteed -the perception of Lam's work

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also as a reflection of revolutionary ideals.[93] He also conceives of Lam's work an encompassing a series of dialectic oppositions: creation/destruction, night/day, light/dark, earth/sky, and, finally, "lo azul y lo negro" (the blue and the black).[94]

Desnoes suggests a context and source for Lam's work, which had not been offered by other writers. He suggests its relationship to certain images and characters found in folk tales that are particularly to Sagua le Grande. He cites such lore as the source of the character of Lam's hybrid monsters.[95] He mentions Martí again in the context of a discussion of Lam's elegant draftsmanship, and heeds Ortíz's caveats about attributing one of more of Lam's artistic traits to his racial make-up, specifically his Chinese origins:

> Furthermore, [Lam's] elegance can be considered as a Cuban cultural characteristic, inherited from the numerous Andalusian colonists who live in Cuba.[96] Martí had the same elegant temperament as do the majority of creative people.[97]

Despite his previous caveats about racial stereotyping, Desnos continues by noting: "Cubans in general are graceful and nimble" (El cubano, en general, es grácil y ligero).[98] These somewhat ackward characterizations must be seen in content of Desnoes's interest in casting Lam's work as, at once, quintessentially Antillean, Cuban, and revolutionary. He continues, somewhat, the process of cultural affirmation and reclamation that guided the editorial politices of

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Tropiques in the 1940s, which contributed to the realization of the revolution proposed in those same pages.

After this first post-revolution visit, Lam returned to Cuba in late December, 1965. This stay coincided with the first meeting of the Tri-continental Congress, an alliance of African, Asian and Latin American countries, out of which came the Non-Aligned nations bloc in the United States, which captured the attention of international politics in the 1970s.[99] At this time Lam painted The Third World (fig. 3.8), a monumental, multi-figure composition destined for the Presidential Palace in Havana. In January, he had an exhibition of oil paintings and aquatints at the Museo de Bellas Artes, and the opening was attended by a number of international luminaries visiting Cuba at this time, including the entertainer and social advocate, Josephine Baker. On their return back to Europe, Lam and Laurin stopped in Moscow as the guests of the Yuri Gagarin Society.[100]

The Salón de Mayo.

The highpoint of Lam's relationship with Castro Cuba was the organization of the Salón de Mayo of 1967. On this occasion works from the Paris Salon de Mai were exhibited in Havana. This exhibition coincided with an international congress of writers, artists and intellectuals from Europe - most of them friends and associates of Lam, and commemorated

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the fourteenth anniversary of one of the important turning point of the Revolution: the storming of the army barracks at Monada in Santiago de Cuba in 1953.[101]

The work of over one hundred artists was included in the exhibition, from older artists such as Picasso, Miró, Magritte and Arp, to Lam and his generation - Hérold, Hayter, Calder - and the post-war generation, including Jorn, Baj, Antonio Saura, Riopelle, Hunderwasser, Lindner, Erro, Soto and Vaserely. It was a selection that the French critic Georges Boudaille described as maintaining "a precious by appropriate balance among art movements that at times seem to be in opposition" (un précaire mais juste équilibre entre des mouvements artistiques parfois opposés).[102] In conjunction with this event the Cuban government also issued stamps of various denominations featuring the works of several of the participating artists including Lam, Erro, Tapies, Ernst, Vaserely, Picasso and two other Cuban artists, Mariano Rodríquez and René Portocarrero.[103]

There was extensive coverage of the Salón and the attendant meetings in the Cuban press. The participants were involved in daily briefings and discussions with ministers and other representatives of the arts and culture. A tone of openness was set by José Llanusa, then Minister of Education, who declared that the visitors, "were going to have the opportunity to work wherever they wished, that they

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will experience new vistas as their project developed in conjunction with workers and students, who were transforming Cuban society."[104] The emphasis was on collective working and exchange, the end result that Lam had envisioned for this event. In one of a series of letters he wrote to Carlos Franqui in 1966 and 1967, Lam expressed his hope that the Salon de Mayo

> would achieve two things; that young painters and sculptors would be able to work in a socialist country such as Cuba, and enjoy the spontaneity of creating something so that they would have memories of the pleasure they experienced working in Cuba just for the sake of working. And secondly that the works created by these artists be exhibited in the Galería La Habana, and later in Paris. It will be important that people realize that this work could be created in Cuba.[105]

The importance of this event taking place in Cuba, would be, as Lam noted in an earlier letter to Franqui, to organize "an exhibition which will represent the triumph of the Cuban revolution through its universal resonance in the cultural and spiritual order."[106]

The focal point of this collaborative spirit was the creation of the so-called Cuba Collectiva mural (fig. 3.9) on the night of July 19, 1967 in from of the Cuban Pavilion in Havana. Over eighty artists and writers participating in the conference contributed an image or literary passage, which spiraled around the canvas within a band emanating from the central image of several rhomboid heads drawn by Lam.[107] The reflections that came in the aftermath of the creation of this mural indicate the profound response it evoked in a group of artists for whom the ideal revolution

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in world society had not yet been accomplished. An article published in L'express in Paris described the event as occurring

> with a speed that is typically Cuban, a giant white canvas was hung in the outdoors, practically in the street, in the humid night air of the tropics...It had the feel of a somewhat surrealistic magic ceremony which was celebrated in the midst of a popular festival. Although not a drop of alcohol was consumed, the event was intoxicating.[108]

Carlos Franqui declared that the mural exemplified "

> a collective art, a socialist art, an art of liberty, of revolution, imaginative, convulsive, revolutionary, popular...For the first time, during the night, revolutionary artists and the people created an imaginative reality.[109]

Franqui's choice of words would have it seem that this event encapsulated the elements for a fourth surrealist manifesto, the manifesto for a revolutionary imagination that the movement had espoused since the 1930s. The Salón de Mayo fulfilled the prophetic trajectory of the writing of Breton, Masson, Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, and René Ménil during the 1940s and 50s. If in the post-war era, Breton and the Surrealists could only issue and elicit support for statements about Vietnam and Algeria,[110] Lam and Franqui would seem to have delivered the only real surrealist revolution, affording surrealist adherents to at last participate satisfactorily - if only briefly -in an act of solidarity with an actual revolutionary regime. There in the tropics - the quintessential surrealist landscape, according to Breton - Surrealism found a Marxist Leninist regime that accommodated sensuality and revolutionary rectitude. Alain

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Jouffroy, who took part in the activities that summer of 1967, noted "We have waited twenty years to see this happen" (Nous attendions depuis vingt ans de voir ce point apparaître).[111] The irony was that André Breton, who would have especially appreciated this event, had died a year earlier in 1966.

Jouffroy wrote a more extensive analysis of the analogy he perceived between the collective spirit expressed in the creation of the mural and surrealists method:

> The new cultural and historical reality which the Collective Mural of Cuba represents is that for the first time the individual unconscious is in direct dialogue with the collective political conscious. The ideology of Che was present, as well as a sensuality, a festiveness, a delirium, a tenderness, friendship...and it is enough that the Cuban Revolution set the context in which revolutionary artists and intellectuals met, where hope for a reconciliation of the subversive imagination and revolutionary political reason became a reality. The riskiest venture for man today, which would allow him to communicate most directly with pleasure and death is to participate in and dedicate himself to revolution.[112]

Jouffroy even conceived a new name for this new brand of ideological struggle: "revolutionary cultural internationalism" (l'internationalisme cultural révolutionnaire), so called because it represented a way for revolutionary artist and intellectuals to "Define and intensify their actions" (définir et approfondir leur action).[113]

For Jouffroy the realization of the collective mural demonstrated that there need not be an estrangement between modern art and revolution. This estrangement had preoccupied

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leftist circles in the United States and Europe since the mid-1930s, when the Soviet Union formally and officially embraced social realism. In doing so, the Stalin rejected abstract modes such as Suprematism and Constructivism, which initially had been recruited to promulgate the ideals of the Russian revolution in its early years.[114] Jouffroy may also have perceived it a symbol of reconciliation between the "Bretonist" Surrealists and the Surréalistes Révolutionnaire:

> Modern art doesn't need the usual niceties to be understood and comprehended by the leaders and catalysts of a revolution like that in Cuba. It's diversity is one of its most important achievements, which can not be given up without giving up at the same time the possibilities of a reversal of all the reactionary values in art as well as life.[115]

The Salón de Mayo formally opened at the Pabellon Cuba on July 26, 1967. Lam did the cover of the newspaper format catalogue depicting one of his horned Elegua devotional heads as the sun rising over the sea in red, black and yellow, the colors of the Cuban flag. The names of the participants in the exhibition and the visiting delegation were written on the periphery of the image. In his opening remarks, Raúl Roa, Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared that the Cuban revolution "guaranteed and exalted" the right of artist and writers to freely express reality." If the Salón de Mayo was the universal expression of the revolution in painting, then Cuba "represented today...the dream and the reality of the revolution on this side of the

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Atlantic, and the pathway, which is full of the audacity and surprise of the revolution within the Revolution (encarna hoy...el sueño y la realidad de la Revolución aquende el Atlántico y el camino repleto de audacias y sorpresas de la Revolución dentro de la Revolución).[116] Roa then emphasized Cuba's position in world geography and world events:

> The New World which flowers on this island of promise is the fruit of the creation of a socialist and communist society by a people determined to move heaven and earth to do so. [As such] it represents the seventh day of creation in the struggle of man to know himself and to live in the realm of liberty as a conscious necessity in a magnificent development of his inexhaustible abilities and power. For this reason, I dare to reiterate that the fortifying wind that has sustained the May tree is that of the July Revolution, the month in which Spring gives way to Summer in Cuba. This is a new time in history and a new time in life.[117]

In these comments Roa echoes on a political plane, the metaphors and ideals for a cultural revolution perceived by the Surrealist movement. Roa's image of Cuba complemented a variety of conceptual paradigms of a Caribbean or Antillean identity already discussed: Martí's reveries upon his return to Cuba, the Surrealist metaphor of the Antilles as the new Eden, gateway to the new world order, the May tree/pole as a correlate to Suzanne Césaire's "l'homme de plante," and the anthropomorphic "jungle" of Lam. After the opening of the Salón de Mayo, another climatic moment came when the conference participants met with Fidel Castro during their visit to Santiago de Chile, and the newly created township of Gran Tierra.[118] The final collaborative moment came with the drafting of a declaration of group condolences over the

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death of Che Guevara in Bolivia earlier that year.[119]

"Official" pronouncements such as this demonstrate that the appreciation of Lam's oeuvre within revolutionary Cuba, was not merely political expediency due to Lam's international reputation. Despite Lam's forthright eschewing of proletarian realism, it correlated very specifically with the stated ideals of the Cuban revolution and represented, in the words of Desnoes, the liberation of the tropics from the oppression of the exoticist paradigms of European colonialism by means of a Marxist/ Leninist reconstruction of Cuban society. This carried over into other cultural policies in Cuba. Despite the predominance of a "pop-art" orthodoxy - most readily seen in the widely published art of Raúl Martínez - there has always been a more diverse character to art in Castro Cuba.[120] In a series of interviews published in 1983, Armando Hart Dávalos, Minister of Culture, declared that

> The Ministry of culture of Cuba does not have the authority to declare publicly and officially its own artistic taste, except to be obliged to create a favorable atmosphere for the development of art forms which are viable and in accord with the cultural history of the country, with the concrete possibilities of the country, and to give the widest breadth in these political considerations. [121]

Lam brought a second delegation to Cuba six months later for the Cultural Congress in January, 1968. It included many of the same individuals who had come to Cuba for the Salón de Mayo. One addition was the indefatigable Asger Jorn, who created quite a sensation when he literally

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took over a former bank that had been converted into a governmental rest house, and executed a continuous mural decoration that took in the space of the building as a totality.[122] Lam wrote a poetic tribute to his friend on this occasion which is suffused with nostalgic affection:

Allegro Vivace
Companion on the road
For the countries
of the men who are upright like palm trees
where the incendiary fever rises to the temperature of acid blue
For which Jorn plays the trumpet
of unity and friendship,

Crescendo Appassionato
Disintegration-integration
boomerang sound
lost and found in the light
Rainbows on the Land of Liberty
there the migratory bird is poised
who douses the road of ideas with blood
towards the horizon of passions.

Andante Cantabile
We are flying over the Caribbean sea
the night of December 27, 1967

Coda
To my right Joyce [Mansour] and Michel [Leiris]
To my left Lou [Lam] and Georges [Fall]
Bon Jour Revolution.[123]

The preliminary session for the Congress, which had convened in October, 1967, had set the agenda to be a discussion on the role of culture in the creation of a national identity. The specific points that were emphasized included issues of colonization and national culture, and the role of culture in the struggle for liberation, specifically in Latin America, Asian and Africa. The published plenary resolutions made specific note of the

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Russian Revolution, which was celebrating its 60th anniversary as the Congress was in session.[124] Among the resolutions to come from the participants in the Congress was an homage to Camilio Cienfuegos, an early casualty in the 1959 Revolution, who had been part of the close-knit group around Castro in the Sierra Maestra mountains, and a declaration of support for armed struggles for independence in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

During this visit, Lam again visited his home town, Sagua le Grande. He was accompanied by Lou Lam, Michel Leiris and Max-Pol Fouchet, who recorded this moment in his 1976 monograph on Lam:

> Wifredo walked happily along the village streets, delighted to be back. Several people recognized him...He was no longer just "the Chinaman," but...the great painter who was famous on the outside world...Presently we came to a long street someway from the center of town...The houses on either side of the unpaved road were almost identical. They were generally, one-storyed, sometimes built of wood, with two high, wide bay windows, protected by thin iron grills and concealed by shutters in the middle of which a smaller opening revealed the shadowy interior. Without hesitating for a moment, Wifredo stopped in front of one of these houses and knocked on the door. At first nobody answered, but finally an old woman appeared. Lam introduced himself, and was asked in.[125]

This tone of nostalgic return was to persist throughout the next 14 years, whenever Lam visited Cuba, as can be read in interivews that Lam granted during subsequent visits to Cuba. His life story, which he recounts many times, begins to be filtered through a polemical lens and interpreted within the context of the world stuggle of peoples of color for hegemony and self-control, for affirmation and self-

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definition. He continued to associate his work with an Antillean sensibility. "I consider myself a regional painter of Cuba" (Yo me considero un pintor regional cubano) he declared in a 1977 interview,[126] "taking much of the emotion of Cuba and expressing by with the most competent plastic achievements of my time to being these exigences to a discourse abut my country."[127] While acknowleding his relationships with Picasso, Breton and the Surrealists, he asserts: "I can't do anything without an almost absolute control of my consciousness. When I paint, I am like a combat weapon."[128]

In another interview in Granma in 1977, he notes the implications of Cuba's geographical position at the cross-roads where where everything is comes together and disperses ("todo se une y se dispersa..") and asserts his satisfaction with being part of that legacy.[129] In these late interviews, Lam reinforces his ideas of what constitutes a revolutionary art, through his definitions of what is and should be in a socialist, revolutionary society. In response to a question about his reaction of "hyperrealist painting," published in El Caiman Barbudo in July, 1977, Lam rather off-handedly notes, "I don't bother spending much time analyzing this subject." (No me he preocupado mucho en analizar este problema). He then adds significantly, "But I am very liberal with regard to art. I believe that one ought not to be prejudiced against creation. Forms are always free

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and transitory. The important thing for me in art is the spiritual element."[130]

During the 1970s Lam continued to exhibit in Cuba. He had an exhibition of lithographs and illustrated books in 1977 at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Havana. In June of that year, Humberto Solas made a highly evocative film on Lam's life and work. The artist is seen as a spectator to his own life in such scenes, as he roams around and through scenes recreated in Cuba. Among the highlights of the film is the recreation of the events during the Civil War in Spain, in which a Cuban actress recreated the persona of Lam's first wife Sebastiana Piriz. Lam's work was featured in the exhibition, Cuba, peintres d'aujourd'hui, organized at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, and had another one-person exhibition in Havana at the Museo Nacional in 1978. That same year his work was included in Pintura y graphica cubana at the Museo Español de Arte Contemporaneo in Madrid, and an exhibition of Lam's work from Cuban collections was organized by Fernando Gamboa at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City in December, 1978.

Lam had suffered a stroke in Italy in 1978. In 1980 and 1981 he spent several months at a time in Cuba for medical treatment. During that time is was interviewed by Antonio Nuñez Jimenez, and poet Pablo Armando Hernandez for a monographic study which was published in 1982. In an interview in El Caiman Barbudo which was published during

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his last visit before his death, lam provides a epitaph of a sort for his Cuban audience. The interviewers, Angel Tomas and Joe Veigas remark on Lam's spirited attitude: "Lam loves to talk and always looks for an excuse to prolong the conversation. Finally he invites us to look through a magnificent volume on his life and work, which has recently been published. The book is sensationally magnificent. As we look at the pages, Lam talked to us about his past. His memory is a limitless archive. As he sees us to the door he makes an observation that seems to be an evaluation of his career."[131] Lam then quotes the artist Francis Picabia: "I die happy knowing that my art disagrees with the people who don't like me" (Muero con placer al pensar que mi pintura no le agrada a la gente que desagrada)[132], echoing sentiments expressed to Carlos Franqui, almost thirty years before.

If post-revolutionary Cuba found in Lam a willing if cautious ally, she was able to make good use of the reputation of Wifredo Lam on the world cultural stage. Lam served as the personification of the cultural and political aspirations that marked the new way that Cuba would attempt to define itself in the changing world scene of the 1960s and 1970s. Carlos Moore has noted the thorough re-haul of Cuban political and cultural alliances in the world. Policy on all levels of life and government would be characterized by a forth-right embracing of the African in the Cuban psyche.[133] From the first speech that Castro made about

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racism to the current day, the ideal of a multi-racial Cuba persists - officially if not actually. This realignment was most evident in Cuba's political maneuvers in the 1960s and 70s as it interjected itself into the ideological wars in Africa, specifically those in Angola and Mozambique.[134] It was also demonstrated in the leadership role which Fidel Castro asserted in the alliance of Non-Aligned countries, whose membership consisted of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.[135]

The Tricontinental Congress of 1966 in Cuba marked the beginning of this initiative. It is tempting to postulate that the coincidence of Lam's visit in 1965-66 was deliberately timed to coincide with the convention of the Congress. As a Latin American of Asian, African and European descent Lam would be a potent personification of Cuba's international image. The exploitation of art and popularist, ethnically-grounded cultural phenomena also figured contemporaneously in the political agenda of Michael Manley in Jamaica,[136] and was key to the accomplishment of the social and economic revolutions that Manley and Castro envisioned for their respective island nations. These cultural forms represented an alternative to the Euro-American economic, political and social systems that continue to dominate Caribbean culture and politics. Lam's role as a political catalyst was cemented with the announcement at the First Havana Bienale of the inauguration

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of the Wifredo Lam Center whose mission is to research, collect and exhibit art by artists from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Lam's motivation in maintaining a relationship with the Castro government was, in the final analysis, directed more by his personal concerns that by a whole-scale embracing of its politics. He was certainly supportive of the social and political changes that were proposed for Cuban society especially in the amelioration of the conditions of the illiterate, the poor, and black Cubans. He was also cognizant of the fact that he could exploit his relationship with the Castro regime to enhance his career at a point when his work was largely overlooked in Europe and the United States, while not having to live in Cuba. In the end, his effort to navigate between pragmatism and political enthusiasm would not gain him any special friends with the Cuban exile community in the United States, and during the 1980s, the political situation with regard to his work on the art market was certainly complicated by his well-publicized support of Castro.[137]

As in the case of Cuban patriots in the past, such as José Martí, contact with Cuba was crucial for Lam.[138] In Europe and the United States Lam would always be the outsider, but in Cuba he would always be home. Ultimately his fate was inseparable from that of the society which had nurtured him during his most formative years. After his

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death in 1982 he was buried in the Colon Cemetery in Havana.

Lam in Latin America.

Despite the fact that Lam's career has paralleled and even predicted trends in the United States and Europe from the 1940s until the 1980s, since the late 1970s, the most familiar and dominant association for Lam is Latin American art. While this is not the forum to assess the viability of this stylistic classification, it is at once central to the development of Lam's career as well as misrepresenting its scope. It is clear from the previous discussion in this chapter, that the issue of national identity is certainly central to the comprehension of Lam's art in the 1940s, the evocation of a pan-continental identity (as opposed to a pan-American identity) accommodates trends that have predicated the problematic position of artists from countries south of the United States within the international art market over the last forty years.

There had been some interest in a Pan-American identity in the United States during 1930s and 40s - promoted variously by economic, political and cultural purposes (see Chapter 4). By the time that the Chicago collector Joseph Shapiro organized the exhibition, The United States Collects Pan American Art in 1959, that interest had waned and the distinction between the art market in the United States and the rest of the American archipelago had been codified. This

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left the question of whether the countries of the Caribbean, Central and South America could or should be grouped together as a homogenous whole. Shapiro addresses this issue in his introduction to the catalogue, debunking the notion of a single Latin American identity or the existence of an artistic homogeneity in that region.[139] After summarizing some of the elements that characterize different Latin American cultures (in his view), Shapiro wonders whether the tendency by artists from Latin American to conform to European and American [i.e. that of the United States] styles will "...increase the tyranny of conformity and with it, the peril of anonymity for the young artist of Latin America."[140] Shapiro underlines the dilemma of artists not incorporated within the market in Europe or the United States, and the difficulty they face in positioning themselves in those contexts.[141]

Since the 1940s Latin American artists have been integrated into the art scenes in the United States and Europe on an individual basis. The factors determining this have to do with mobility, social interaction, and chance. Artists who are considered Latin American vary as greatly as the demographers of this "New World." Some have even been born outside of Latin America (I.e. Marisol), and others have had extensive careers outside of Latin America (Matta, Lam, Torres-Garcia). They work within the numerous stylistic manifestations that have appeared in Europe and especially

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the United States. They, have had, however, to labor under certain exigences different from artists born in the United States of European heritage (and for a long time male gender): i.e. the onus of national identity/statehood, predetermined psychological and emotional profiles (i.e surreal, fantastic, etc.), and the consequences of being located (physically as well as politically) on the periphery (i.e. the colonies, the provinces, etc.). In the case of Lam, his context has been defined in the marketplace as Latin American especially since the late 1970s when that market was developed as a separate entity by auction houses and galleries.[142] This has occurred to the extent that his former association with the School of Paris, in particular, has totally been eclipsed in the current international art scene. In the United States, it has also been increasingly defined by issues of cultural diversity and multiculturalism - which relate to the more prominent presence of African, Latino, Asian and Native Americans in the art scene of this country (this will be further discussed in Chapter 6).

Lam's reputation in Latin America had been established long before there was multiculturalism, or Latin American departments in universities, galleries and museums, and auction houses. Starting in the 1940s his work was given solo venues or included in group exhibitions in Mexico, Venezuela, Chile and Peru. In Mexico he was included in the first group exhibition of modernist Cuban artists at the

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Museo de Bellas Artes in 1946, and in Arte Cubana in 1947 - also at the Museo. Outside of Cuba, Lam's work was not exhibited in Latin America again until 1954 when his work was in the exhibition of Surrealist artists organized at the Galería Lima in Lima, Peru, organized by Sophie Barbet, then director of the Galerie L'Etoile Scellée in Paris. The following year Lam had his first solo exhibition in Venezuela at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas. His work was also in the Exposición International de Pintura, which opened at the Galería d'El Ateneo in Valencia, and traveled to Caracas in November, 1955.

The exhibition at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas was accompanied by a catalogue with texts written by Michel Leiris, Aimé Césaire and Alejo Carpentíer. It also included excerpts of text and statements by Breton, Mabille, Picasso, René Char, Herbert Read, Georges Braque, Christian Zervos, Max Clarac-Serou, Edmundo Desnoes, Robert Ganzo, Eduoard Jacquer and Maria Cambrano.[143] Carpentíer writes about Lam's engagement of "Lo magico" of the landscape in the Americans, and compares his rediscovery and reencounter with the natural luxuriance of his native island with the reaction of "El Discubridor" (Christopher Columbus). While he observes that Lam's predilection for specific plants, musical instruments, dance rhythms, religious rituals, have returned him to his "primal state" (condición primera),[144] he also notes that Lam's personal experience of nature is

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comparable to that of other artists in Latin America. "Cuban by birth, Wifredo Lam belongs equally to all the Americas, wherever there is a restless nature, which manifests itself in the feverish chaos of Genesis."[145] Writing in the newspaper El Nacional, critic Carlos Dorante dramatically describes Lam's work as "a bit scandalous like brutal cinemagraphic omens" (un poco escandalosamente como esos brutales anuncios cinematográficos).[146] He continues that Lam's ability to gain access to the "real" condition of Man - magic - is comparable to that of the German author Hermann Hesse. Lam is quoted as saying that he leaves interpretations of his work to the individual, and that he felt that his work had arrived at the point where its plastic values outweighed the expressive aspect of his work.[147]

This was clearly demonstrated in the more formalist aspect of his work in the mid 1950s. Although the two mural projects he did in Havana and Caracas were quite different in character - one more geometric and spare, the other more lyrical, alluding to floral motifs - they are for the most part one of the few instances in Lam's mature career when his work approaches non-objective abstraction. Both are also remarkable in the way that Lam for the moment distances himself from his usual dictionary of motifs related to Afro-Cuban religion and ritual. The flat, rectilinear quality of the Havana mural, in particular, relates to Lam's handling

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of form in his graphic work at the time. One such as Detras de Espejo (fig. 3.11) shows machete, rhomboid heads and fin-like forms rendered in flat, precise areas of color dispersed across a black background.

Although the view of Lam as a agent of decolonization is one of the hallmarks of writing on his work in the 1980s, Lam was caught up in north-south politics as early as the 1940s and 50s. In 1955, Carlos Franqui published an article on Lam in Caracas, in which he wrote that the artist's work "reflects a national will to anti-colonialism. It has a substantial intellectual basis and a vigorous plastic expression that is both genuinely American [i.e. Pan-American] and universal [in character]."[148] Gaston Diehl, long-time president of the Salon de Mai in Paris and then director of the Venezuelan-French Cultural Center, noted in conversation with Alejo Carpentíer that Lam's work was "a painting of symbols and the liberation of American expression" (una pintura de simbolos y liberacián de expresiones americanas).[149] In another interview with Carlos Dorante in El Nacional, Lam proclaimed his commitment to the cause of Latin America in his work: "My painting is different. This is everything. I believe in it and that it shows the possibility of a social [polemical] painting which poses the problems of the Americas."[150]

As a result of his 1955 exhibition, and the mural commission in 1956 in Caracas, Lam spent extended portions

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of each year between in 1955 and 1957 in Cuba and Venezuela. This period was punctuated by the curious adventure to the Brazilian border to look for gold. The local newspaper clippings demonstrate that he was becoming quite a personality in the Venezuelan press. Lam spent enough time in Caracas to take a studio on the Plaza Altimira.[151] When he returned in 1957 for the installation of the mural in the Botanical Garden, he was given a solo exhibition at the Centro Bellas Artes in Maracaïbo, of oil paintings, graphic works, etc. some of which had been executed in Caracas in 1956-57.[152]

In the Fall of 1957, Lam went to Mexico with Lou Laurin, where he stayed for about four month (November, 1957-February, 1958). He and Laurin arrived in time to attend Diego Rivera's funeral. They met many of the prominent figures on the Mexican art scene including collector Dolores Olmedo, artists Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, and several expatriate, pro-Castro Cubans (see chronology).[153] During this trip Lam and Laurin visited the Yucatan, and Lam worked on pastels as they traveled around the country. From Mexico they went onto Cuba, where the political unrest led them to leave for the United States in April, 1958. It would be another five years before they returned to Cuba again.

Despite the fact that he is so intimately linked with Latin America, Lam actually did not exhibit very extensively

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in the continent (outside of Cuba) until the 1980s. He did have an exhibition of his etchings at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Carcas in 1967, and was included in an exhibition of Surrealist art in Sao Paulo in 1967. In 1970, his work was included in the IV Bienal Americana de Grabado at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile. After his death in 1982, Lam's work was seen in many exhibitions in and about Latin America. In this context he was featured in several contexts: general surveys of Latin American Art (e.g. The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970, Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1988); "fantastic art" (Art of the Fantastic: Latin America, 1920-1970, Indianapolis Museum, 1987); Surrealism (Bronx Museum, Surrealism, Berkeley, and Surréalismo Entre Viejo y Nuevo Mundo, Canary Islands, 1992); myth and ritual (Art in Latin America, The South Bank Centre, 1989); and Cuban Nationalism and New York and European Primitivism (Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-1952, The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1992). There are clear differences in these views of the work of an artist like Lam. From the vantage point of Europe and the United States he exemplified the view of Latin America as inherently "surreal" and "fantastic." From the point of view of critics in Latin America, especially Cuba, his surrealist roots are traced through the matrices of the original group in Paris as part of the lineage that include Gothic visionaries, symbolism, and romanticism (particularly

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of Northern Europe).[154] The variability of these interpretations are probably symptomatic of the rich, syncretistic cultures of the Americas, in which the encounter of cultures results in categories which defy conventional characterization. Lam's work may serve as a particularly apt forum for these discussions, but in the final analysis, his importance for Latin America, as it was for Cuba, was to serve as an inspiration for the generations of artists who have arrived since him, and will continue to arrive to meld their national identity and aspirations with the vocabulary of modernism.

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NOTES: Chapter 3

1. See Herrera, op. cit.: 225, fig. 80.

2. See the publication of this symposium. Sobre Wifredo Lam: Ponencias de la Conferencia International, 1 Bienal de la Habana. (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubana, 1986).

3. Manuel Pereira, "Lam El Hijo del Caribe," El Caiman Barbudo (July, 1977): 16. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

4. "Wifredo Lam," Información (April 12, 1946). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

5. Ibid.

6. Blanc, op cit.: 6, 8.

7. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Una Carta," Gaceta del Caribe, 1, no. 6 (August, 1944): 5.

8. Blanc, op. cit.

9. "realizar estudios sobre el desarrollo de la pintura moderna en...Los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, Francia y Italia." Letter from Raúl Roa, Director of Culture, Ministry of Culture, Havana to Dr. Ernesto Dihigo, Minister of State, August, 18, 1950. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

10. Lam: Obras Reciéntes, 1950 [exhib. cat.] (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección de Cultura, 1950).

11. Angel Lázaro, "Wifredo Lam Bajo la Tormenta," Carteles (October 29, 1950): 20. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

12. Ibid.

13. "La verdad es que para cada cuadro de Lam se necessitaria un ámbito proprio; desalojar todo lo que fuera ajeno al cuadro, y dejarlo allí, solo, dentro de su proprio universo." Ibid.

14. Jorge Mañach, "Wifredo Lam en el Parque Central," Diario de la Marina (October, 1950): 66, 92. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS).

15. Ibid.

16. "Nadie está obligado a 'gustar' de él, ni maldito si a él le interesa gustarle a todo el mundo. Lo que él trata de expresar en sus cuadros no es, como no lo era en Ponce, como

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no lo es en Amelia Peláez, un mundo visto, sino un mundo sentido. Y sentido, con esa emoción primaria de lo sentimental, que eso todavía parte de las experiencias comunes y rutinarias, sino con la peculiar emoción artística en que la sensabilidad para las formas puramente plásticas...se ponen al servicio de la imaginación creadora...absoluta, que no recuerda imágenes sino que las inventa; pero que no las inventa a capricho, sino para que a su vez trasmitan, con la mayor elocuencia que puedan, una misteriosa experencia interior." Ibid: 66.

17. "Consiste en las más profunda intimidad de si mismo, lo que vale decir de muchos siglos de sangre y cultura que en él se han encarndo." Ibid: 66, 92.

18. Ibid.

19. Marcelo Porgolotti, "Wifredo Lam en el Parque," El Mundo (October 7, 1950). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

20. Ibid.

21. Unidenfitied articel from Visions, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

22. Fernando Ortíz, Wifredo lam y su obra vista à traves de significados criticós (Havana: Ministry of Culture, Cultural Division, 1950).

23. Estaban Cobas Puente, interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989. Cobas Puente met Lam on the occasion of his exhibition at the Parc Central in Havana in 1950. He was instrumental in helping Lam install his exhibition at the University of Havana. Cobas Puente left Cuba in 1958 and lives in Paris. He recently retired from UNESCO, Paris.

24. Rafael Súarez Solis, "Wifredo Lam: pintor que viene de sí, está en sí y va hacia sí," Diario de la Marina (January 30, 1955): 8, 10. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

25. "A Paris van todos los que tienen algo nuevo que decir. Y allí están, en espera de mensajes, los criticos, los saloncistas, los museistas, las gentes todas. Y nadie que tenga algo sincero y bueno que decir se queda ignorado." Ibid: 8.

26. "Este Dubuffet era un vinatero alsaciano que se puso a pintar sin perseguir hacer pintura, que tomaba la pintura de los tubos y las dejaba caer sobre una superficie cualquiera en busca de un efecto pictórico. No estaba animado por la

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intelligencià, sino por las ganas de crear sabe Dios qué. Como genera el animal por intuición por instincto." Ibid.

27. "...a explicar la inteligencia que hay en la pintura bruta, y sus conexiones de actualidad con lo que en norteamérica llaman manchisimo y en Europa tubismo, por ir del tubo al lienzo sin amasijos previos en la paleta para encontrar matices. Un potaje dicen algunso criticos franceses sin burla y con todo respeto." Ibid.

28. "...como hombre. Porque todos los artistas lo fueron, cada cual en su época. Todos somos, si somos algo más que exterior, muy dentro de nosotros mismos y desde muy atrás." Ibid.

29. "Puedo contestar con la misma exprésion que tuvo el dadaísta cubano Picabia: 'No he tenido la armagura de ver mi obra reconocida por gente que no he querido jamás conocer.'" Carlos Franqui, "El Retorno de Wifredo Lam," Carteles (December 12, 1945): 93-95, 98. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

30. See Martínez, op. cit.: 80-81, 146.

31. "Estos cuadros míos, creo yo...reflejan nuestra vida. Nuestros complejos y la idiosincrasia de nuestro pueblo. Con su ritmo y sensualidad manifestados en la música y el baile. La caña donde se mece nuestra miseria y riqueza, las creencias y supersticiones y esa presencia racial en desequilibro, falta de integración en lo económico y en lo psicológico, y nuestro clima y geografia, con su belleza y sus violencias. Desarmonias que se traducen en toda la dramaticidad de nuestra convivencia. La frase tan conocida: No hay problemas, no tiene cabida en mis cuadros. En ellos si que hay problemas. No les tengo miedo y trato de enfrentarios y traducirios...Si ciertas personas, por compromisos acomodaticios, quieren ignorar tan terribles verdades..., no podemos tomarias en serio. Son sólo dignas de compasión." Ibid.: 98.

32. See Gastón Baquero, "Los Murales del edificío 'Esso,'" Diario de la Marina (February 11, 1951). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

33. "Es nesessario abrir nuevas perspectivas a los hábitos que integran las más enérgicas tradiciones de la humanidad...las artes en general, siendo la música y la plástica las más utilizadas." Vincente Diego, "Una tema sobre los murales Cubanos," País Grafico (April 22, 1951): 18-20. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

34. Ibid: 19.

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35. Baquero, op. cit.

36. "Hay un lapso en que el hombre coincide con los aspectos más difíciles y esotéricos de su imaginación. Este acontecimiento en el artista, tiene un finísimo cariz intelectual que siempre permanece si su desarrollo coincide a plenitud con las aspiraciones más comunes a sus intereses culturales." Diego, op. cit.: 19.

37. Ibid, p. 20.

38. Jorge Mañach, "Los Murales de la Esso." Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. "Lam, si esta, a su manera, cargado de elementos epicos, aunque primitivos. Son, como se sabe, simbolos de la matriz telúrica y cultural los que piegan en su obra, cuyo ancestro etnico en vano se querrá descartar del juicio estético. De ahi que el mural de Lam tenga un dinamismo como de estraña geológica y magica a la vez, una figuración misteriosa, estremecida de sismos, cruzada de subterraneos, relámpagos, habitada de seres en que solo se dan los esquemas primordiales de lo natural atravesada de dardos fatales, de alas centelleantes; visitada, como en todos sus cuadros, de pequeños monsturos bicornes que acechan en la sombra...Y sobre todo la pintura de Lam cumple la misión esencial del mural, que es là de coordinarse con lo arquitectónico, ensancharle y profundizarle su frio ambito, abrir en las paredes como una cuarta dimensión." Ibid.

42. The one commission that Lam was invited to compete for and did not receive, was for the UNESCO building in Paris. The competition was ultimatley given to Joan Miró. Lou Lam has noted that Lam expressed his disappointment about losing this commission for many years afterward. (Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989.)

43. See Emma Perez, "Wifredo Lam entre sus monstuos," Gente, 3, No. 18 (May, 1951): 18-19, 48-49; and J.A. Baragaño, "Lam: Gran Señor de la Pintura," Seminario, 1, no. 25, (December 2, 1954): 39-41.

44. Carreño, op. cit.

45. Ibid.

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46. René R. Leal, "Si el Gobierno mexicano continúa hablando de pintura pólitica no expondré," Diario de la Marina (October 21, 1951): 46. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

47. "Nunca empleas sus símbolos en un sentido esticto." Edmundo Desnoes, Azul y Negro (Havana: Editorial Nacional de Cuba: Cuadernos de la Casa de la America, 1963): 15.

48. "...Lam puedan evocar a veces ciertos detailles objectivos de litúrgica de africandidad, pero sólo como escalones claros que pone al artista para facilitar la bajada subjectiva a los antros más sombrós de pensamiento." Ortíz, op. cit. Reprinted in Jiménez, Antonio Núñez Jiménez, Wifredo Lam (Havana: Editorial letras Cubans, 1982): 16. (Trans. LSS.)

49. This map, first published in Variétés magazine in 1929, is reproduced in Evan Turner, "Dada and Surrealism," in "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, Vol.II: 556.

50. "La exuberancia jugosa de estos cuadros de Lam nace de una visión fresca de nuestro mundo. A veces se acusa a Lam de exótico, y es porque nosotros no podemos ver el valor de las cosas que él destaca. Hemos visto tantos hojas y tallos de caña y lujuriosos cuerpos de mujer y frutas y hombres con el sexo en la miranda que nos choca su concreción. Nos molesta que nos descubran el mundo que nos envuelve fluidamente todos los días." Desnos, op. cit.: 6-7.

51. A native of Peru, Larrea frequented the surrealist circles in Paris before the Second World War. His 1944 publication El Surrealism Entre Viejo y Nuevo Mundo. (Mexico: Ediciones Cuadernos Americanos) was one of the earliest interpretations of surrealism from the point of view of the Americas, with its particular cultural mixtures.

52. Ortíz, op. cit.: 19

53. Ibid: 19, 21-22.

54. Ibid: 24.

55. Ibid: 25.

56. Ibid: 26.

57. "Lam comprende esto como hombre civilizado e impone su mundo antillano a la sensibilidad de París, Londres o Nueva York. Es un mundo explotado y humillado que afirma su igualdad." Desnoes, op. cit.: 10.

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58. See, for example, Zangrie and Gustafson, op. cit.

59. See José Ortega y Gasset, The Dehumanization of Art (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956).

60. "Ya casi la teniamos olvidada y, sin embargo ¿ podemos presindir mosotros de la selva? ¿ Podemos desentendernos de ella sin dejar de ser nostros mismos? Divorciados por completo de nuestro proprio paisaje, hemos sustituido el vigoroso dinamismo de la selva por una quietud falsa, de factura europea, ajena, en fin, y como postiza a nuestra realidad." José Hernandez, Meneses, "La Pintura de Wifredo Lam," Diario de la Marina (July 15, 1946): 16. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

61. See Martínez, op. cit.: 80.

62. Ortíz, quoted in Ibid: 81. This concept of "métissage" becomes futher developed in Lam scholarship in the 1980s under the rubric of multiculturalism (see Chapter 5).

63. José Baragaño, Wifredo Lam (Havana, 1958).

64. Ibid: 16-17.

65. Ibid: 16. Lemuria was the name of an imaginary ancient world, where, as in Atlantis, humankind was supposed to have evolved to a higher level before their folly destroyed their civilization. Whereas Atlantis was supposed to have been located just beyond the Straits of Gibraltar in the Atlantic Ocean, Lemuria is believed to have been off the east coast of Africa, connecting Madagascar with Indian and Sumatra. See Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia, ed. by Katherine Baker Siepmann (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc., 1987).

66. "En la 'manigua,' por exemplo, vive la expansión totalmente, allí, a pesar de toda hay alegria de pensar que el peligro existe, pero que hay medios para conjurarlo y que la divinidad primigenia se mantiene en acecho para darnos la alegría dionisíaca." Ibid: 30. (Trans. LSS.)

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid: 26- 27, 31.

69. See André Breton. Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. by Richard Seaver and Helen Lane (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969): 25, 26, 38.

70. Larrea, op. cit.: 9-33.

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71. "La verdad de Lam se nutre en el hecho de que su obra expresa todos los elementos: un continuidad en las renovaciones de la pintura como medio, una consciencia clara de la trascendencia del hombre como voluntad ideal y el valor para exponer su continente fuera de todo prejuicio; lo que hace que la pintura de Lam sea revolucionaria, plástica y mítica." Baragaño, op. cit.: 36.

72. "...Lam como Artaud rehusa entrar en el hecho fenomenal de la existencia porque sabe que eso significa hundirse en el vacío. Como solución acepta la sumisión a las transformaciones del instante en su perenne combate." Ibid: 39. (Trans. LSS.) In his 1972 monograph on Lam, Michel Leiris mentions Artaud's visit to Cuba before the Second World War (see Chapter 2). In addition, Lam had a more personal relationship with Artaud, having participated in an benefit exhibition for Artaud in 1947, and later executed graphic works to accompany the poems of Artaud.

73. Ibid: 43.

74. Ibid.

75. Breton, Martinique, charmeuse de serpent: 18.

76. Suzanne Césaire, " Malaise d'un civilization," Tropiques, 5 (April, 1942): 45. Césaire continues the development of this metaphor to refute European stereotypes of black Antilleans as "lazy." They are rather "doublement dans la vérité," in their position as individuals close to a univeral life force - i.e. nature. Césaire asserts it is pointless to try and dominate the Martinican. Like the tropical landscape, they must be left to find their own nature within and without themselves.

77. See Chapter 5, note 85.

78. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, February-March, 1993.

79. Lou Laurin Lam interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989.

80. Lou Laurin Lam interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989. Lam changed residence in part because he found himself an inadvertent target of racist hostility against Arabs in Paris during the Algerian War.The intensity of the atmosphere in Paris is not to be underestimated. In February, 1993 French television finally aired a program on the events of the night of October 17, 1961, when over 200 Algerian men, women and children were killed in police precincts all over Paris, after having been detained after a large demonstration. Their bodies were evidently dumped into

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the Seine. This program was the first time that official circles admitted that these events had taken place, although most of the officials in the police and the government at that time still deny their involvement.

81. Edmundo Desnoes, "Wifredo Lam en Cuba," Revolución (May, 2, 1963. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

82. "La pintura moderna es una actividad revolucionaria ante la vida...hay que convertir el mundo en un lugar plenamente humano, donde el hombre pueda vivir con libertad...No hay que aceptar pasionmente las cosas. Hay que vivir con la imaginacion." Ibid. (Trans. LSS.)

83. See Lewis, op. cit.

84. Nazim Hikmet was the best-known modernist poet in post-war Turkey. He died in 1963 after having been imprisoned, then exiled for his political convictions. His poetry has been published and translated by Randy Blassing and Mutlu Konuk for Persea Books (1994).

85. "No compredo donde empieza la frontera del realismo socialista y otras manifestaciones del realismo. Si socialismo es luchar por un provenir mejor y una armonía entre los hombres, mi pintura tambíen es socialista." Alejo Bettran, "Mi pintura es tambien socialista," Hoy (May 11, 1963). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

86. Edmundo Desnoes, " La Cicatriz y la Espuma," Revolución (January, 1963). Archives of SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

87. "Los cuadros donde revela la carne del trópico están fuertemente empastados, bañados por la luz azul de los impresionistas y la solidez arquitectónica de Cezanne y los cubistas. Son cuadros en que se unen como un ciclón, vegetales - tallos de caña, hojas, fruitas -, animales - caballos, pájaros, pezuñas, tarros -, y hombres - mujeres telúricas, hombres con el sexo en la mirada, niños asustados...la exuberencia jugosa de estos cuadros de Lam nace de una vision fresca de nuestro mundo." Desnoes, Lam: Azul y Negro: 6. (Trans. LSS.)

88. Ibid: 7.

89. Ibid.

90. "Pensé en La Jungla...de Lam cuando leí esto in Martí: 'La gente cuelga hamacas, se echa a la caña, junta candela, traen caña al trapiche para el guarapo del café. Ella mete la caña descalza.' y 'El sol brilla sobre la lluvia fresca: las naranjas cuelgan de sus árboles ligeros: yerba alta

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cubre el suelo húmedo: delgados troncos blancos coran, salteados, de la raíz al cielo azul la selva verde; se trenza a los arbustos delicados el bejuco, à espiral de aros iguales, como de mano de hombre; caen a tierra de lo alto, meciéndose al aire, los cupeyes: de un curujey, prendido a un jobo, bebo el cgua clara: chirrían, en pleno sol, los grillos." Ibid: 7-8. (Trans. LSS.)

91. Lou Laurin Lam interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989.

92. See Finsen, op. cit. and Pereira, "Lam del Caribe". Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

93. Lam's leftist credentials are usually established through his association with Aimé Césaire. Césaire, however, had his own epiphany with European Communism, and had a very public rupture with the French Communist Party in 1956.

94. Desnos, op. cit.: 19.

95. Ibid: 14.

96. As Fouchet mentions, the Spanish ancestry of Lam descends from the family of Cabeza de Vaca, which figured prominently in the colonization of the Caribbean. Fouchet, op. cit.: 32.

97. "Además, la elegancia puede considerarse un característica cubana, heredada culturalmente de los numerosos colonizadores andaluces que vivieron a Cuba. Es la misma elegancia tempermental que encontreamos en Martí y en la mayoría de nuestros creadores." Ibid: 18.

98. Ibid.

99. See Carlos Moore, Castro, the Blacks and Africa (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988): 72, 74-75, 137.

100. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February, 1993.

101. See Noelio Reyes, "Invitados al Salon de Mayo, Pintan ya en Cuba," Granma (July 7, 1967). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

102. Georges Boudaille, "Le XXIIIe Salon de main: Lettre aux amis Cubains," Les lettres françaises, no. 1181 (May 4-10, 1967): 28.

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103. The work of Lam, Davie, Mariano, Labisse, and Hundertwasser were featured on one centavo stamps; Erro, Tapies, Ernst, Singier, and Svanberg on the two; Picasso, Arp, Calder, Vaserely and Portocarrero on the three; Poliakoff, van Velde, Miró, Magritte and Matta on the 4; Jorn, Alechinsky, Viera da Silva and Messagier on the 13, and Pignon on a 30 centavo stamp. See El Mundo (July 29, 1967), Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

104. "...iban a tener la oportunidad de trabajar en los lugares quesquiersieran, que verán nuevas paisajes, en el desarrollo de los planes con los que el pueblo, trabajadores y estudientes estan tranformando a Cuba." "Llanusa con artistos del Salón de Mayo," Granma, (July, 9, 1967). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

105. " ...se realizarían dos cosas: el ideal de los jóvenes pintores y escultores de poder trabajar en un país socialista como Cuba, con la simpatia espontanea de creer algo para dejar un recuerdo en Cuba y el placer de haber la hecho allí mismo. Y segundo las obras que realicen dichos artistas podrian ser expuestas en una galería de la Habana, y más tarde se podrían exponer en Paris por cuenta de los realizadores, y esto serían de gran importancia cuando se sepa que dichas obras fueron realizadas en Cuba." Wifredo Lam, letter to Carlos Franqui, April 28, 1967, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

106. Wifredo Lam, letter to Carlos Franqui, May 1, 1966. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

107. See "Los pintores pintan en espiral" Juventud Rebelde (July 19, 1967). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

108. "...avec une vélocité toute cubaine, un panneau géant de toile blanche fut tendu. En plein air. Presque dans la rue...Et dans la nuit moite des tropiques...l'allure d'une cérémonie magique et quelque peu surréaliste, cèlébrée au coeur d'une véritable fête popularie...Pas une goutte d'alchool n'a été versée, et, pourtant, c'est l'ivresse." F. G., "Happening à La Havane," L'express, no. 842 (August, 7-13, 1967): 50.

109. "...un arte colectivo, arte socialista, arte de la libertad, de la revolucion, imaginativo, convulsivo, revolucionario, del pueblo...Por primera vez durante una noche, artistas revolucionarios, pueblo construyen una realidad imaginaria." Carlos Franqui, Draft of an undated, untitled statement, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

110. See Rosemont, op. cit.: 329, 339, 346.

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111. Alain Jouffroy, Text on the Collective Mural, Archives of the SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

112. " Le fait historique et cultural nouveau que représente le Mural collectif de Cuba, c'est que, **pour la première fois, l'inconscient individual ait établi, en direct, un dialogue avec la conscience politique collective** [emphasis author's]: la pensée du 'Che' était presente, mais aussi l'éroticisme, la fête, le délire, la tendresse, l'amitié....Et il a suffit que la révolution cubaine devienne le lieu de rencontre des artistes et des intellectuels révolutionnaires pour que l'espoir d'un accord entre l'imagination subversive et a raison politique révolutionnaire devienne enfin une réalité. L'aventure la plus risquée, aujourd'hui, pour un homme, celle qui le fait communiquer les plus directement avec le plaisir et avec la mort c'est de participer et de se dédier à la révolution." Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. See Joop M. Joosten, "Chronology," Kazimir Malevich, 1878-1935 [exhib. cat.] (Los Angeles: The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center, 1990): 20. See also Harris, op. cit.

115. "L'art moderne n'a pas besoin d'etiquettes pour se faire entendre et comprendre par les dirigeants et par les acteurs d'une révolution comme celle de Cuba. Sa diversité même et l'une de de ses plus importantes conquêtes, auxquelles on ne peut renoncer sans renoncer du même coup aux possibilités d'un renversement de toutes les valeurs réactionaires dans l''art' comme dans la 'vie.'" Jouffroy, op. cit.

116. Salón de Mayo [exhib. cat.], texts by Fidel Castro, Pablo Picasso, Raúl Roa, Jean Jacques Léveque, José Pierre, Michel Ragon, Denys Chevalier, Jean Shuster, Gerard Gassiot-Talbot, Georges Boudaille, Dionys Mascolo, Juan Goytisolo, Marguerite Duras, Alain Jouffry, and Gaston Diehl (Havana: Ediciones Granma, 1967): unpaginated.

117. "El nuevo mundo que alborea en este insula prometeica es fruito de la edificacíon simultánea de la socidad socialista y comunista por un pueblo empeñado indoblegamente en traer el cielo a la tierra y representa el séptimo diá de la creación en la lucha del hombre por encontrarse a sí mismo y vivir en el reino de la libertad como consciencia de necesidad, en fastuoso desplieque de sus inagotables aptitudes y potencias. Me atrevo, por eso, a aseverar, rotundamente, que la atmósfera más tonificante que hasta ahora ha respirado el Arbol de Mayo es el de la Revolución

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de Julio, mes que en Cuba rezuna las fragancias sobrevivientes de la primavera y los hervores iniciales del estío. Nuevo tiempo en la historia y tiempo nuevo en la vida." Ibid.

118. See Jaime Sarusky, "Fidel Conversa en Gran Tierra con artistas y escrítores," Granma (June 29, 1967). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

119. Ibid.

120. Perhaps the best example of the curious nature of how the marriage between art and polemics was maintained in Cuba is the case of the revue Islas, which was edited and published by poet, artist and folklorist Samuel Feijoo, at the University of Santa Clara in Cienfuegos. Founded in 1958, it was issued on a tri-monthly basis until the mid-1970s, and each issue contained an artful melange of political polemic and theory, and articles on literature, art, poetry with plentiful reproductions of works of art. The format of the magazine was similar to Surrealist journal such as Documents and Minotaure. He juxtaposed the art of self-taught artist with professional artists, and, in addition to Lam, was able to get reproductions of the work of Picasso and Asger Jorn and Dubuffet, with whom he maintained a lively correspondence from Cuba. He also did features on "Op Art International" with reproductions of the work of Vasarely, Barlewi, Scheggr, Delchant, Gussler, and Bridget Riley. The work European modern masters, Cuban contemporary artists (especially Portocarrero), prehistoric art from Europe and examples of fantastic art and imagery were especially favorites of Feijoo's.

Feijoo, who probably met Lam in Cuba in the 1940s, featured him and his wife, Lou and their work in Islas: Lam did the cover of the May-August, 1966 issue, and in the following issue (September-October, 1966) Feijoo published a photograph of Lam and Lou Lam in front of Lam's painting, The Third World, which was in process. In this same volume, drawings by Lam including a collaborative one executed with Feijoo - were also published. In the July-September, 1967 issue (which coincided with the Salón de Mayo) Feijoo reproduced over twenty pages of drawings by Lam, with a photograph of the artist, taken by the American artist Ylla in the 1940s, in his garden in Cuba in front of his 1947 painting, Belial, Lords of the Flies. In addition to publishing Islas he also organized an art workshop at Santa Clara University where he taught and encouraged farm workers to make art. The collective cultivated experimentation with various media, and also fostered collaborations between "professional" and "naive" artists. This activity was inspired by Jean Dubuffet's appreciation of what he called "Art Brut." Feijoo maintained a lively correspondence with

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the French artist. Feijoo also collected information on Cuban folklore and music which he also published in his revue. When Islas folded Feijoo started another revue Signes. Feijoo died in Cuba in 1990, and with him ended one of the most remarkable - if less documented episodes in the story of art and politics in the 20th Century. (Lou Lam, interviews with LSS, Paris, October, 1989 and February-March, 1993.)

121. "El Ministro de Cultura de Cuba no tiene facultades para expresar pública y oficialmente sus proprios gustos artisticos, sino que tiene la obligacion de propiciar el desarrollo de todos aquellos que sean viables de acuerdo con la historia cultural del país, con las posibilidades concretas del país, y darle a esa política la mayor amplitud posible." Luis Baéz, ed., Amando Hart Dávalos: Cambiar les reglas de juego (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1983): 9-10.

122. See Guy Adkins, Asger Jorn: The Final Years: 1965-1973 (Copenhagen: Borgen Forlag, 1980): 16-18.

123. Wifredo Lam, "Les créatures de Prométhée, Jorn, le son nordique," 1970, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

124. See Reunion de Intelectuales de Todo el Mundo Sobre Problemas de Asia, Africa, y Latina America: Semanario Preparatorio, October 25-November 2, 1967: 8-10. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

125. Fouchet, op. cit.: 32.

126. Periera, op. cit.

127. "Tomando muchas de las emociones que habia en Cuba y expresandolas en la medida de la conquistas plasticas mas competentes de mi epoca, he llevado estas exigencias a un discurso de mi pais." Ibid.

128. "No puedo nacer nada sin un dominio cas absoluto de la consciencia. Cuando he tomado la pintura, la he tomado como un instrumento de combate." Ibid.

129. Rosa Elvira Peláez, "Yo no pienso en los dias que dejo atras," Granma (July 3, 1977): 4. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

130. "Pero yo soy muy liberal in el arte. Creo que uno no debe tener prejucios contra la creación. Las formas son siempre libres y transitorias. Para mí lo importante en arte es el espíritu." Manuel Pereira, "Lam El Hijo del Caribe" El

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Caiman Barbudo (July, 1977): 17. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

131. "A Lam le gusta hablar y siempre busca un pretexto para prolongar la conversacion. Por último, nos invita a hojear un magnifico volumen editato recientemente en donde se recoge toda su vida y obra...Mientras pasamos las paginas, Lam dice algunas frases y anecdotas relacionadas con su pasado. Su memoria es un archivo sin limites. Casi al despedirnos, hace un commentario que mas bien nos pareció un sentencia." Angel Tomas and Jose Veigas, "Una Pistola para le cabello blanco," El Caiman Barbudo (January, 1981): 26. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

132. Ibid.

133. Moore, op. cit.: 281-297.

134. Ibid: 299, 321.

135. This alliance sought to leverage economic and political world affairs to their advantage through a more flexible relationship with both the east and the west in the heyday of the Cold War.

136. See Michael Manley, Jamaica: Struggle on the Periphery (London: Third World Media in association with Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society, Ltd., 1982).

137. Juana Maria V. Sol, "No Habra Arma Que Pueda Detener a Este Pueblo," Gramna (May 15, 1980): 3. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

138. See Desnoes, op. cit.: 7.

139. The United States Collects Pan American Art [exhib. cat.], intro. by Joseph Randall Shapiro (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1959): unpaginated.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

142. See Edward Sullivan, "Conversation with Art Dealer Mary-Anne Martin," Latin American Art, 2, no. 3 (Summer, 1990): 25-28.

143. Lam [exhib. cat.] (Caracas: Museo de Bellas Artes, 1955.)

144. Ibid.

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145. "Cubano por el nacimiento, Wifredo Lam pertenece por igual a todas las tierras de América donde aún existe una naturaleza desasosegada, - todavía capaz de manifestarse en 'febriles conmociones' de Génesis." Ibid. It should be noted that Carpentíer is quoting Goethe's description of a "febrile" nature.

146. Carlos Dorante, "El hombre y su huella: Wifredo Lam," El Nacional (May 19, 1955): 8. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

147. Ibid.

148. "Refleja una voluntad nacional anti-colonialista. Tiene una poderosa base intelectual y una vigorosa expresión plástica genuina de America, que la hacen univerisal." Carlos Franqui, "Pintará Wifredo Lam un mural para Caracas," Diario Nacional. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

149. "A. Carpentíer y Gaston Diehl," (May 21, 1955). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

150. "Mi pintura es otra. Eso es todo. Creo en ella y creo en la posibilidad de hacer pintura social, que plante el problema del hombre americano." "Volvio Wifredo Lam," El Nacional (October 27, 1955). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

151. Courvoisier, op. cit.

152. This exhibition was sponsored by the Centro de Ingenieros de Zulia. The press continued to chronicle his every move - from a visit to the Creole Petroleum Corporation installation, to the reporting on his sale of twelve works from the exhibition for the grand sum of 7,500 Bolivars.It was not surprising, then, to read a week later the news of the theft of two works from Lam's exhibition at the Centro de Bellas Artes. (See Panorama Maracaïbo (March 2 and 11, 1957, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.)

153. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, March, 1993.

154. See for example Larrea op. cit.

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CHAPTER 4: LAM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1942-82

From Cuba With Love.

At the end of December, 1942, Lam wrote to André Breton in New York City:

> Matisse sent me...a very nice letter as well as the catalogue of the exhibition which is very beautiful. Your preface, dear André, is marvelous, being at the same time so concrete and so subtle and poetic...Your titles are superb. They are very significant for me and I was greatly moved by them... At this moment I am so involved in the preparation of the large painting [The Jungle] about which I spoke in my last letter, that I don't want to interrupt my work.
>
> Many thanks for having put the gouache in the exhibition of French relief for the benefit of children and French prisoners.[1] I would like very much to have the catalogue. You will find inside also the gouache for Peggy Guggenheim's Museum. The colors are those of the Marseilles period...please propose an exchange to Peggy Guggenheim.[2]

The critical reception to Lam's work in the United States is not usually been given much attention in Lam literature,[3] and this letter is an important document of the lesser-known career of Wifredo Lam in the context of the New York School in the 1940s. As this letter indicates Lam was determined to maintain the contacts he had made in Paris before the war and also to establish his reputation in New York. Achieving this would not be easy. During the war Lam was forcibly ensconced in his native Cuba. Therefore it was up to André Breton in New York to intercede on Lam's behalf. As alluded to in the letter quoted above, Breton not only negotiated the first exhibition of Lam's work at the Matisse

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gallery, but also wrote the introduction for the exhibition brochure.[4] Breton also placed Lam's work in the exhibition, The First Papers of Surrealism. The gouache that Lam mentioned sending with the letter was to be proposed as an exchange for one Peggy Guggenheim had already purchased a gouache from Lam in Marseilles.[5]

In hindsight it is clear that Lam's artistic development in 1942-43 correlated with that of artists in New York City, who were working towards a new mythic imagery couched in a morphology that married surrealist improvisation with cubistic structure.[6] The struggle to achieve this synthesis was impelled to a great extent by the presence of individuals such as André Masson and Roberto Matta, who transmitted their expertise in the technical aspects of surrealist picture-making, such as automatic drawings and spontaneous paint application through dripping and splattering.[7] In addition, some artists - such as Pollock and Reuben Kadish - had been exposed to similar technical experimentation through their involvement with the Mexican muralist David Siquieros who had worked on murals in Los Angeles, and also established a workshop in New York.[8] The engagement of mythic content was also evident by the early 1940s in New York, where the subject matter and titles assigned to paintings suggested archetypes from Greek and Roman mythology on the one hand and Native American symbology on the other.[9] With its evidence of Afro-Cuban

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myth and subject matter, then, Lam's work found a receptive audience in New York.

Critical response to Lam's second New York exhibition - his first at Pierre Matisse Gallery - in 1942 responds to earlier analyses of Lam's work as it was seen through the lens of Picasso. The review in Art Digest evokes the sobriquet of "Picassolamming," which had been the title of the review of Lam's work when it was shown at the Klaus Perls gallery in 1939.[10] But it also observes that Lam's "ingenious creations...might be idols of ancient gods of modern mechanical devices, for in all of them may be perceived an assortment of all-seeing-eyes peering out from unsuspected places and sharp angles usually associated with tin and wrought iron...African masks have been a help too."[11] While the titles of these works evidence the hand of Breton: Oubli, La chanteuse des poissons, l'enfant et la miroir, the titles of the work in Lam's 1944 exhibition were more specifically Afro-Cuban in nuance. Julia Herzberg attributes this to the fact that Lydia Cabrera had by then become involved in providing titles for Lam's work, basing them on her own research on Afro-Cuban religion and culture.[12]

For the 1944 exhibition, critics also discern a progress in Lam's imagery. The reviewer in Art Digest writes: "Lam's paintings heretofore have been filled with Picasso-like motifs (the horse-face, double profile, etc. A

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return to Cuba, and an actual and renewed interest in that land, has produced a new kind of expression, one concerned with exotic plant growth, gods and rites of African origin, practiced today in Cuba."[13] Art News notes that Lam "...has reached the point where his native West Indian inheritance takes precedence over the Africa-via-Paris strain which hitherto dominated his work...There is a thoughtful quality to his work, a deep interlocking of forms, an experimental interest in textures which gives promise of ....an authentic integrated expression all his own."[14]

In 1945 Lam showed the black and white works such as Sur les traces (fig. 1.30) and Butinantes, which exploit negative space so that the forms seem to hover suspended between states of being and non-being, appearance and disappearance. At this point the critics complain that Lam's work is "anemic," and "mannered," and the color "thin and spared, stippled around harsh black and white forms" which "peter out."[15] Lam's reductive tendencies must, indeed, have seemed "anemic" in comparison with other art that could be seen in New York at the same time. The previous year critics noted that Lam' "doesn't merely cut loss with the paint pots" as do "many of the Cubans,"[16] a reference to the work seem in the group exhibition of Cuban painters at the Museum of Modern Art in 1944. In addition his work presented a contrast to the energetic surfaces of artists such as Pollock, Still and Motherwell, who by the mid-1940s

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were finding exhibition opportunities at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery, and the Betty Parsons Gallery. Lam's work did, however, suggest a comparison with the delicate tracery and sparsely painted compositions of Rothko in the mid-1940s, and developments in Gorky's work exemplified by paintings such as Water of the Flowery Mill (1944, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).[17]

Margaret Breuning writing in Art Digest observes aspects in Lam's work that relate to issues of totemism and occultism which had begun to occupy the artists of the New York School:

> While this is fantastic art, it is far removed from surrealism which seeks to destroy the visible world of our experience; the world that Lam creates is an end in itself, an occult, mysterious universe governed not by the laws that regulate our cosmos, but by some under current of magic that makes itself felt in every canvas. There are recognizable forms...but they appears not so much realities as the symbols of an inner mystic existence.[18]

That Breuning distinguishes Lam's work from that of the surrealist artists is an interesting development in Lam criticism at this time. Despite the initial sponsorship of Breton, and despite the fact that Breton's book Le surréalisme et le peinture, published in New York in 1945 includes Lam in the new discoveries of the surrealist group, there are signs that by the mid-1940s critics in the United States were viewing Lam's work in the context of developments in the New York school. A long-overlooked, but revealing article published in Newsweek magazine in August, 1946, singles out Lam, along with Adolph Gottlieb and

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Robert Motherwell as "...some of America's own young abstractionists who think they have found the long-waited 'new direction' in art...The...new 'abstract' art is different from what has previously gone by that name."[19]

The writer continues:

> The young artists who are identified with the new trend paint abstractly but they do not, like School of Paris followers, abstract real objects and people. Instead using the surrealists' method of free association, they evolve shapes, images and ideas out of the subconscious. Unlike the surrealists, however, they do not paint dreams, nor do they paint in literal representational styles.[20]

Motherwell, Lam and Gottlieb are identified as three artists who typify this new "imaginative abstraction," or "surrealistic formalism:"[21]

> For example, Robert Motherwell...sometimes uses ominous black dots and precariously balanced shapes to express the premonition of danger...Wifredo Lam...fills his canvases with strange winged creatures and voodoo gods which suggest rather than represent the mysteries of the jungles in his native Cuba. The paintings of Adolph Gottlieb...look something like ancient hieroglyphics... Gottlieb breaks up his canvases into rough rectangles. To those who still look for perspective in painting, the reason for this will come as a shock. "It's a device I use," says Gottlieb, "to kill space."[22]

The emphasis on glyph-like shapes, of forms that "suggest rather than represent," the perception of the "premonition of danger," are all observations that reflect the primordial condition that the Abstract Expressionists were evoking in their own work. They are echoes of Rothko's assertion that the work of the new generation of American artists is "of the Earth, the Damned and the Recreated," forging "new hybrids from old myth."[23] But beyond mere

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compatibility with the formal and conceptual qualities of artists of the New York School, the fact that Lam was so easily integrated among "America's own abstractionists" is noteworthy, given the sharply demarcated national lines which have been enforced in the art works since the 1950s. Particularly since the 1970s, Lam has been so forthrightly re-cast as the pre-eminent Latin American artist, that his participation in the School of Paris as well as the New York art scene has been effectively obscured,[24] despite the fact that the New York School was populated with individuals of many nationalities and religious backgrounds.

In the 1930s and 40s, and even into the 1950s, there was an understanding of art in this hemisphere as a Pan-American manifestation. Exhibitions of artists from Latin America were a regular part of the program at the Museum of Modern Art, and even the Metropolitan Museum, which focused on the work of contemporary artists as well as the art of the Pre-Encounter epochs.[25] The presence of Mexican artists, in particular, who received mural commissions were also an important influence on developments in art in the United States in the 1940s, and many of the Abstract Expressionists had direct contact with several of these individuals, i.e. the case of Pollock with David Siquieros.[26] A concrete expression of this sense of a common "American-ness" is vividly indicated by certain views published by Barnett Newman in the 1940s. Writing about the

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work of Rufino Tamayo and Adolph Gottlieb, for example, Newman observes that the two artists "have so many things in common that a critical study of the two men would help toward an increased understanding to their work."[27] Furthermore, Newman notes, "an analysis of their working aesthetic should give us a clue...to the attitude that ought to motivate our American artists and those art layman who are concerned with the establishment of an 'American' tradition."[28] Newman's claim of a common tradition in North and South American is based on what he describes as Gottlieb and Tamayo's appreciation of "the great art traditions of our American aborigines."[29] It is only through the appreciation of these traditions that "there is any hope for the possible development of a truly American art."[30] In this evocation of an American "aboriginal" art, Newman echoes Marsden Hartley's thoughts that the only way to a truly American art lay in the emulation of the spiritual values of Native American art and culture.[31] He also laid the conceptual basis for his writings on Northwest Coast Indian art as an example for modern artists published in 1946 and 1947.[32]

Newman observes in the work of Tamayo and Gottlieb a common "preoccupation with myth," as well as a common palette based, appropriately, on earth tones.[33] He discusses their common use of "geometric designs," and abstract shapes in a flat two-dimensional space "to express

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a symbolic idea."[34] In his writings on Oceanic art in particular, Newman's discussion of the role of magic within mythic imagery is particularly reminiscent of the critical interpretations of Lam's work. He notes the experience of "magic based on terror," in Oceanic art, and declares that the artists of these societies "developed a pictorial art that contained an extravagant drama - one might say theater of magic."[35] Critics writing about Lam would postulated that his work had been "painted under a spell,"[36] and was full of the "dark mysteries of voodoo,"[37] or, as Margaret Breuning would write, that it depicted "an occult, mysterious universe governed not by the laws that regulate our cosmos, but by some undercurrent of magic...[which]...makes itself felt in every canvas...and ...in which...the sinister power of the supernatural forces are set down in symbolic language."[38]

In their approaches to myth the Abstract Expressionist were engaged largely by Greco-Roman classical prototypes transmitted through Freudian models, although Jungian thought gradually took precedence. Also, while African art was initially of interest, by the 1940s, Newman and his colleagues were more preoccupied with Native American.[39] David Craven has proposed that the Abstract Expressionists's appreciation of primitive cultures was as much a critique of western materialism and cultural imperialism, as it was a search for spiritual renewal. He has reviewed the Abstract

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Expressionists' criticism of western culture, interpreting their celebration of the art of "Native America and pre-Colonial cultures in the South Pacific,"[40] as a positioning of an alternative set of cultural values for artists to emulate in the post-World War II era. Despite their emulation of these cultural values, however, the Abstract Expressionists did not have to deal with the realities of the existence of the peoples from whom such values emanated.[41]

Lam, on the other and, was engaged by the animistic universe of Afro-Cuban cosmology and myth. His particularly innate, or "nationalistic" relationship to this mythic structure - as opposed to the outsider status of the Abstract Expressionists with regard to Native American culture - was comparable to the evocation of their national cultures by artists such as Rivera, Kahlo, Tamayo and Torres-Garcia. It is also important to note that the totemic and mythic imagery which the North American artists cultivated eventually evolved into indeterminate forms, whereas Lam and his colleagues worked more specifically from a consistent iconography with increasingly recognizable symbology through the mid-1940s.[42] For an artists like Lam, however, the consequences of political oppression and social inequity were real and present. Despite the celebration of Afro-Cubanismo among Cuban modernists, he inevitably had to face racism within Cuban society.[43] Additionally such

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artists also face a dismissal of their artistic contributions, as mere mimicry of European models. In seeking to engage his own culture within the language of modernism and postmodernism, Lam, like other artists of color, was particularly vulnerable to accusations of pastiche and imitation. They inevitably must always confront the specters of the Europeans who have gained acceptance in the exploitation of their cultures, and are assumed to have a greater capacity to exploit it "objectively."

Still, at the very least, Lam was able to take advantage of any corollaries that might be recognized between his work and that of the mainstream to at least establish his position within the international art world. In addition to the art press, his work was also extensively published in artist-run magazines published out of New York.[44] These included artist-run publications such as VVV, and View. In 1945 he created the cover for a special edition of View, edited by Paul Bowles, featuring "Tropical America."[45] Lam's work continued to be featured in art publications in the United States in the late 1940s. The December, 1948 issue of Tiger's Eye (edited and published by John and Ruth Stephan) showed his painting L'arbre aux miroirs on the same page as Second Passage (1929) by Yves Tanguy, following Gorky's Water of the Flowery Mill (1945), and Miro's Le chant du rossignol à minuit et la pluie matinale.[46] This same issue also featured reproductions of

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works by Ad Reinhardt, Richard Pousette-Dart, Mark Toby, Loren MacIver, Bradley Walker Tomlin, Robert Motherwell, Clyfford Still, Boris Margo, Robert Matta, and Barnett Newman. Lam's drawings also appear in Instead, the short-lived publication created by Matta and the poet Lionel Abel, in a grouping of reproductions by Matta, Toyen and Petrov in a feature entitled "USOUP" in issue no. 2, 1948.[47] In the double issue 5-6, 1948, a drawing of winged creatures that evidences the appearance of more fantastic, and less culturally-referent, imagery in Lam's work is the illustration of the article, "Face to Face with Sade," by Maurice Blanchot.[48] The appearance of Lam's work in this context is interesting given the fact that the editorial decisions were influenced by the controversy which resulted as Existentialism emerged to challenge Surrealism as a response to the realities of the post-World War II era.[49]

These publication efforts and the Newsweek magazine review of August 1946 (discussed in the previous chapter) seemed to locate Lam squarely not only in the artistic milieu of New York, but also with the post-surrealist generation of artists. This was an important distinction, as William Rubin has noted in his discussion of the manifest purging of associations with the School of Paris in general, and Surrealism in particular, which occurred in the New York art world after the war.[50] But like Matta, and the generation of biomorphic and geometric abstractions who

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matured in the 1930s and 40s, Lam began to be left behind as the roster of the new post-war generation was codified in the late 1940s. Michael Leja notes that in spite of the "thematic and formal continuities with the early New York School, Lam's work generally elicited a different sort of response from New York critics."[51] But Ann Gibson and Leja attribute this to the fact of Lam's ethnic origin, which paradoxically "give Lam's primitivism, in the eyes of many reviewers, an authenticity to which any modernist artifice he employed was secondary."[52] But critics could be ambiguous when dealing with the issues of race or nationality with regard to Lam.

For example, when Lam had his penultimate solo exhibition of this epoch at the Matisse Gallery in 1948, Thomas Hess compared Lam's synthesis of European and New World cultural statements to that achieved by the Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo.

> Although he is half-Chinese and half-Negro, it would be a mistake to attribute the svelte sophistication of his [Lam's] calligraphy, or the hypnotic savagery of his totems to any occult racial memories. Lam, like Tamayo, has created his own balance between Latin American art and the School of Paris. In looking at these refined monsters, which are luxuriously colored with an extreme economy of means, one should remember that he is one of the very few younger painters who worked as a student of Picasso[53], and also that he is still a practicing surrealist, i.e. still a friend of André Breton. This suave effortless variation of line on line and form on form is more related to Boucher than to the Sung masters. And Lam's insistence on primitive Indian rites comes mainly from the tradition of the Mexican painters, and from his love of his nature Cuba.[54]

Hess hedges on attributing any special quality to Lam's work

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because of his Cuban and/or African heritage, but at the same time skews that association by conflating Mexican with Cuban, and French Rococo with traditional Chinese art.

In his identification of Lam as "still a practicing surrealist, i.e. a friend of André Breton,"[55] Hess also betrays the growing anti-Surrealist sentiment in the New York art world. By 1966 William Rubin had relegated the engagement of surrealist techniques such as automatism by New York artists to a "transitional" stage, "from which they could go onto something else."[56] He notes that

> During the fifties, when their mature styles were making their mark, many American artists were reluctant to exhibit their earlier works... the reaction of the pioneer American painters in the late forties against the mythic, biomorphic and poetic images of their own work, and against the Surrealist ambiance that influenced them was stringent. Having been to some extent over impressed by the Surrealists as the embodiment of the great European avant-garde, the American now regarded them largely as idols with clay feet.[57]

Rubin then delivers the death knell for Surrealism in the United States: "Since 1960 there has been no such thing as Dadist or Surrealist art properly speaking."[58]

The most significant aspect of Hess's review is the introduction of the denomination of "Latin American" to Lam criticism. This underlines several assumptions about Lam's career that also indicate shifting positions in American art criticism at mid-century with regard to the art of Latin America. The reference to the continent as an all-encompassing category, indicates not only the blurring of distinction among the artists from that region, but also

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indicates the shift away from a more open "pan-American" view to a more "closed" consideration of oppositions, i.e. North versus South America, Anglo versus Latin America. This was antithetical to the artist's own view of his work, which he first expressed with regard to the 1944 exhibition of Modern Cuban Artists at the Museum of Modern Art. Lam explained his conspicuous absence by noting that he was against the implied ghettoization of Cuban artists.[59]

Reviewing this same 1948 exhibition critic Emily Genauer compared Lam's work with that of Matta who had a show at the Matisse Gallery in April, 1948.[60] The work of these two artists had been exhibited together in 1944 at the Art Club in Chicago, and the title of the exhibition - Lam-Matta: The Latin American Spirit, indicated a perception of certain shared charactersitics that might be used to define a common aesthetic. Genauer observes that Lam and Matta were "using a similar vocabulary of forms can arrive at completely different emotional expressions." Her perception of the distinction between the two artists is that Matta's work shows, "dehumanized figures, functioning amidst the greed and cruelty of the world today." Lam, one the other hand, "depicts...primitive man moving in a world of myth and legend."[61] This assessment of Lam's work falls in line with the views of various European art critics. However, the difference is that in New York there was little tolerance after the 1950s for such overtly primitivist statements,

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although the primitivist aesthetic could be observed in such post-surrealist manifestations as Happenings and assemblage.

Lam in the U.S. Art Scene, 1946-1982.

In the late 1970s Lam reminisced about his first visit to New York in 1946, and about his friendship with Arshile Gorky in particular:

> I saw Gorky for the first time at the airport in New York when I arrived from Havana in 1946. He was with his wife and Jeanne Reynal, who was wearing an American Indian dress. We were all invited to Nicholas Calas's house where we talked all night long. The next day we went with Frederick Kiesler to Gorky's studio in Union Square where he showed us his paintings, and we spent a very pleasant evening there. Gorky was someone who was very cordial and amiable. The following day Gorky and I went to the photograph studio of Vogue magazine with Rosamond Bernier. Irving Penn took photographs of us all afternoon. He enlarged a very nice photograph of Gorky and I sitting around an old Parisian cage table. I saw Gorky again when I visited the United States often in his studio in New Milford.[62]

During this first visit to New York Lam also traveled to Amagansett, Long Island to visit Roger Wilcox and his wife Lucia, and also met Mercedes Matter and Ian Hugo.[63] Lam was accompanied by the Cuban photographer, Jesse Fernandez, who often facilitated Lam's communications in the United States by serving as his interpreter.[64] Lam then sailed for London in July 1946, on his way to his first post-war visit to France (see Chapter 2).

The following summer, Lam was accompanied by Helena Holzer and they stayed with Pierre and Teeny Matisse in Manhattan, and visited Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner on Long Island.[65] In 1948, the Lams stayed with Jeanne Reynal

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on 11th Street in Manhattan.[66] During this visit he and Holzer made a fateful visit to Arshile Gorky with Isamu Noguchi[67] the day before Gorky committed suicide. Lam later related the sequence of events:

> Noguchi came to pick up me and...Helena, and we accompanied him to Gorky's studio in Connecticut. Gorky had an automobile accident, and I thought it was strange that he was all alone in New Milford. When we arrived I took several photos of Gorky seated on the lawn outside his studio wearing this strange metal collar that kept him from moving his head. We returned to New York tired and preoccupied. The next day Nicholas Calas called me to say that Gorky had hung himself. We left right away for New Milford to attend the funeral. All of his friends were present: his dealer Julian Levy, Jeanne Reynal, Sonia Sekula and others. I was struck by the family of Gorky, who were all dressed in black - as was the Armenian custom - and crying non-stop.[68]

Among the other individuals whom Lam met in New York between 1946-50 were John Bernard Myers, John Cage, Edgar Varese, Anais Nin and Yves Tanguy.[69] Lam also made the acquaintance of David Hare[70], Gerome Kamrowski[71], Sari Denes, Thomas Sills (who was married to Jeanne Reynal), Pierre and Teeny Matisse, Marcel Duchamp, John Bernard Myers, John Cage, Edgar Varese, and Alexander Calder.[72] In the summer of 1949, Helena Holzer Lam went to New York alone to seek employment. Lam was unable to accompany her because the United States at that time had strict quotas for the immigration of persons of Chinese descent.[73] While Holzer returned to Cuba for a few weeks in December 1949 for the Christmas holidays, by the end of 1950, their marriage was over. The divorce of Lam and Holzer was finalized in Havana in 1951 (see Chapter 2).

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During the 1950s Lam also made contact with the Chicago art scene through his acquaintance with collectors Lindy and Ed Bergman. They had met Lam in Havana in 1955, and continued to pursue their friendship with him in Europe.[74] Lam's work was not new to the Chicago area. As noted he and Matta had a joint exhibition at the Arts Club in Chicago in 1944.[75] Mary Jane Jacob has observed that in the 1950s as Surrealism "was being abandoned in New York, its reputation as an important international movement dismissed, so Chicago took up the cause."[76]

> Building on the firm background established by the Surrealist exhibitions at The Arts Club of Chicago and occasional shows at Katharine Kuh's gallery, Kuh (now at the Art Institute), with Frederick A. Sweet, organized in 1947 the Institute's Fifty-Eighth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture, whose theme was "Abstract and Surrealist American Art."...early exhibition of developing collection of Chicagoans served not only to continue to bring Surrealism before the public eye but also as models that supported the notion of acquiring the works of the Surrealists.[77]

Lam benefitted from the patronage of some of these collectors, most notably the Bergmans, Jory and Joseph Shapiro, and Ruth Horwich, who acquired his work through dealers such as Allan Frumkin and Richard Feigen.[78] Shapiro also organized the exhibition of Latin American art at the Art Institute to mark the Pan-American games in Chicago in 1959, which featured Lam's work (see Chapter 3).

Lam visited Chicago for the first time in October, 1958, when he was elected a fellow of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Study in the Fine Arts. At this time he also

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had an exhibition of his work in the gallery of the Foundation.[79] His second visit came in 1960 as part of his honeymoon trip after his marriage to Lou Laurin Lam in New York City on November 21st.[80]

During the 1950s, the critical reading of Lam's work focused more and more on occult rather than specifically totemic themes, reflecting the stylistic and conceptual changes in his work (see Chapter V for a full discussion of Lam's stylistic evolution after 1946). For example, Margaret Breuning, who had written so perceptively of Lam's work in the 1940s, notes:

> Wifredo Lam's recent paintings indicate that he has penetrated even further into the jungle, not into its physical aspects so much as into its miasma of fetish and occult demonism. While to the observer the symbolism of voodoo and obeah may be obscure it is apparent that to the artist their mysteries are comprehensible. He sets down weird figures with a definiteness which implies that he understands their cabalistic meaning.[81]

Howard DeVree writes in The New York Times:

> Where the fauves and others were attracted by the forms and primitive directness of African carvings, Lam has tapped the psychological background to suggest voodoo rites and human sacrifice...Something of the child's terror of the unknown dark invades these emotional conceptions. Black, glaring white areas heighten the effect.[82]

That Lam's work is distinct from other abstract art is noted:

> One of two [paintings] might be dismissed as well-designed decorative abstractions if it were not for the trenchant statement and ever-present overtones of the barbaric in color, in symbols, and in the mood of mystery and threatened terrors invoked.[83]

Henry McBride, on the other hand offers almost an

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unequivocal support for Lam's 1950 exhibition asserting that Lam "becomes, more than ever before, someone to reckon with."[84] He finally declares Lam's emancipation from under the yoke of Picasso:

> The Picasso influence has been submerged into a language suitable to a Cuban mystic's experiences, and says things that Picasso knows nothing about. And how Picasso would have relished knowing all about those things that go on in a Cuban forest![85]

McBride records the stylistic changes in Lam's work from the more brilliant colors of the 1940s to the more earthy palette, dominated by grays, beiges and ochres, which had been appearing in Lam's work since the mid 1940s[86] (see Chapter 5).

Breuning, DeVree and McBride responded to the more ritualistic and ceremonial aspects to Lam's work, which superseded the depiction of the mysteries of an anthropomorphized landscape in the work of the early 1940s. The work of the later 1940s took on a more hieratic quality readily seen in Lam's figuration. The dynamic tensions between figure and ground, human and plant/animal life of the earlier work has been replaced by figures clearly delineated from the background, whose postures of alternating profile, frontal and back views is very reminiscent of ancient Egyptian art. That the subject matter seems to delve deeper into the esoteric thought which had informed the earlier work only enhances this effect in Lam's work. These changes were heralded in the installation which

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Lam designed for the 1947 surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Maeght, whose theme was predicated on the arcane.

These development in Lam's work coincided with a preoccupation with magic and the occult in certain circles of the New York art world in the late 1940s. In 1948, for example, the Surrealist painter Kurt Seligmann published his Magic and Art, a volume which was the culmination of his continuing research into the hermetic mysteries.[87] That same year in February, Nicholas Calas organized the exhibition Blood Flames, at the Ian Hugo Gallery. The installation was designed by Frederick Kiesler,[88] and included the work of Lam, Matta, David Hare, Noguchi and Gorky. In his preface for the catalogue, Calas emphasized the connections between magic and primitive art, and singled out Lam's work as providing a "further elucidation of the character of modern magic."[89]

> ...no other living painter is so directly dependent on art of primitive people and so close to the collective aspect of early magic than is this artist who did not develop exclusively in the tradition of western individualism. Lam's "Jungle" is an individualistic interpretation of mythical reminiscences...Unlike Gauguin, Lam is not exotic but is forcing himself...to free himself from the living knots that chain a man to the fate of his family, to the fate of his race.[90]

In the September, 1950 issue of Art News, Lam was the focus of the artist-painting-a-picture feature written by Geri Trotta, who traveled to Havana to interview and observe the artist. This article is a revealing document of Lam's painting technique as he worked on a painting entitled, The

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Horse. Trotta describes in detail how Lam draws in the contours in charcoal, and then applies the paint thinned with turpentine onto the canvas. The article also notes the stylistic changes in Lam's work and his use of "deeper and more profound" shades of purple, blue, olive green and brown.[91] With regard to the critical interpretations of Lam's work, Trotta observes:

> Quite a lot of words have already been written about Lam. Often they confuse more than they clarify. Spectators insist on attributing to his pictures subject content, which they then describe variously as phallic, religious or even anthropolitical...The fact is that more positively than many of his fellow abstractionists, Lam evokes unequivocal emotions, but everything else be it as it may, Lam utilizes his symbols as units in the interest of design.[92]

Trotta's reactions to Lam's work would be consistent with the trends in American art criticism away from subject matter to emphasize painterly values, but, as indicated above, it was that subject matter that made Lam's work distinctive within the context of totemic and mythic imagery in New York or Paris. Even as his subject matter evolved, and his presentation of content-based Afro-Cuban material become less programmatic, Lam maintained the original allusions of the symbols and motifs in his work. During the 1950s and 60s that content, as has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, was increasingly framed in the context of an occult mysticism posited as an alternative to the secularization of modern life.

Although Lam had no solo exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery between 1948 and 1982, the gallery showed

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work from its inventory in group exhibitions at the gallery throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.[93] His next one person exhibition in New York was in 1962 at the Albert Loeb Gallery, and subsequently he exhibited at the Pyramid Galleries in Washington, D.C in 1963, 1971 and 1974. His etchings for Alain Jouffroy's L'antichambre de la nature were shown at the Wittenborn Gallery in New York in October, 1967, and his 1970 solo exhibition at Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, was seen in the New York gallery from December, 1970-January, 1971. Lam exhibited in the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh in 1952, 1958 and 1964, and 1970. In 1964 he was also featured in the Guggenheim International exhibition, and won one of the $2,500 prizes.[94]

His work was featured in numerous other group exhibitions including those of museum collections, or private collections, such as Collection of Contemporary European and American Paintings and Sculptures at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1948, or 20th Century Painting and Sculpture, Cantor and Witzinger Collections at the John Herron (now Indianapolis) Art Museum in 1955, and several exhibitions focused on the collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1959, 1962, 1969), and, increasingly, exhibitions on Latin American Art. Of these last, the most important before the 1980s, was perhaps the aforementioned The United States Collects Pan American Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, and Cuban Contemporary Art at the

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Indianapolis Museum in 1957. In 1965 an exhibition of the Nancy Sayles Day Collection was organized at the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design, and Art of Latin America was shown at the Yale University Art Gallery and the Archer B. Huntington Gallery at the University of Texas at Austin that same year. In 1969, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum organized an exhibition of Latin American painting from its collection, including Lam's work, and Latin American Horizons, 1976, organized by the Ringling Museum in Sarasota traveled to several other Floridian cities. Lam's work was also included in Art of the Americas at the Andrew Morris Gallery in New York in 1977.

Lam's work was included in several exhibitions on Surrealism, including The Surrealists at the Byron Gallery, New York (1969), Surrealism in Art at the Knoedler Gallery (1975), and in 1978-79 The Jungle traveled in an exhibition of surrealist art from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art throughout Europe. The most interesting was perhaps Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanter's Domain at the D'Arcy Gallery in New York (1960-61). This was a collaborative project with André Breton and Marcel Duchamp as "directors," and Eduoard Jaquer and José Pierre as managers. This exhibition seemed to be a reprise of the 1947 Surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Maeght, and was organized as an homage to entities and personalities that were mythic or deemed worthy of mythic status. For the

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D'Arcy Gallery exhibition a lineage of magicians, sorcerers, and alchemists, through the ages, would be evoked through the persona of the Count de Maldoror, the predecessor of surrealist thought.[95] Each magical entity or personality was associated with a gem stone, a special locale, a roster of poets artists and an archetypal couple from literature or myth. Lam's contribution of his 1947 painting Nativity which is perhaps the most arcane composition of his career was a perfect complement to this project.[96] The inclusion of Robert Rauschenberg's Bed and works by Oyvid Fahlstom, was a pointed denial of the premature declaration of the death of Surrealism.

In this context, the 1968 exhibition, Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage, organized William Rubin, would seem to be a response to the declaration made by Breton and Duchamp. Rubin's purpose was to relegate Dadaism and Surrealism to history. His text tends also to focus on the formalistic aspects of the movements, in direct opposition to the arcane, associative approach of the 1960 exhibition which reaffirmed the persistent interest in "la poesie" within Surrealism. Lam was represented by four paintings in this exhibition: Eggue Orissi, L'herbe des dieux of 1944, The Antillean Parade and Fugue and Form of 1945, and Song of the Osmosis, 1945.[97] He was included in the section on "The Last Surrealists" with Matta and Gorky. Rubin offers no new observation on Lam's work, reiterating truisms about the

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role of African art and the influence of Picasso. More puzzling still is his assertions about Lam, Surrealism and "primitive art":

> Wifredo Lam was the first Surrealist to make primitive and ethnic sources central to his art. Though we see iconographic traces of such imagery from time to time in the work of Ernst, it counted for surprisingly little among the Surrealists painters in general. This, despite the fact that the Surrealists were avid collectors of primitive art, which appealed to them especially because it stood **outside an aesthetic tradition** [emphasis author's].[98]

By marginalizing Lam's primitivist enterprise even within the Surrealist movement, Rubin deflects the inevitable confrontation with the implications of Lam's "more authentic" primitivism, and more importantly the role of race and nationalism in constructing the current canon of 20th Century Art history. His slight of Lam (and Matta) is even more pointed when he notes in this same publications that Arshile Gorky, who had died in 1948, was the last important artist to be associated with Surrealism.[99]

Despite Rubin's eschatological pronouncements, however, Surrealism continued to have a lively and viable, if marginalized presence in the American art scene during the next two decades. Artists such as Richard Lindner, Oyvind Falhström, Lucas Samaras, among others preserved the spirit of the original movement.[100] Rubin's attempt to historicize Surrealism in the mid 1960s was not merely a case of nationalist self-assertion on the part of the artworld in the United States, specifically New York. It was also based on antithetical critical aims. As Rubin sought to

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separate the post-war artistic mainstreams in Europe and the United States into separate and irreconcilable camps, José Pierre would insist on commonalities. In the catalogue of the exhibition, Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain, Pierre counters the popular construct of modern art as "a spectacle of successive and regular waves, each chasing the one preceding and occupying the beach"[101] with observations by himself and others who "have been able to discover in all this superficial and majestic agitation of the oceans, the periodic return of a powerful, deeper movement" often "veiled", i.e. Surrealism.[102] Where Rubin sees rupture, Pierre posits continuity.

The dichotomy between critics in Europe and the United States is also encompassed in issues of content versus forms. Rudi Blesh has noted that "Representation, narrative, and literature - so resolutely barred for years - came flooding back into Surrealism."[103] Critical outlooks in the New York scene, on the contrary, had been increasingly preoccupied with formalist approaches since the early 1950s. This methodology tended to suppress anecdotal or associative elements, and where they were present in an artist's work to deliberately deny or overlook the issue of content, insisting on the selfhood of the works of art as an autonomous entity.[104] This lead the way for Irving Sandler to claim that the art of the 1960s, be it Pop, Minimal or Color Field, was "the product of a nihilist generation,"

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which found "positive values...in impassiveness and boredom."[105]

If, therefore, Rubin would claim that the rejection of Surrealism was an Oedipal purging on the part of the Abstract Expressionists of the movement that was the source of their artistic development,[106] Abstract Expressionism would also be rejected, in its turn, on the basis of its expressive quality by the 1960s.[107] Although tenets of Surrealism persisted in the 1960s, they were characterized by a certain "pre-fabricated" quality exemplified by Pop Art and its appropriation of images and methods of the mass media. What was no longer viable in the United States context by the 1960s was the mythic totemic aspects of Surrealism. While this focus was able to survive in Europe during the decades after the war among elements which struggled to recuperate a sense of essential values in the wake of the devastation of World War II,[108] in the United States "Surrealism...lost its shock...less from familiarity than from the fact that the Surrealists overdid it."[109] This was most obvious in the peculiar alliances of surrealism and commercialism in this country - exemplified by the notorious career of Salvador Dalí, and the excursions into the Hollywood scene on the part of Man Ray - the result of which was that "the real thing...lost its punch."[110]

Criticism of Lam's work in New York after 1960 reflects this less-than-enchanted view of Surrealism. His imagery,

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formerly seen as powerful, full of occult elements, is now criticized for being "decorative and benign."[111] As noted by Vivian Raynor in Arts Magazine in 1963, "The force is still there but...one might say that the shape that was so sinister in the night has turned out to be a hat and coat on a chair."[112] Jerrold Lanes notes in Artforum in 1971:

> Actually, the work is not so very bad, but it has no character, as if the reasons for its being painted were unclear. At any rate, it is certain that the artist who did these paintings was not thinking of making an historical contribution, and I wonder if the Surrealists's neglect of art history was not in the end too detrimental to their work.[113]

This dismissal of Lam's work seems particularly harsh given the fact that the American art scene was during the period 1942-46 the primary arena for the advancement of Lam's career. By the 1980s, however, the critical response to Lam's work in the United States would be reoriented by ideas associated with the new critical paradigms of multiculturalism and diversity, which would precipitate a re-evaluation of his career. The appeal of and interest in Lam's work on such a multi-national presence in the art world was an exceptional phenomenon. It may have been predicated on the fact that his work provided an alternative to artists of what Gaston Bachelard defined as "the third path between realism and the delineation of purely mental dreams and fantasies."[114] It also complied with the attempts of groups such as the CoBrA, the Group Phases and the Situationists to reorient Surrealism away from a focus

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on the unconscious to other ends "within the framework of cultural revolution."[115] Lam's agenda suited Guy Debord's critique of the fragmentation of everyday life as manifest in western culture and art,[116] by uniting the personal and the communal, the physical and metaphysical, the real and the sur-real. The continuing search for such resolution in this century would unearth Lam's name and his work again and again, and as will be discussed in Chapter 6, it would seem that this may continue well into the future.

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NOTES: Chapter 4

1. First Papers of Surrealism was sponsored by the coordinating council of the French Relief Services and installed at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion at 451 Madison Avenue in New York City from October 14- November 7, 1942. The title was an allusion to the preliminary documentation needed to emigrate to the United States. See William S. Rubin, Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage [exhib. cat.] (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968): 160.

2. Letter from Wifredo Lam and Helena Holzer to André Breton, December 31, 1942. Collection Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet, Paris. (Trans. LSS). This letter was included in the exhibition André Breton: La beauté convulsive, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, April 25-August 26, 1991.

3. This aspect of Lam's career was the subject of an essay I wrote in 1984-85 for the catalogue, In the Mind's Eye: Dada and Surrealism, for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. This material was later amplified in my essay for the catalogue of the exhibition, Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970, organized by the Bronx Museum of the Arts. It formed the basis of a presentation in the session Abstract Expressionism and its Enemies, organized by Ann Gibson for the 1990 College Art Association meeting in New York. This presentation was cited by Michael Leja for his discussion of Lam in his 1992 publication, Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectvity and Painting in the 1940s (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993): note no. 158, p. 347. A fourth version was my essay, "Myth and Primitivism: Wifredo Lam in the Context of the New York School and the School of Paris, 1942-1952," for the catalogue of the exhibition, Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-1952 at the Studio Museum, 1992-93 (pp. 71-88).

4. This was later published in Breton, Le surréalisme et le peinture...: 181-183.

5. See Benitez, op. cit.: 19.

6. See Robert Carleton Hobbs and Gail Levin, Abstract Expressionism: The Formative Years [exhib. cat.] (Ithaca: Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1978): 18-19.

7. See Sidney Simon, "Concerning the Beginnings of the New York School: 1939-43. An Interview with Robert Motherwell conducted by Sidney Simon," Art International, 11 (Summer, 1967): 20-23.

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8. See Lawrence D. Hurlburt, The Mexican Muralists in the United States (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

9. See, for example, Stephen Polcari, Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

10. "Picasso Footnotes: His Drawing; Lam's Painting," Art News, 38 (November 18, 1994): 22.

11. "Picassolamming," Art Digest, 17 (December 1, 1942): 7.

12. Herzberg, op. cit.: 40.

13. "The Lore of Cuba," Art Digest, 43 (June 1, 1944): 14.

14. "The Passing Shows," Art News, 43 (June 1, 1944): 22.

15. "Wifredo Lam, Gouaches at Pierre Matisse," Art News, 44 (December 15-31, 1945): 16.

16. See note number 14.

17. A comparison of Lam's work in the mid-1940s with that of Gorky is useful. The monochromatic dripping and thinly painted, open surfaces of Lam compositions such as Oya or Hermes of 1945, in particular share a morphological character with Gorky's work. I have noted this relationship in my essay, "Wifredo Lam and Robert Matta: Surrealism in the New World," In the Mind's Eye: Dada and Surrealism [exhib. cat.] (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary art and Abbeville Press, Publishers, New York, 1985: 94). Valerie Fletcher also asserts that Lam preceded the New York School and Washington Color School in his thinning of color and soaking into the canvas (Fletcher, op. cit.: 175).

18. Margaret Breuning, "Lam's Magical Incantations and Rituals," Art Digest, 20 (December 1, 1945): 16.

19. "A Way to Kill Space," Newsweek, (August 12, 1946): 106-107. This was first published in my article, "Wifredo Lam: Transpositions of the Surrealist Proposition in the Post-War Era," Arts (December, 1985): 21-25. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to April Paul for bringing this article to my attention.

20. Ibid: 106.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid: 107.

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23. Irving Sandler, The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism (New York: Praeger, 1979): 67.

24. For an examination of the presence of artists from Latin American in the U.S. art scene see The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970 [exhib. cat.] (New York: The Bronx Museum of the Arts in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1988), especially the essay by Félix Angel, "The Latin American Presence," pp. 222-283.

25. See Angel, op. cit.

26. See Hurlburt, op. cit., and Jacinto Quirarte, "Mexican and Mexican American Artists: 1920-1970," The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970: 14-71.

27. John O'Neill, ed., Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews, text notes and commentary by Mollie McNickle, intro. by Richard Shiff (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990): 71.

28. Ibid: 71-72.

29. Ibid: 72.

30. Ibid.

31. See Marsden Hartley, "The Red Man," Adventures in the Arts (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921): 13-29.

32. O'Neill, op. cit.: 105-108.

33. Ibid: 76-77.

34. Ibid, p. 75. Such aspects of Native American art were to engender the so-called Indian Space Painters group. These artists who included Steve Wheeler, Robert Barrell, Peter Busa and Will Barnet, exhibited together in the mid 1940s. For a recent study of this phenomenon see the catalogue, The Indian Space Painters: Native American Sources for American Abstract Art, essays by Sandra Kraskin, Allen Wardwell, Barbara Hollister, and Ann Gibson (New York: Baruch College Gallery, 1991).

35. Ibid: 100.

36. See note number 12.

37. "The Passing Shows," Art News.

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38. Breuning, "Lam's Magical Incantations and Rituals."

39. Ann Gibson discusses this aspect at length in "'Primitivism' and 'Race,'" a chapter in her forthcoming publications, Abstract Expressionism: Race and Gender (Yale University Press). She also chronicles the displacement of African and African American cultural forms as the preferred primitivist vehicle by Native American forms. I am grateful to her for making this draft available to me.

40. David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American Art'," Oxford Art Journal, 4, no. 1 (1990): 47.

41. Ann Gibson has made this point vividly clear. See the discussion of her work in Chapter 6.

42. Robert Linsley has specific ideas about Lam's purpose in retaining a figural style which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. See Robert Linsley, "Wifredo Lam: Painter of Negritude," Art History, II, no. 4 (December, 1988): 527-544.

43. See Chapter 1.

44. See Sims, "Myths and Primitivism: The Work of Wifredo Lam in the context of the New York School and the School of Paris, 1942-1952," in Balderrama, op. cit: 79.

45. View, 5, no. 2 (May, 1945).

46. Tiger's Eye, 6 (December, 1948): 23.

47. Instead, 2 (March, 1948): unpaginated.

48. Instead, nos. 5-6 (November, 1948): unpaginated.

49. See Ann Eden Gibson, Issues in Abstract Expressionism: The Artistic Periodicals (Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Press, 1990).

50. See William Rubin, Dada and Surrealism and Their Heritage: 180-181.

51. Leja, op. cit.: 102.

52. Ibid.

53. Hess persists in perpetuating the myth of Lam literally being a student of Picasso. Varian Fry also claims this in his description of the habitues of the Villa Bel Air in Marseilles during 1940 and 41. See Varian Fry, Surrender on Demand (New York: Random House, 1945): 117.

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54. Thomas Hess, "Spotlight on Lam," Art News, 14 (May, 1948): 37.

55. Hess, op. cit.

56. Rubin, op. cit: 177.

57. Ibid: 180.

58. Ibid: 185. Rubin was writing this in the mid-1960s in the heyday of Minimalism and Color Field Painting. Although Pop Art was clearly the progeny of Dadaism, the critical treatment of its manifestations had been nearly subsumed into the formalist paradigm, thus blunting comprehension of its inherent social critique. Since then the persistence of the Dadaist and Surrealist legacy has been more readily recognized despite Rubin's attempts to relegate it neatly into history. Given Lam's predilection to retain mythic references and figuration in his work past the 1940s, therefore, it is easy to see how his extrication from the context of the New York School was to be expected.

59. Lam in unpublished interview in Spanish. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

60. See Matta [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, 1985): 280.

61. Emily Genauer, "Klee Fancy Lacks Substance," (April 27, 1948). Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. This stylistic relationship between Lam and Matta would be referred to often. The two artists were exhibited together on numerous occasions, going back to their two-man exhibition in Chicago in 1942, and as will be discussed in Chapter 4, there were stylistic developments in Lam's work particularly during the late 1940s and 1950s that seem to invite comparison with Matta's work.

62. Reminiscence by Lam written in response to a request from the Guggenheim Museum for the Gorky retrospective. This statement was not published in the catalogue. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

63. I am grateful to Phyllis Braff for sharing this facts, conveyed to her by Roger Wilcox in a conversation in Paris in March, 1993.

64. France Mazin Fernandez, interview with LSS, Paris, March, 1993. A talented painter and collagist, Jessie Fernandez worked as a photographer for Magnum Services. During his later career he lived primarily in Europe and

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died in France in 1982.

65. Helena Holzer Benitez, interview with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992. Also see Hovdenakk, op. cit.

66. Ibid.

67. See Dore Ashton, Noguchi: East and West (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992): 73 for confirmation of the acquaintance of Noguchi and Lam.

68. See note number 65.

69. See Antonio Nuñez Jumenez, Wifredo Lam (Havana: Edtorial Letras Cubanas, 1982) and Per Hovdenakk, "Wifredo Lam y el expresionismo abstracto en los Estados Unidos y Europea," Sobre Wifredo Lam (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1986): 129-137.

70. David Hare, telephone interview with Lowery Stokes Sims telephone from Victor, Idaho, January, 1989. Lam sometimes worked in Hare's studio, and may have left paintings which were subsequently awarded to Helena Holzer in the divorce decree.

71. See Gerome Kamrowski: A Retrospective Exhibition [exhib. cat.], essays by Jennifer Bayles and Evan M. Maurer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1983).

72. See letter from Alexander Calder to Lam and Nicole Raoul, January 7, 1957, Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

73. Helena Holzer Benitez, interview with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992. See also Trotta, op. cit.: 45. The policy of strict regulation of immigration from Asia continued until well into the 1960s.

74. Lindy and Ed Bergman, interview with LSS, Chicago, June, 1984. Lam even planned the itinerary for their European trip in 1959.

75. This exhibition, "Lam-Matta: The Latin American Spirit," was shown from January 3-29, 1944 at the Arts Club of Chicago.

76. Mary Jane Jacobs, "Chicago: 'The City of Surrealism'," In the Mind's Eye: Dada and Surrealism [exhib. cat.] (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art in association with Abbeville Press, Publishers, New York, 1985): 10.

77. Ibid.

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78. Ibid.

79. Lindy and Ed Bergman, interview with LSS, Chicago, June, 1984.

80. Ibid, and Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, October, 1989.

81. Margaret Breuning, "The Demonic Lam," The Art Digest 24, no. 16 (May 16, 1950): 18.

82. Howard DeVree, "The Magic of Klee," The New York Times, (May 7, 1950): 81.

83. Ibid.

84. Henry McBride, "Cuban Forests," Art News, XLIX, no. 4 (Summer, 1950): 53.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Kurt Seligmann, Magic, Supernaturalism and Religion (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948).

88. This information was gained from the correspondence of Tony Smith. I am grateful to Jane Smith and Sarah Olds for allowing me access to this information. Tony Smith was the losing competitor for the commission to design this exhibition.

89. Nicholas Calas, "Magic Icons," in Nicholas Calas, Transfigurations: Art Critical Essays on the Modern Period, (Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1985): 14.

90. Ibid: 14-15.

91. Trotta, op. cit.: 52.

92. Ibid.

93. This information is based on the list of exhibitions prepared by Yveline Hemsi for the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Lam's work.

94. The other $2500 awards went to Asger Jorn, Victor Vasarely, Antoni Tapies and Robert Motherwell. Alberto Giacometti won the $10,000 prize. See notice from the Chicago Tribune (January 16, 1964), Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

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95. Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanter's Domain [exhib. cat.] essays by Edouard Jaquer, Vincent Bounoure, and José Pierre (New York: D'Arcy Galleries, 1960): 5-21.

96. The roster of artists in this exhibition was extensive and included Surrealists such as Adrian Dax of France, Toyen of Czechoslovakia, and Wilhelm Freddi and Max Walter Svanberg of Sweden. It also included artists such as Enrico Baj and Corneille, who a decade earlier had been founders of respectively the "arte nucleare" group in Italy and the CoBrA group. Their inclusion seemed to indicate the consolidation of the Surrealist legacy after the initial revolt by the younger generation. Additions of Americans such as Gorky were undoubtedly meant to emphasize the seminal contribution of Surrealism to the New York School. As to dispel any doubts about this it is pertinent to note José Pierre's essay for the catalogue, "Surrealism, Jackson Pollock, and Lyric Abstraction." Ibid: 31-35.

97. See Rubin. op. cit.: 171.

98. Ibid. Rubin's assertion seems counter to the admissions of André Breton who affirmed the desire of the Surrealists to participate in the spiritual state of these cultures, finally admitting defeat by noting that the European Surrealists lacked a "basic organic contact" which distanced them from the art of traditional cultures (quoted in Maurer, Evan, "Dada and Surrealism," William Rubin, ed., Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, Vol. II: 584.)

99. Rubin, Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage: 171.

100. See Ades, op. cit., Pierre, op. cit.

101. José Pierre, "Surrealism, Jackson Pollock and Lyric Abstraction," Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanter's Domain: 31.

102. Ibid.

103. Rudi Blesh, Modern Arts USA: Men Rebellion, Conquest, 1900-1956 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956): 196.

104. See for example Irving Sandler's conflation of Minimalism, Color Field and Pop Art in his article, "The New Cool Art," Art in America (Winter, 1962): 96-101.

105. Ibid.

106. Rubin, op. cit.: 180.

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107. See Steward Buettner, American Art Theory, 1945-1970 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981): 127-143.

108. See Clousseau, op. cit.

109. Blesh, op. cit: 197.

110. Ibid. See also Ericka Doss, Benton, Pollock and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 300 for a discussion of the relationship between Surrealism and advertising in the United States.

111. I.S., "Wifredo Lam," Art News, 6 (January, 1963): 12.

112. V. R[aynor], "Wifredo Lam," Arts Magazine, 37 (January, 1963): 46.

113. Jerrold Lanes, "Wifredo Lam," Artforum 9, (February, 1971): 84.

114. Peter Wollen, "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International," Elizabeth Sussman, ed., On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: The Situationist International (Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press, 1989): 43.

115. Ibid: 22-23.

116. Ibid: 26.

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CHAPTER 5: THE STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN LAM'S WORK, 1946-82

Lam Criticism: A Summary.

During the last five decades Lam's work has engendered a substantial body of criticism. This writing has focused on contextual questions and cultural evocations that speak to the diadic relationship defined in modernism between "civilization" and "primitiveness." During the 1940s critics in the United States found correlations with the mythic and totemic paradigms of the New York School.[1] Writing from the point of view of Surrealist investigations, Breton defined the significance of Lam's work in relation to the appropriation of tribal and traditional arts by the European vanguard, particularly as represented in the work of Picasso.[2] Observers of the new nuclear age in post-war Europe found in Lam a model for recuperating humanity's primal relationship to nature.[3] And in Cuba and the Caribbean, Lam's artistic enterprise was recognized as a model of an unique American aesthetic - specifically one grounded in African culture and expressive of the aspirations to political, social and economic independence in the area.[4] These writings offer, however, little - if any - discussion of Lam's stylistic evolution.

It is true that in the 1930s and 1940s critics refer to

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stylistic antecedents in European art[5], and note changes in the character of his work brought about by his reencounter with his native land.[6] Writing in 1992 about Lam's work in the period between 1941-46 (when he was establishing his signature style and roster of iconographic motifs), art historian Julia Herzberg has isolated distinct stylistic characteristics, namely: "the Surrealist subversion of common expectations...an abstractive vein...[and]...synthetic Cubist Style."[7] But, while critics may take note of such elements, however, they tend to gravitate more readily to the aspects of Lam's evocations of metaphysical entities and ambiances. His work is seen as providing entry into the dangerous but seductive realms of the deepest recess of the human subconscious: into the integral and true state of human existence, symbolized in the longing for the "primitive" in European society over the last century.[8]

This chapter will examine the stylistic development in Lam's work from the late 1940s to the early 1980s. The discussion will first summarize the various themes and concepts brought to the discussion of Lam's work, including: European art, Picasso, Matisse, Surrealism, African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian art, Afro-Cuban culture and ritual, Antillean Identity and the Politics of Negritude, esotericism and the occult, and Lam's Chinese ancestry. It will then chronicle the stylistic changes in Lam's work

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during the period 1946-82, examining the development of his subject matter after 1946.

Lam Criticism: Themes and Concepts.

European Art.

The imagery of Wifredo Lam seems so startling in the context of western modernism, and so culturally specific in the context of Cuban art that the very real relationship that Lam's work has to European art - both historical and modern - can be overlooked. Academically trained in Havana and Madrid, Lam was an astute and adept student of European art history, and during the 1920s and 30s, critics often alluded to the influence of Goya, as well as that of El Greco, in his predilection for using the color black, and the attenuated nature of his figures,[9] of Bosch and Brueghel in his allegorical and fantastical bent and Velasquez.[10] Lam's appreciation of these artists - Bosch, Brueghel and Goya in particular - was consistent with the interest of the Surrealist group in their work as antecedents for the Surrealist movement.[11] In a 1971 interview, Lam identified Goya's The Third of May, 1808 (1814, Collection Museo del Prado) as the masterpiece he would have liked to have painted himself.[12] That same year he wrote an appreciation of Albrecht Dürer for the catalogue of an exhibition of the master's work in Nüremberg. His description of Dürer evokes his own experiences:

He lived in a world still close to the Middle Ages, torn between belief and doubt, unable to separate religion from

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knowledge. A world tormented by the horrors of war and pestilence...Ignorance and superstition having crated in life a realm where the confines of the earth and the sky are muffled and where the guardians are beasts of all sorts and monstrous forms full of fury and mischief.[13]

Charles Merewether has suggested that beyond Lam's involvement in disrupting realist modes through abstraction, Lam's work also disrupts the aspirations of European representation through the appropriation of non-European art. (Max-Pol Fouchet has described Lam's symbols as "half-way between the known and unknown,"[14] an apt description of his mediation of modernism and ethnicity.) Merewether uses the paradigm of mimesis to describe Lam's particular response to conventions in European representation.[15] The femme cheval, for example, may be seen as a mode for deconstructing European notions of female beauty. "The conjunction of mask and the naked body," notes Merewether," produces an experience precisely of fascination and repulsion."[16] While this also can be said of Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon, Merewether points out that the added component of cultural identification expressed in Lam's work constitutes "a direct engagement with and resistance to Western discourse."[17]

This engagement and resistance can be seen in the multiple variations on the femme cheval, primarily after 1946. Parodies of female portraiture in European art, particularly that of Goya can be seen in a work, such as Ibaye (1950, fig. 5.1). The mantilla and comb of prosperous

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Spanish matrons is mimicked by the accumulation of forms at the top of the head and the cascading elements to one side of the neck. It is also possible to see parallels with conventions in Western art in Lam's compositions of female figures, attended by other forms. Clairvoyance (1950, fig. 5.2), for example, shows a figure visited by a spectral, other worldly entities, recalling familiar themes of Danai or Europa, or - even closer in spirit to Lam's work - figures visited by nocturnal imps in the work of Henry Fuseli in the late 18th century. The femme cheval compositions of the 1940s and 50s, such as Woman (1942), The Jungle (1943) or The Bethrothed of Kiriwini (1950, fig. 5.3) have been characterized as brutish and feral and highly sexualized.[18] However in their coquettish poses, with their backs to us (in the words of Merewether, they return "a side-long gaze to the colonizer"[19]), they certainly evoke an eroticism comparable to that of Correggio's Jupiter and Io (c. 1532, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), or Boucher's Mademoiselle O'Murphy (1751, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne). This last comparison is particularly called to mind by Lam's 1959 Untitled in which a lounging nude female figure wearing a hat, her back and buttocks in full view, contemplates a perplexed horned bird, while other birds sit at her elbow, her feet, and can be seen flying overhead. Matisse.

As chronicled by Maria Lluïsa Borrás, the stylistic

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influence of Matisse's work is particularly evident in Lam's oeuvre between 1934 and 1937.[20] Paintings from this period show areas of color, outlined by strong black lines, and an emphasis on decorative embellishment, as seen in Still Life (fig. 5.4). Two Nudes (fig. 1.4) additionally shows a rhythmic sensuality and voluptuousness that is reminiscent of Matisse's work of the period 1904-06, and his Nice period starting in about 1918. Details like the florets and trefoils in the structural elements of these compositions - which document lingering North African influences in Spain - illuminate a complementary aspect of the issue of primitivism in Lam's work by demonstrating its relationship to Matisse's own response to Moroccan art.[21]

While it is not known when and where Lam first saw Matisse's work before he went to Paris in 1938. Borrás has noted that Lam undoubtedly benefitted from the information brought back to Spain by his friend Jaime Ramis who visited Paris several times during this period.[22] Ramis, who was also very interested in Matisse's work, shared a studio with Lam at the time that the French artist's influence on Lam's work was most evident.[23] Despite the intervention of Picasso on Lam's work by the late 1930s, the influence of Matisse persisted in Lam's work.[24] The aforementioned decorative elements in the works of the 1930s can be seen in compositions throughout the 1940s. During this period they begin to evolve into more independent motifs, which, in

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conjunction with Lam's gift for drawing, suggest an affinity of sensibility between the two artists, rather than a direct influence. For example, compositions such as Femme fleur (1950), L'Offrande (1950) and Femme Assise (1955, fig. 5.5) feature curvilinear elements that define variously knots of hair, floral elements (that replace facial features) or textile designs. In the 1960s and 70s, such elements become especially "baroque" in character as Lam's decorative impulse reaches its most fully realized development in works such as Personage with Bird of 1973 (fig. 5.6).

Picasso and Cubism.

When Lam's work was first exhibited in New York in 1939 at the Klaus Perls Gallery, it was seen with a selection of drawings by Picasso. Although Klaus Perls has revealed that the combination was largely to attract an audience to see the work of a then unknown artist[25], critics in New York immediately latched onto the idea that Lam was Picasso's "protege"[26] or "student,"[27] and his work described as "forms snitched from Guernica."[28].

As noted in Chapter 1, Lam's work of 1936-39 shows a reduction and stylization of form, and an abstraction of the facial features into mask-like elements, which was precipitated by his contact with Picasso's work in the 1936 exhibition of the older artist's work in Spain. This stylization became more pronounced in 1938-39, when the figures show an articulation of planes that more closely

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refer to those in African art, as seen in Mother and Child of 1939 (fig. 5.7).[29] After Lam met Picasso in Paris in 1938, however, there is no evidence of the biomorphism and dramatic expressiveness of Picasso's then current work[30] in Lam's until 1940-41 in a series of ink drawings done in Marseilles as he awaited passage out of France, and in paintings such as Composition (1940, fig. 5.8). By 1941-42, when Lam has returned to Cuba, the modalities of synthetic Cubism have been so modified by the visual impact of the Cuban landscape, that in the words of Henry McBride, Lam's work "says things that Picasso knows nothing about."[31]

It was undoubtedly Picasso's more personal intervention in promoting Lam's career that reinforced the association with the Spanish master despite evident stylistic divergences in their work. Lam retained great affection for the Spanish artist who liked to call him a "relative,"[32] and sang Cuban songs with him.[33] It was in Picasso's care that Lam entrusted the contents of his studio when he fled Paris in June, 1940. Despite the fact that Lam's work became inculcated in the propositions of Surrealism, Cuban modernism, North American totemism, and post-war primitivism, the influence of Picasso continued to inflect Lam criticism throughout his career.[34]

After the Second World War, Lam and Picasso saw each other and communicated intermittently over the next twenty-seven years. Lam's own analysis of their artistic affinity

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focused on his having experienced life in Picasso's homeland: "Our plastic interpretation simply coincided," Lam noted, "I already knew the Spanish temperament, for I had lived it, suffered it, in the country itself."[35]

Surrealism.

It was, however, the Surrealist group in Paris which provided the intellectual and critical anchor that secured Lam's place in art history. André Breton's early intervention to clarify Lam's position within the modernist discourse, and his analysis of Lam's relationship to Picasso (see Chapter 1) was the earliest to deal with the situation of an artist intimately related to cultures in the realm the Surrealists dubbed "le merveilleux" and conversant with western modernism.[36]

Before coming into contact with Breton in 1939, Lam had an experimented with Surrealist image-making in Spain in the early 1930s. A group of drawings, and at least three or four paintings that have survived from that period show his particular interpretation of biomorphism (see fig. 1.3), as well as his use of dream-derived imagery with disjointed space and fractured narratives. Lam's inventive metamorphic imagery would align his work with the surrealist artists André Masson and Max Ernst, although, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the early work of Dalí in particular is recalled in a painting of prostitutes and sailors of 1931 (fig. 5.9).

Lam's African heritage and his Cuban nationality,

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however, placed him in a different cultural space from that of his French associates, one based on the assumption that his claim to primitivism was more authentic. Nevertheless, the Surrealists legitimized Lam's own enterprise through their own politic positions with regard to colonized cultures, and their affirmation of the integrity of non-Western thought and methodology (see Chapter 1). In their critique of European and Euro-American values, they not only provided the intellectual framework for individuals such as Lam, the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire and the Senegalese poet Leopold Senghor to create strategies of self-affirmation as necessary prelude to political liberation,[37] but they also predicated the intellectual response of liberal camps in Europe to post-war independence movements in Asia and Africa.

As seen in the discussion of critical writings on Lam in Chapter 3, Cuban critics have demonstrated that the contextualizing of Lam within his native environment elicited readings of its syntax and iconography which paralleled qualities and states of being celebrated by Surrealism, but which remained intrinsic to the Cuban environment. As such his artistic enterprise served as a linchpin and catalyst for a cultural self-reflection in the Caribbean because of the specificity with which it mirrored political, social, economic as well as cultural aspirations in the area. It may be said about Lam then, as one critic in

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New York said about Frida Kahlo, that his status as a Surrealist was affirmed by his primal environment and confirmed by outside perceptions.[38]

African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art.

Although the African elements in Lam's work are usually attributed to the intervention of Cubism in general and Picasso in particular,[39] Lam had already studied African art in the museums of Spain during the 1920s and 1930s.[40] As has been noted, the relationship of Lam's work to African art is evident by the second half of the 1930s. The subtle changes in the character of the masked heads of Lam's figures between 1938 and 39, between those done in Spain and those painted in France, evidence a more specific notation of the different styles of African masks. It can be said that in the later of these works the styles of the Baule or Kuba, for example are most specific, as it can be said that in Lam's late work in the 1970s and 1980 styles reminiscent of the form observed in Senufo and Baga art.

The paintings of 1938-39 also evidence an articulation of the prominent body planes - shoulder, breast plate, hands and legs - in a geometric manner that directly relates to African art as seen in Nu assis (fig. 1.8). In his work of 1946 to 1949, Lam extricates the figure from the dense, forestrial environment it inhabited during 1942-45, and renders them in more specifically sculptural terms as can be seen in Le sorcier de l'océan (Alafi Incan) of 1947. (fig.

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5.10). Such figures demonstrate not only characteristics that relate to African sculpture, but also Oceanic sculpture as well (fig. 5.11), which by then Lam was actively engaged in collecting along with African art.[41] The peculiarly "disemboweled" quality of the torso's of some of the figures of the late 1940s relate to the forms he could easily study in several sculptures from the Sepik River area then in Lam's collection.[42]

In addition to the art of sub-Saharan Africa, elements that seem to refer to Egyptian art can be observed in Lam's work - namely the posturing of the femme cheval with its particular conflating of a profile view and frontal or back view.[43] The endowing of the femme cheval with an animal head is also characteristic of some Egyptian deities. The possibility of this relationship becomes even more intriguing through the consideration of the elongated digits on the hands and feet of Lam's figures, particularly after 1950. In addition the aspect of dismemberment, particularly evident in Rumblings of the Earth (fig. 5.12), and the truncated motifs of breasts, spikes, horns, wings, etc. that can be found in miscellaneous graphic works after 1950 suggest Islamic influences and archaic Greek modes. References to Pre-Columbian art, though less frequent in Lam criticism, are evoked in the context of a more generalized discussion of primitivist sources. Fernando Ortíz, for example mentions it in his analysis of Lam's work being an

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expression of the primogeniture of Native American cultures in the Caribbean.[44]

Afro-Cuban Religion and Ritual.

Despite his interest in Haitian Afro-Christian religion (Vodun), André Breton rarely brought references to Afro-Cuban culture to his discussion of Lam's work. The influence of Afro-Cuban culture was evident in Lam's work by 1942, and was highlighted by the titles conceived in collaboration with Lydia Cabrera (see Chapter 1). Lam, however, could be equivocal about the specificity of his quotations from that culture. In some cases, he reveled in the fact that such subject matter could "disturb the dreams of the exploiters,"[45] citing specific aspects of Afro-Cuban symbology in his work.[46] At other times he would pointedly deny that he had no interest in the literal meaning of cult symbols: "I have never created my images according to a symbolic tradition, but always on the basis of poetic excitation."[47]

It was not until the 1980s that studies of Lam's work by scholars such as Suzanne Garrigues, Julia Herzberg and Alvaro Medina provided the first detailed iconographic analyses of Afro-Cuban elements in Lam's work.[48] These studies led to the separation of Lam's painterly enterprise from that of his contemporaries, locating him within a cultural specificity which affirmed the authenticity of his primitivism, as well as that of artists on this side of the

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Atlantic engaged in similar projects. These writers also clarified the political implications of Lam's work, embellishing what Breton could only guess at in 1942. All this by necessity opened a Pandora's box of culturally specific art history and criticism, forcing a shift away from the presumed hegemonic position of the Euro-centric world view.[49] It is now clear that even if marked by Picasso, it was Lam's work that potently effected an alternative art historical lineage that validated once-suppressed and marginalized cultural expressions.[50]

Antillean Identity and the Politics of Negritude.

The developments in Lam's work in the 1940s correlated with the effort to define an African American identity in Martinique. Spearheaded by Aimé and Suzanne Césaire and René Ménil, this movement sought to promulgate a cultural and political philosophy that celebrated the continuity and philosophy later became known as "negritude."[51] As an expression of cultural and personal revolution, negritude was certainly compatible with the way that Lam approach the politics of liberation in his own work.[52] Suzanne Césaire evoked the image of the "L'homme arbre"[53] as the essential character of the Martinican: a syncretistic fusion of nature and man which complemented the contemporaneous imagery in Lam's paintings.

Aimé Césaire acknowledged this affinity in his 1946 salute to Lam's contribution to the evolution of the

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Antillean identity:

> The spirit of creation triumphs in the Antilles because of [Lam's] efforts....Wifredo Lam is the first person from the Antilles who knew how to savor freedom. His work is free, free from all aesthetic scruple, free from all realism, free from all documentary concerns, and what his work embodies is the frightening but wonderful encounter with the forest, the marsh, monsters, the night, seeds in flight, the rain, our blood vessels, epiphytic plants, serpents, fear, the abyss,life itself.[54]

When Edmundo Desnoes compared Lam's celebration of the Cuban landscape (as a long-lost son) to that of José Marti, he not only affirmed aspects of decolonization and cultural liberation, which lie at the core of the conceptualization of negritude, but also demonstrated the continuity of such political and cultural aspirations in the Antilles. In his analysis of Lam as the "artist of Negritude," Robert Linsley notes further that Lam's engagement of Santeria and Vodun, two of the most important Antillean religions, gains political currency in view of the "tradition of political resistance" these religious systems have played, for example in the revolutionary traditions of Haiti.[55] Furthermore, Linsley characterized Lam's utilization of Cubist vocabulary as that of "a colonial..aggressively claiming a place within a new global western cultures and restructuring the aesthetic debate at the core of that culture in his own terms."[56]

Esotericism and the Occult.

Lam explored occultism and esoteric belief with his second wife, Helena Holzer, in Cuba during the 1940s.[57] In

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addition to the iconographic elements in Lam's work noted by Marta Barrio-Garsd - e.g. the serpent, the crescent moon, the spoked wheel[58], as as noted in Chapter 1 titles of specific works executed in the mid-1940s refer to that subject: Hermès (Trismegistus), to the avatar of hermetic and esoteric traditions, and Chemical Wedding to the title of a seventeenth-century Dutch esoteric text.[59]

During the years 1945-49, Lam's work showed a more intense engagement of esotercism. His work was later singled out with that of Victor Brauner by José Pierre as epitomizing the focus on esotercism in Surrealism after the Second World War.[60] Works executed at this time, such as Nativity (1945, fig. 5.13), The Wedding (1947, fig. 5.14), and Belial, King of the Flies (1947, fig. 5.15), demonstrate how the specificity of the Afro-Cuban content becomes less dogmatic as they are subsumed into esotericism and occult elements. This was not merely an artistic device on Lam's part. There were cultural precedents as well. Cuban scholars such as Roberto Cobas Amate and Enrique Sosa Rodríguez have noted that aspects of metamorphosis and hermeticism indicate correspondences which exist between the rituals and organization of African-derived organizations such as the Abakua Society (or Ñañigos), Ifik, or Palo in Cuba, and masonic organizations.[61]

Lam's Chinese Identity.

Critics in Spain had mentioned Lam's Chinese ancestry

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as early as the 1920s, but did not attempt to postulate its presence in his work. During the 1940s, as seen in the discussion in Chapters 2 and 3, critics in New York and Cuba isolated this aspect of Lam as the mitigating element which predicated the stylistic nature of his work,[62] and in his 1948 review of Lam's work, Thomas Hess evoked the paintings of the Sung Dynasty to dismiss the idea of "occult racial memory"- i.e. of Africa - in Lam's work.[63]

In the early 1980s Marta Barrio-Garsd singled out such qualities as his virtuosity in drawing, and his habit of laying on washes of color as indication of the expression of Lam's Chinese ancestry.[64] Specific paintings, such as Composition, 1969 (fig. 5.16) would support this postulation, with the additional characteristic of isolating several figures as discrete episodes within the background, which can also be observed in Chinese painting. The appearance of a chart of numbers in Lam's 1948 painting, Belial, Lord of the Flies, may be linked to the Chifra or Chinese numbers, a system of numerology brought by Chinese laborers to the Caribbean.[65] An analysis of the human types, animals and symbols assigned to various numbers to aid in the interpretation of dreams, predictably reveals a syncreticity with Afro-Cuban and other cultural meanings throughout the world. The most interesting analysis of Chinese cultural elements in Lam's work, however, came on the occasion of the 1991 exhibition of Lam's graphic work in

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China. In the exhibition catalogue critic Xing Xiao Sheng compared Lam's metamorphic hybrids to those in Chinese mythology.[66] His descriptions of the anatomical anomalies of the Chinese creatures almost recreate those of Lam.

In addition to a more culturally-specific analysis of Lam's Chinese identity, this aspect of his work may also be considered in the context of the evocation of Japanese and Chinese art in discussion of painterly trends in Paris and New York in the 1940s and 50s. Sara Wilson notes this "new Orientalism" in "informal" art in Paris, singling out the work of Michel Tapié and Henri Michaux, as well as manifestations of the "art autre" such as the festural abstractions of Hans Hartung and Georges Mathieu,[67] and observes that "the Orient would also be a major point of reference of the 'siting' of the work of [Jackson] Pollock in Paris in 1951."[68]

Wilson quotes Michaux's description of Chinese art after an extended visit to Asia in 1933: "Objects are traced, they seem like memories...The Chinaman possesses the facility of reducing Being to Being signified." As noted in Chapter 2, corrolating racial identity with stylistic traits is a critical strategy that can lead to problematic stereotyping. Nevertheless Barrio-Gard's deft analysis of the impact of Lam's Chinese heritage on his work is reflected in the technical facility and cryptic nature of the work of his late period. The character of Lam's

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figuration after 1960, exemplified in the aforementioned painting, Composition of 1969, can be described as transmuting form into form "signified." In light of Agnès de la Beamelle's description of the compatibility of Lam's work after 1947 with in artistic tendencies in Paris that manifested "emerging forms...conceived a language," Wilson's discussion indicates a yet unexplored aspect of Lam's work within the context of Parisian art criticism in the 1950s.[69]

Although individual critics writing about Lam tend to approach his work from one or another of the preceding issues, Lam's work continually defied easy categorization. As Roland Dumas has noted, Lam, "ignored schools of art as much as he did conventional style."[70] As will be seen in the next section of this chapter, he remained true to his personal vocabulary throughout the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and even the engagement of new media - graphic work and ceramics - enriched, but did not dislodge this thematic consistency.

Stylistic Development and Subject Matter: 1947-82.

1946-50: The Return to Europe.

In the second half of the 1940s Lam continued to explore thematic motifs which had been developed in his work in Cuba earlier in the decade. There were also several important stylistic developments at this time. The figure was freed from its forestrial ambiance, and was now

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positioned within bare, unadorned spaces, which sometimes included stage-like platforms. Concomitantly his paint surfaces become more uniform in character.[71]

The intimations of change in Lam's approach to figure ground/ relationships was first seen in a series of ink drawings done in Haiti during the winter of 1945-46. In these works, which featured astral beings hovering in space, Lam reintroduced the horizon line in his work to define a dramatic, orthogonal space, whose cavernous character contrasted dramatically with the dense, closed compositions of 1942-45. This space can be observed in paintings such as the 1947 Présages (fig. 5.17) in which a white winged form, possessing a cluster of rounded heads, sends out an appendage to grip the horizonline as if to anchor itself from sliding off the composition.

The colors in these compositions show a limited palette of various combinations of blue, purple, white and black or brown. Lam had exhibited a group of black and white, "pointillist" paintings in New York in 1945. The Nativity, painted that same year additionally featured blue and purple. Two years later, a series of heads and partial figures in brown wash on brown paper (Head, fig. 5.18 and Canaima, fig.5.19) anticipated Lam's use of a palette dominated by brown, beige, white and black - as seen in Belial, Emperor of Flies, Zoomorphic Figures (fig. 5.20) both of 1948, and Murmur of the Earth. In Grande Composition

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(fig. 3.2) Lam exploited the brown color of the paper, overlaying it with washes of blue, black and white.[72] These closely related hues persist in Lam's work through the 1950s, when the palette is characterized by velvety surfaces of rich browns, grays and purples, punctuated by occasional appearance of red, green and yellow, as seen in Je Suis, (fig. 5.21) of 1950.

By 1946 Lam's figures show a more hieratic, formal quality, and a centralized image and compositional organization first seen in The Nativity. These qualities are further developed in The Wedding of 1947. Like The Jungle, this last painting may be seen as a pivotal work in Lam's career, indicating both elements in his work that refer to the past and those that show future directions. On the one hand there are familiar Afro-Cuban motifs: the knives, the small horned heads, the triangular Abakua motif, and the candelabra held in the out-stretched hand of the figure which extends out the mid-section of the central figure. On the other, there are references to esotericism in the highly ritualized presentation of the composition, and the prominence of the crescent shapes, the seven-spoked wheel, emanating rays of light and luminous egg shape, which recalls the fabled Philosopher's Stone. Similar elements were present in Le Chevelure de Falmer, Lam's installation in the 1947 Surrealist exhibition, and in other still life compositions of this period such as Rites Secretes, a

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representation of an Afro-Cuban altar, and L'atelier [Cuarto Fambal (fig. 5.22) - this last a depiction of the ceremonial room of the Abakua society.[73]

The 1947 sepia heads and partial figures are characterized by open thoracic regions, and spine elements along their backs and manes. The more grotesque, even feral, quality to some of sepia heads and to the figures in Belial, Lord of the Flies can also be traced to Le Chevelure de Falmer, and they add a more diabolical and foreboding nuance to Lam's already strong characterizations. The planar quality which is seen in these works indicate the influence of Oceanic art, particularly that of the Sepik River region in Papua New Guinea, which Lam's began to collect along with African art in the mid-1940s. This use of flat, unarticulated shapes can been seen in Composition (1949) and Pasos Mimeticos cf 1951 (fig. 5.23). In the first a black arched two-footed form stands in front of a portal at the corner of a room, it's emphatic, flat form contrasting to the fugitive orthogonal space of the composition. Similar forms appear later in L'invasion de l'objet, where its stands like a sentinel in back of the main figure, and in Le figure, la terreur this form creates a distinct "lane" of space to contain figural elements and landscape details. Pasos Mimeticos is distinguished by velvety reds and black which create an open-air scene in which a highly schematized femme cheval and a winged white form enact their drama

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against the horizonline, while two rhomboid (Abakua) forms float above, joined by a canoe-shaped form with a prominent spine.

The 1950s.

These stylistic developments are refined in Lam's work of the 1950s. In Umbral (1950, fig. 1.33), Lam explores the notion of a portal as a threshold between dimensions of existence. This composition is dominated by three large diamond-shaped forms. Extra dimensions are suggested by the diagonal lines that appear sporadically in the space, as opposed to a continuous horizonline. Presences appear from behind them, or figures on the foreground grasp them as if to step into that other dimension. These open-ended transitional passages permit a constant traffic between one dimension and another. Large winged, or finned entities- which Lam called "diabolical birds"[74] - also hover in the background. Other figures are variously embedded in the color of the background, or are set off from it by a strong outline and decorative embellishment. A similar presentation of dimensional simultaneity can also be in seen Non-Combustible (fig. 5.24), where the forms span the composition on the horizontal as if in transit between worlds.

During the 1950s the femme cheval also develops into a character of great expressive range and individual decorative appointment. A typical incarnation is seen in

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Plait of Water of 1950 (fig. 5.25) where her trumpet shaped head is doubled, and she attempts a rather sly, grimacing smile, under which is attached a perfect, bulb-shaped chin. The extension of the head into the neck/ hairline segues into a familiar divided formation of the hair, from which is released a thick mane, which doubles as a horse's mane and/or tail. Her beard falls gracefully over her shoulder as she glances back to look at the spectator. Completing a contortion worthy of a circus performer, her breasts and upper torso are seen in profile, and her lower torso at a three-quarter view. Behind her looms another shadowy figure, whose torso is covered with striated designs similar to seen in Lam's depiction of palm fronds, and a rather perplexed bird sits atop her head.

This painting demonstrates the main elements of the femme cheval which codified into several distinct types - distinguished by the shape of their heads - between 1947 and 1940. The trumpet head of the figure in Plait of Water appears most frequently, and is often seen with spiked elements along its snout, reminiscent of the figure in La langue maternelle of 1942. This convention dates from drawings Lam did in Marseilles in 1940-41, and can be seen in Le sorcier de l'océan (Alofi Incan) of 1947, Zambezia-Zambezia (fig. 5.26) and Composition (Lunguanda Yembe) of 1950, and Abalocha (figure sur fond noir) of 1951. Femme Cheval (fig. 5.27), The Bethrothed of Kiriwina (1949) and

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Seated Woman (1950, Hirshhorn Museum, and 1955, Museo national de bellas artes, Havana) have more mask-like heads in concave crescent forms. The painting in the Hirshhorn collection (fig. 5.5) demonstrates how Lam often combines several approaches to the head on a single figure, in this case, the round head with an arching neck has been superimposed on the darker crescent head.

This arched format characterized the particular stylization of the "horse" head of the femme cheval, which contrast with the long-snouted apparitions of 1942-43 such as Untitled (fig. 5.28). It is seen in paintings such as Seated Woman (1955, Museo nacional de bellas artes, Havana) and Je Suis, both of 1949. The latter also features head decorations comprised by Elegua devotional heads, horns, serpent heads, birds, etc. These later permutate into detached or semi-detached entities, joined to the main figure by tubes in the 1960s and 70s. In Lisamona (fig. 5.29) the face is rendered as an elongated oval, which extends to form a larger one, whose lower area is defined by chevron stripes. One last characterization is the hatted figure, derived from several figures in paintings of the early 1940s, most notably The Eternal Presence of 1944. L'Offrande of 1950 shows such a figure, whose visage has been replaced by a network of stylized leaves in the form of the trefoils found in the interiors of Lam's Spanish paintings of the mid 1930s. The figure in the lower left of

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Le Marchand des Rêves sports a wide-brimmed hat crowned with a bird, and in Flor/Niola, 1946 (fig. 5.30), the round-faced type, which proliferates in Lam's work in the 1970s and early 1980s makes an early appearance.

The attenuation of form observed in the femme cheval is even more anomalous in the figures in Lam's large-scale compositions. An extreme manifestation is seen in Murmur of the Earth, with its presentation of dismembered body parts (which were predicted in the abbreviated torso which dominated Le Chevelure de Falmer). The particular intertwining of form recalls Islamic design, and throughout the 1950s and 60s severed breasts, arms, and feet (human and hoofed) and hands would evolve into independent physiological elements particularly in Lam's graphic work. In other paintings Lam's anatomical inventions suggest a formal relationship with those of Matta, particularly of the mid to late 1940s. This is most evident in instances where the figures are endowed with legs and feet at both ends of a torso, and in the elegant extension and gesticulation of the limbs as seen in When I Am Not Sleep, I Dream (1955, fig. 2.2). There is, however, a difference in philosophical approaches in the work of both artists. As Lam's work continues to hover of the edge of esoteric, spiritualist content during the 1950s, Matta's, on the other hand, evolved into a post-apocalyptic imagery that became increasingly militaristic in nature.

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This visual invention emphasized the fact that drawing increasing became the dominant aspect of Lam's art during the last three decades of his career. With the exception of a series of paintings executed in the late 1950s, and graphic work of the early 1960s, in which he explores a more painterly statement, Lam's late work is characterized more and more by what Max-Pol Fouchet has called a "heightened plastic decisiveness, an handwriting endowed with clarity and dynamism."[75] Drawing remained the fundamental source of Lam's imagery. If he did not do preparatory drawings as such, he was in the habit of drawing the basic design of his compositions in charcoal onto the canvas before adding the paint.[76] The evolution in his work can be traced from the thick application of paint seen in Le Bruit of 1942 (fig. 1.22), to the sparsely painted Annunciation of 1944 (fig. 1.28) in which drawing and paint interact with one another to achieve an optical effect that reinforces the fugitive quality of Lam's other worldly beings. In the later 1950s, Lam's repertoire of drawing effects show a cultivation of breaks in the line which convey a tentativeness and agitated impression which activates the image as a whole.

Besides the femme cheval, the other important theme in Lam's work during the 1950s was the rooster or cock. As noted, during the early 1940s, animal and bird themes appeared in Lam's work as elements in figural and still life compositions as attributes of the orishas, or as sacrificial

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offerings to them. Fish, doves or pigeons, goats, roosters and cats were the most frequently represented. Of these the cats seem to be more incidental household pets, and photographs of the artist in his home and studio from that period reveal an indulgent pet owner, who later added three dogs to his household menagerie (fig. 5.31). In the late 1940s, creatures which resembled lizards, as seen in Warrior: Character with Lizard (1947), appeared in Lam's work. Related to the lizards are serpents seen in Nativity, which Maria Barrio-Garsd has related to alchemical symbolism, and figures in Christian and African iconography as well. The shadowy, winged forms in the backgrounds of paintings first seen at this time are present in Murmur of the Earth, and in When I do not Sleep, I Dream. They are distinct from the dove-like species see in Fascinated Nest of 1944, the horned birds see in Le guerrier (fig. 5.32, 1947), which Julia Herzberg has associated with vultures - the symbolic birds of the orisha Olofi or Oludumare, "the supreme deity who...lives in a devotee's head."[77] In these works created after 1947, the dove/ pigeon appears as a sacrificial offering as seen in paintings such as Osun and Elegua and Le Marchand des Rêves, where the female figures hold them in their hands before disposing of them. Occasionally they sit within or atop the head as in The Casting of the Spell-Personnage of 1947 (fig. 5.33), J'arrive, 1961) and Présage.

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In several paintings done in 1953-55 these birds seem to divest their former Afro-Cuban ritual context and assume the role of embodying not only the male principle, but also as Giulio Blanc has noted: "Cuban nationhood and pride."[78] This iconographic nuance was especially exploited by Lam's contemporary, the Cuban artist Mariano Rodriguez, in a series of compositions that depict an unusually weighty breed of these birds see in his Cockfight (1941, oil on canvas, Private Collection Miami).[79] It is probably no coincidence, then, that the appearance of this theme in Lam's work coincides with the period in Cuban history in which the struggle for control of the island's political destiny intensified (see Chapter 3). This may also explain their pointedly militaristic character. In the two versions of Caribbean Cock (figs. 5.34, 35), the birds is endowed with the hoofed feet, long-snouted face with grimacing teeth, bulbous chin and beard of the femme cheval, with additional facial protuberances in the form of arrows. One brandishes a knife, and the face of the other seems to be caged in a spiked protective armor, which makes the bird seems a weird hybrid of nature and militaristic mechanization. This is also expressed in the elaborate grill-work on the back of Bird of the Earth also of 1953 (fig. 5.36).

At the end of the 1950s Lam created a series of large-scale paintings on the theme of the landscape vegetation

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entitled collectively La Brousse. These works were painted in Italy in 1958 and 1959, and show an exceptional consideration of contemporary trends on Lam's part. In these works Lam used a compositional motif of a densely criss-crossed network of cane stalks (bamboo) as the basis for an exploration of all-over imagery. Each painting is characterized by a concentration of the compositional element towards the center of the canvas, leaving the outer areas of the surface empty.

In the earlier compositions (fig. 5.37) Lam created a complicated interplay of stalks and leaves which feature contrasting dark and light tonalities, as well as variations in the thickness of size of the shafts of the stalks, to enrich the visual effect. Occasionally scythe-like forms literally cut across the space, and lead the eye back to the center. Here and there round or rhomboid head also appear, but for the most part, it is the cane stalk which is the trope, the surrogate for the drip or the brushstroke in the compositions. In the second group (fig. 5.38), Lam began to obscure the network of cane stalks with a dense mist of splattered and dripped paint. In one painting the artist opposes the basic composition with a large band of painted slashes, whose diagonal orientation is off-set by stalk forms created with broad brushes of color. There is a diagonal element established between the brushed shafts and those more precisely drawn onto the canvas. In the two

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subsequent compositions, the cane stalks are all but obliterated by the most of splotches of color.

The particular character of the painting from the La Brousse series can certainly be comprehended in the context of the various modes of gestural abstraction in Europe and the United States in the 1950s.[80] The special achievement of the La Brousse series within Lam's oeuvre has never been fully appreciated. They indicate a painterly ambition which would encompass an engagement of scale and a degree of abstraction that is unprecedented in his career. Lam's use of splattering to achieve a mist that defines a field color, as opposed to cultivating gestural episodes, also seems to predict developments in color field paintings during the next decade.

These paintings also indicate the evolution of the landscape in Lam's work. As noted in the mid-1940s as the figure was gradually separated from its natural ambiance, Lam began to explore more schematic renderings of the Cuban landscape. Paintings such as The Greenhouse (1947), and Tropical Vegetation (1948, fig. 5.39) show extreme close-ups of trees, leaves, fruit, etc. with no reference to the horizonline. In Song of the Forest (1946, fig. 5.40) and The Triangle (fig. 1.34), the Cuban landscape is evoked by isolated stalks of banana or papaya fruit, accumulations of bamboo or cane stalks. This schematization is further accentuated in The Barrier (1964, fig. 5.41), in which the

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landscape is reduced to a vertical shaft of cane, intersected and intertwined by spiked palm fronds and branches. This motif appears in many paintings of the later career such as La lumière qui monte of 1950, Counterpoint (1950), Dawn and Dusk (1957-8) and We Are Waiting, and La Brousaille of 1959. In these works, the diagonal shafts appear with spiked leaves and stacks of rounded or helmet-shaped heads (Elegua).

In 1967, the femme cheval is reunited with the landscape in Composition fantastique (fig. 5.42). It would seem to be a prelude to Lam's 1981 drawing La Selva (fig. 5.43) in which the femme cheval, Elequa heads, and a score of minor denizens of the Afro-Cuban universe come to the edge of Lam's jungle (selva) in a final reunion of the figure and landscape.

The 1960s.

Writing about Lam's work in the early 1960s, James Johnson Sweeney noted that the

> more refined and ...concentrated manner" of Lam's treatment of his imagery, and a shift from a "dependence on conventional naturalism to a symbolic minimum," has allowed Lam to "heighten the emotional impact of his expression..Now his color is cleaner,...the elements of his composition swim clear against grounds that are always laden with hints, suggestions...which grow directly out of the medium itself and its application - not arbitrary conventions with readily legible forms.[81]

These qualities are manifest in the complex interplay between line and color, void and mass, frontality and background, as well as a proliferation of limbs, torsos,

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hands and heads in works such as We are Waiting (1958, fig. 5.44), Near the Virgin islands (1959, fig. 5.45), and Les Enfants sans Ames (fig. 5.46) of 1964. This effect is enhanced by the more angular, abrupt character of Lam's line as seen in The Barrier.

The color in these paintings continues to be somber and monochromatic, applied in washes of one of more hues, that subsume the forms drawn in the paint. Episodes of color on the figural elements can be seen occasionally and establish a visual dialogue with the dominant color to assert as well as obviate spatial readings. This is can also be seen in Lam's contemporaneous work in pastel, where he was able to achieve visual effects similar to the velvety expanses of color that he did in his painting. There is a minimum of interior furniture or architectural details in these works. The resulting spatial ambiance repudiates the fractured ambiances of Cubism, while paying homage to Cézanne, with its adroit exploitation of the pictorial devices of "passage," interstitial areas that mediate different spatial depths.

The sense of mischief and playfulness that can be observed in Lam's figures at this time recall the spirit of Paul Klee. As seen in paintings such as The Guests and All Saints' Day (fig. 5.47) of 1966, and Adam and Eve (fig. 5.48) of 1969, formal sequences change abruptly and swiftly with each extension of an anatomical part, each one of which

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is always in the process of becoming another. While the forms meander around the composition, they always come full round to grasp themselves, or grip the random diagonal lines to anchor themselves and the whole visually as well as structurally. In Tropic of Cancer (fig. 5.49) of 1969, the limbs have a propulsion all their own as they angle across the front of the composition. This energy is comparable to that observed in Murmur of the Earth in which dismembered hands reach out to hold feet, and feet sit on shins, which in turn are connected to feet with toes curled under on one side and on the other, a hand pointed straight up, palm out. In Les Abaloches Dance for Dhamballa, God of Unity (fig. 5.50), one of the standing figures bends over the recumbent figure in the foreground and grasps her right leg by its shin. That figure, in turn, grasps a loose tassel with the toes of its right foot, and in the meanwhile a third cloven-footed leg sprouts out of its back to support it from falling down to the bottom of the composition.

At the same time, Lam has distilled the specific physiognomic elements of the femme cheval into a series of interchangeable tropes. In some the head shape is reduced to a trapezoidal or triangular shape. The mouths may be composed by a bifurcated oval, or two inverted crescent shapes. The chin retains it bulbous shape, although in some cases it disappears altogether into the background at the lower terminus of the head. There are also some heads that

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show a separately articulated jawline that curves upward, as well as a pronounced cranial plane (see All Saints' Day). The knife blades, which in the 1940s were symbols for the orisha Ogun, become independent entities and function as heads for some of Lam's figures as seen in The Undesirable (fig. 5.51), and With Open Eyes (1972). The Elegua heads are also enlarged proportionally, and liberated from their omni-present plate to function as independent heads, as in The Passing of Fear (fig. 5.52).

Lam's 1964 composition, Dog with Two Heads (fig. 5.53), exudes a particularly foreboding, haunting quality which becomes more prevalent in the early 1970s. The pervasive monochromatic dark olive-green hue is typical of Lam's work at this period. In defining the figures he allows the drawing to advance and recede into the background color. The focus of the composition is a ghostly canine with wide, pupil-less, staring eyes, and an open-ended snout, which is being ridden by a figure wearing a hat. The figure in turn has multiple faces which resemble the femme cheval. The dog has a second head at his rear end, which seems to be leaning on an extraneous arms and hand. The prototype of this composition is Lam's 1963 painting, Personnage Assis (Seated Figure), where the femme cheval sits on a much smaller horse. She is distinguished by the myriad arms (brandishing knives) and feet, and a winged horse-headed being that emerge from her head and snout.

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Lam also experiments with new compositional formats in the 1960s. The Meeting of 1963, for example, shows the use of a tondo. Why? (1968) features a series of horizontal bands of bright colors at the right side, which contrasts with the gray background. In The End of Night (Daybreak) the flat unarticulated shapes seem to have been strung across the composition on a meandering line, effecting a series of spatial "holes" which often appear in large-scale compositions. They provide an alternate means to negotiate space and unite disparate elements within a single composition. Space is negotiated in a similar manner in paintings such as Les Frères of 1969 (fig. 5.54), in which an assembly of various characters in Lam's cast are arranged across the composition like a group portrait.

The full-range of Lam's creativity in his later career can be seen in the large-scale compositions with multiple figures that he painted in the 1950s and 60s. Although the subject matter of these compositions would seem to be as varied and capricious as Lam's figural invention, close study reveals that they are usually based on one of the other of two compositions from Lam's work in the 1940s. The first group includes variations on the compositional format of The Jungle: The Visitors (1950), We Are Waiting (1958), Near the Virgin Islands (1959), Les enfants sans âmes (1964), All Saints's Day, and The Third World, (1966), fig. 3.8). These compositions usually feature four of five

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principle figures in a dynamic relationship, which approximates that of The Jungle, so that the disposition of the figures is either about a reunion of devotees or orishas.

The second category of large-scale compositions in Lam's late work features a reclining figure often attended by standing figures. Clairvoyance of 1950 is one of the earliest of these compositions. A young girl holding an Elegua devotional figure lies on an unspecified structure, while three different versions of the femme cheval - one with a trumpet head and wings - look on. While this composition invites comparison with examples from art history of reclining female figures, its specific content becomes clearer when it is compared with Lam's 1955 painting When I am not Asleep I Dream. As noted in Chapter 2, the reclining figure fearfully contemplating the streamlined black form streaking across the composition over head illustrates Lam's memoir of his childhood encounter with a frightened bat trapped in his room. This narrative motif becomes transmuted into a vigil for an initiate in Clairvoyance, and subsequently in Early Hours of a Dawn (1959), Three Centimeters Above Ground Level (1962), Tropic of Capricorn (1963), The Undesirable (1964), and Adam and Eve (1969). In these compositions the "flickering shadows"[82] crowd around the recumbent figure. In Early Hours of a Dawn, the bat transmutes into flying elements

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that resemble birds and flying horse-headed entities. In Three Centimeters Above Ground Level the bird form simulates that of an arrow, whose upwardly zig-zag path sets up a counterpoint to the white arrow that reaches down to the protagonist.

Lam also used these two compositional prototypes in the two rare instances in the post-war era when he made overt political commentary. While Lam viewed his work as a political act, he assiduously avoided polemic art as not being "art" rather "a transaction between a form of expression and an ideology."[83] He used the format of The Jungle for his 1959 painting La Sierra Maestra (1959, fig. 3.7). The title refers to the mountain range in which the Castro forces had taken refuge during the Cuban revolution. There is, however, no concession to anecdotal reportage in this work. There is no depiction of troops, battles, or ceremonial moments. Instead the composition shows four femme cheval figures: one lies rather prostrate in the foreground, while three others hover solicitously over her. This is also the case with The Third World, which was commissioned for the Presidential Palace in Havana in 1966. Its composition is similar to that of Clairvoyance where the spectral figures crowd around the space around the reclining figure, and the tell-tale bat is barely seen in the upper center of the composition.

After the 1950s, the still life composition, per say,

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is no longer found in Lam's oeuvre. Still life elements are seen in compositions such as For Babalu Aye and Elegua (1959), Ogun et Elegua (1962) and Osun, Elegua Pour Yemanja (1963. fig. 5.55) as offering to the orishas. In Lam's late career the still life subject of his painting literally became a still life object in the artist's ceramic and sculptural production. A frequent motif in his ceramics was the presentation of a fish, bird or snail, mudfish form on the surface of the rondels or plates, as if they were food offerings to the orishas. Sometimes the forms are painted onto the surface of the plates; at others they are incised with sections lifted away from the surface of the plate, and in still others, the forms may have been modeled in full-three-dimensional relief (fig. 5.56).

The 1970s and 1980s.

Lam's painting of 1970-82 are distinguished by the more elaborate decorative flourishes drawn on the figures. The compositions of this period for the most part feature single figures. As seen in Personage 19/24 (1972, fig. 5.57) and Composition (1973, fig. 5.58), the femme cheval often bears a proliferation of birds, Elegua heads and Abakua symbols upon her head, and Group (fig. 5.59) of 1973 shows a figure which also bears attendant ones - some attached by tube-like appendages. Stripes, circles, curlicues, rosettes, squiggles, etc. cover the figures themselves and extend out from them. The artist's engagement of a more intense color

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palette is also noticeable in these works.

One of the most extreme examples of this panoply of decorative richness and linear virtuosity is Composition (fig. 5.60) of 1976, in which a double horizontal row of vigorously brushed red sets off the vertical veil of red, orange and yellow tonalities at the lower right. These provide a visual counterpoint to the green and dark purple of the rest of the background. At the upper portion of the painting, a heraldic bird, resembling that on the iron staff of Senufo sculpture (the symbol of Osayin) extends its left appendage which has metamorphosed into a horse's head, and sits atop another flying configuration, which takes on the appearance of an airplane. At the rear of the composition, a horse head seen from the front (as opposed to the usual profile view) is seen with a winged torso extending from its thorax. To its right is a round headed figure with a headdress in the shape of an arrow, which also extends a winged appendage to it right. An upside-down Elegua head hangs on this appendage.

This decorative impulse in Lam's late work is counterbalanced by the continued exaggeration of the character of the femme cheval. As seen in Personage 7/24 (1971, fig. 5.61), jawlines gape open to reveal massive teeth, the nostrils are particularly articulated, the eyes wide-open and pupil-less. As seen in Group of 1973, the additional biological entities attach themselves to the main

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figures. Like alien creatures, they emit tubes which opportunistically intrude into one another and the host figure through the nearest facial cavity or convenient body part. They certainly justify Xing Xiao Sheng's evocation of "headless" figures, "with three heads, whose ears come out of their chests or their mouths, at the site of a nostril, monsters with tentacles-like arms whose palms show eyes.."[84] The awesome aspect of these works may not be gratuitous. Lam used of the title Personnage for many of the depictions of the femme cheval during the 1970s. This term can have spiritual connotations, specifically in the context of Africanized religious beliefs in the Caribbean.[85] So that the use of this term may indicate Lam's own conception of these figures as more than devotees, but presences more powerful than their humanoid hosts.

Graphic work.

Lam's late painting have generally been received less enthusiastically by critics and art historians. In these works the complex interplay between the background and foreground - the hallmark of the work in 1940s and 50s, in particular - has been abandoned, and the increasingly grotesque and fanciful creatures of Lam's imagination are literally drawn in black on top of washes of color. These developments in Lam's painting are due in large part to his graphic work - with which he became more intensely involved in the late 1960s and 1970s.

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Lam first worked in this medium in Havana in the 1940s. He produced a color lithograph for the catalogue of the Surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Maeght in 1947,[86] and that same year produced a lithograph for the first Brunidor Portfolio, published by Robert Altmann in New York.[87] In the early 1950s, Lam worked sporadically on prints, producing one for an issue of the magazine L'age du cinema devoted to Surrealism.[88] He finished four lithographs for the first of many collaborations with contemporary poets and writers for René Char's Le rampart de brindilles.[89]

The graphic work of the 1950s shows tendencies that are distinct from paintings executed at the same time. In a series of lithographs done for an issue of Derrière le Miroir devoted to his work (fig. 3.10), Lam explored more fully the fragmented anatomies of Murmur of the Earth as well as truncated plant forms, which also appear in other images of the mid-1950s.[90] Lam's images also evidenced a distillation of familiar elements from his work into flat, unarticulated shapes. These appear later in the mural he executed for the Retiro Medico in Havana in 1955 (see Chapter 3), and in paintings such as The End of the Night (Daybreak).

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Lam executed two prints projects which betray an experimental will comparable to that observed in his La Brousse series of paintings. A suite of eight untitled color lithographs executed in 1958

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(fig. 5.62), consisted of several images from Lam's repertoire, overlaid on one another, and executed in combination with miscellaneous marks, brushes and gestures. They were done in Albisola at the instigation of Asger Jorn, who had them printed in Denmark.[91] In these images Lam exploits different widths of line, various drawing techniques and brilliant color in an anti-atmospheric relationship to achieve images of great visual dynamism. In the 1962 etching suite Images (fig. 5.63) Lam introduced "accidental" splatterings, stains, blobs and smears into the surface of the prints, creating at times a moiré patterning. He also creates a "scorching" effect, where the color was splotched creating areas with edges that seems to have been burnt into the papers. His drawings of his characteristic imagery of rounded and triangular heads, spiked bamboo stalks, etc, faded into the rich textural mix of newsprint, brown ink, and relief print.

By the late 1960s Lam was more and more preoccupied with his graphic work. Although he worked with various editors and printers such as Mathieu in Zurich and Studio Grafik in Stockholm, the most prolific collaboration was with Giorgio Upiglio, at whose studio Graphica Uno in Milan, Lam produced some of the most memorable images of his late career. Lam first met Upiglio in the early 1960s, they started to work together at that time and continued until Lam's death in 1982. Lam, who was by then working year-round

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in Albisola, would periodically go to Milan to work at Upiglio's studio for ten days to two weeks at a time.[92]

Since drawing was paramount to the graphic process for Lam, means had to be found to allow him to achieve the fluid lyrical quality that gives Lam's graphic work its special quality. As seen in the images for Gherasim Luca's poem Apostroph' Apocalypse (1967, fig. 5.64), the ease with which Lam's lines traverse, reverse and cut through space, distinguishes a movement which emanates from the arm as opposed to the wrist.[93] In the medium of lithography, Lam had an advantage, as this technique complimented that of drawing. This is readily seen in the suites Le Regard Vertical (1973), Le Feu Vert and Pleni Luna (1974) and Meta de Chango (1982), which are distinct in his career as being based on images created first in another medium: in these cases pastel.[94] In etching, however, the resistance that the copper plate posed to the burnisher cutting the design into it was an obstacle that had to be overcome. Upiglio devised a solution to allow Lam to draw into bitumen powder spread on a copper plate. Lam supported his art above the surface of the powdered plate by means of a wooden "bridge." When the drawings was complete the copper plate was heated from beneath, and when it cooled the design was fixed in to the bitumen. The plate would then be set into the acid bath to cut the design into the plate.[95]

The results of this artistic improvisation can be seen

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in the subtleties of modulation and ease of linear play which can be noted Apostroph, Apocalypse. These etchings also reveal a greater ethereal quality than can be found in paintings executed at the time, which despite the input from Lam's work in graphics, seem more hieratic and formal. The etching feature not only a more varied cast of earthly and unearthly apparitions, but also demonstrate a lightness of being and openness of form. This is in stark contrast to the condition of the femme cheval in his paintings, which seem to sulk under the weight of the various head accoutrements and extra anatomical parts.

In Visible, Invisible (1972, fig. 5.65), Lam creates complex hybrids by gathering and overlapping separate motifs on the plate, as well as by his linear play. The subtle and gradual modulations of color within the forms result from the fact that Lam carefully controls the hues so that the fading out of the color follows the outline of the form until it gently interfaces with the color of the background sheet. The openness and air-borne disposition of the forms and figures in Visible, Invisible reach even more dramatic heights in Contre un maison sèche (1976, fig. 5.66). Here the familiar forms of the femme cheval bend around in space, and are stretched out as if being pulled by some mysterious force. Their exaggerated distortion seems remarkable even for such supernatural beings, and in the words of Xing Xiao Sheng they seem to "traverse time faster than space and have

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access to the Beyond."[96] The most successful exploitation of surface decoration and subtle gradations of colors or tonalities, which can be observed in his late paintings, without a doubt come out of the graphic work. It is that deft draftsmanship that has led the French critic, Jacques Leenhardt to position Lam along with Giacometti as a catalyst for the restoration of the status of drawing in painting in the post-World War II era.[97]

Lam would bring all the characteristics that distinguish these three suites to the last group of etchings that he did to accompany a group of ten poems by Aimé Césaire, The Annunciation, published in 1982 (fig. 5.67). Lam first began to work on the images for these plates in 1969 at the Graphica Uno. There still exist several drawings which show Lam's development of this imagery. What is surprising is that the conception of these works as a summation of the images and motifs that had appeared in his oeuvre, seems already to have been determined by Lam from the beginning, almost 13 years before his death. As in most of Lam's graphic work, the images were printed in a single color or tonalities - in this case rich, dark browns that range in nuance from green to orange. Lam allowed the main elements in the compositions to stand in stark contrast - they are the color of the paper - to the tenebrous background. He thus exploits negative space, by presenting an inversion of the usual manner in which figure-ground

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spatial relationship are defined.

In these seven etchings Lam reunites one by one all the characters which have marched in and out of his work for over forty years. Within the intermediate hues are suspended figures, who in Lam's work have represented entities that go back and forth between the physical and ethereal realms, between the foreground and the background. There are also the girl with the long hair, first seen in the drawings for Breton's poem Fata Morgana in 1941, the femme cheval, the winged apparitions that refer to Lam's childhood encounter with the bat, the horned creatures that synthesize the Christian cherub and the Afro-Cuban orisha Elegua, the knives, bowls, masks, etc. Abstract, realistic, horrific and engaging, they are the living memories ("les memoires vivantes") that Césaire evokes in "Passages," one of the poems for this etching suite.[98]

Ceramics and Sculpture.

In addition to pastel and graphic work, during the period 1947-82, Lam also began to work in ceramics and sculpture. In these two media he successfully translated his imagery into three-dimensional form, and into a more overtly ornamental mode. He first experimented with ceramics in Cuba in 1950 at the studio of Dr. Juan Rodríguez de la Cruz in the town of Santiago de las Vegas, along with Mariano Rodríquez, Amelia Peláez and René Portocarrero.[99] Eight years later he tried ceramics again in Italy, when he and

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Lou Laurin visited the artist Enrico Baj and his first wife Gigina in Rapallo during the summer of 1958.[100] Gigina Baj was a ceramicist, and Baj himself worked in the medium, demonstrating a predilection for assemblage and texture in his work. As Lam became increasingly involved with the artistic community of Albisola (see Chapter 2), his involvement in ceramics was inevitable.

Lam first learned about Albisola in Paris in the early 1950s in conversations with Corneille, a founding member of the CoBrA group. After the Second World War, Albisola began to revive its reputation as a ceramics center which dated back to the middle ages. One of the catalytic agents in this project was the man known as Tullio d'Albisola, who was a nephew of Marinetti, the founder of Italian Futurism.[101] As a result of his meeting Baj, Roberto Grippa and other Italian artists of the younger generation who traveled to see him in Paris, Lam also was contacted by Tullio d'Albisola himself to come and work in Albisola.[102]

Lam's first attempts at ceramics in the late 1950s were not especially successful. He later admitted to Max-Pol Fouchet: I didn't feel at ease with the material..."[103] During the next few years, however, Asger Jorn continued to try and engage Lam in the medium, often inviting him to collaborate with him on some of the ceramic projects that Jorn was working on at the time.[104] As a result Lam anonymously participated in the construction of a large and

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ambitious ceramic mural that Jorn did for the high school at Aarhaus in Denmark,[105] and worked on some ceramic vessels that Jorn deposited at the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark.[106]

It is ironic, then, that it was in the summer of 1975, two years after Jorn's death, that Lam suddenly resolved his problems with the ceramic medium, and within one year produced approxmiately 200 works.[107] The subject matter of these works - plates, plaques and vessels - was based on the femme cheval, marine life such as snail, mud fish, carp, etc (figs. 5.68), as well as variations on the femme cheval (fig. 5.69). Lam worked in collaboration with ceramic artisans who produced the basic forms, on which he would then paint, splatter with glaze, scour, score, incise, lift and add relief elements.[108] During the next three years Lam continued to work in ceramics, and even produced his own line of porcelain,[109] and exhibited this work in Albisola, and at various art fairs in Bologna.

In the 1970s, Lam also undertook projects to translate his signature motifs into sculpture in cooperation with Jacques Tronche Gallery in Paris, and Studio Bellini in Milan. A series of multiples were produced in 1972 from forms created in 1970, which featured motifs reminiscent of those to be observed in his paintings such as crested birds (Oiseau Feu); a still life with Elegua head (Offrande à Elegua) and a hybrid plant form composed of peppers and arrows (Dieu de la Porte); a mutated plant form of leaves,

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vines and gourds (Mutation Vegétale, fig. 5.70); a rhomboid form with flanking spiked and winged forms (Osun, L'esprit de la communication); and a breast/gourd vessel with a multi-digited foot (Fontaine). These sculptures were issued in bronze and nickeled brass. In an interview published in the catalogue which accompanied their exhibition, Lam expressed his interest

> to achieve what is in a large part a synthesis of my usual modes of representation...What I was interested in...was to follow the alchemical mutations which would allow a pictorial sign to move into a volumetrical treatment in space. [To achieve this] I considered the hidden aspect of the forms that I dealt with in two dimensions.[110]

Lam noted that as in the case of his lithographs, these multiples would make his work available to a larger public, an audience he felt would be important to him in the future.[111]

In 1979, Lam did a second group of bronze sculptures with Art Curial in Paris.[112] These included four head and upper torso representations of the orishas, Yemanja (fig. 5.71) and Osayin, and two entities L'oiseau Zombie, and the hood-masked figure of the Abakua, the "diablito" (little devil) or Ireme. Lam also conceived a plate with the image of Elegua, a plaque of Guije (a river spirit), and pendants in gold and silver with an image representing L'oiseau d'eau. As opposed to the composed forms, and pristine finish of the earlier multiples, these images are distinguished by the texture resulting from the traces of the scouring in the original models, which were undoubtedly done in clay. This

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indicated a direct cross-over from Lam's work in ceramics. The figure of Yemanja, in particular, shows a marked relationship to the character of Lam's late paintings, in which the femme cheval figures have tube-like elements extending from orifices such as the eye sockets and nostrils to connect with other parts of the body or attendant beings close by.

A careful examination of Lam's later work reveals that there is a rich and varied elaboration on the main themes and subject matter of the work of the 1940s. Although the late work is usually viewed as degenerative, it is clear that its character was predicated on Lam's involvement with graphic work and ceramics and sculpture in the last two decades of his life. His work in these media provided outlets for the decorative impulse which began to manifest itself in his paintings by the mid-1970s. Lam seems to have been able to entertain the possibilities that these new means brought to his work. In his work, as in his career, he seems determined to provide himself with the widest range of alternatives and possibilities, and it would seem from the record that he succeeded.

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NOTES: Chapter 5.

1. See Lowery Sims, "Myth and Primitivism: The Work of Wifredo Lam in the context of the New York School and the School of Paris, 1942-1952": 71-88.

2. See André Breton, Le surréalisme et la peinture...: 181-83.

3. See Zangrie, Gustafsson and Pièyre de Mandiarques, op. cit.

4. See Césaire, Ortiz, Desnoes and Linsley, op. cit.

5. See Théophile, Besson, Cabrera, Ortiz and Desnoes, op. cit.

6. See M[argaret].B[reuning], "The Lore of Cuba," Art Digest 43 (June 1, 1944): 14, and Alejo Carpentíer, "Lo real maravelloso de America," El Nacional. Archives, SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

7. See Herzberg, op. cit.:42

8. See, for example, Torgovnick and Segalen, op. cit.

9. Undated, unattributed clipping, Archive SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris.

10. See Fouchet, op. cit.: 74.

11. See Larrea, op. cit., and Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism. ed. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. [exhib.cat.] (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936).

12. Liana Bortoton, "Maestro, quale capola voro lei vorrebbe avere dipinto," Grazia, XLIV, no. 1586 (July 11, 1971).

13. "Il a vécu dans un monde encore trés près du moyen-âge, partagé entre la croyance et le doute, incapable de séparer la religion de la connaissance. Un monde tourmenté par les horreurs de la guerre et de la peste...L'ignorance et la superstition avaient alors créé pour la vie un espace où les confins de la terre et du ciel son soudés et dont les gardiens sont les bêtes de toutes espèces et formes monstrueuses, pleines de furie et de méchants..." Wifredo Lam, Text for Dürer exhibition, Nüremberg, 1971. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. (Trans. LSS.)

14. Fouchet, op. cit.: 206.

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15. Charles Merewether, "At the Crossroads of Modernism: A Liminal Terrain," Wifredo Lam: A Retrospective of Works on Paper [exhib. cat.] (New York: Americas Society, 1992): 26.

16. Ibid: 22.

17. Ibid.

18. Linsley, op. cit.: 535.

19. Merewether op. cit.: 22.

20. Borrás, op. cit.

21. See Matisse in Morocco: The Paintings and Drawings, 1912-1913 [exhib. cat.] (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1990).

22. Borrás, op. cit.

23. Ibid.

24. This transition Lam's work is vividly seen in two figural studies done n 1936. Both show the artist in an intimate moment with a female figure.In one version, the woman, who sits at the man's feet with her back to the spectator, displays porcelain skin set off by her abundant auburn hair. In the second version, the man stands with his back to the spectator, slightly below the woman who is now facing front. Her transformation from a Matisse creature to one derived from Picasso is dramatic. On the one hand her posture, especially with the drapery at her feet, recalls the main figure of Matisse's 1912 painting Bonheur de Vie, but her face is now mask-like, showing the characteristics of Picasso's proto-cubist period in her wide, staring eyes and the more emphatic articulation of the rest of the features. See also, Sims, "Wifredo Lam: From Spain Back to Cuba," Balderrama, op. cit.: 18.

25. Klaus Perls, telephone conversation with LSS, New York, November, 1989.

26. "Picasso Footnotes: His Drawing, Lam's Painting," Art News 38 (November, 18, 1939): 22.

27. Varian Fry, Surrender on Demand. (New York: Random House, 1945): 117-118.

28. "Picassolamming,": 7.

29. See Sims, op cit.: 18-19.

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30. See Judi Freeman, Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie-Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar [exhib. cat.] (Los Angeles: Los Angles County Museum of Art and Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 1994). Lam's late Spanish work and early Parisian work does show an intense emotionality expressed through the exaggerated gesticulation and anguished demeanor of the figures seen, for example, in The Family and Douleurs de l'Espagne of 1938.

31. McBride, op. cit.

32. See Pierre Gaudibert, "Wifredo Lam, Paris, Picasso...(1938-1940) in Wifredo Lam: oeuvres de Cuba [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Maison de L'Amérique Latine in association with Librairie Séguier, 1989): 28.

33. Fouchet, op. cit.: 112-113.

34. See Michael Gibson, "Picasso Had Lam for Dinner," Art News (September, 1983): 144.

35. Ibid: 118.

36. See Breton, op. cit.

37. See Kesteloot, op. cit.

38. See W.P. Art News (November 12, 1938): 13. In evaluating Lam's career, more so than any number of other artists, the role of circumstance - beyond the ordinary vicissitudes of life - in the development of his art and career is a provocative one. It is clear that the encounters with the art worlds of Paris and the United States, especially, forged a dynamic convergence of Lam's own artistic interests and experiences with those of the mainstream international art world, in a way that is more than fortuitous.

39. Lam's description of his first meeting with Picasso has Picasso directing his attention to a piece of African sculpture in his studio on rue Augustins. He also instructed Michel Leiris, who was visiting at the same time: "Teach Lam about African art." Later - again according to Lam - when Pierre Loeb complained, after seeing Lam's work for the first time, that it was too influenced by African art, Picasso retorted indignantly: "He has the right, he is of African blood!" Wifredo Lam, "Mon Amitié avec Picasso," Wifredo Lam, 1902-1982) [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Editions Amis de Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1983): 13. (Trans. LSS.)

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40. See Pierre Mabille, "La manigua," Cuadernos americanos, 1944, extracted in Exposición Antológica: "Homage à Wifredo Lam, 1901-1982 [exhib. cat.] (Madrid: Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporaneo, 1982): 67.

41. By the 1970s, he had a substantial collection of African and Oceanic art, which was prominently displayed in his Paris apartment and his house and studio in Albisola. After Lam's death these works were auctioned at Sotheby's. See African and Oceanic Art (New York: Sotheby's, May 16, 1985): nos. 8-16, 34, 140, 195.

42. See Fouchet, op. cit.: 78.

43. This dates back to the drawings done in Marseille, 1940-41.

44. Ortíz, op. cit. While there has never been any extensive analysis of Lam's femme cheval within the discourse of goddess imagery, it is interesting to postulate the complementary relationship between Lam's images with the work of his much younger Cuban compatriot, Ana Mendieta. Mendieta, who was particularly interested in Lam's work, used the imprint of her body in the earth as a metaphor for re-instating her relationship with her native land from which she was exiled in her early teens. (See Mary Jane Jacobs, Ana Mendieta: The "Silueta" Series, 1973-80 [exhib. cat.] (New York: Galerie Lelong, 1991). Later in the early 1960s, she returned to Cuba, and there realized a syncretism with her previous work and the female figures traced in the rocks of Cuba by pre-Contact inhabitants of the island. (See Gerardo Mosquera, Ana Mendieta: Rupestrian sculpture (Esculturas Rupestres) [exhib. cat.] (New York: A.I.R. Gallery, 1981).

45. Fouchet, op. cit. 188-189.

46. Lam, "Oeuvres récentes de Wifredo Lam."

47. Fouchet, op. cit.: 204. Lydia Cabrera told Julia Herzberg that Lam gave the impression of not being very knowledgeable about Afro-Cuban religions, despite the fact he had been trained in its tenets when he was young. (Herzberg, op. cit.: 39.) Lam's evasiveness might well be predicated on the strictures of taboo, and the code of secrecy that would bind adherents of these religions, which Lam would well be aware of given his education in the religion when he was young. (See Lowery Sims, "Wifredo Lam," Fletcher, op. cit.: 221.) It was Michel Leiris who first explicated the persona of Lam's godmother in the Lucumi religion, Montanica Wilson, and described the kind of education within that tradition the artist received from

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Wilson. Michel Leiris, Wifredo Lam (Milan: Fratelli Fabri, 1972: unpaginated) On the other hand, neither Cabrera or Fernando Ortíz made much of this aspect in Lam's work in their writings on the artist. Ortíz, considered the pioneer of Afro-Cuban religious studies, refers to European traditions as much as Cuban ones as the roots of Lam's imagery. It may very well be that Ortíz and Cabrera's more profound knowledge of Afro-Cuban religious would have made them especially aware of where and how Lam's work and traditional beliefs were distinct.

48. See Garrigues and Herzberg, op. cit., and Alvaro Medina, "Lam y Changó," Sobre Wifredo Lam: Ponencias de la Conferencia Interntaional, I Bienal de al Habana: 26-62.

49. See also John Yau, "Please Wait by the Cloakroom," Arts Magazine 63, no. 4 (December, 1988): 56-59.

50. See Linsley, op. cit.: 534.

51. For a concise and pertinent discussion of negritude, see Aimé Césaire, Aimé Césaire: The Collected Poetry, trans with an introduction and notes by Clayton Eshelman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

52. See Linsley op. cit.: 534

53. Ibid., Vol. I: 45.

54. En définitive, ce qui, par ses soins, triomphe aux Antilles, C'est l'esprit de création....Wifredo Lam, le premier aux Antilles, a su salver la Liberté. Et c'est libre, libre de tour scruple esthétique, libre de tour réalisme, libre de tous souci documentaire, que Wifredo lam tient, magnifique le grand rendez-vous terribe: avec le forêt, le marais, le monstre, la nuit, les graines volantes, la pluie, la liane, l'épiphyte, le serpent, la peur, le vond, la vie. Aimé Césaire, "Wifredo Lam des Antilles": 357-59. (Trans. LSS.)

55. Linsley, op. cit: 534. For a more general study of the role of religion in political resistance among colonized societies in particular, see Vittorio Lanternari, The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

56. Linsley, op. cit.: 533.

57. Helena Holzer Benitez, interview with LSS, Madrid, September, 1992. Benitez has related that she read to Lam from hermetic texts, some by Carl Jung, etc. as Lam painted during the night as was his custom in Cuba in the 1940s.

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58. Barrio Garsd, op. cit.

59. See Seligman, op. cit.: 291-292.

60. Pierre, op. cit.: 246.

61. Roberto Cobas Amate, "Wifredo Lam: Los laberintos de la realidad," Wifredo Lam, 1902-1982, Obras Sobre Papel [exhib. cat.] (Mexico City: Centro Cultural/ Arte Contemporaneo, S.C., 1992): 23-24; Enrique Sosa Rodríguez, Los Ñañigos (Havana: Ediciones Casa de la Américas, 1982): 123-131.

62. See, for example, Carreño, op. cit.

63. Hess, op. cit.

64. Barrio-Garsd. op. cit. While empirical evidence for the impact of Afro-Cuban culture on Lam's work is clear-cut, the information regarding that his of Chinese ancestry is more elusive. Lam's father Lam Yam was eighty-four years old at the time of the artist's birth (he died in 1926 at the age of 106, when Lam was 24 years old). While Lam Yam does not receive much attention in the literature on Lam, the artist himself retained memories of his father that were specifically focused around his art-making for ritual purposes and his calligraphic skills. (See Fouchet, op. cit.: 23, 32.) Lam continually affirmed his Chinese identity in describing himself. In the 1920s, he occasionally signed his paintings "Wifredo Lam Yam." In a panel discussion on Lam's Asian identity at the Asia Society in February, 1993, Evelyn Hu-DeHart, who has studied the history of the Chinese community in Cuba, noted that Lam's retention of his father's surname was significant given the fact that the Chinese in Cuba tended to adopt a Spanish name in order to integrate into Cuban Society. Lou Lam has noted that Lam's father adopted the name Enrique.

65. See Luis Manuel Nuñez, Santeria: A Practical Guide to Afro-Caribbean Magic (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1989): 110-111. Marta Moreno Vega, Director of the Caribbean Cultural Center, has noted that the familiar comic strip character Ching Chung, that appeared in newspapers in this country, was widely scrutinized for clues to winning numbers for the lottery and other betting activities.

66. Xing Xiao Sheng, "Merveilles et Demons de Wifredo Lam," Gravures de Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.] (Beijing: Central Institute of Fine Arts, 1991): 10-14. It should be noted that Lam's work had already been exhibited in Asia in exhibitions of Surrealist and western art in Japan in 1969 and 1975 (see chronology). For a summary of the dissemination of Surrealism in Japan see also Marcel Jean,

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The History of Surrealist Painting, trans. Simon Watson (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959): 276.

67. Wilson, op. cit.: 46.

68. Ibid.

69. See Chapter 6 for a discussion of de la Beauville's analysis of Lam's work.

70. Roland Dumas, "Wifredo Lam où le chant profond de l'art," in Wifredo Lam: oeuvres de Cuba.: 8.

71. The first version of this discussion of Lam's stylistic development in his later career was published in Lowery S. Sims, "Wifredo Lam: Transpositions of the Surrealist Proposition in the post-World War II Era," Arts magazine, (September, 1985): 21-25.

72. There has always been some question about Lam's use of paper during his early career. While his reliance on brown Kraft paper could be explained by monetary concerns, by the 1940s and early 1950s, when he could have afforded canvas, his continued use of the paper even for major works seems to indicate another interest on his part. Some Lam enthusiasts have seized upon this as an indicator of the influence of his Chinese ancestry on the formal character of his work - i.e. use of ink and brush on paper.

73. See Blanc, and Herzberg, op. cit.

74. See Trotta, op. cit.: 52. Robert Linsley reads these black background figures variously as "the ancestral presences, the goddess who takes possession of the devotee," and the black woman of Africa as opposed to the "white" women in the foreground of the composition. (Linsley, op. cit.: 534)

75. Fouchet, op. cit.: 208.

76. See Trotta, op. cit.

77. Herzberg, op cit.: 42.

78. Blanc, op. cit.: 66.

79. Reproduced in Ibid: 134.

80. For a brief summary of art in Paris in the 1950s see the catalogue, Un art autre/un autre art [exhib. cat.], essay by Daniel Abadie (Paris: Artcurial, 1984). Abadie notes that in hindsight what was seen as oppositional positions between

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geometric and aformal, figurative and abstract can be seen as complementary tendencies.

81. James Johnson Sweeney, Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.] (Bowling Green: Notre Dame Art Gallery, 1961): unpaginated.

82. Fouchet, op. cit.: 43-44.

83. Lam in an unpublished interview. Archives SDO Wifredo Lam, Paris. Lam did execute works that focused specifically on political issues, even if only by allusion. During the 1930s, it is said that Lam did political posters as his contribution to the promulgation of the Republican cause. While it is not known at this time if any of this work survived, there are several gouache works in which Lam depicts the Republican partisans fighting or marching triumphantly through the roads and streets of Spain. His 1936 large-scale work The Spanish Civil War depicts fighting and death in urban streets, and may be considered one of the most ambitious propagandist works on the Civil War before Picasso's Guernica painted a year earlier. Towards the end of his life, Lam participated overtly in several causes around issues of the political fate of Chile, the Mariel boat lift of Cuban refugees, and apartheid, lending his art, as well as his person to these event.

84. "...singulières figures, acéphales ou pourvues de trois têtes, dont les yeux son à fluer de poitrine ou la bouche à l'endroit un nombril, monstres aux bras tentacularies dont chaque paume montre un oeil." Sheng, op. cit.: 10.

85. I am grateful to Marta Moreno Vega for this reading of Lam's title. These works are distinguished one from another by a numbering system: e.g 7/24. or 13/24. The 24 is constant but the numbering was not, as Lou Lam has confirmed, sequential. As a result, it is different to discern Lam's meaning. The topic of titles in Lam's work is one that desires more attention. Throughout his career great import has been placed on the titles of his work as a component of gaining access to the content of the imagery. During the early part of his career, Lam's titles tended to be more prosaic and descriptive. When he came into the Surrealist orbit in the early 1940s, the influence of Breton was initially evident in some of the more poetic and evocative titles of his work (see Chapter 1). Gradually, as the titles became more specifically referential to Afro-Cuban sources, the influence of Lydia Cabrera can be felt. Julia Herzberg (op. cit.: 41) has identified the meaning of several titles at this time: Anamu, referring to a flower used in Lucumi ritual and for medicinal purposes, Malembo to evil to be averted and appeased at the crossroads. The use of Dhamballa indicates Lam's knowledge of Fon deities in

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Afro-Haiti theology. In addition to titles such as Hermès and Chemical Wedding, Magician and The Enchanter relate to esoterism and the occult. Belial is a variant on an alternative name for Satan, and other Catholic themes include Annunciation and Nativity. Throughout the 1950s and 60s Lam returned again to evocative titles, undoubtedly as a result of his collaborators with poets: When I don't sleep, I dream, for example, has been identified by Lou Lam as an allusion to a work of Paul Eluard. Tropic of Capricorn brings Henry Miller to mind, but may be geographically referent as Canaima refers to an area in Venezuela, The Betrothed of Kiriwina to the Trobriand Islands, and most obviously, Near the Virgin Islands. Robert Linsley (op. cit.: 538) has suggested that some of the more poetic titles may also refer to the political situation in Cuba, such as: Early Hours of the Dawn or We Are Waiting. As noted previously, Lam titled La Sierra Maestra as an homage to the Castro forces, and The Third World to the emerging players on the international scene in the 1960s.

86. Robert Altmann, note to LSS, Paris, March, 1993; see also Dominique Tonneau-Ryckelynck and Pascaline Dron, Wifredo Lam; oeuvre gravé et lithographié: catalogue raisonné (Gravelines: Editions du Musée de Gravelines, 1994): 42.

87. Altmann, op. cit.

88. Tonneau-Rycklinck, op. cit.: 44.

89. Ibid: 48-49.

90. Ibid: 46-47.

91. Ibid: 57-59.

92. Giorgio Upiglio in conversation with LSS, Milan, October, 1989.

93. The first version of this discussion of Lam's graphic work was published in the catalogue Wifredo Lam: A Retrospective of Works on Paper. See Lowery Stokes Sims, "Rethinking the Detiny of Line in Painting: The Later Work of Wifredo Lam": 47-55.

94. For that reason Dominique Tonneau-Ryckelynck did not include these works in her catalogue raisonné of Lam's graphic works. See Tonneau-Ryckelynck. op. cit.: 26.

95. I am grateful to Giorgio Upiglio who not only discussed Lam's working method with me, but also demonstrated the various steps described in this section during my visit to

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Graphica Uno in Milan with Lou Lam in October, 1989.

96. "Ces Chimériques créatures aux formes instabiles, qui traversent le Temps plus vite que l'Espace et ont un libre accèss à l'Au-delà se font à peu accepter dans la magie du récit et nous deviennent même intelligibles." Sheng, op. cit.: 10. (Trans. LSS)

97. Jacques Leenhardt, "Wifredo Lam," in Gravures de Wifredo Lam: 18-21.

98. See Aimé Césaire, Moi, laminaire (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982): 89.

99. See Mariano: Uno y Multiple, Exposición antológica (1937-1987) [exhib. cat.] (Santa Crux de Tenerife: Centro Cultural Cayanan, 1988): 48; Giulio V. Blanc, "The Secret Garden of Amelia Peláez/ El Jardín Secreto de Amelia Peláez," in Amelia Peláez: A Retrospective/ Una retrospectiva [exhib. cat.] (Miami: The Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture, 1988): 53; and Alejandro G. Alonso, "Cerámica Artística Cubana," Revolución y Cultura, 32, no. 4 (April, 1990): 40-49. Alonso also discusses more recent developments in Cuban ceramics.

100. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February, March, 1993.

101. For an history of the art scene in Albisola see Luciano Pecca and Margherita Gallo, L'aventurra artistica di Albisola, 1920/90 (Savona: Editrice Liguria, 1993).

102. Lou Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February-March, 1993.

103. Fouchet, op. cit.: 220. Alejandro Alonso illustrated a ceramic plate dated 1959 in his article on Cuban cermicas (Alonso, op. cit.: 46), but it not clear where it was executed.

104. In 1957, Jorn had organized the international ceramics seminar which was attended by Karel Appel and Corneille, formerly of the CoBrA group, and Enrico Baj, Sergio Dangelo and Lucio Fontana of the Milan-based vanguard movement, and Matta. This was part of the activities of his one-person art movement, the Movement for an International Bauhaus, which he had proclaimed in 1954. (See Adkins, op. cit.) Lam was invited, but was not able to attend this Congress. At the time he was still very preoccupied with projects in Cuba and Venezuela.

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105. Lou Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February-March, 1993. See also Guy Adkins, Asger Jorn: The Crucial Years, 1954-64 (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag in association with Lund Humphries, Ltd., London, 1971) for Jorn's commission at Aarhaus.

106. Lou Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February, 1993. Jorn had formed an assocation with the Museum at Silkeborg in the 1960s, with the purpose of forming a collection of contemporary art, concentrating on the work of artists he particularly admired. He left this project incomplete at his death in 1973, including the finalization of the representation of Lam's work. This story is chronicled in the exhibition catalogue: Asger Jorn à Silkeborg: Le musée d'un peintre (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1978).

107. See Fouchet, op. cit.: 209, 219.

108. See Wifredo Lam [exhib. cat.], preface by Serge Santreau, Repères: cahiers d'art contemporain, 63 (Paris: Galerie Lelong, 1990).

109. See Mercedes Viale Ferrero, Wifredo Lam: Servizi in porcellana (Turin: Editrice d'Arte Fratelli Pozzo, 1970).

110. "... de faire la synthèse d'une grande part de mes schémas de représentation habituels....Ce qui m'a intéressé...c'était de suivre les mutations un peu alchimiques qui permettent au signe pictoral de passer à l'état de volume dans l'espèce. J'ai réflechi sur l'aspect chaché des formes que je traitais habituellement en deux dimensions." Anne Tronche, interview with Wifredo Lam in Wifredo Lam : 5 sculptures/1 multiple [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Galerie Tronche, in association with Studio Bellini, Milan, 1972). (Trans. LSS.)

111. Ibid.

112. See José Pierre, "Wifredo lam: de la peinture à la sculpture," L'Oeil (November, 1979): 64-65.

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CHAPTER 6: LAM IN THE POST-MODERN CONTEXT

Lam's Last Years.[1]

In late summer, 1978, Wifredo Lam suffered a massive stroke in Albisola. After a few weeks of convalescence, Lou Lam transferred him to a rehabilitation center in St. Gallen, Switzerland. He eventually returned to Paris. During the last four years of his life, Lam maintained a frenetic schedule. He continued an international schedule of exhibitions, including one of his sculptures at Prospect Art Gallery in Brussels (March 19-April 28, 1978), and a retrospective exhibition seen at the Ordruppsgaardsamulung in Copenhagen, and the Sonja Heine and Niels Onstad Foundation in Oslo, also in 1978. In December of that year he traveled to Mexico for an exhibition of his work from the collection of the Museo nacional de bellas artes in Havana, which was organized at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City. In the following year, the Centre Georges Pompidou organized a monographic exhibition featuring The Jungle and related paintings, and his latest sculpture was exhibited at Art Curial in October of that year. In June, 1982 he had his first one-person exhibition in New York since 1950 at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, which included works from the 1940s.

Lam was included in several important group exhibitions. Asger Jorn à Silkeborg: Le musée d'un peintre

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at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris in 1978 focused on the collection which Jorn had donated to the Museum of concentrations of work by artists he'd selected. That same year Lam was in a exhibition of Cuban artists at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Madrid, and of "Ibero-American" artists at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas. The following year he participated in the exhibition organized to salute Cuba on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution at the Palais de UNESCO, and was feature in L'aventure de Pierre Loeb, Le Galerie Pierre, Paris, 1924-1964, also at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris. Other exhibitions devoted to individuals with whom Lam collaborated organized at this time included: René Char, manuscrits enluminés par des peintres du XXeme siècle at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (1980), and Homage à Max-Pol Fouchet at the Galerie Drouant in Paris, (1981). In October of 1981, Lam also participated in a colloquium to mark the 100th anniversary of Picasso's death, and also in 1981 Editions Plasma posthumously published Pierre Mabille's Message de l'étranger, which included a memoire of his contact with Lam in Cuba and Haiti in the 1940s.

That same year the Centre Georges Pompidou organized Paris/Paris, 1937-17, the last in a series that examine the artistic correspondences between Paris and other urban centers in the history of modern art: New York, Berlin and

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Moscow.[2] Lam was also one of an international group of artists who was asked to participate in an exhibition protesting apartheid in South Africa. Lam contributed an image of a black femme cheval with white "Elegba" heads atop her own. He was also cementing his relationship with Cuba. In 1981 and 82 he made several extended visits to Cuba to receive medical treatment. He had an opportunity to survey his life and career in interviews in the Cuban press, and worked with Antonio Nuñez Jimenez, and Pablo Amando Hernandez on the text of a biography by Jimenez that was published in 1982.[3]

Lam continued to work on projects despite the fact that his left side was paralyzed. He also authorized the translation of pastels into a graphic suite, Meta de Chango, published in 1982 by Mundi Arte Edition in Madrid, to commemorate the quincentennial of the arrival of Columbus in America, which would be celebrated in 1992, and did six etchings to accompany Jean Dominique Rey's L'herbe sous les pavés, also published in 1982. Perhaps the crowning achievement of his last remaining years, however, was the completion of the drawings for the suite The Annunication, which he had begun in the 1969, for etchings to accompany ten poems to Lam written by Aimé Césaire (see Chapter 5). It coincided with the 40th anniversary of Lam's illustrating Césaire's Retour au Pays Natal in 1942.

Lam's death on September 11, 1982, immediately preceded

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the opening of the retrospective exhibition organized by the Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno in Madrid in association with the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Havana. This exhibition of paintings, gouaches, drawings, watercolors, prints and sculpture was the most comprehensive view of Lam's career, and marked his 80th year. It traveled to the Musée d'Ixelles in Brussels, and the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris. This exhibition would have redressed the faisco surrounding Lam's 1968 exhibition in Pairs, which was closed after being open for only three days due to the student demonstrations against De Gaulle's government.

Since Lam's death, his work has found new currency within the new critical paradigms of the so-called post-modern world. While he is seen most frequently in the context of Latin American art (as a result of the new markets developed in the late 1970s by auction houses and galleries in the United States and Europe), his work also found a new context in African American art circles when it was included in the exhibition Myth and Ritual: A Survey of African American Art, organized at the Studio Museum in 1982.[4] In the catalogue for the exhibition Paris/Paris, 1937-57, Agnès Angliviel de Beaumelle clarified Lam's seminal relationship with the CoBrA group and other post-war artistic movements. In the context of multiculturalism and deconstructionism Lam's work found a focus and explication that proceeds from a model drawn not from the center

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(Europe), but from what Gerardo Mosquera has called a "de-centralized international culture."[5] This chapter will examine some of the new critical paradigms that have been brought to bear on Lam's work and career in the 1980s and 90s.

Wifredo Lam and Primitivism.

Wifredo Lam's career coincided with the apogee of the European world's engagement of primitivism. Although his artistic strategy would seem to place him in the midst of that dialogue, within the hierarchy and familiar scale measuring the range from primitive to civilized, he did not find a precise position. That he was apart among his peers was perhaps no where more clearly expressed than in Ad Reinhardt's tree of ascension for modernism, which was published in the June 2, 1946 issue of P.M. magazine.[6] In this drawing Reinhardt groups together modernist artists of different tendencies on branches off the trunk of modern art. Lam's name can be found in the proximity of artists such as Louis O. Guglielmi, Yves Tanguy, Kurt Seligmann, Pavel Tchelitchew and John Atherton, whose work is imbued with a specific fantastical quality. But, tellingly, he is literally out on the limb by himself.

Lam's positioning on Reinhardt's tree indicates the dilemma encountered by the modernist establishment over the last half century with the increased presence of artists of

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color within the mainstream art world. Despite the fact that the arts of Africa, Asia, the Indigenous Americas, and the Pacific were central to the modernist enterprise, it would seem that individuals whose ancestry is in those cultures are anomalous presences in the art world. While the conditions of modernism - particularly in the visual arts - is inconceivable without the "primitive," the stature of modernism is denied to the "primitive."[7] Lam matured on the art scene as the realpolitik of the world was undergoing dramatic transition. That he succeeded in having an international career given the politics of primitivism makes him inevitably one of the foci of the revisionist art histories that have emerged within the rubrics of multiculturalism and deconstructionist theories.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the world outside of Europe and Euro-America was being transformed. The seeds of independence had been planted (their final blossoming postponed only by loyalist restraint during the Second World War). As a result, the nuances of the primitivist construct would be invalidated and dated. In Europe and the United States, Africans and African Americans had glimpsed the social, economic and aesthetic potential for the independence movements which would gain momentum in the 1950s and 60s. As Michael Leja notes in his revisionist history of the 1940s, however, while the implied changes in hegemonic relationships that would result from these

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political changes were evident in the aspirations for nation-building in the so-called "Third World," in anthropology as well as the arts, constructs of the "primitive" continued to emanate from self-generating ideas within these fields.[8] These were expressed, according to Robert Linsley, in the "reassessment of the whole enterprise of borrowing from other cultures."[9] African, Asian, Pacific and Amerindian individuals were establishing positions on the world cultural scene from which they could express and celebrate their integral selves, and in turn, segments within the art establishment had "a special hope invested in those artists...who by virtue of their ethnic origins would move closer to primitive sources."[10]

In the presence of the greater authority of individuals from these societies, André Breton would by 1955 admit to the failings of the European primitivist enterprise:

> Unfortunately, ethnography was not able to take sufficiently great strides to reduce...the distance which separates us from the ancient Maya or the contemporary Aboriginal culture of Australia, because we remain largely ignorant of their aspirations and have only a very partial knowledge of their customs. The inspiration we were able to draw from their art remained ultimately ineffective because of a lack of basic organic contact, leaving an impression of rootlessness.[11]

When Picasso, in response to Pierre Loeb, asserted the "right" of Lam to use African sources in his art, it was as if he were admitting the fact of Lam's greater connection with such sources. But the hegemonic presumption of western modernism was such that even this imprimatur could not save Lam from intimations of lack of originality, replete in

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headlines such as "Picassolamming" in 1939, and - to demonstrate the persistence to such a view - "Picasso Had Lam for Dinner," in 1982.[12] The challenge for artists like Lam, and his contemporary, the African American artist Norman Lewis, therefore, was to establish their identity in an era when they were not only expected to draw on their African heritage,[13] but when that heritage had already been appropriated, decontextualized, "essentialized" to the service of modernism.[14]

While Lam's predilection for a late cubist style can be dismissed as a derivative, out-of-date mannerism, as discussed in the first chapter, it provided an uniquely compatible formal mode for the philosophical content of his work. This suggests to Robert Linsley that Lam was conscious of "how this plastically inventive non-academic art [African art] could...be realist."[15] This realization, therefore, "brought [Lam] closer to a concept of how his art could serve a concrete political purpose."[16] With regard to accusations of lack of originality, Linsley offers a theoretical approach to The Jungle as a "paraphrase of The Demoiselles d'Avignon...partly a homage...and partly a kind of 'blackening' of the tradition represented by the older master."[17]

That this was a viable strategy for protest was illustrated some three decades later when the African American artist Robert Colescott undertook as series of

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paintings in which he created parodies of well-known masterpieces from European and Euro-American art history, replacing one or more of the characters in the original composition with an African, Asian, Native or Latino American. In addition he replaced the considered academic style of the painting with a raucous, jaunty figuration. His purpose, declared Colescott, was to interject black people into art history, not just any art history, but mainstream art history. He has noted - and this is germane to our discussion of Lam - that appropriation can be a revolving door:

> Picasso started with European art and abstracted through African art, producing "Africanism," but keeping one foot in European art. I began with Picasso's Africanism and moved toward European art, keeping one foot in Africanism... The irony is partly that what most people...know about African conventions comes from Cubist art. Could a knowledge of European art be so derived as well?[18]

The global dimensions of Lam's career began to be fully comprehended in the 1980s, in the context of a renewed emphasis on primitivism. New critical modalities, which focused on issues of identity, ethnicity, gender and race, also began to reconfigure the existing perceptions of Lam's work. He seemed to embody multiculturalism with his affirmation of his tri-partite racial identity. His engagement of western modernist syntaxes, grounded in primitivist appropriation, as a means to declare his status both in the modernist tradition and in his own culture, was a prefiguration of a deconstructivist strategy.

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Multiculturalism and Issues of Identity in the work of Wifredo Lam.

Writing about Lam in the March, 1993 issue of The World and I, Jason Edward Kaufman concludes: "...we hail [Lam]...as a deft juggler of cultural modes, and as a potent symbol of the intermixing of cultures that will flower in our increasingly 'multicultural' civilization."[19] Kaufman acknowledges the most vital interpretive modes brought to Lam's work in the last decade. As the interest of the international art world has been increasingly captivated by ultra-European cultures over the last fifteen years, Lam's reputation has been revived - particularly in the United States and Latin America -and reconfigured. His tri-partite ancestry speak not only to the cultural fusion evident on the international cultural scene, but also in the new manifestations of racial fusion evident in the Americas, specifically the United States. In this context, Lam is not merely Surrealist, Cuban or Afro-Cuban, or Latino, he is also African American and Asian.

Gerardo Mosquera suggests that a new context is needed to evaluate Lam's work in his catalogue essay for the retrospective of Lam's work at the Museo Reina Sofia in 1992. He rejects the usual School of Paris associations, noting that Lam's work is "less as the result of surrealism or the presence of the 'primitive,' the African or African-American in modern art, and more as the fruit of the culture

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of Cuba and that of the Caribbean..."[20] This is very much in the tradition of Cuban criticism of Lam's work. Mosquera emphasizes the intercultural dialogue that is implicit in the work of Lam, declaring that it exemplifies the ontological diversity of the "ethnogenesis" of the new Latin American and Caribbean nationalities, which is the result of creolization and hybridization.[21] Lam, therefore, represents the "first artist who presented a vision of the African in America in all the history of the gallery system."[22] This means that his work would have a relationship to art made by African Americans, since in Mosquera's view the African American entity is the both the result of their ancient culture, as well as the experiences shared by all Africans in the American diaspora.[23]

Mosquera's analysis is distinctive in its suppression of Europe as the primary paradigmatic mode for Lam's work, and his assertion of an integral Afro-centrist criterion. Lam's work was first included in a pan-African American context in the 1982 exhibition, Ritual and Myth: A Survey of African American Art, organized by the Studio Museum in Harlem.[24] Leslie King Hammond, curator of the exhibition and essayist for the catalogue, included Lam with a group of artists, who represented the second wave of the Caribbean diaspora in the United States: the Haitian metal sculptor, Georges Liautaud, the Trinidadian Leroy Clarke, Ademola Olugbefola from the Virign Islands, and Luis Flores, born in

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Puerto Rico.[25] Clarke has in the past acknowledged the influence of Lam on his work,[26] and as Hammond noted his work has concentrated on parallel themes of the "snake-female...the presence of God and the spirits of life and death, ancestors and the general socio-political status of the Third World."[27]

The inclusion of Lam in this exhibition was a barometer of how of the cultural politics of New York City in particular. By the 1980s, the greater presence and acknowledgement of African and Afro-Cuban or Caribbean religions in the United States effected a realignment of Latino and Anglo African Americans for the first time since the 1940s and 50s. This was affirmed when the Studio Museum in Harlem featured Lam's work again in the 1992 exhibition, Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-1952, in which Lam's work was exhibited with that of artists of the New York School in the 1940s, and also of artists who were Lam's contemporaries in Cuba.[28]

The 1980s also saw a greater interest in the art world in the issue of Lam's Asian identity. Marta Barrio-Garsd outlined the main points of this discussion in her essay for Lam's 1982 exhibition at the Galerie Albert Loeb in Paris.[29] In the United States, Lam's Asian identity became a focal point the Asian American art community seeking to establish their historicity within the context of culture in the United States. In May, 1990, therefore, the Asian

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American Institute organized a conference on the subject of Lam's Asian identity at the New School for Social Research in New York City in May, 1990. Presentations by Suzanne Garrigues, Julia P. Herzberg and Lowery Stokes Sims examined this aspect of Lam's work within the context of the social, artistic, and historical aspects of the Chinese presence in the Americas and in American art in general. In 1991, Lam's work was shown in China when an exhibition of his graphic work toured several cities including Beijing and Guangzhou (Canton), the city from where Lam's father had come.[30] The issues of the influence of his Asian ancestry on his work was the subject of the catalogue essays for the exhibition. Xing Xiao Sheng focused on the aspect of Lam's linear invention to explore a relationship with Chinese conventions in art. He drew corollaries between the fantastical beings that appear in Lam's imagery with those found in Chinese literature and mythology (see also Chapter 4).[31]

Leenhardt's analysis also focused on the morphology of Lam's work, noting that along with Alberto Giacometti, Lam may be said to have "rethought" the aspect of drawing in 20th Century painting.[32] In February, 1993 another symposium considering Lam's Asian identity was organized at the Asia Society in New York, in conjunction with the exhibition, Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-1952 at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Lisandro Perez and Lowery Stokes Sims discussed not only the

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aesthetic modalities of Lam's Chinese ancestry, but also the demographics of Chinese immigration to Cuba as contract labor, and the particulars of their integration and interaction with Cuban society.

While these developments are not nearly as rich or conclusive as others for considering Lam's work, they do reveal the continuing importance of Lam as an example for artists of color to participate in the contemporary art market while celebrating their cultural specificity. To quote Mark Rothko, Lam did infuse "old hybrids with new meaning," and his efforts had great import for succeeding generation of artists which matured in the context of the School of Paris and New York after World War II.

Lam's work provided the response to the criticism of George Bataille, who accused the international avant-garde of sanitizing the art process through its focus on purely formal qualities.[33] Bataille had asserted that European modernism's appropriation of symbols from specific cultural context had become problematic with their "transpositioning" of cultural symbols thus negating their essential meaning.[34] What Lam achieved in his work was a resynthesis of form and content, symbol and meaning. Some of the most interesting analysis of this aspect of Lam's work has been done in various studies that offer a revisionist history of art in New York in the 1940s. Art historians such as David Craven, Ann Gibson and Michael Leja have reconsidered the

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heroic, mythic and ultimately male-oriented view of the decade to acknowledge the presence of other realities and points of view which contributed to this more edited comprehension of this period.

In an essay, particularly germane to this discussion, David Craven reorients the comprehension of Abstract Expressionism as an "American" art enclosed by notions of Euro-centricism (and, not incidentally, masculinity).[35] He re-evaluates the comprehension of the Abstract Expressionist's interest in and appropriation of African, African American and Native American art as indications of an anti-bourgeois, anti-western critiques of progress. In Craven's universe Abstract Expressionism regains its lost polemical role - allegedly indicated by the artists' own support of special causes, membership in certain organizations, and concerns about civil rights, imperialist politics, Native American history, etc.[36] Thus Lam gains currency as "...a onetime friend of Jackson Pollock and lifelong socialist who was a firm partisan of the Cuban Revolution until his death in 1982."[37]

Craven also notes the contradictions faced by Matta and Lam, for example, for whom the Surrealist critique of "western scientism and instrument thinking constituted...both a progressive counter to hegemonic values in the West and a regressive convergence with Western stereotypes about Latin American culture as irrational or

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unscientific."[38] This is reminiscent of Desnoes's defense of the celebration of the aspects of Caribbean Latin culture by José Marti and Lam.[39] Mindful that the work of these "native" sons closely mimicked European and Euro-American escapist fantasies about the Caribbean and Latin America[40], Desnoes sought to distinguish an "indigenous" exoticism from an exogamous one. Exhibitions of Latin American art in the United States and Europe since the 1990, amply demonstrate the persistence of this view, particularly in the emphasis on aspects of the "fantastic" in Latin American art.[41]

Craven, like Gibson and Leja, expands the roster of participants in the totemic, and mythic dialogues of the 1940s to include artists such as Lam, and the African American Norman Lewis, as well as artists in Latin America, who have appropriated Abstract Expressionism as a "decentered" vocabulary "of visual conventions capable of development in a variety of directions."[42] He notes that "...in some of these cases Cuban and Nicaraguan artists have actually drawn on post-war art in the United States to advance their own national self-determination culturally in the face of the foreign intervention and ideological underdevelopment promoted by Western capital in concert with the United States government."[43] Such subversion of modernist art and its primitivist pretension by artist from these cultures are viewed as acts of reclamation, as has been discussed in the case of Lam. As John Yau has noted,

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Lam "restores" the African figures in Picasso to their cultural context.[44]

In her manuscript, "Abstract Expressionism, Primitivism and Race," Ann Gibson deals with the social dynamics of primitivism, which become more pertinent in the light of the social and political demands of peoples of color in the post-World War II era. She describes the dichotomy between the embrace of cultural expressions on the part of white artist, and the reality of the racism experienced by artists of color. Gibson also critiques the subjective rationale of valuative criteria such as quality and difference, and examines how it effectively serves to exclude artists such as Lewis from the mainstream art discourse. She notes how the scholarly and artistic interest in Native American and African cultures neglect the context for this art in the struggles for identity on the part of these people in the 1940s, 50s, etc., [45] and brings to the discussion Kurt Varnedoe's observation that "...a specific linkage...between an already beleaguered modernist minority and the far more seriously oppressed and populous culture, would have brushed too close to the specific social engagement that most of the artists were busy expunging from their work."[46]

In her analysis of ethnicity versus essentialism, Gibson distinguishes two ideas of race in this country, which offer an insight even into the European and Cuban contexts within which Lam received his first reception in

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the 1940s.: "the essentializing view - in which one's ethnic heritage guaranteed certain intellectual, psychological, as well as physical characteristics - [and which] permitted, indeed encouraged certain kinds of primitivizing,"[47] and the "more functional view" which "saw 'race' as an oppressive idea rather than physical fact."[48] Gibson discusses the views of influential African American scholars such as W.E.B. DuBois and Alain Locke to provide insight into how African Americans would have a way of framing their ideas about race and difference, and their relationship to their African roots.[49] She notes concepts which framed racial differences as complementary rather than hierarchical (duBois), and which defined African survivals as "ancestralism" (Locke) rather than "primitivism." "Ancestralism," she writes, "differed from primitivism in its emphasis on the scholarly recovery of an interrupted heritage."[50] This effectively repositioned artists of African descent in a proactive role in the discussion of "tribal" culture and contemporary art. Gibson's work is interesting in relation to the discussion of Lam's work because she provides a wider multicultural and intellectual context for primitivism. Lam himself had read the works of Jung, Frazier and Ruth Benedict, for example, which were influential forces on the cultural scene in the 1940s. It can be assumed, therefore, that Lam's engagement of his own ancestral roots was indeed as much on a "scholarly" basis,

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as it was an intuitive or experiential one.

Gibson additionally comprehends how the appropriation of the aesthetics of jazz, blues, and their concomitant methods of improvisation, and variation, by Euro-American artists essentialized them. By expunging modernist art forms of the specificity of their genesis, the art establishment managed to homogenize them (in interpretation if not essence) enough for general acceptance. This, in effect, negated the immediacy of the experiences which gave rise to them - segregation, survival - and the strategies which preserved them - coding, secrecy, cultural fusion. Lam recognized the importance of such strategies when he described himself as a "Trojan horse" that would infiltrate the art establishment and "disturb the dreams of the exploiters."[51] As Gibson analyzes the influence of Clive Bell's concept of "significant form" on the perception of tribal art as pure abstraction, she provides a context with which to comprehend Lam's inversion and subversion of modernist pictorial vocabularies by reinfuing them with cultural specificity.[52]

Michael Leja's study is particularly useful for its analysis of the role of anthropology in formulating the concept of the primitive in the context of racial ideologies world-wide in the period between the two world wars.[53] He demonstrates how a notion of the inherent nature of mankind was not only the subject of nostalgic recidivism in an anti-

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technological statement, but conversely it was a decisive factor that predicated the global ambitions of Nazi Germany and Japan.[54] Leja summarizes the various constructs of "primitive" man as either equivocal (Boas) or inferior (Lévy-Bruhl and Frazier) to modern man,[55] and of "primitive" peoples as generic entities indistinguishable one from another (Fergusson, Harvery) or as possessing a multiplicity of distinct identities (Ruth Benedict).[56] Similarly, he notes, that in the context of the visual arts "primitive" and "archaic" were often used interchangeably.[57] This can be observed in Surrealist journals in the 1930s, and 40s which were potent and influential disseminators about ideas about primitivism. A similar conflation can also be observed in what Leja describes as a divergent, "self-contradictory" view of the primitive which emerged in cultural circles as either representing "terror and brutality" as well as "spirituality and community."[58] These observations have relevancy in critical writing on Lam, particularly in the post war period, where, as Marianna Torgovnick demonstrates in her discussion of D.H. Lawrence, the second state of primitivism is a transfiguration of the first, that it is through brutality and blood lust, that true spiritual transcendence can be found.[59] This is replete in this observation about Lam's work by Benjamin Péret: "These beings express the eternal depth of spirit which in all languages and on all

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levels of thought speak to our desires and our terror."[60] Or Ingemar Gustafsson, who notes that despite the "violent, *suffocating ardor*" of Lam's work, his position is that of "initiator. It is he who opens the 'gate of mysteries,' it is he who is our interpreter."[61] This last comment verifies Leja's observation that Leja's observations that "talk of the primitive was the effort to comprehend the barbarism of 20th Century Art"[62], echoes the above sentiments in post-war Europe.[63]

In his discussion of Lam's work in particular, Leja sees it provoking "a different sort of response from New York critics...in spite of the "thematic and formal continuities with the early New York School."[64] Lam's ethnic background, in Leja's opinion, gave writers an excuse to express a range of exotic fantasies from the fact that he "painted under a spell"[65], because its stylistic characteristics, necessarily indicated "occult-racial memories."[66] Such reactions are consistent with the exoticizing of African Americans during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and the concomitant vicarious experience of "jungle dance," "primal nature," and "sensual savage myth," by white Americans caught up in what Leja calls "negrofad."[67] But, on the other hand, Leja notes, Lam's primitivism, in the eyes of many reviewers, gave his work "an authenticity to which the modernist artifice he employed was secondary."[68]

While all of these new analyses of Lam's work lend a

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greater clarity to the exposition of his place in the world art market, none of they take into account the development of Lam's imagery within the specifics of Cuban modernism. While there is undoubtedly another kind of exoticism associated with blackness in that context, as Giulio Blanc has written, these same elements accrue the additional nuance of nationalist identity, similar to that in the homages to their pre-Encounter cultures by the Mexican modernists.[69] This oversight is explained in part by what Leja describes as the "soft pedalling of nationalist (i.e.political, social, economic) concerns on the part of artists in the United States,"[70] which allowed later claims of universalism to prevail in readings of post-war art in the United States. This formation and subsequent formalist rephrasing resulted in the gradual and virtual excising of African, Latino, Asian and Native, women and foreign artists from the art history of the United States until the 1970s.[71]

Postmodernism and Deconstruction.

In the 1950s Jean Paul Sartre recognized the changes on the cultural scene as artists such as Lam and Aimé Césaire interfaced with European cultural circles. He wrote in Black Orpheus how European culture which "had already accepted primitive art into itself...had to be colonized in reverse," how "Third World artists were themselves entering this

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culture and twisting it to their own purposes, effecting a more complete Africanization of western art."[72] As if continuing Sartre's premise, Charles Merewether then declared that "...Lam's art not only disrupted, but pushed and transformed European modernism. Recognizing its projections, thresholds and limits as a source, Lam paved a way for the emergence of a new forms of modernism."[73]

These observations, written thirty years apart, demonstrate how the phenomenon of multiculturalism, manifest in the globalization of world culture over the last fifty years, dovetails with issues of postmodernism and deconstruction. As the participation of artists of color challenged the "universalist" and "internationalist" presumptions of modernism (condemned by Georges Bataille), so the focus on the impact of ethnicity on artistic activity mutated the premises of modernism, and determined the post-modernist landscape. Charles Merewether's assertion that for artists outside the mainstream, "the issue of subjectivity was ...critical[74]...and questions of artists's self-expression and cultural self-determination were inseparable," indicates that changes.[75] His observation is all the more striking given the fact that during the 1950s and 60s - and to some extent the 1970s - the art establishment in the United States and Europe marginalized subjectivity. It is not surprising, them, that this issue became the focus of artistic communities such as women,

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racial minorities and gays, which began to challenge the status quo.[76] While issues of ethnicity and identity are usually considered one aspect of the intellectual field of deconstructivist and post-modern theory, Christopher Read would argue that they are central to those intellectual systems:

> Issues of identity are crucial to postmodernism, so much so that some theorists propose a new awareness of certain identities to be **the** defining characteristic of the modern art....Such emphasis on specific identities challenges formalist beliefs in a transcendent or universal art (that just happens to have been created overwhelmingly by and for a specific demographic group: white, Western, apparently heterosexual men of the upper middle class).[77]

The comprehension of the act of deconstruction that artists of color would effect on modernist primitivism was first declared in André Breton's essay on Lam for his 1942 exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery (see Chapter 1). The new modernism heralded in Lam's work not only generates new forms and modalities, but also examines the presumptions of the "old" modernism. This is again evident in the analysis of the artistic relationship between Lam and Picasso. Presenting an oppositional view of the long-standing comparison between Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and The Jungle, John Yau notes: "the message it embodies... is neither self-diminishing nor an homage. Instead it represents a conscious opposition to Picasso's influence and practice."[78] Yau further observes that the African figures in Lam's work are "not reductive artifacts to be absorbed into Western perceptual systems...", they are integrated

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within nature ("the jungle setting") and thus reclaim their original and rightful place."[79]

The elements of the woman and nature (along with that of blackness), are also the focal points of Charles Merewether's discussion of Lam as a "cultural decolonizer." Merewether describes these elements as they appear in Lam's work as "embedded with colonial content and overlaid by modernist primitive aesthetic."[80] They represent "the enigmatic subject of the other, that which was to be either conquered, explored or entered into, a kind of three-fold taxonomy of race, gender and land folded into one another."[81] Merewether's approach to the primitivist issue with regard to Lam is distinctive in its more decisive analysis of the established diadic oppositions that have been posed in discussing this issue. He takes into account the fact that as a result of the dynamics of racial mingling and the rupture of established social and economic lineages on this side of the Atlantic, segments of the population can embody both the colonizer and the colonized, the hegemonic and the other. The interest among the Cuban avant garde and intelligentsia in "nationalizing" the primitivist enterprise he notes served to "challenge the West [i.e Europe] and the colonial dynamic."[82] This paralleled the New York School's own struggle to find and define its own identity in the mid-to-late 1940s. And, as David Craven as noted, continues to preoccupy artists from Latin America, and Asian, Latino,

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Native American and African descent working in the context of the New York art establishment today.[83] As Merewether notes, these artists, like Lam must (in the words of Homi Bhabha): "...[mime] the forms of authority at the point of which it de-authorizes them."[84]

If sexuality, ethnicity and race are, as Christopher Read asserts, elements crucial to postmodernism, then Lam's work conflates all of them. This is the crux of Merewether's analysis, when he suggests that it is in the depiction of the female body that Lam's own subjectivity finds expression: "Lam's recurring studies of women and themes of maternity and sexuality corresponded, to a degree, with the interest in the subjects of abundance, growth and decay of forms of...many European modernists, particularly the Surrealists."[85] Merewether's consideration of the role of the female body in Lam's work is noteworthy, as issues of gender are rarely addressed in discussion of Lam's work. This is extraordinary given the fact that this subject dominates Lam's work throughout his entire career. Such an analysis would undoubtedly suggest additional layers of meaning to his work: some projected from our time onto his, and others posited from familiar ground. For example, Merewether suggests in the above quotation a reading of Lam's female imagery and an analysis of its interpretation that confirms to familiar stereotypes of woman and the female familiar throughout human history, and in all human

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cultures. Additionally, as noted in Chapter 5, however, a consideration of the significance of the femme cheval as an animal-headed deity leads to an examination of goddess imagery, shamanism and related images as they might relate to Lam's work.

In Merewether's essentially Freudian model for Lam's identity crisis, the female and the land are the focus of the obsession of the black male. The effect is the reinstate the onus of exoticist obsessions on the shoulder of the Western colonizer that the assimilated colonized. This is distinct from Robert Linsley's interpretation of woman in Lam's work, which provides a more mainstream contemporary feminist reading.[86] He relies on the analyses of Franz Fanon of the cultural dislocations which result from racial stratifications in the colonial context. Linsley rather simplistically interprets Lam's use of white and black tonality as a indication of, respectively, European and African women,[87] detecting in the positioning of the black entities (i.e. African women) in the background what he perceives to be Lam's ambivalence towards his status as a mulatto.[88]

While such essentialist interpretations of color in Lam's work are problematic, Linsley does initiate the discussion of Lam's subject matter in a way that implicates the artist more directly, by calling to question Lam's motivations and choices with regard to his imagery.[89] He

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additionally reads the appearance of elements such as cleaver and knife forms as an indication of the "battle of sexual dominance, castration, rage and seduction" which "permeates Lam's imaginative world and he seem to be trapped within it."[90] His analysis contrasts with that of Fernando Ortíz, who would interpret such "phallic" elements in Lam's work as more life-affirming elements rising out of the specifics of the cultural context of Cuba (see Chapter 3).

Merewether further fosters a reading of Lam's work within a cultural context by comparing elements of drawing and tracing in Lam's work as a means to achieve a reconfiguring of empirical reality that is synonymous with divination drawings made by santeros in Afro-Cuban ritual. Lam's work literally draws some of its power from this technique through his own cultivation of his deft draftsmanship, and has been perceived as sharing in the qualities of divination drawings which "...embodied and transmitted sacred knowledge and historical memory of Afro Cuban culture."[91] As noted in Chapter 2, such overt religious references have for the most part been down played in primitivist discussions, where the emphasis is on the form, the image, the technique, rather than the content. José Pierre, writing about the condition of Surrealism after the Second World War, alludes to the challenge posed to Christianity by the occultism and exaltation of the primitive by the Surrealists and their followers.[92] This

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was also the implication of the resuscitation of pagan Nordic myths and ideals by the CoBrA artists.[93] By focusing on the specific spiritual - as opposed to anthro-political - aspects of Afro-Cuban religious traditions, they are reinfused with the political power they really had in that context.

Merewether then moves onto issues of race and class in his analysis of Lam's work. He outlines the problematic positions of even liberals among the Cuban intelligentsia with regard to race and gender,[94] which would have made Lam - because of his blackness - subject to certain exclusionary social conventions, despite his "international" reputation, and the sponsorship of influential people like Cabrera and Ortiz.[95] Both Merewether and Linsley then note the specific political implications of Lam's choice to engage Afro-Cuban culture, echoing Vittorio Lanternari's study of messianic cults of the 19th and 20th century. Lanternari describes how Santeria or Lucumi, and other religious revivals in the Caribbean, North America and Africa, exploit white/black antagonisms and class struggle, while purporting to empower their adherents against the forces of man and of nature.[96]

For Merewether this consideration is germane to the analysis of Lam's career. In the previous chapter, the peculiar posture of the femme cheval - with its head in profile and shoulders in a frontal position or back to the spectator - was described in the context of ancient Egyptian

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art. Merewether offers an interpretation of this posture as a metaphor of decolonization, embodied in the "sidelong glance to the colonizer."[97] The parallels between the power politics of gender and the power politics of colonization thus united in the person of the female, whose assumed passivity is a metaphor for the powerlessness of the colonized. Merewether's isolation of the over-the-shoulder glance (sometimes into a mirrored image which then looks out at the spectator) responds to feminist critiques of the power position implied in the act of observation. Lam's profiled posture then can be read as one of defiance: neither confrontation nor subservient, and certainly seductive. Gerardo Mosquera emphasizes the subversiveness of these creatures, observing that although the femme cheval is "often seated in the typical poses of conventional good manners,"[98] they reveal their inherently feral (i.e. rebellious) nature in the "'wildest' mixture of masks, tails, horns, manes, prickles and zoological or botanical motifs."[99]

Lam also confronts the issue of gender by masking the male in female guises, indicating his presence in the bulbous chins often read as testicles on the femme cheval (again an Egyptian analogy is apt, as in the affectation of a male beard by female pharaohs), and the tail/mane/beard/penis elements. This dualistic visual play and punning ultimately, according to Merewether, results in

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the colonized gaining the upper hand:

> Rather than seeking to paint a direct correlate to the experience of possession, Lam's image suggests that the treatment of the other is deeply tied to the dual effects of fascination with and fear of a primitiveness that already exists within the individual body...Lam turned possession around: the Western self and its desire for the other is possessed by figures who are themselves possessed.[100]

Again, in the context of a feminist reading of Lam's imagery, the dichotomy that might exist between a consideration of political colonization and sexual dominance would have to be considered. Afterall, one can see that as a black or a Cuban, Lam the politically colonized entity becomes a colonizer of women as sexual entities.[101]

In the mediation between the real and the surreal, Lam and Alejo Carpentíer, writes Merewether, differed from the rest of the surrealists: "...rather than suggesting the entry into an altered state of consciousness or a dream state...[their]...work suggests the coexistence and interplay of a different order of reality."[102] In this assertion of an equity among realities, Carpentíer and Lam would in Merewether's analysis equalize the balance of power between European rationalism and African metaphysics, and by extension, between the colonizer and colonized. In this liberation, the landscape also is a key factor, not only a the locus of homecoming (re: Césaire), but also a site of resistance. When Lam commemorated the mountain site which offered shelter to Castro's forces during the revolution in his 1959 painting La Sierra Maestra, he was undoubtedly

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drawing an analogy with the side of African resistance in Cuba, i.e. "el monte," the brush where the orishas of the old world resided. In Lam's work of 1942-46 the interpenetration of the compositional elements

> ...became a means of registering an exchange between the human and spirit world...The convergence and interplay between the body and the surrounding, between figured and ground represent a state of transmutation between appearance and disappearance, between physical and spiritual realities...Lam's paintings create images of fascination and resistance, images that in fact resist being object of scrutiny.[103]

Resisting scrutiny, yet possessing a powerfully seductive quality; revealing itself, yet hiding its meaning - Lam's painting is the ultimate Trojan Horse.[104] He later formulated another metaphor for the process of decolonization in his work, when he described the iconography of The Jungle to the Cuban critic and writer Gerardo Mosquera in 1977. He drew Mosquera's attention to the figure brandishing a pair of scissors at the lower right: "I would like to say that it is necessary to sever all ties with the colonial culture" (Yo quieren decir que era necessario dar un corte con la cultura colonial),[105] thus concretizing the emergence of a self-sustaining post-colonial cultural environment.

Issues of Form and Content: Lam's Work as a Model for Reorienting the Modernist Paradigm.

The critical modalities of multiculturalism, and decolonization/ deconstruction have certainly allowed for a

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more varied comprehension of Lam's career. But while they have amply demonstrated how Lam's career encompasses issues of identity, race, even gender, their focus on context and content still leaves unanswered the question of what is the relationship between Lam's style and his content: if the question arises at all. In her study of abstract tendencies among African American painters, Ann Gibson ruminates on the exclusion of African Americans such as Hale Woodruff and Norman Lewis from the discussion of the Abstract Expressionist movement.[106] Despite the stylistic eligibility of Woodruff and Lewis's work for inclusion in the history of Abstract Expressionism, Gibson observes that there are several cogent reasons for their exclusion. They have very much to do with issues of content and form.

Gibson notes the effect of social barriers faced by African Americans and other peoples of color even in their maneuvering within the New York art world in the 1940s, and 1950s.[107] While this certainly accounts for lack of opportunities to exhibit and to be collected, even for critical dismissal based on societal presumptions, there were also morphological and conceptual differences that may also be observed. Gibson writes:

> The abstraction that became canonical in America and other countries after the Second World War...was based on an Americanized version of European experience, which denied the breadth and depth of the African American contribution.[108]

The conventions of that abstraction in New York can be

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characterized, according to Gibson, by monumentality, "forms operating in a relatively flat field and composed on an 'all-over' way."[109]

> It was understood by the practitioners and proponents...that it would be non-mimetic, that is, it would not quote forms in the everyday world in such a way as to make them immediately recognizable, and if it did, the objects to which the images referred were assumed to be incidental to the meaning of the work.[110]

As has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation, in the case of Lam, form tended to be mimetic, though fantastic, and specific to the meaning of the work, even after the 1940s, when the specificity of his work was less ethnic and more metaphysical.

The ultimately distinct qualities of Lam's work and that of his New York contemporaries is seen in the comparison between Lam's 1944 The Astral Harp (fig. 6.1) and de Kooning's 1950-52 Woman I (oil on canvas, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase, 1953). In both paintings a rather ferocious, feral apparition of female power is in evidence. That apparition is, in both paintings, intermeshed with the surrounding ambiance of the composition so that there is a morphological continuity between fore and background. The difference is two fold: first that the Lam is predicated on a precise, elegant linearity, while the de Kooning is "messy," brushy and gestural; second that the character and presence of the female figures was central to the comprehension of the Lam, and, while equally evident in the de Kooning, has largely been suppressed.[111] The

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question is whether issues of formalism can be brought to the critique of the work of artists who have been discussed primarily in terms of content, as formalist readings of other artists are being deconstructed by modes of identity, race and gender.

Lam's work would seem to offer the possibility of expressing identity through formal means through the encoding of repetitive forms linked to cultural bases, and through the phenomenology of perception as it is predicated by locale or cultural grounding. As noted, Robert Linsley notes the deliberateness of Lam's engagement of the formal aspects of African art towards a political end.[112] This is in direct contradiction to Clive Bell's "universalism," and is a signal that critical approaches to non-European cultures would have to be predicated on criteria which emanate from those cultures.[113] Lam engaged in a similar cultural encoding through the repetitive use of triangular/diamond shapes that alluded to extraterrestrial presences that syncretized with the symbology of segments of Afro Cuban practice, specifically the Abakua.[114] In addition certain aspects of the chronology of Lam's stylistic development in the early 1940s would also clarify his contribution to the break down of the Cubist grid to achieve a presumably "American" modernist space through the extricating of line from color, and the interchange between form and void to accomplish the ultimate generation of "all-

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over" painting. [115]

Precedents for non-mimetic, non-formal art of the 1940s and 50s can be found in the work of Kandinsky in the 1910s, Hans Hartung at the same period, Wols and Masson in the 1920s and 30s. The crucial element for developments in the United States was the freeing of the subconscious to release creative forces. In this context the methodology of Surrealist automatism, learned in New York from relocated exiles from Paris - specifically Matta and Masson[116] - provided the means to progress to the next step. A sense of scale -which was the inheritance from 19th Century landscape and mural painting of the 1930s and 40s also provided a crucial ingredient. But the specifics of freeing color and line from what Robert Hobbs called the "cubist grid" was a feat especially needed to make the distinction between the old and the new viable.

While a number of artists accomplished this in their work by the early 1940s, the artist whose work is most germaine for this discussion is Arshile Gorky, both because of his friendship with Lam (see Chapter 2) and because of certain stylistic developments they shared during the mid 1940s. After an extensive and adept apprenticeship to European modernists such as Picasso and Miró, Gorky found his unique style in the mid-1940s with such works as Water of the Flowery Mill of 1944. This painting was one of several executed by Gorky in the mid-1940s, which, according

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to Barbara Rose, were "the first to synthesize abstract painterliness with Surrealist motifs."[117] The lineage of American art is then followed in rapid succession by Pollock and Rothko, with Pollock utilizing the drip method - evident in the diluted washes of Gorky's work - and Rothko in the presentation of what in Gorky's work were areas of thinly diluted paint. It is interesting, therefore, to note the position of Lam's work in these developments.

Dripping can be observed in goauche works of the late 1930s (The Couple), and early 1940s (The Jungle), which were exhibited in New York at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. Lam's predilection for a less emphatic facture was evidenced in the increasingly loosely worked pigment in The Annunciation and The Idol (figs. 1.28, 1.27) of 1944 and offers an interesting comparison with developments in the work of Arshile Gorky at that period. Lam's work also showed an appreciation for the bare canvas, and an extraction of line from the role of prescribing color and color from the role of replenishing the interstices between lines. Both artists also dealt with ways to preserve figural elements while entertaining abstraction. These qualities are often overlooked by critics in their determined effort to discern the iconographic nuances in Lam's work. This is the result of the rupture between form and content effected in American art criticism in the early 1950s.[118] As a result the careers of Lam and artists such as Leon Golub, Jacob

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Lawrence, Romare Bearden- who were more forthright in their engagement of figuration and/or content in the intervening period, were either marginalized or jettisoned by the art market and media establishment in the United States until the 1980s. By 1945, however, Gorky and Lam were following a parallel course. Although Lam would move towards a more specific - if schematized figuration - in the late 1940s, his work was a important component in the engagement of totemic and mythic imagery in New York in the 1940s, both in terms of its content as well as its philosophy in so far as they were conveyed morphologically in his work.

If Lam's paraphrase or reconstitution of European modernist vocabularies can be seen as an act of syncretism that is comparable to the encoding of African religions on Catholicism, then a careful analysis of Lam's work in the early to mid 1940s, reveals that he was also engaged in an act of revealing and concealing form. The conceptual underpinnings of Lam's work was closely linked with his interest in visualizing the simultaneity of empirical and metaphysical realms, a task that would by necessity posit a new approach to space, comparable to that in the prolonged formalist dialogue with illusionism in European art since the second half of the 19th Century. To this dialogue Lam brought a myriad of formal techniques.

One of the earliest to manifest itself in his painting was the reduction of his palette to near-monotone, closely

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valued contrast of pale yellows, salmons and greens. This was seen in a series of compositions executed in 1941 and 1942. Usually executed on brown kraft paper, paintings such as Femme (fig. 6.2) evident a sparse application of paint, a variety of linear elements - some prominent, others so scant they can barely be seen - and an increasing hybridization of the elements in the composition. The "under color" of the brown paper emerges with the paint scumbled on top of it. The color of the figure incorporates that of the ground. The lines defining the figure are occasionally over painted and obscured (see Deésse avec feuillage, 1942, fig. 1.20). There are traces of other elements retained and obliterated. These devices all function so that the stylistic elements enhance the reading of the space as ephemeral and ethereal.

In The Jungle and related paintings of 1942-43, this hybridization becomes more emphatic. The ambiance is more elaborately defined, but the nonempirical nature of the event is replete in the figures which literally seem to be metamorphosing into masked vegetal composite beings. By 1944 Lam achieved a similar obfuscatory effect by means of a pointillist stippling with which he outlined forms, defining the richly colorist vegetal ambiance and leaving the forms themselves white. this was use to great effect in a series of still life compositions such as Altar for Elegua (fig. 1.15) and Table in the Garden (fig. 1.26), where Lam succeeds in conveying the effect of intense sunlight on

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reflective surfaces of glass and metal, while the color of the vegetation intensifies. The forms of the objects themselves appear as white voids which are surrounded with stippled colors. In Composition [Ñañigo], (fig. 1.35) the flickering, fugitive forms of a diablito figure appearing in an Abakua ritual at night, can just be discerned within the "all-over" stippling of reds and greens on the brown paper. The interstices are wide enough between the daubs of paints that the primary effect is a disembodiment of the main form. This exemplifies the primacy that Lam gives to visual and visceral effects in his work, in contrast to the work of his contemporaries in Cuba.

In the context of the post World War II scene in Paris, Lam's stylistic influence has been more readily noted. Agnès Angliviel de la Beaumelle has noted the interest of artists as diverse as the CoBrA group, Fautrier, and Henri Michaux in "phantom apparitions" (apparitions fantomatiques) characterized by "the symbolic power of emerging forms, creating a quality of randomness as in writing and ciphering."[119] And it was that interest in "forms conceived as language" (les formes conçus comme langage)[120] that explains in part the interest in Lam on the part of the CoBrA artists, when after the 1950s the totemic forms in his work became more and more pure signs.[121]

Angliviel de la Beaumelle's evaluation of Lam's currency for post-war surrealist tendencies was heralded by Pierre Mabille who wrote in 1949 that in the fact of a dearth of

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"personal certitude" on the part of lingering adherents of Cubism, Fauvism and Surrealism:

> In contrast Lam's work achieves a vehemence, a magical power and pure artistry...He has proved that the road from cubism via surrealism to the future holds many an ambush, and many a blind alley. Nevertheless it remains the sole road to that great emotional urge which since the dawn of history has provided the fundamental source of art and poetry.[122]

As has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, the development in Lam's style towards a hieratic, ceremonial character with flat unmodulated shapes that evoke a certain ritual protocol, appeared to a generation seeking to express a more psychic than specifically tribal angst relating to the primordial manifestation of the cycles of terror and rebirth that part of the human experience which was much in evidence after World War II. Henri-Claude Clousseau traced the viability of this "ecriture" - often sought in the pure line of compulsive, obsessive art-making associated with the immediacy of folk art, the art of children and the mentally disabled.[123]

The transition from tribalistic primitivism to psycho-physiological primitivism indicated not only the recognition of the failures of western appropriation as noted by Breton, but also the recognition of the greater authenticity of the Third World, which brought the engagement of these concepts to their urge towards political liberation. Lam's work, as it followed it own development, served as a bridge between these two phases of primitivism, while at the same time generating a political based on its own terms, in its own

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context outside of Europe. Robert Linsley would recognize that Lam's understanding of African art would bring him closer to conceptualizing how his art could serve a political purpose.[124] In that purpose of transformation, celebration and affirmation of the plastic culture of the blacks, bound as it was to the metaphysical and the natural, it correlates with the interest of the CoBrA and other post war surrealist groups such as the Situationists to alert people to the consequences of our technological world. Furthermore Craven's addressing of the issue of cultural imperialism in his discussion of the dissemination of modernist vocabularies throughout Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean, pinpoints the different destiny that modernism has had in Anglo and Latin America.

If in the United States the trend sought to isolate modernist and post-modernist idioms from the specifics nuances of their sources (i.e. myth, politics, gender, identity, etc.), in Latin America the opposite process can be noted, especially when addressing issues of political empowerment and economic domination.[125] Landscape painting in this context became a particular. In the mid-1930s the modernist artist Joaquin Torres-García created an image for his so-called "School of the South" (Escuela del Sur) in which the continent of South America has been reoriented so that the southernmost end has been pointed up (i.e. north).[126] Torres-García, who had a close relationship with

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modernist circles in the United States, Spain and France before returning to his native Uruguay in 1934, deliberately conceived this image as a challenge to the dominance of the United States and France (all "north" of the equator) in Latin American art. He called for a "rectification" of this situation, for Latin Americans to appreciate the place from which they came:

> ...We now turn the map upside down, and now we know what our true position is, and it is not the way the rest of the world would like to have it. From now on...South America will point insistently at the South, our North...the North is now below. And as we face our South, the East is to the left...the artist...must do the same: he must remain conscious of the world without forgetting what is close at hand.[127]

Torres-García's comments not only call for a more "indigenously"-based art in Latin America in general, and Uruguay in particular, but also for the creation of a new sense of the center. This notion breaks with prevailing geo-political positionings, and complements the ideas of Cuban critics writing on Lam, who see the Caribbean and Latin America not only as the site of the post-atomic Eden, but also - by virtue of the racial make-up of the area - the crossroads of world culture.[128] In this context Lam's work is paradigmatic for the treatment of the landscape in the work of other Latin American artists.

Lam's particular fusion of the figure with the landscape, using modernist syntaxes of Cubism and Surrealist automatism, was not only an expression of a philosophical concept of the relationship of man to nature according to an

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Afro-centrist belief system; in the context of Latin American art it can also be seen as a political statement about economic aspects of propriety and exploitation. This view encompasses two problematic power relationships to land: the first being slavery, and the second economic domination by outside powers. The first (as noted by Suzanne Garrigues) is manifest in Lam's work in terms of the associations of plant forms with the economic and social history of Africans (and in other contexts, Native Americans, and Asians) in Latin American and the Caribbean under the former plantation system.[129] The second deals with issues of conquest and exploitation from the outside, which signifies sometimes the European conquest, and most times the economic influence of particularly the United States in the region. The first is thought to be exemplifed in the work of Lam, Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros of Mexico, Cándido Portinari of Brazil, particularly during the 1930s and 40s. The second may be seen in the work of the Mexican artist Antonio Ruiz, whose 1939 painting, Dream of Malinche, depicts the body of the Aztec woman literally cultivated into a Spanish settlement. The work of the Cuban-born artist Ana Mendieta may also be understood in this context. For example, in her Silueta series[130] the form of the artist's body become a marker on the landscape of a cultural and personal identity that is in peril.

Taking all these considerations into account, it may be

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concluded that the deconstruction of Eurocentrist art history may not be the appropriate intellectual model by which to reconstruct Lam's artistic identity on the 20th Century Art world stage. As Gerardo Mosquera has suggested, there needs to be a whole-scale reorientating of art history in terms of paradigmatic models which serve as matrices for critical evaluations. He makes the radical suggestion that Lam's work must be perceived in such a way as to recognize that it is not primitive or traditional - but "the non-traditional artistic production of the Third World...a...point of true synthesis between avant-garde and 'primitivism' the possible embryo of a future line of development of art as a result of the eruption of the confines of contemporary culture."[131] Mosquera, like Merewether refutes the hierarchical paradigm of Euorcentric discourse noting that

> Lam's cultural sources have been widely recognized, but subordinated to Western avant-garde art, never the other way around, seem from themselves, analyzing their own action on their art, their particular interpretation of contemporary 'culture' culture.[132]

Mosquera observes that within the scope of European and Euro-American hegemony that many aspects of "primitive" culture "are no longer 'ethnic' and have become internationalized an intrinsic components of a world shaped by the development of the west."[133] Therefore, the academic and western modernist styles to which Lam had apprenticed himself would be recognized for their rightful placements in

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his artistic development. "The change of viewpoint in the interpretation of Lam," suggests Mosquera," is an attempt to break away from the dualism and recognize the hybridizations, complexities and 'inauthenticities' inherent in the post-colonial dynamics through an awareness of the cultural action of the periphery in contemporary processes from Modernism to Postmodernism."[134] The cultural diversity in the Americas results "from processes of creolization and hybridization," which for Mosquera, "form part of the cultural corpus of the West, but are modulated from within by highly active non-Western ingredients."[135]

Mosquera proposes a change in the mode of interpreting Lam's life and career in a way that is no less radical that "a new orientation of the various discourses as a result of the action that is taking place from the periphery towards the center, whereby the periphery is ceasing to be a reservoir of traditions, and is moving towards a polyfocal, multi-ethical decentralization of 'international' culture combines with a strengthening of local development."[136] This would represent a "dismantling of the History of Art, as a totalizing, teleological story told from the paradigm of Western art...to the benefit of a more centralized deologizing, integrationist, contexturalizing, multi-disciplinary discourses based on hybridization and transformation, open to an intercultural understanding of the functions, meaning and aesthetics of that production and

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its processes."[137] In the context of this reorientation of art history, Lam would be more than a follower. There would be a recognition of the fact that Lam could not only reconciled elements which up to now have only been perceived to exist in a dichotomous relationship: form and content, tradition and the future, figure and abstraction.

Lam found in the reconciliation of these opposites a unique manner by which to pose an alternative to materialistic cultural values through the celebration of nature. That this position has continued to be relevant to contemporary life is indicated by the endurance of this point of view over the last thirty years. It was a central principle in the social and political liberation movements of the 1960s - whether revolution or revolt - and the return to such values in the 1980s and 90s in the wake of the societal excesses of the 1980s, particularly in American culture. Lam was indeed ahead of his time. For it has been only in the last two decades that the gods of the Lucumi have traveled beyond the borders of Cuba, and are finding recognition and new adherents even in the United States, one of the most overtly technological societies in the world. As Robert Farris Thompson has noted the gods of Africa are alive and well even in the streets of New York City. This explains the renewed interest in Lam's work which has begun to transcend nationality and race. The day has arrived when

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his work is no longer "misunderstood." This dissertation has attempted to broaden and enrich the conventional view of Lam's career and indicate areas that need further investigation. With a great comprehension of the exact nature of Lam's contribution, and as the political clouds part to clarify this situation it is clear that the significance of Lam and his work will come to light. As an intermediary between the old world of formal avant garde to that of iconographic modernism, from primitivist to ancestralist, Lam's work will be able to be judged on criteria that generate from his own center rather than on the margins of modernism.

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NOTES: Chapter 6.

1. The summary of Lam's career in this chapter is based on the exhibition history prepared by Yveline Hemsi, as well as my own expanded chronology which will be published in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Lam's work.

2. In March, 1981, Lam and a group of artists who included Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulages, Antoni Tapiès, Bram van Velde, and Pierre Alechinsky, signed a letter protesting the inclusion of work by Arno Brecker, official sculptor of the Third Reich in this exhibition Paris/Paris, 1937-57, which opened at the Centre Pompidou in at the end of May. Lou Laurin Lam, interview with LSS, Paris, February-March, 1993.

3. Jimenez, op. cit.

4. Ritual and Myth: A Survey of African American Art [exhib. cat.], foreword by Mary Schmidt Campbell, intro. by David Driskell, essay by Leslie King Hammond (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1982).

5. Mosquera, " Modernity and Africania: Wifredo Lam on His Island,": 174.

6. Reproduced in David Anfam, Abstract Expressionism (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1990): 23.

7. The use of the terms "primitive" and "primitivist" in the context of this dissertation has been a matter of expediency. As generally defined in art history, "primitive" has been used to designate cultures that are perceived by Europeans to emphasize spiritual and existential values over technological ones. While Europe and Euro-America have romanticized the spiritual values of the "primitive" as an antidote to their technological values, they still assert the hegemonic positions that technology affords them in the social, economic and political arenas. "Primitivist" is then and adjectival form of "Primitivism," the phenomenon of Europe's appreciation of the "primitive."

8. Leja, op. cit.: 54-64.

9. Linsley, op. cit.: 530.

10. Ibid.

11. André Breton Surrealism and Painting, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper and Row, 1972): 171.

12. Gibson, op. cit.

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13. Cedric Dover notes that despite Alain Locke's earlier support of African American artists cultivating relationship with African art, by 1940 Locke "was compelled to admit...that 'when the younger Negro artists first became aware of this heritage, a sudden and hectic interest flared up which led, unfortunately, to relatively superficial understanding and shallow artistic results. African art could yield little through direct imitation or sophisticated racial pride.'" (Cedric Dover, American Negro Art (London: Studio Books, Longacre Press, Ltd., 1960): 33.

14. See discussion of Ann Gibson's chapter on race and the primitivist enterprise for her forthcoming book, Abstract Expressionism: Race and Gender, further on in this chapter. I am grateful to Gibson for making this manuscript available to me.

15. Linsley, op. cit.: 532.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Quoted in Robert Colescott: A Retrospective, 1975-1986 [exhib. cat.], essays by Lowery S. Sims and Mitchell D. Kahan (San Jose: San Jose Museum of Art, 1987): 8.

19. Jason Edward Kaufman, "Wifredo Lam, Multicultural Modernist," The World and I (March, 1993): 135.

20. Mosquera, op. cit.: 173.

21. Ibid: 25.

22. Ibid: 26.

23. Ibid: 176. Mosquera notes that it is necessary to distinguish the various sources and manifestations of that Africa in America. He identifies no less than seventeen distinct and different African religious dogmas to be found in the Caribbean and Latin America, apart form those found in the United States and Canada. These groups Mosquera observes, "help keep alive an African baggage that has not been dissolved in the new 'mestizo' culture."(Ibid: 176.)

24. Ritual and Myth: A Survey of African American Art: 28-29.

25. Ibid.

26. Conversations with LSS in New York, 1978-79.

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27. Ritual and Myth: A Survey of African American Art: 28.

28. Blanc, op. cit: 61. This last group of artists also included individuals such as Teodoro Ramos Blanco, who, in the 1930s and 40s maintained close ties with the African American poet Langston Hughes and the Afro-Puerto Rican bibliophile Arturo Schomburg.

29. See Barrio-Garsd, op. cit.

30. See the catalogue for this exhibition: Gravures de Wifredo Lam.

31. Ibid: 10.

32. Ibid.: 18.

33. Georges Bataille, "L'esprit moderne et le jeu des transpositions," Documents, 8 (1930): 48-52.

34. Ibid.

35. David Craven, "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American' Art," Oxford Art Journal, 14, no. 1, (1990): 44-65.

36. Ibid. 49.

37. Antonio Nuñez Jimenez quoted in Ibid: 49.

38. Ibid.

39. Desnoes, Azul y Negro: 7.

40. For a recent study of this phenomenon see James Oles, South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination, 1914-1947 [exhib. cat.], essay by Karen Cordero Reiman (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery is association with Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1993).

41. See, for example, Holliday T. Day and Hollister Sturges, Art of the Fantastic: Latin America, 1920-1987 [exhib. cat.] (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1987).

42. Ibid: 44.

43. Ibid.

44. Yau, op. cit.: 59. Such subterfuge has been a common tactic for artists of color who have sought recognition in a modern world that persists in exploiting their production while denying their existence.

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45. Gibson op. cit.: 9.

46. Ibid: 9-10.

47. Ibid: 10.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid: 10-18.

50. Ibid: 11.

51. Fouchet, op. cit: 187-188. For a more contemporary analysis of this strategy, see Lucy Lippard, "Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power," in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. with an intro. by Brian Wallis, foreword by Marcia Tucker (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art in association with David R. Godine Publisher, Inc., Boston, 1990): 341-358.

52. Mathew Baigall notes that in the conflicts between the Regionalists and Social Realists paintings in the United States, the Social Realists felt that the Regionalists's espousal of an American art based on an "American" experience was comparable to the Nazi agenda. The Regionalists, on the other hand, castigated the Social Realists for painting "symbolic" figures for propaganda's sake, rather than "real people." See Baigall, The American Scene: American Painting of the 1930s (New York and Washington, D.C.: Praeger, 1974): 61.

53. Leja, op. cit.: 55-57.

54. Ibid: 56.

55. Ibid: 58.

56. Ibid: 54-64.

57. Ibid: 52.

58. Ibid: 64.

59. Torgovnick, op. cit.: 159-164.

60. Péret, op. cit.

61. Gustafson, op. cit.

62. Leja, op. cit.: 65.

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63. See Henry-Claude Clousseau, "L'origine et l'écart: d'un art l'autre,"in Paris/Paris, 1937-1957, [exhib. cat.] (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1981): 158-173.

64. Leja, op. cit.: 102. Leja has graciously acknowledged my work on the critical reception of Lam's work in New York as guiding his own discussion. He cites specificially a paper I gave for the session, "Abstract Expressionism and Its Enemies," organized by Ann Gibson for the College Art Conference in 1990 (Ibid: 347).

65. Edward Alden Jewell, "A Cuban Picasso," The New York Times (June 27, 1943): sec. 2, p. 9.

66. Hess, op. cit.

67. Leja, op. cit.: 103-104.

68. Ibid: 102.

69. Blanc, op. cit.: 54-58.

70. Leja, op. cit.: 90.

71. See Corrine Robbins, The Pluralist Era: American Art 1968-1981 (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984).

72. Quoted in Linsley, op. cit.: 533.

73. Merewether, op. cit.: 13.

74. Ibid: 16.

75. Ibid.

76. It should be noted here that this was not always a voluntary action on the part of these communities. Many times this development was the result of artists coping, each in their own way, with their rejection or marginalization in the art world. The result is that often the formal aspects of their work was overlooked, and the content overemphasized. It would be interesting to postulate on the psychological and social dynamics of individual choices of artistic strategies.

77. Christopher Read, "Postmodernism and the Art of Identity," in Concepts of Modern Art, third ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993). I am grateful to Ann Gibson for bringing this article to my attention.

78. Yau, op. cit: 58.

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79. Ibid: 59.

80. Merewether, op. cit.: 13.

81. Ibid: 15.

82. Ibid.

83. Craven, op. cit.: 44.

84. Merewether, op. cit.: 15.

85. Ibid: 19.

86. Linsley, op. cit.:537-38

87. Ibid: 538.

88. Ibid: 537-538.

89. What Linsley fails to do is to consider that the coloration of the femme cheval, in the context of an Africanizing tradition - a subject he examines in detail with regard to Lam's work elsewhere in his article - and how it may relate more precisely to concepts about the physical and metaphysical worlds in many cultures in Africa and indeed around the world.

90. Ibid.

91. ibid.: 20.

92. Pierre, op. cit.

93. See Cobra, 1948-1951.

94. Merewether, op. cit.: 21.

95. Lou Lam recalls that as late as 1957-58, when she was in Cuba with him, that they were detained in the front vestibules, even porches outside the entrances of the homes of certain collectors when they visited to deliver paintings and collect money. Lou Lam, interview with LSS, October, 1989.

96. Lanternari, op. cit.: 158, 164.

97. Ibid.: 22.

98. Mosquera, op. cit.: 179.

99. Ibid.

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100. Merewether, op. cit : 24.

101. This incongruity has been the focus of contemporary feminist writing by African American women. The most cogent continues to be Michele Wallace, Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (New York: Dial Books, 1979).

102. Ibid: 24.

103. Ibid: 25.

104. Fouchet, op.cit.: 188-189.

105. Gerardo Mosquera, Exploraciones en la plástica Cubana (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1983): 183.

106. The Search for Freedom: African American Abstract Painting, 1945-1975 [exhib. cat.], essays by Ann Gibson, Steven Cannon, Frank Bowling and Thomas McEvilley (New York: Kenkeleba Gallery, 1991): 11.

107. Gibson notes the reluctance of the art world to admit that racism existed within its confines. She notes excuses based on lack of acquaintance with African American artists, or issues of quality as the reasons for their absence (Ibid: 11-14). Lam, in addition to being visibly and identifiably black, would have faced a linguistic problem, and as noted in Geri Trotta's 1950s profile, faced restrictions because of his Chinese ancestry (Trotta, op. cit.:43).

108. Ibid: 14.

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid.

111. That the more exclusively formalist reading of de Kooning's work is being modified can be seen in the catalogue of the 1994 exhibition: Marla Prather, Willem de Kooning: Paintings, essays by David Sylvester and Richard Shiff (Washington, D. C.: National Gallery of Art in association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1994).

112. Linsley, op. cit.

113. In an ironic way, the deconstruction of formalist theoretical practice brings us back to the problematic place of equating race with aesthetics. The reactions of Meyer Shapiro and James Porter to this issue in the 1930s, in light of the rise of Nazism and other racial political ideologies, is instructive. See James A. Porter, "Negro Art

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and Racial Bias," Art Front, 4 (June-July, 1937): 8-9, and Meyer Shapiro, "Race, Nationality and Art," Art Front, 3 (March, 1936): 10-12.

114. See Herzberg, op. cit. for a discussion of the nuances of that form, and Fouchet op. cit., for a more complete catalogue of Lam's oeuvre for visual comparisons.

115. I first tackled these issues in my essay, "Wifredo Lam and Roberto Matta: Surrealism in the New World," In the Mind's Eye: Dada and Surrealism: 94-95.

116. See Simon, op. cit.: 20-2.

117. Barbara Rose, American Art Since 1900: A Critical History (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967): 173.

118. See Craven, op. cit.

119. "...la charge symboliques des formes émergées, agissant désormais comme signe, ecriture." Agnès Angliviel de la Beaumelle, "Cobra," in Paris/Paris, 1937-1957: 50.

120. Ibid.

121. "...explique en partie l'intêret porté par Cobra à l'oeuvre de Wifredo Lam, dont les formes totémiques deviennent, après les années 50, de plus en plus signes purs." Ibid.

122. Mabille, "The Ritual Painting of Wifredo Lam": 188.

123. Clousseau, op. cit.

124. Linsley, op. cit.: 531.

125. I am grateful to Luis Camnitzer for discussing the various positions within Latin America towards modernism. He has noted that whereas the situation in Puerto Rico might have made modernism suspect - since it was identified with cultural manifestations imposed upon the island from the United States - in other parts of Latin America, modernism was seen as a means to express opposition to conservative political establishments. (Camnitzer, interview with LSS, New York, March, 1994).

126. Reproduced in Mari Carmen Ramírez, El Taller Torres-García: The School of the South and Its Legacy, [exhib. cat.] (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992): frontispiece.

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127. Joaquin Torres-García, "The School of the South," a lecture given in 1935, reprinted in Ibid: 53-56.

128. See Roa, and Desnoes, op. cit.

129. See Garrigues, op. cit.

130. See Ana Mendieta: The "Silueta" Series, 1973-1980, [exhib. cat.], text by Mary Jane Jacobs (New York: Galerie Lelong, 1991).

131. Mosquera, op. cit.: 173-175.

132. Ibid: 174.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid. In this discussion, Mosquera updates Breton's perception of Lam, but admitting that Lam was never the primitive (more like Lam himself noted: 50% savage, 50% Cartesian), but a highly westernized member of the political periphery in the post colonial context.

136. Ibid. Here Mosquera may have been reflecting some of the resolutions of the Cultural Congress held in Cuba in 1968 (see Chapter 3).

137. Ibid.

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Illustrations

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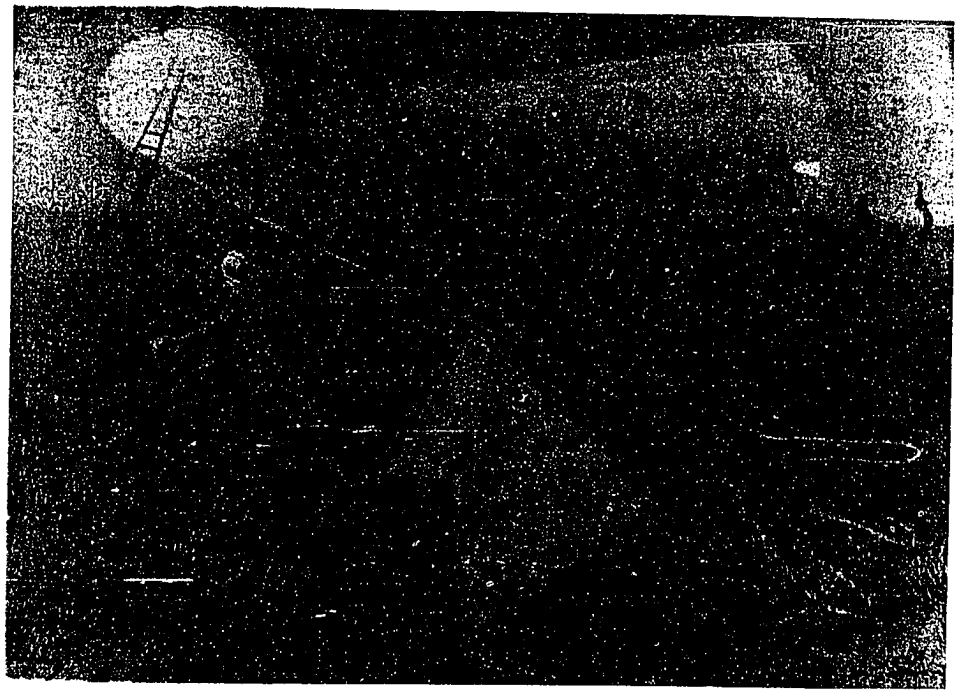
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1.2. Judío (Indio con el búho), 1925, oil on canvas.

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1.3. Composition, 1930, oil on canvas.

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1.4. Two Nudes, 1937, gouache on paper.

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1.5. La Manchega, 1938, gouache on paper.

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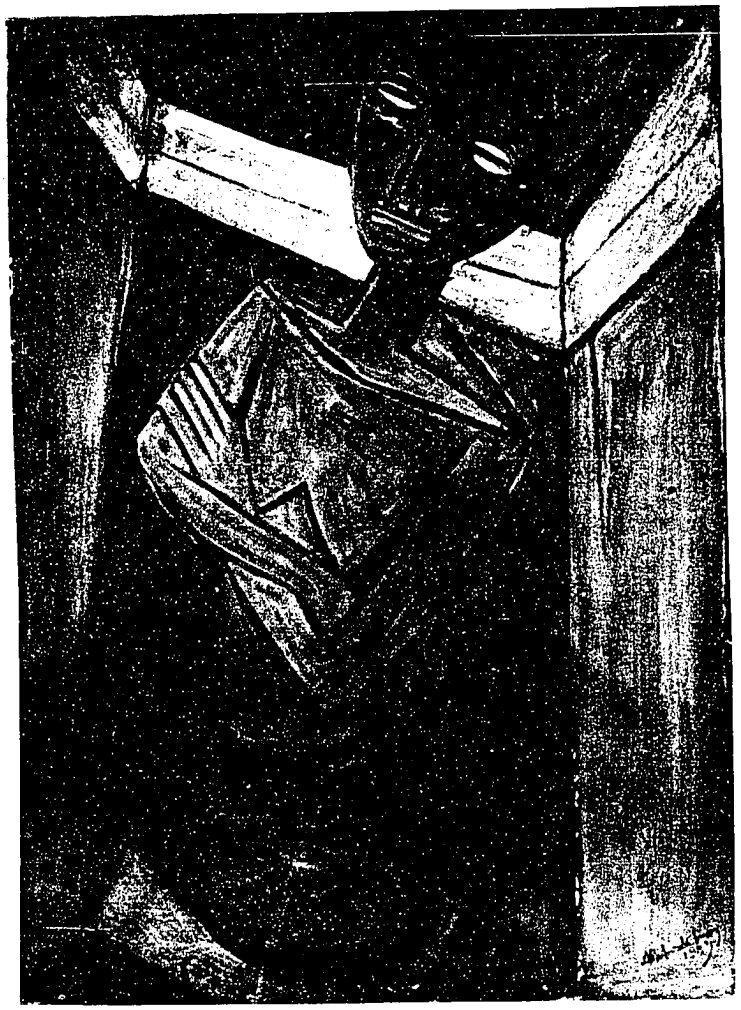
1.6. Pere et enfant, 1938, gouache on paper.

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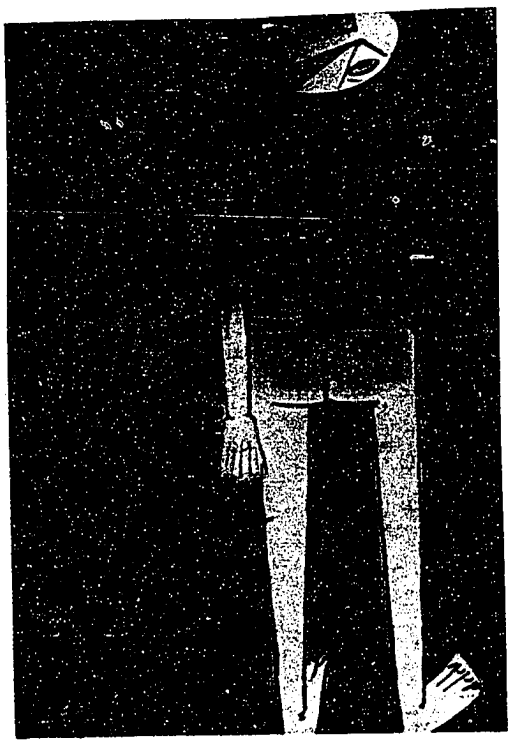
1.7. Douleur de l'Espagne, 1938, gouache on paper.

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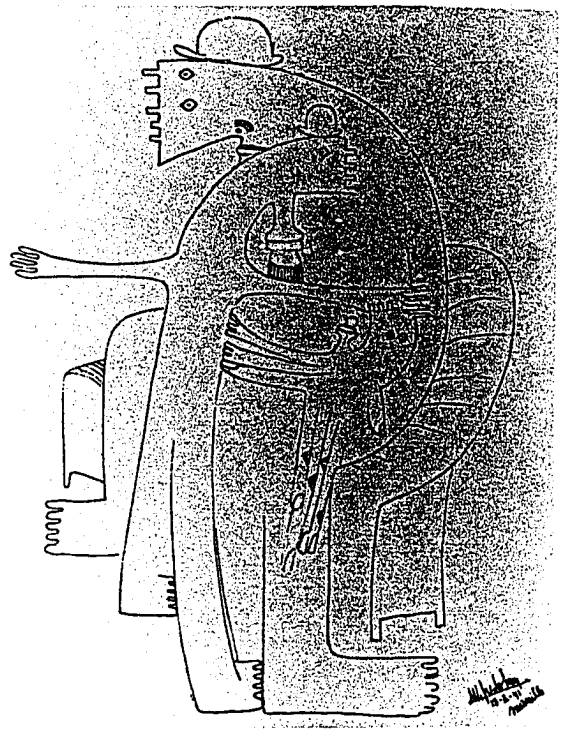
1.8. Nu assis, 1939, gouache on paper.

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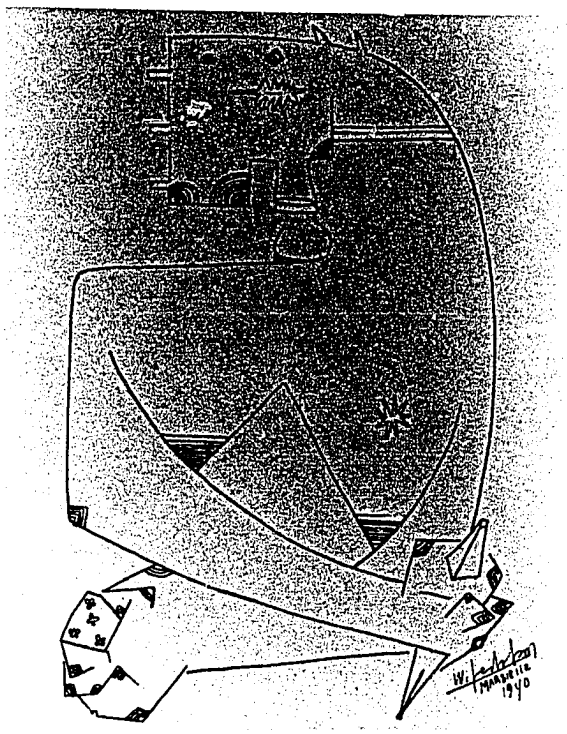
1.9. Deux Grands Nus, 1938, oil on canvas.

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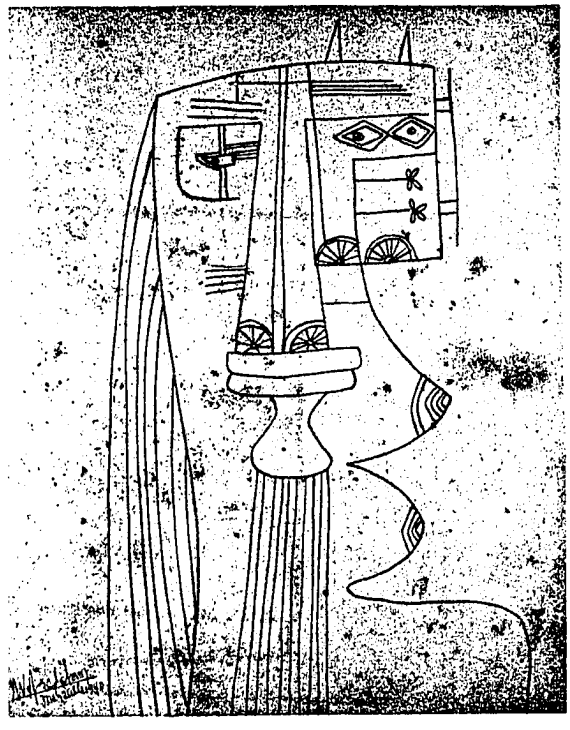
1.10. [Drawing from "Marseilles Notebook"], 1940, ink on paper.

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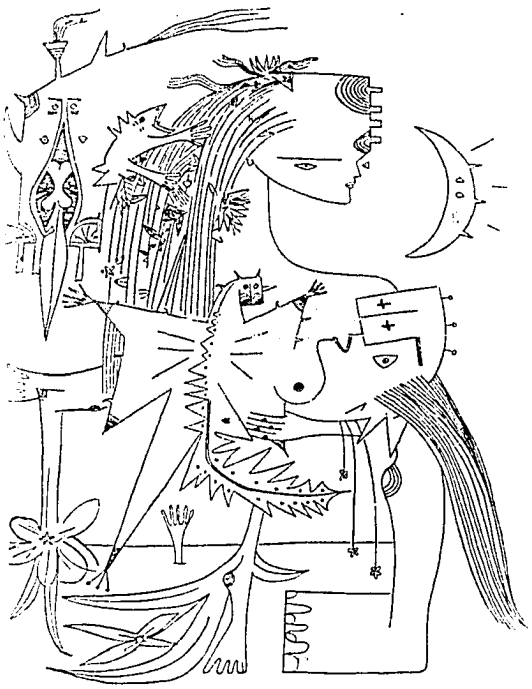
1.11. [Drawing from "Marseilles Notebook"], 1940, ink on paper.

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1.12. [Drawing from "Marseilles Notebook"], 1940, ink on paper.

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1.13. Illustration from Fata Morgana, 1940.

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1.14. The Jungle, 1942-43, goucahe on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.15. Altar for Elegua, 1944, oil on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.16. The Eternal Presence, 1944, oil on canvas.

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1.17. Wifredo Lam in his garden in Havana, c. 1944.

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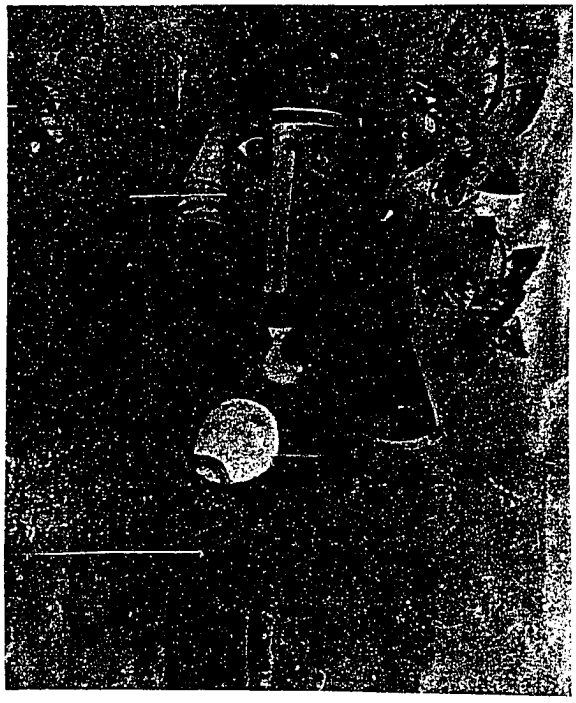
1.18. Nude on Chair, 1942, gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.19. Holiday, 1942, gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.20. Déesse avec feuillage, 1942, gouache on paper.

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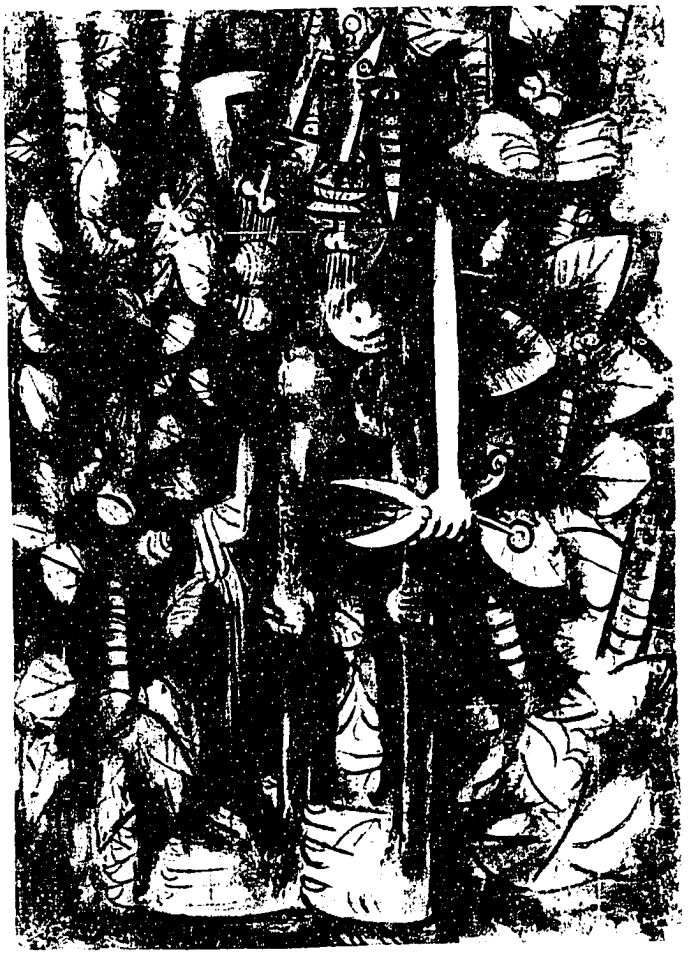
1.21. Les yeux de la grille, 1942, gouache on paper.

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1.22. Le Bruit, 1943, oil on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.23. The Jungle (Personage with Scissors), 1942, gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.24. Malembo, God of Crossroads, 1943, oil on canvas.

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1.25. Omi Obini, 1943, oil on canvas.

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1.26. Table in the Garden, 1943-44, oil on paper mounted on canvas.

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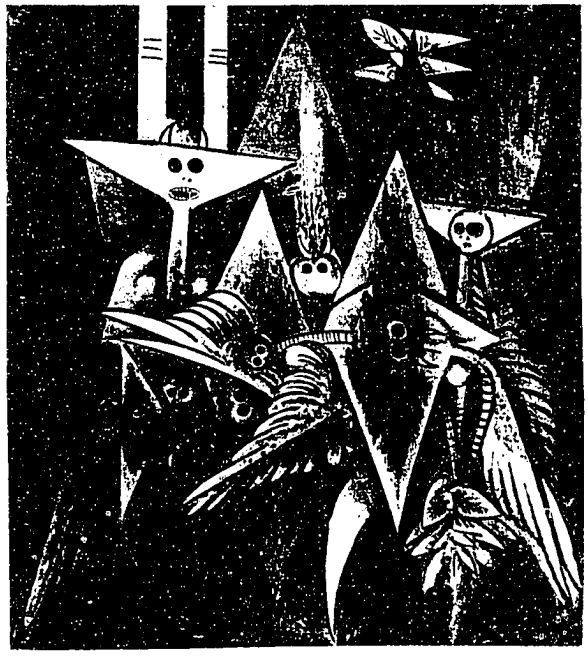
1.27. Oya (also known as The Idol), 1944, oil on canvas.

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1.28. Annunciation, 1944, oil on canvas.

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1.29. Antillean Parade, 1945, oil on canvas.

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1.30. Sur les Traces (Transformation), 1945, oil on canvas.

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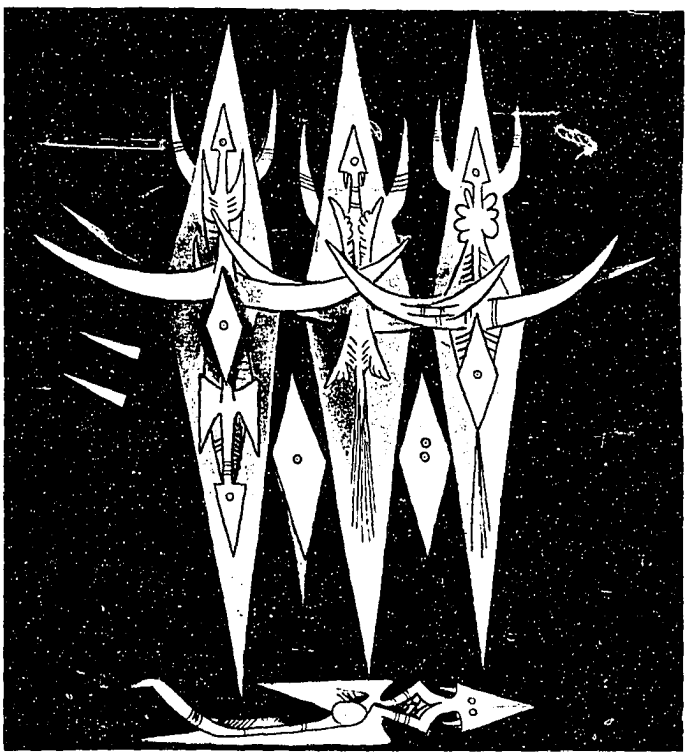
1.31. Portrait of H.H., 1944, gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

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1.32. The Watchful Spirit, 1944, oil on canvas.

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1.33. Umbral (also known as Seuil), 1950, oil on canvas.

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1.34. Triangle, 1947, oil on canvas.

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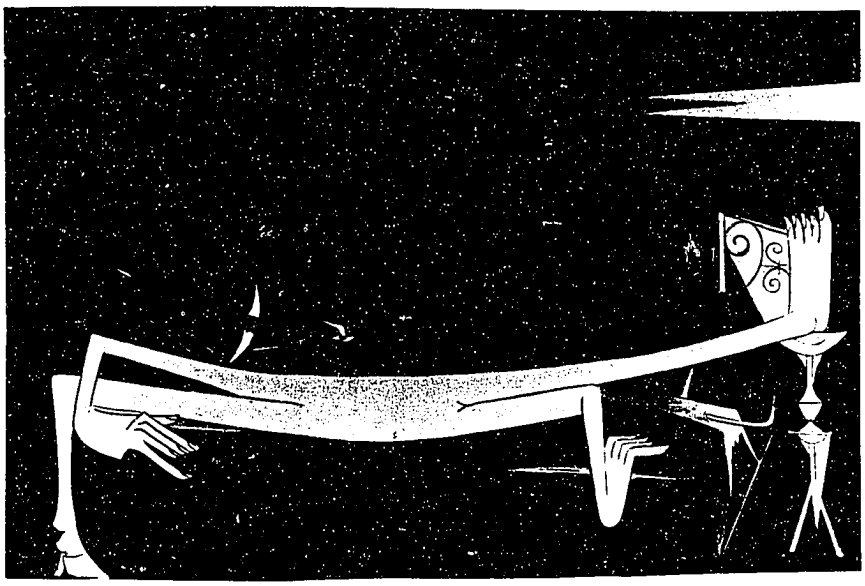
1.35. Composition [Ñañigo], 1943, gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

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2.1. Le Chevelure de Falmer, photograph of installation in the 1947 Surrealist Exhibition, Galerie Maeght, Paris.

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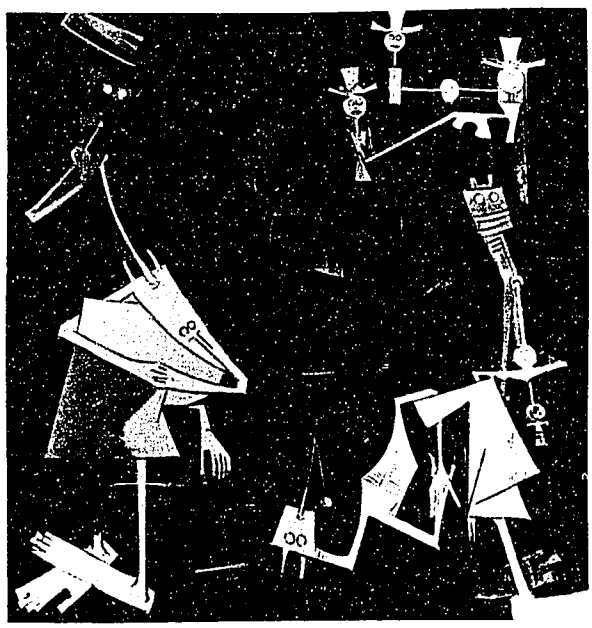
2.2. When I am not Asleep, I Dream, 1955, oil on canvas.

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2.3. Two Personages Full-Face, 1975, ceramic.

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2.4. Embro pour Yemanja, 1969, oil on canvas.

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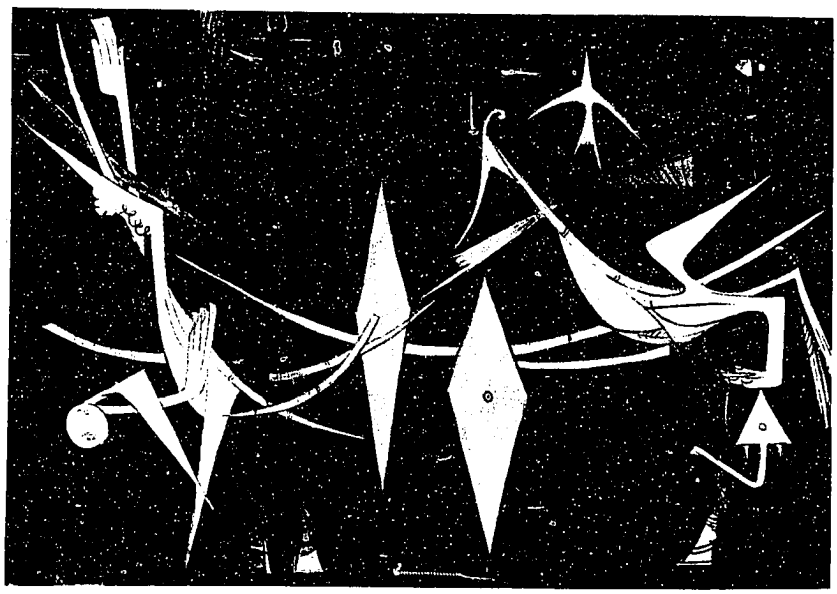
3.1. Lam in front of Untitled (Esso Mural), 1951, gouache on mortar.

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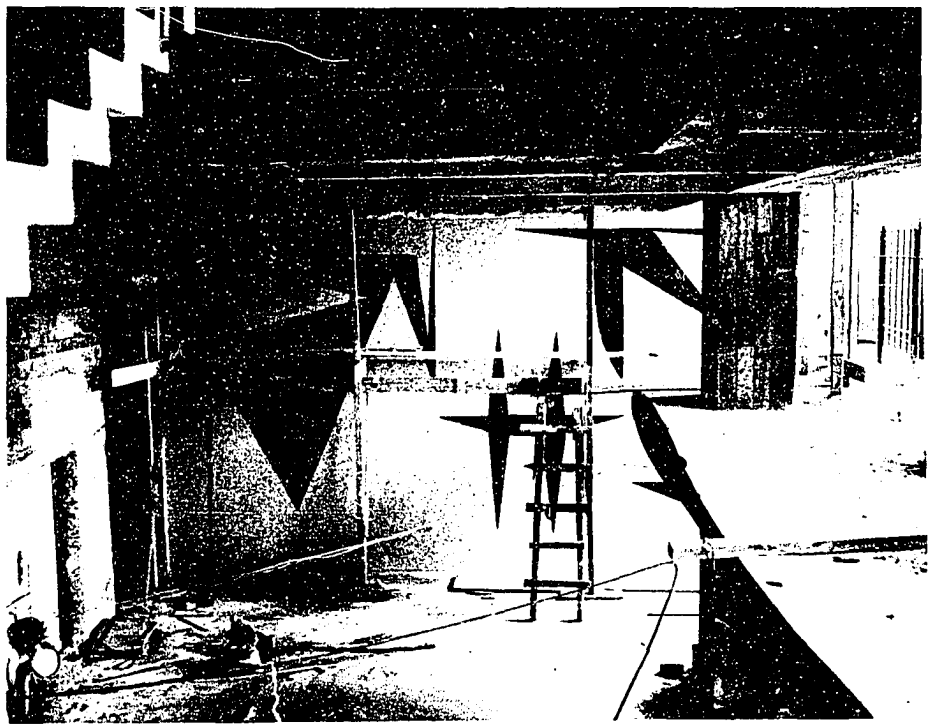
3.2. Grand Composition, 1949, oil on paper mounted on canvas

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3.3. Abstract (Hilton Hotel commission), 1957, oil on canvas.

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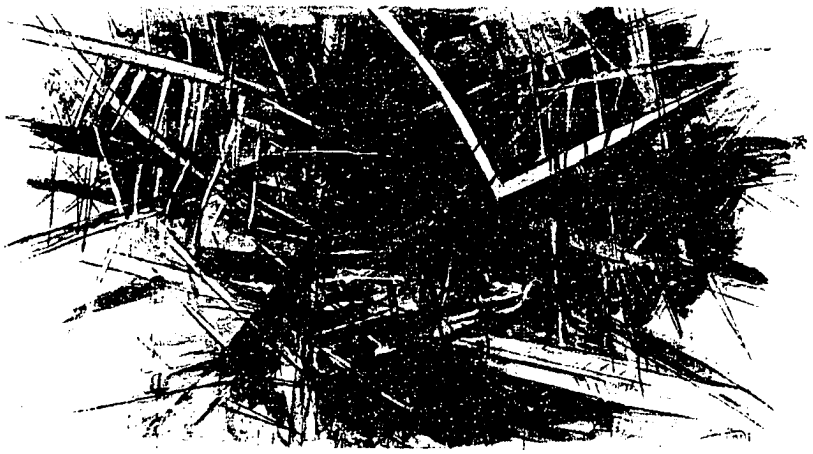
3.4. Mural (Retiro Medical), 1956, glass mosaic.

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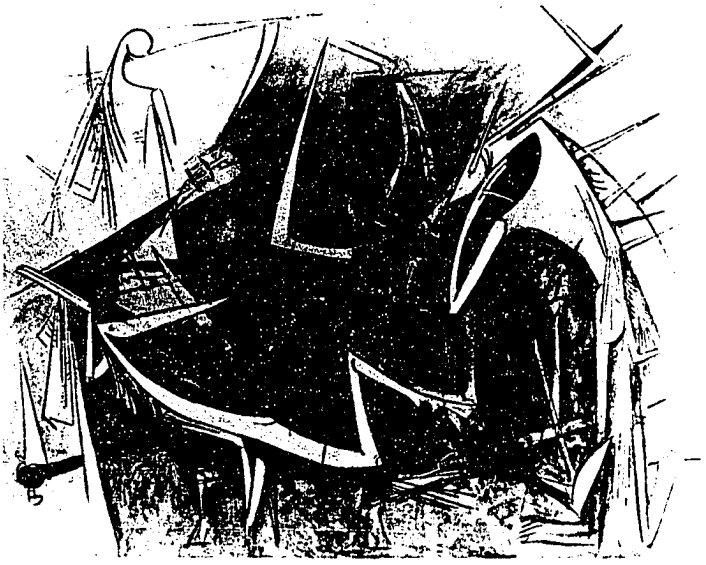
3.5. Mural (Botanical Garden, Caracas), 1957, venezuelan mosaic.

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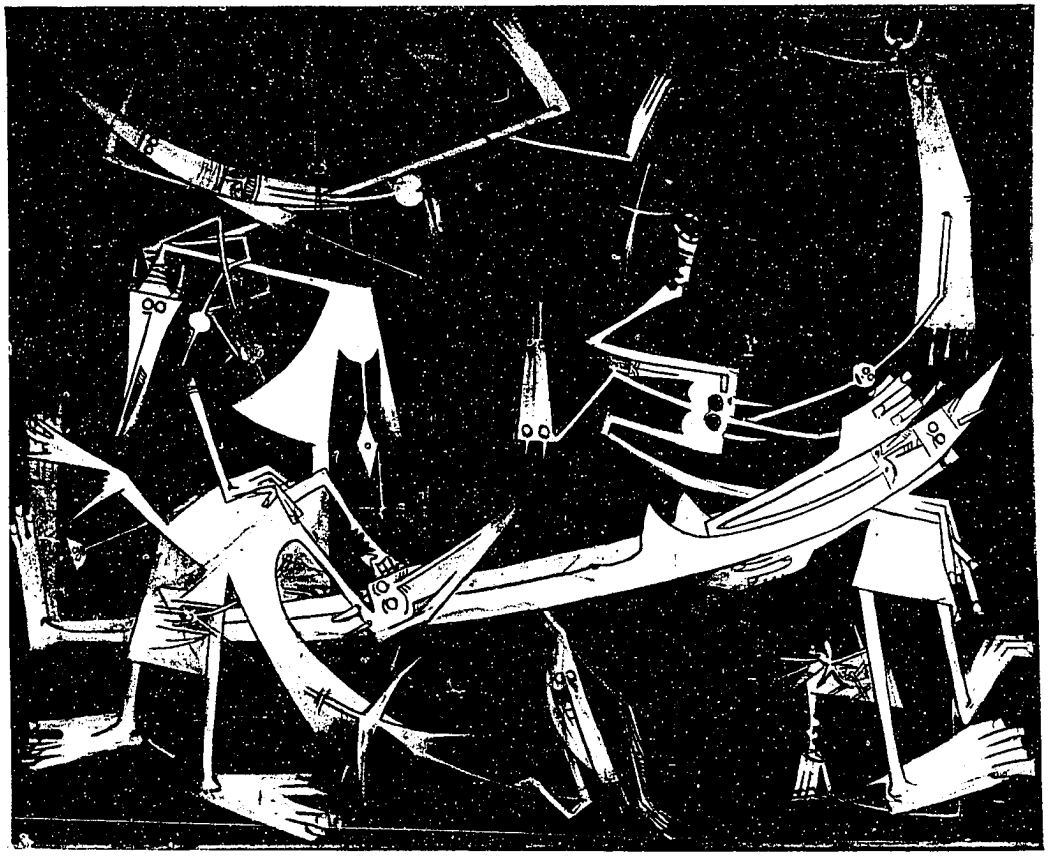
3.6. Maniqua, 1958, oil on paper mounted on canvas.

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3.7. La Sierra Maestra, 1959, oil on paper mounted on canvas.

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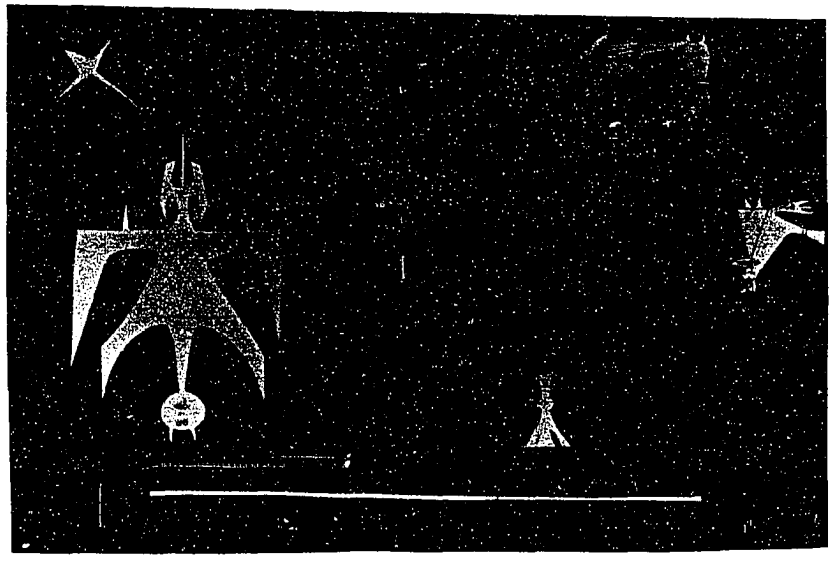
3.8. The Third World, 1966, oil on canvas.

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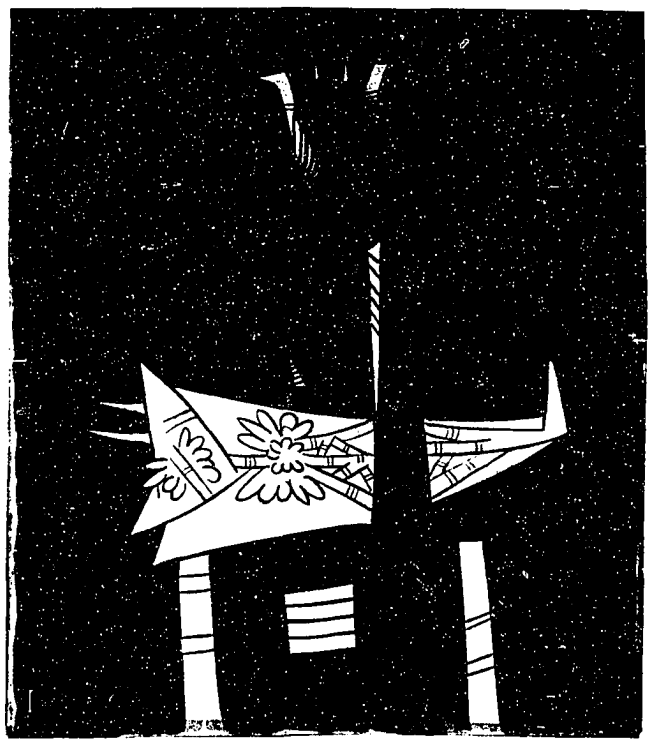
3.9. Collective Mural, 1967, The Cuban Pavilion, Havana.

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3.10. Untitled, 1953, color lithograph.

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5.1. Ibaye, 1950, oil on canvas.

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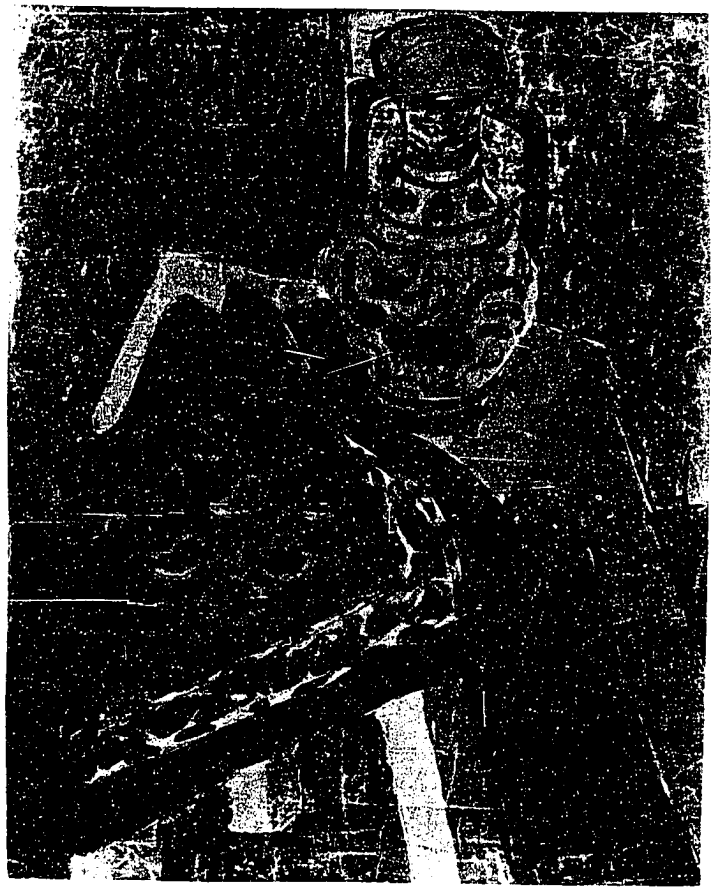
5.2. Clairvoyance, 1950, oil on canvas

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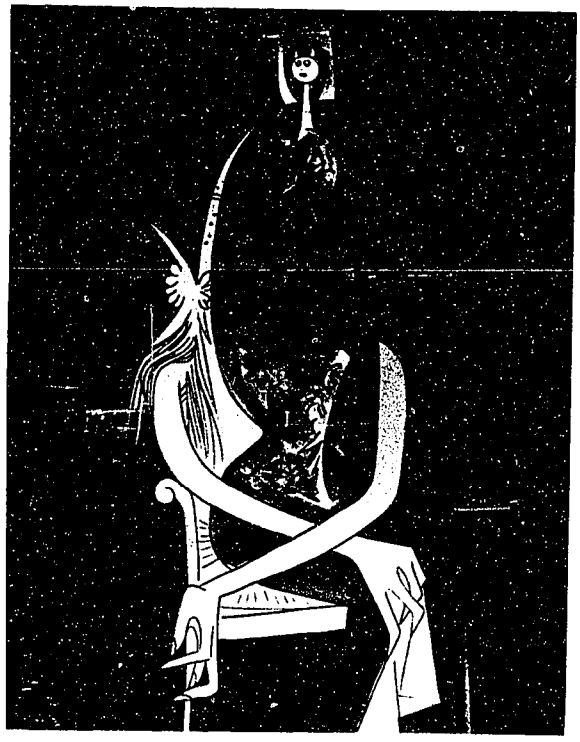
5.3. The Bethrothed of Kiriwina, 1949, oil on canvas.

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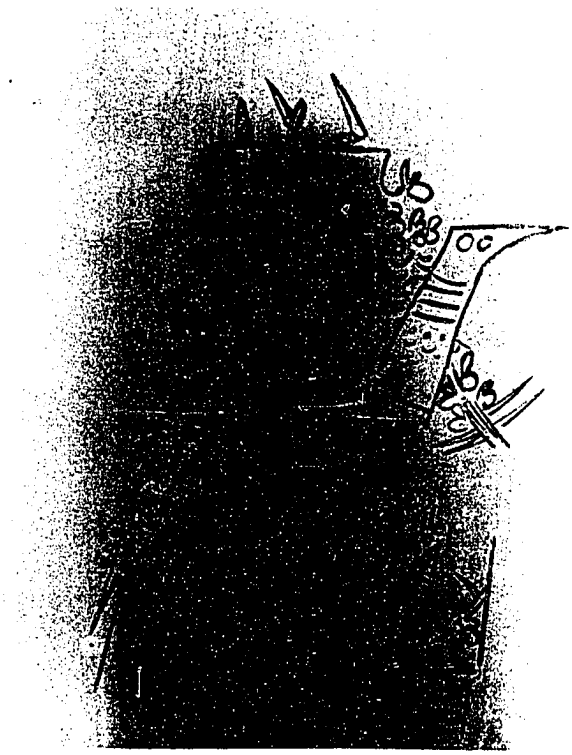
5.4. Untitled, 1937, encaustic on paper.

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5.5 Seated Woman, 1955, oil on canvas.

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5.6. Personage with Bird, 1975, oil on canvas.

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5.7. Mother and Child, 1939, gouache on paper.

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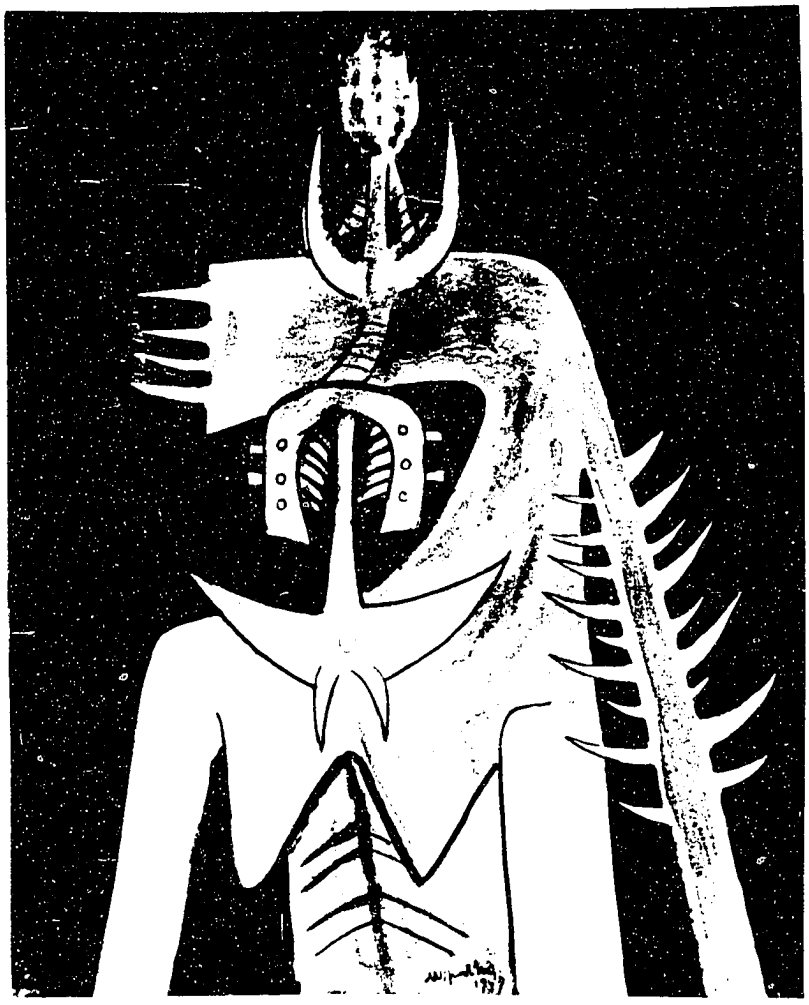
5.8. Composition (The Three Oranges), 1940, gouache on paper mounted on canvas.

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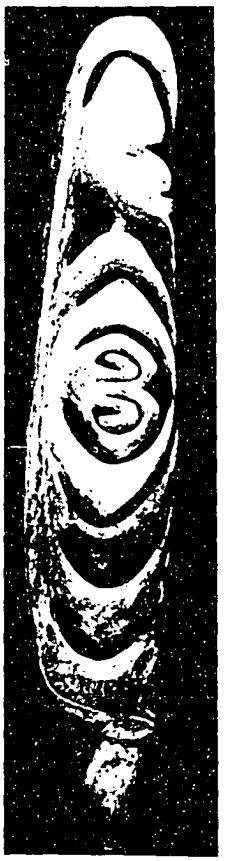
5.9. Sortilegio, 1930, oil on cardboard.

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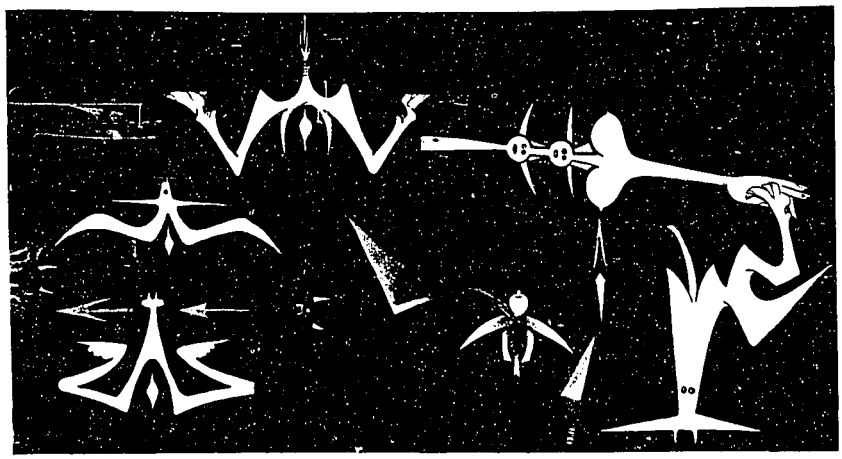
5.10. Le socier de l'océan (Alafi Incan -Ogun Feraille), 1947, oil on canvas.

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5.11. Hunting and War Figure, East Sepik province, Karawari River, n.d., wood.

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5.12. Rumblings of the Earth, 1950, oil on canvas.

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5.13. Nativity, 1947, oil on canvas.

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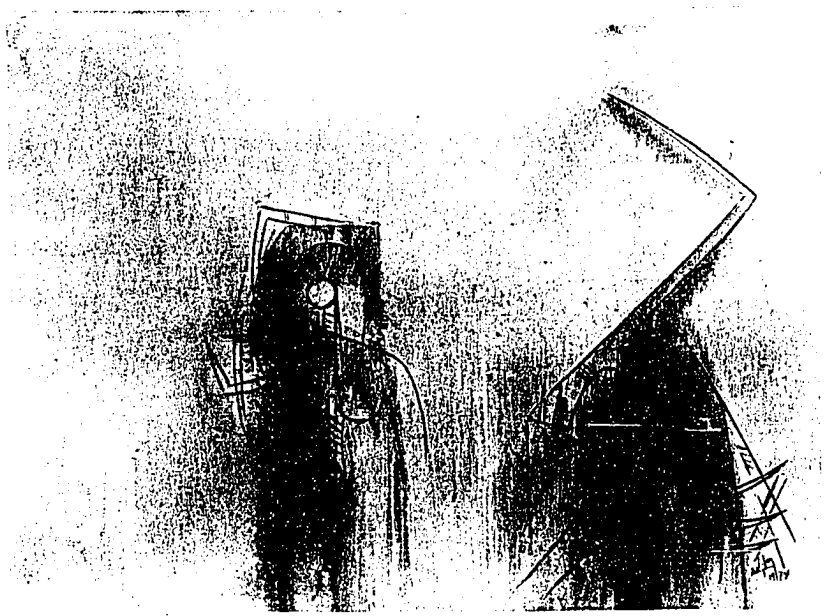
5.14. The Wedding, 1947, oil on canvas.

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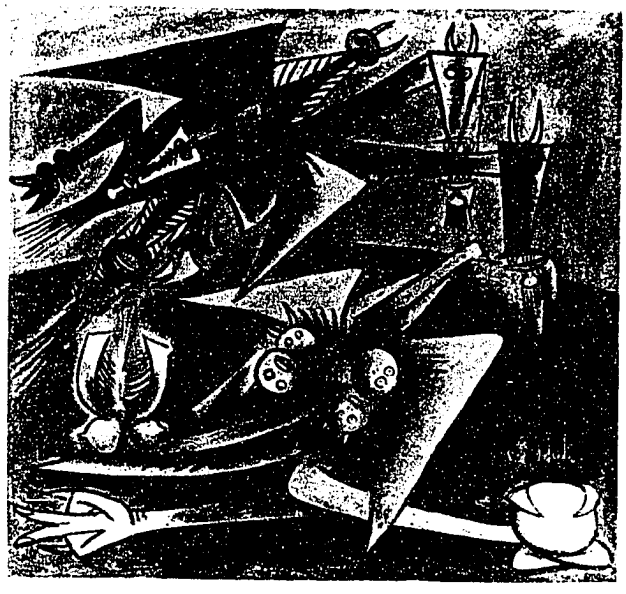
5.15. Belial, Lord of the Flies, 1948, oil on canvas.

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5.16. Composition, 1974, oil on canvas.

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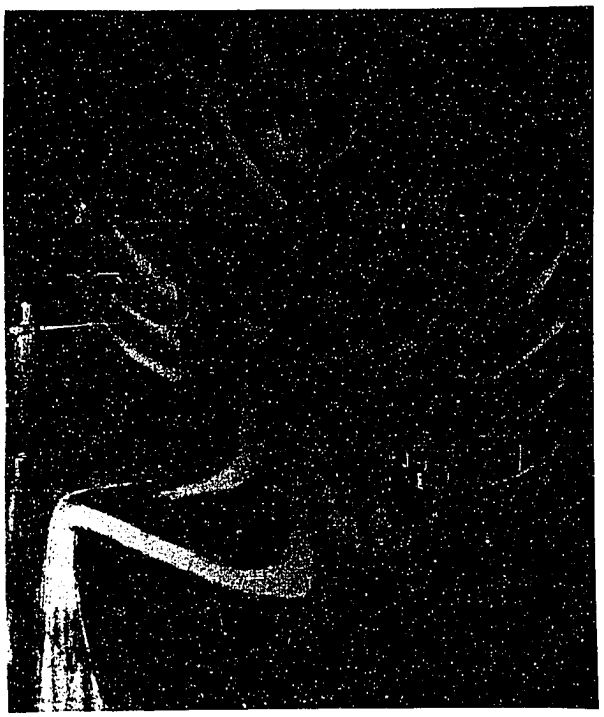
5.17. Présages, 1947, oil on canvas.

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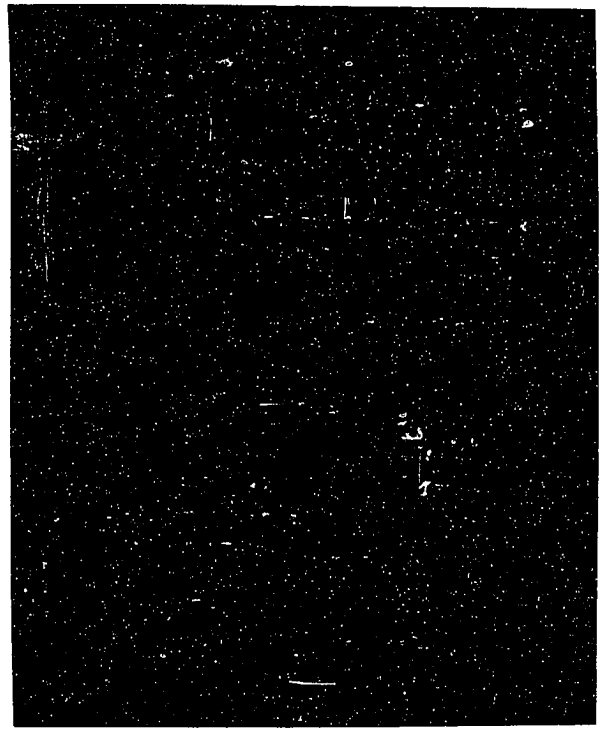
5.18. Head, 1947, oil on canvas.

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5.19. Canaima, 1947, oil on canvas.

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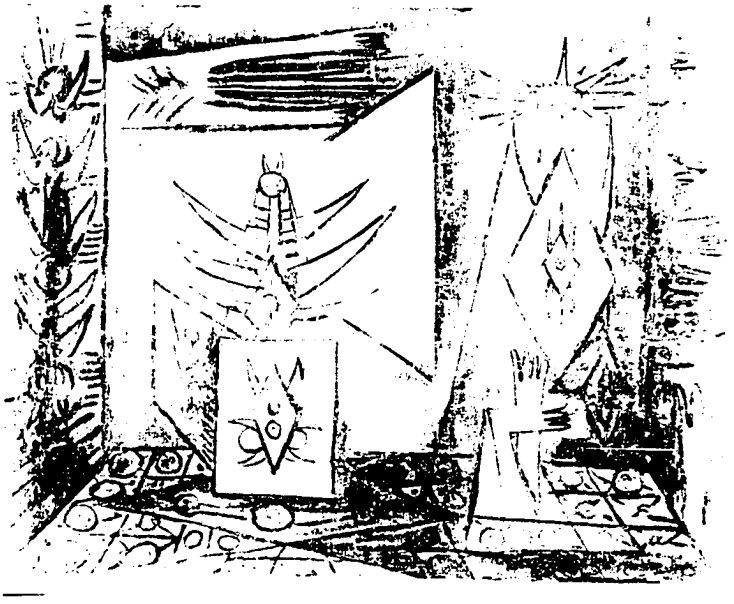
5.20. Zoomorphic Figures, 1948, oil on canvas.

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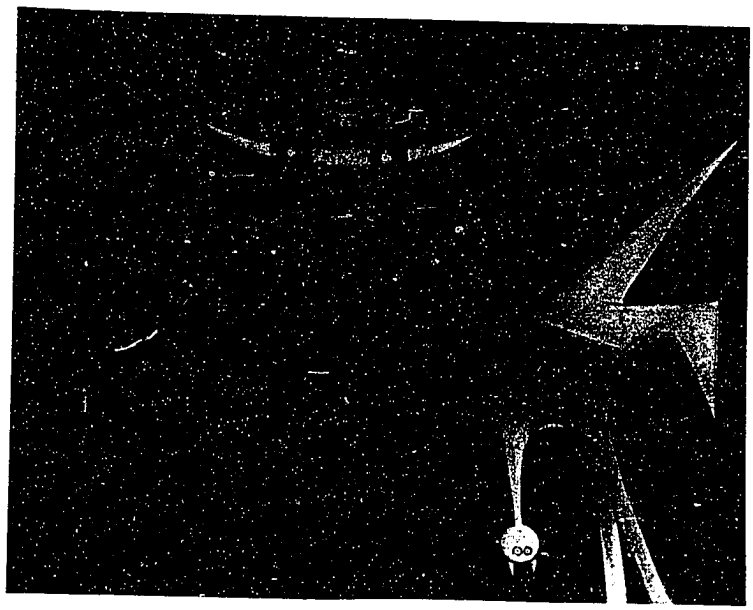
5.21. I Am (Je Suis), 1949, oil on canvas.

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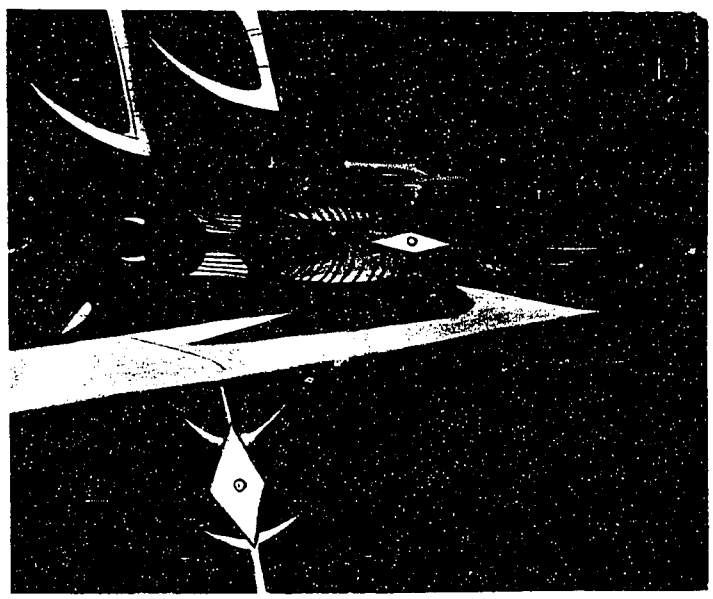
5.22. L'aterlier (Cuarto Famba), 1947, oil on canvas.

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5.23. Pasos Mimeticos, No. 2, 1951, oil on canvas.

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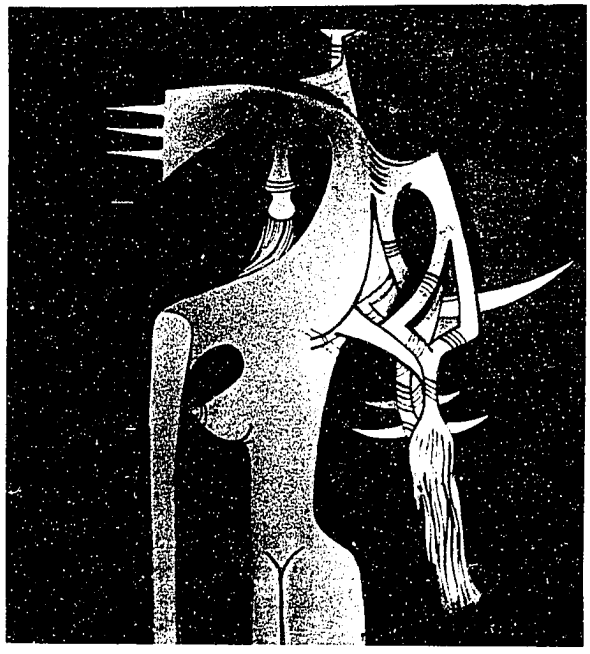
5.24. Non-Combustible, 1950, oil on canvas.

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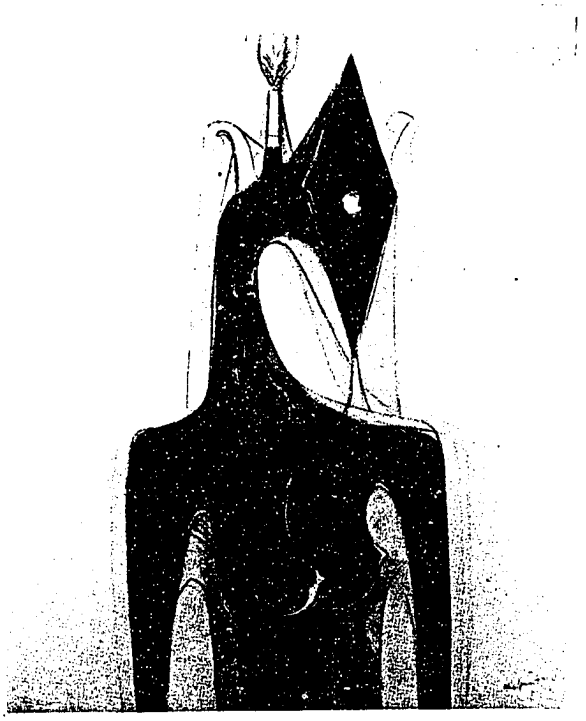
5.25. Plait of Hair, 1950, oil on canvas.

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5.26. Zambezia-Zambezia, 1950, oil on canvas.

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5.27. Femme cheval, 1950, oil and charcoal on linen.

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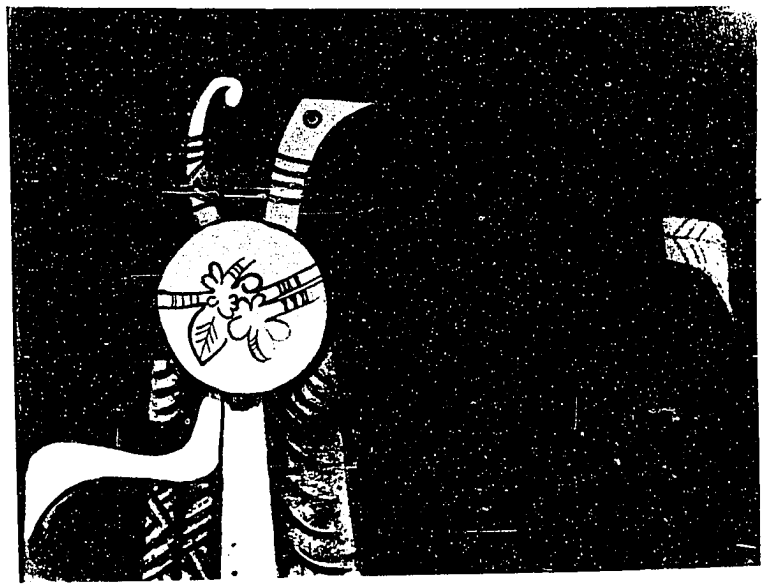
5.28. Femme avec ciseaux, 1942, gouache on paper.

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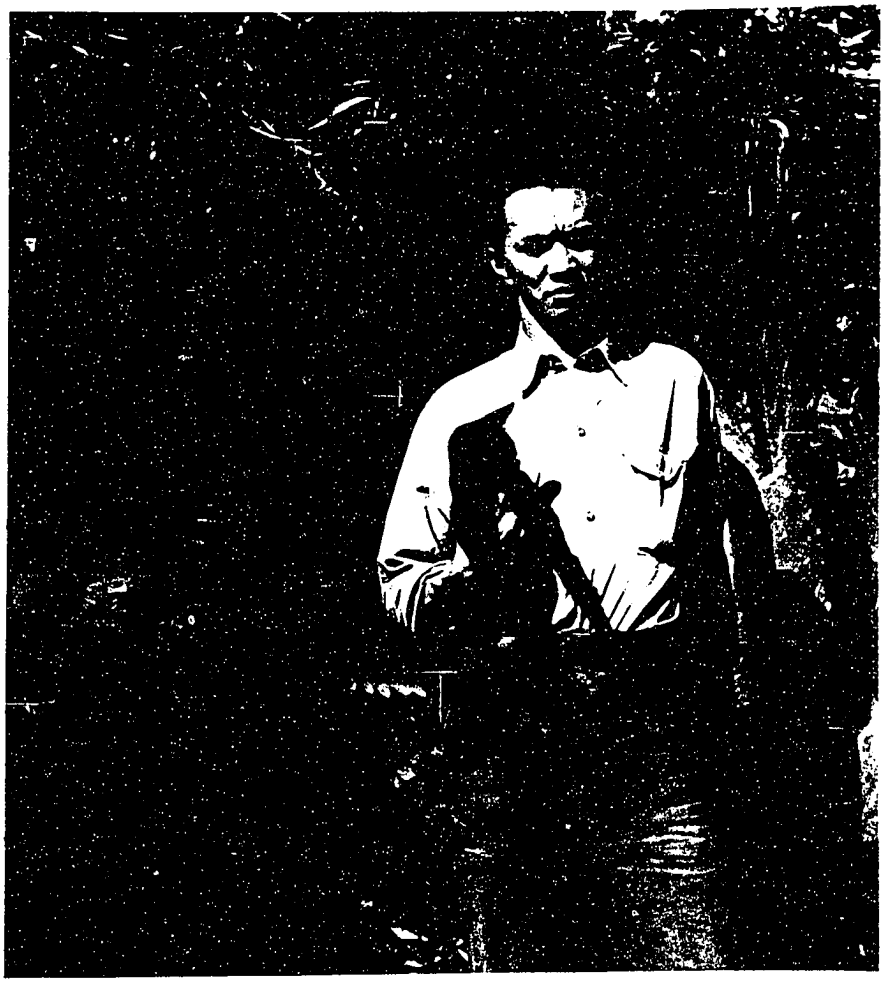
5.29. Lisamona, 1950, oil on canvas.

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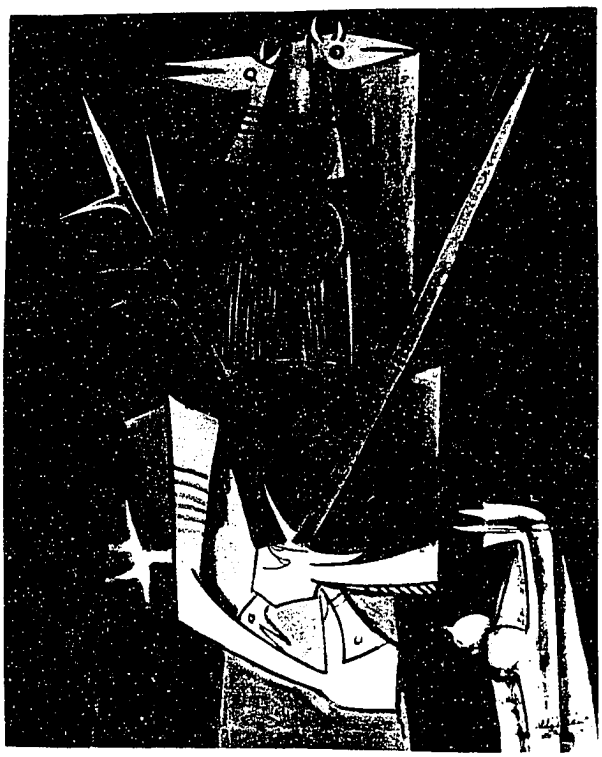
5.30. Flor/Niola, c. 1948, oil on canvas.

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5.31. Wifredo Lam in his garden with pet cat.

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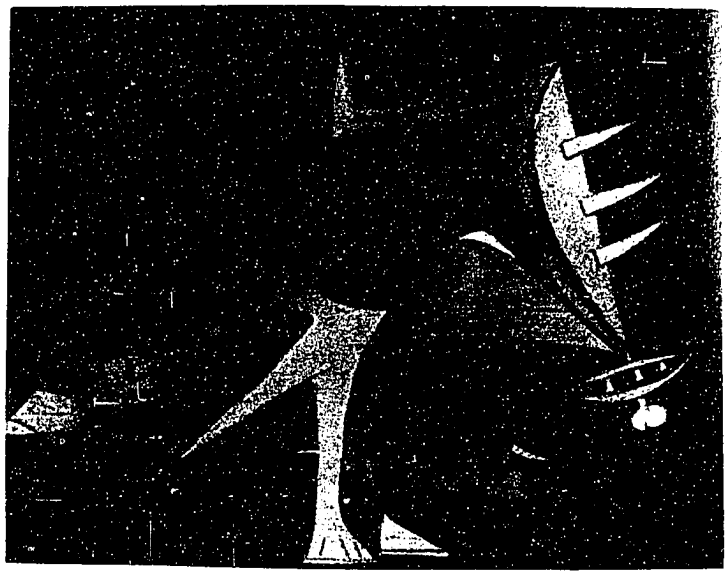
5.32. Le guerrier, 1947, oil on canvas.

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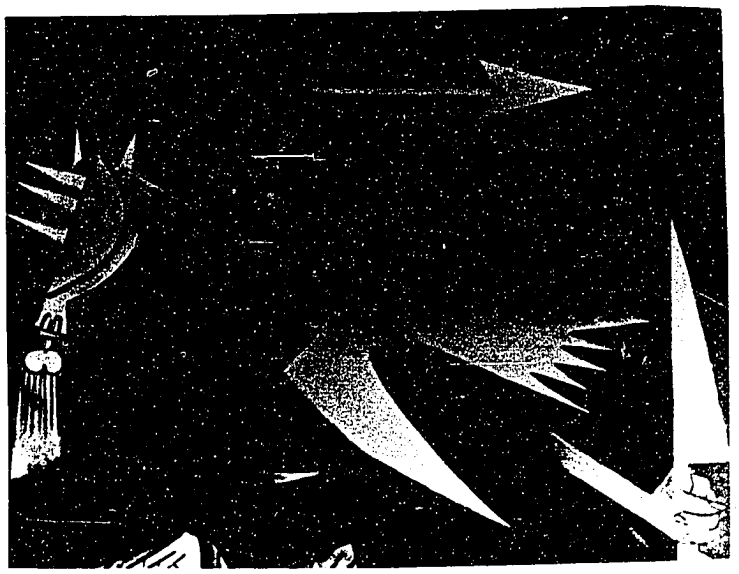
5.33. Casting of the Spell [Personage], 1947, oil on burlap.

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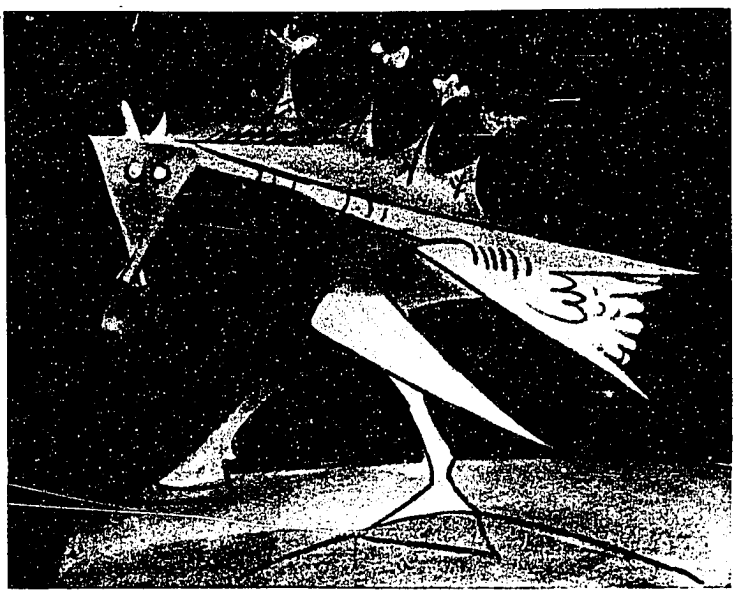
5.34. Caribbean Cock, 1953, oil on canvas.

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5.35. Caribbean Cock, 1954, oil on canvas.

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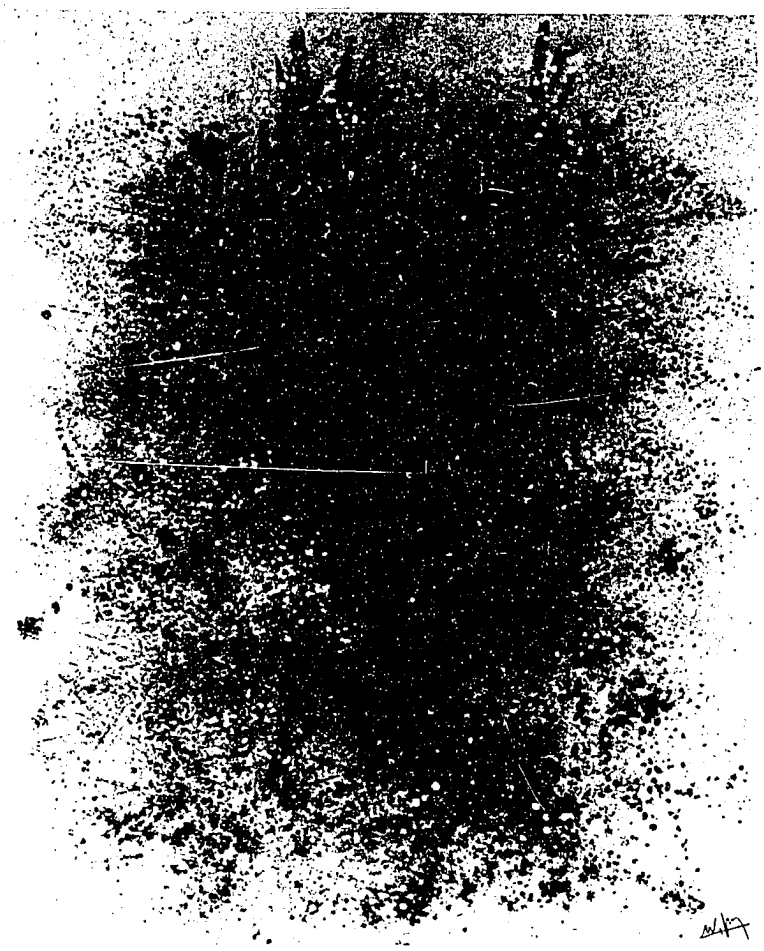
5.36. Bird on the Earth, 1953, oil on canvas.

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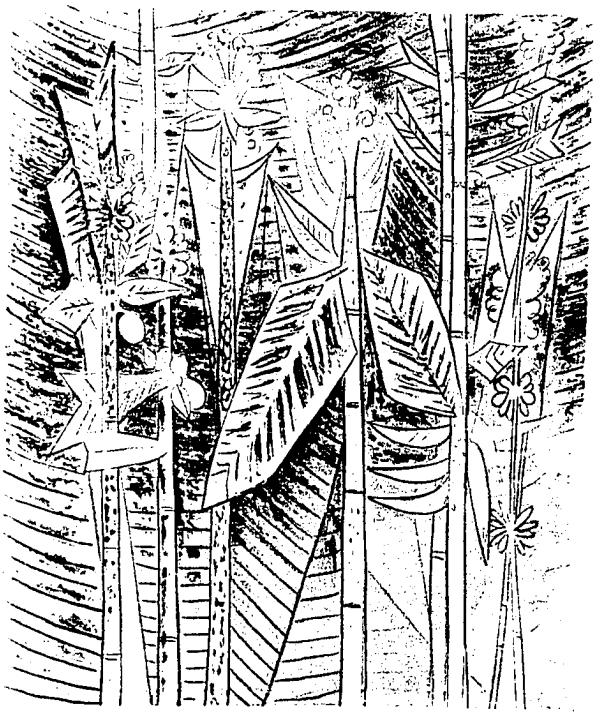
5.37. Untitled (La Brosse), 1958, oil on paper.

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5.38. Untitled (La Brosse), c. 1958, oil on canvas.

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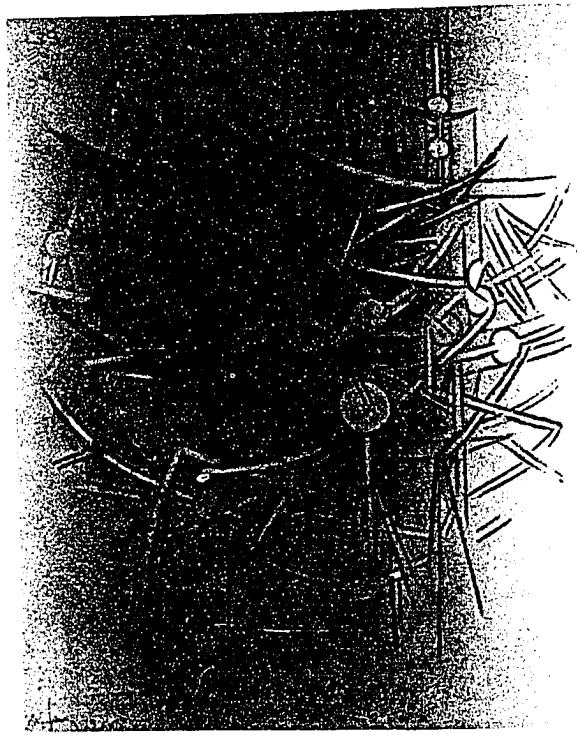
5.39. Tropical Vegetation, 1948, oil on canvas.

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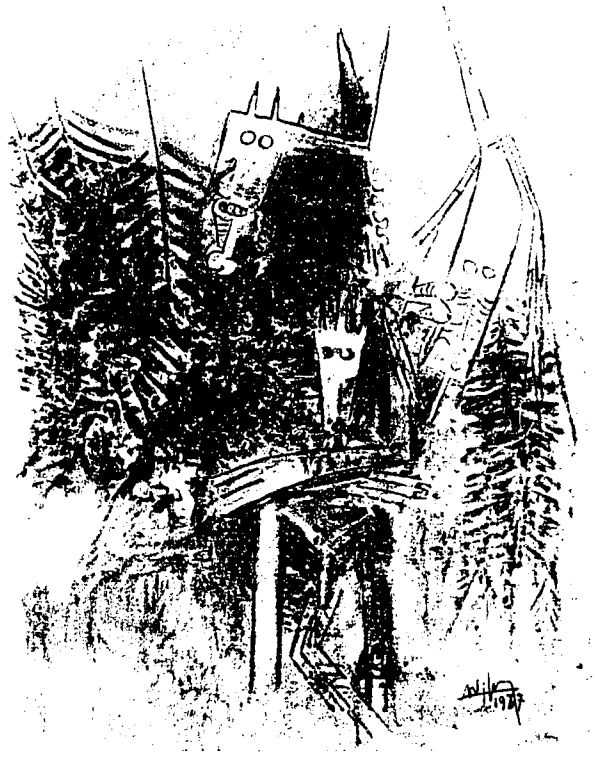
5.40. Song of the Forest, 1946, oil on canvas.

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5.41. The Barrier, 1964, oil on canvas.

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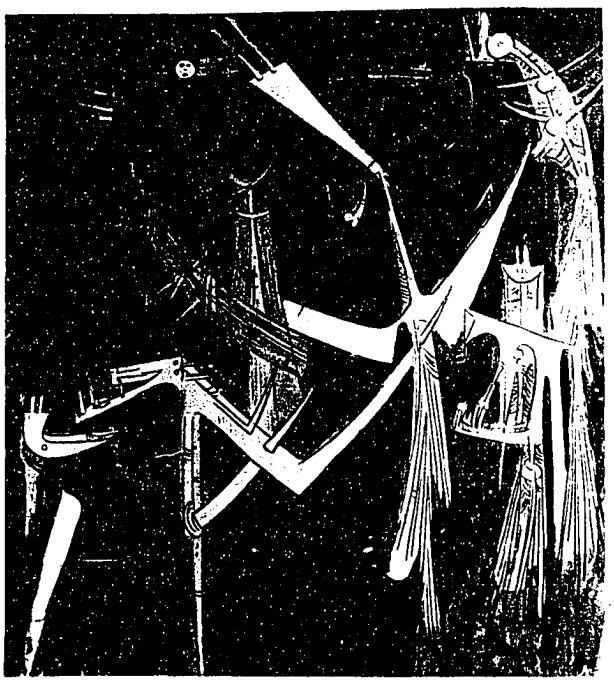
5.42. Composition fantastique, 1967, oil on canvas.

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5.43. La selva, 1981, ink on paper.

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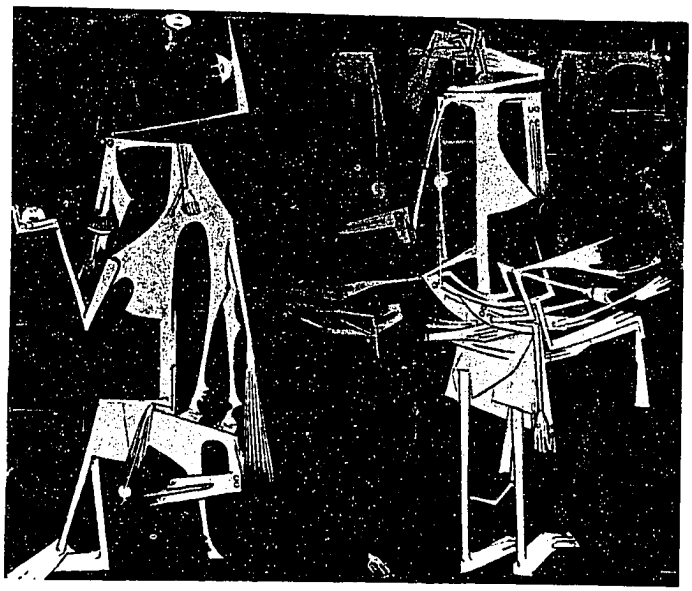
5.44. We Are waiting, 1958, oil on paper mounted on canvas.

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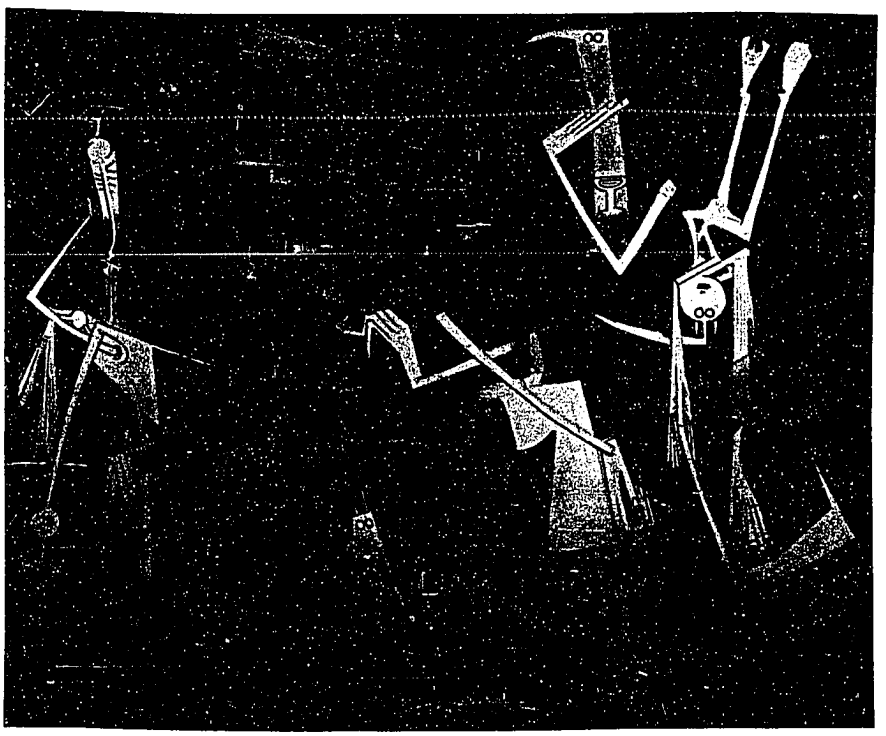
5.45. Near the Virgin Islands, 1959, oil, charcoal and pastel on canvas.

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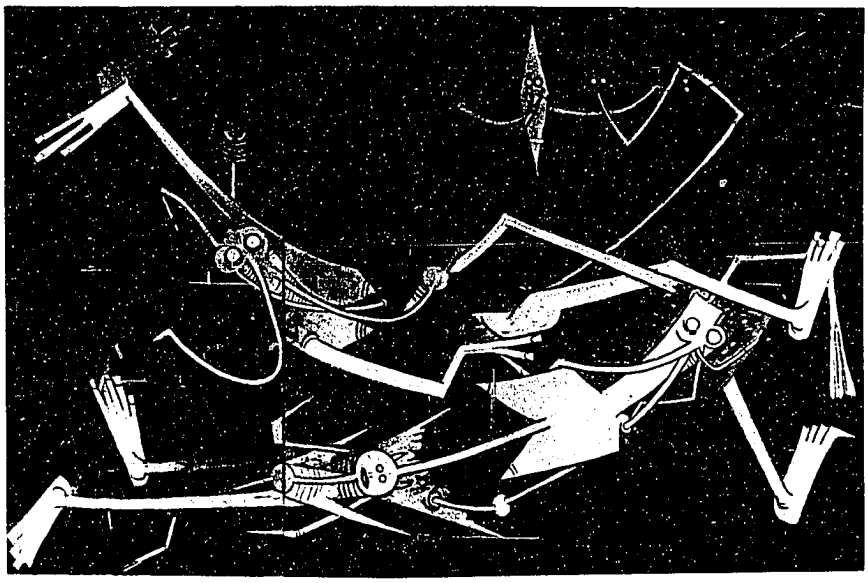
5.46. Les enfants san âmes, 1964, oil on canvas.

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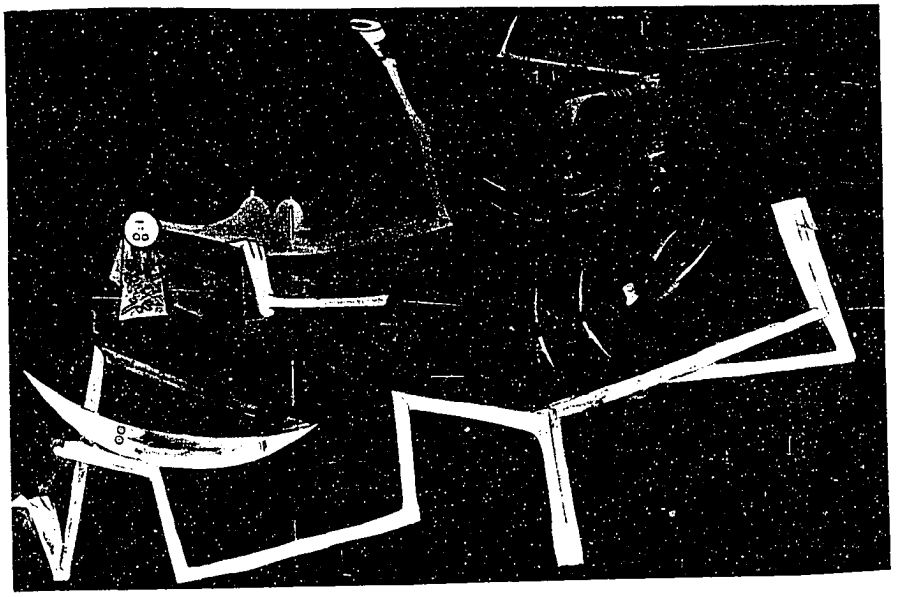
5.47. All Saints's Day, 1966, oil on canvas.

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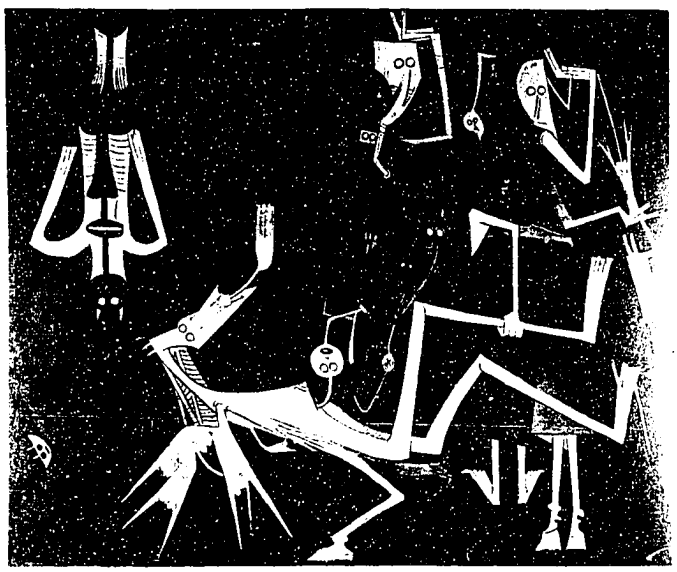
5.48. Adam and Eve, 1969, oil on canvas.

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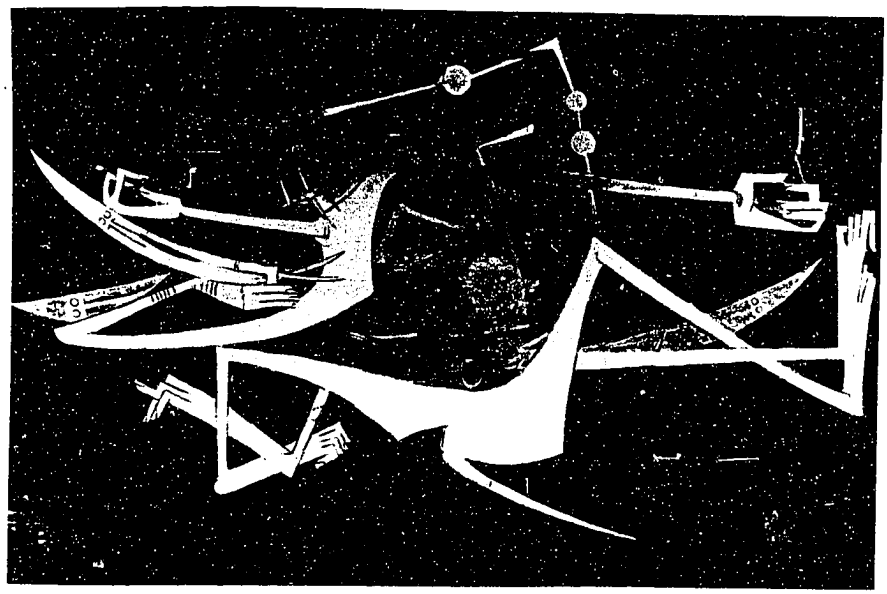
5.49. Tropic of Capricorn, 1963, oil on canvas.

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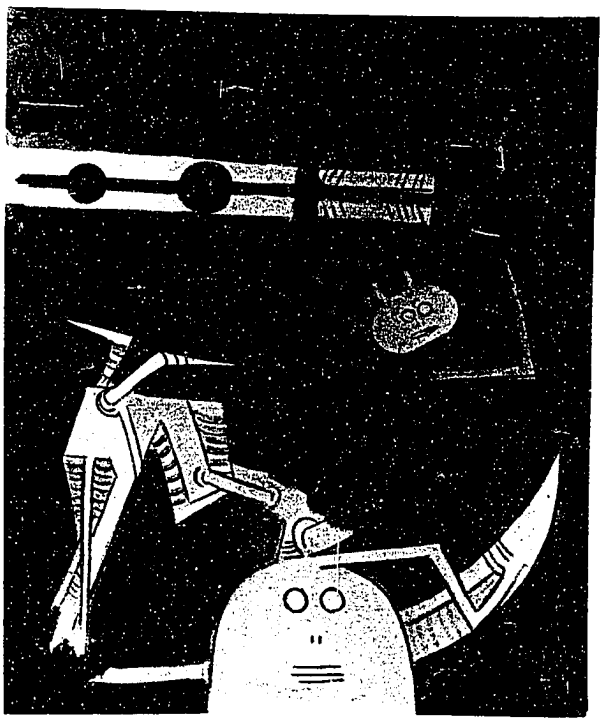
5.50. Les Abaloches Dance for Dhamballa, God of Unity, 1970, oil on canvas.

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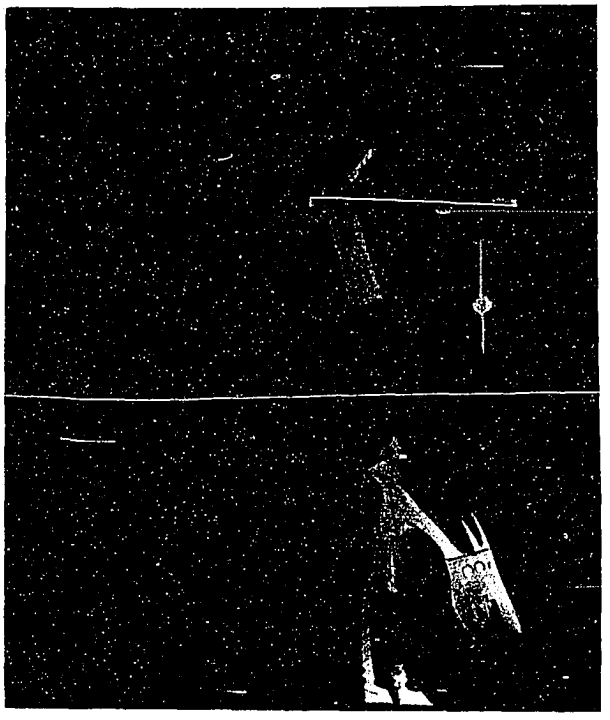
5.51. The Undesirable, 1964, oil on canvas.

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5.52. The Passing of Fear, 1969, oil on canvas.

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5.53. Dog with Two Heads, 1954, oil on canvas.

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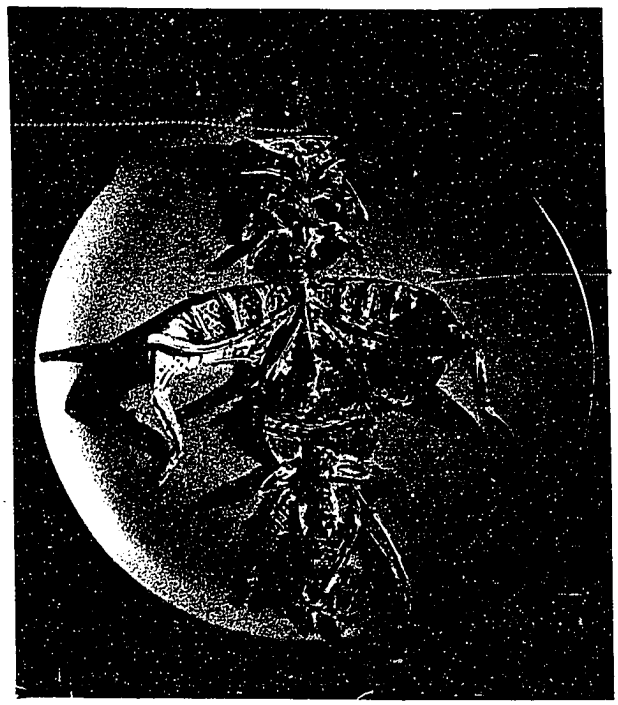
5.54. Les Frères, 1969, oil on canvas.

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5.55. Osun, Elegua pour Yemaya, 1963, oil on canvas.

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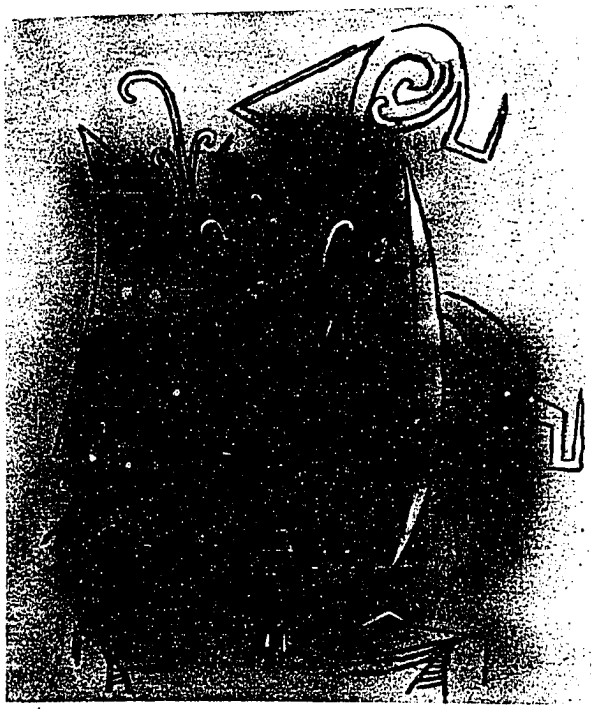
5.56. Bird, 1975, ceramic.

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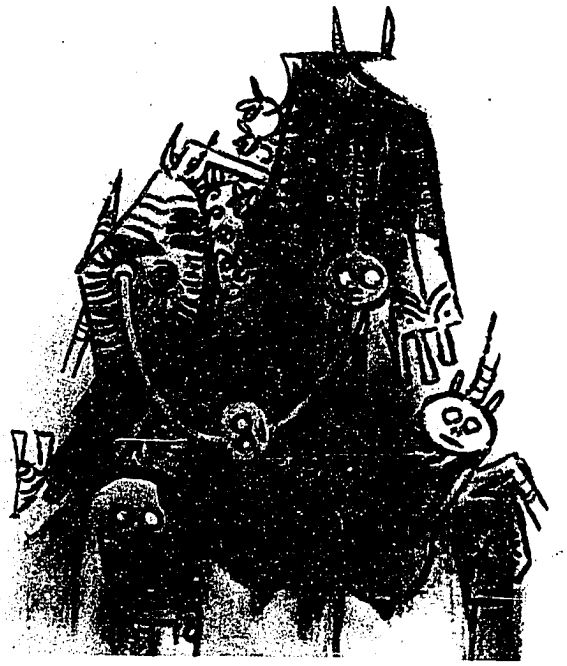
5.57. Personage 19/24, 1972, oil on canvas.

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5.58. Composition, 1973, oil on canvas.

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5.59. Group, 1973, oil on canvas.

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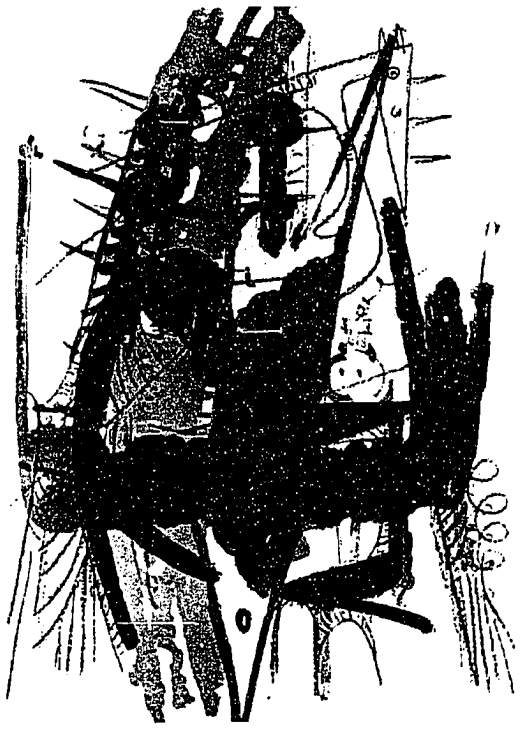
5.60. Composition, 1976, oil on canvas.

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5.61. Personage 7/24, 1971, oil on canvas.

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5.62. From Untitled, 1963, color lithograph.

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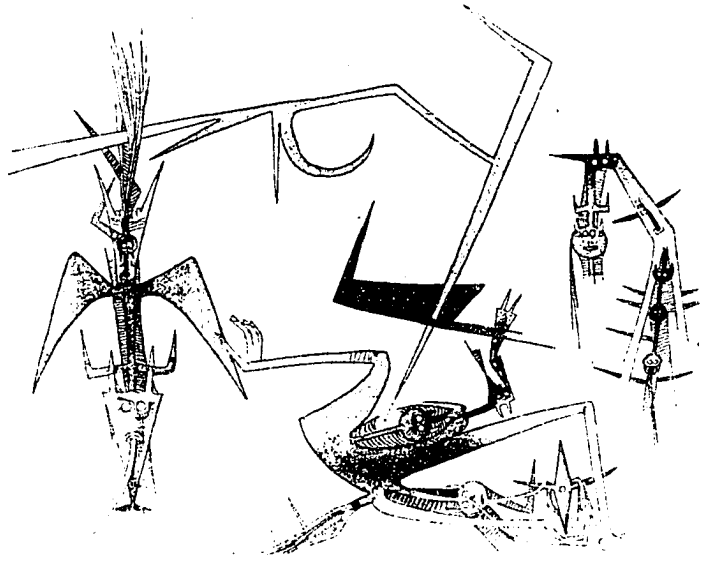
5.63. From Images, 1962, color etching.

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5.64. From Apostroph' Apocalypse, 1972, etching.

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5.65. From Visible, Invisible, 1972, etching and color aquatint.

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5.66. From Contre un maison sèche, 1976, etching and color aquatint.

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5.67. From Annunciation, 1982, etching and color aquatint.

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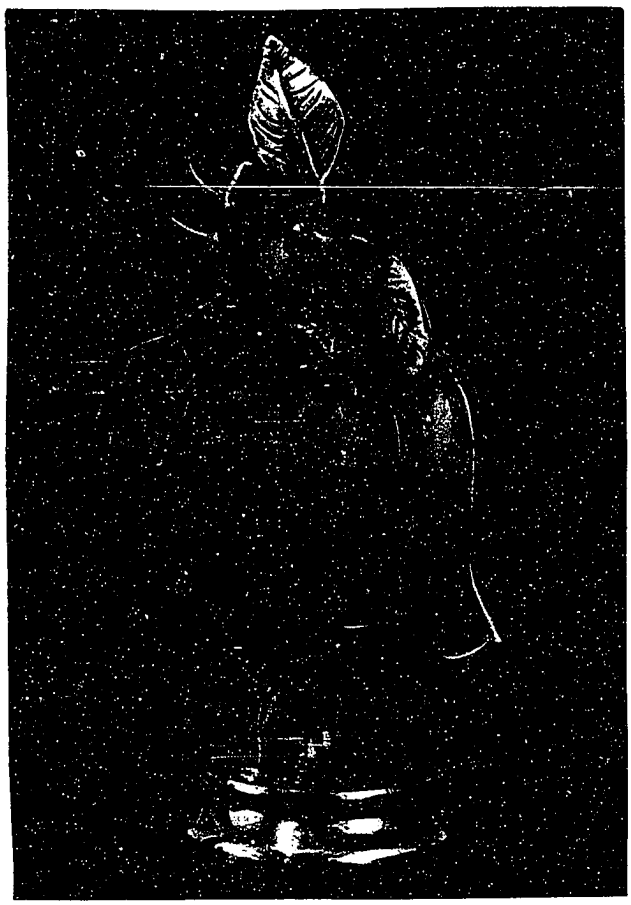
5.68. Snail, 1975, ceramic.

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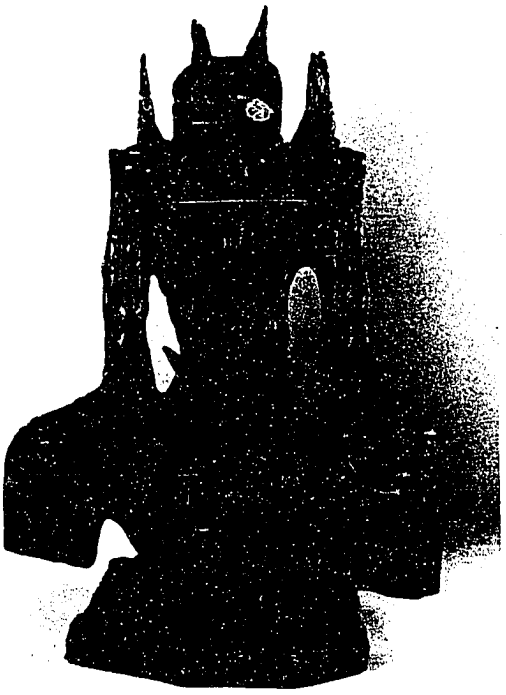
5.69. Figure, 1975, ceramic.

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5.70. Mutation Vegétale, 1970, bronze.

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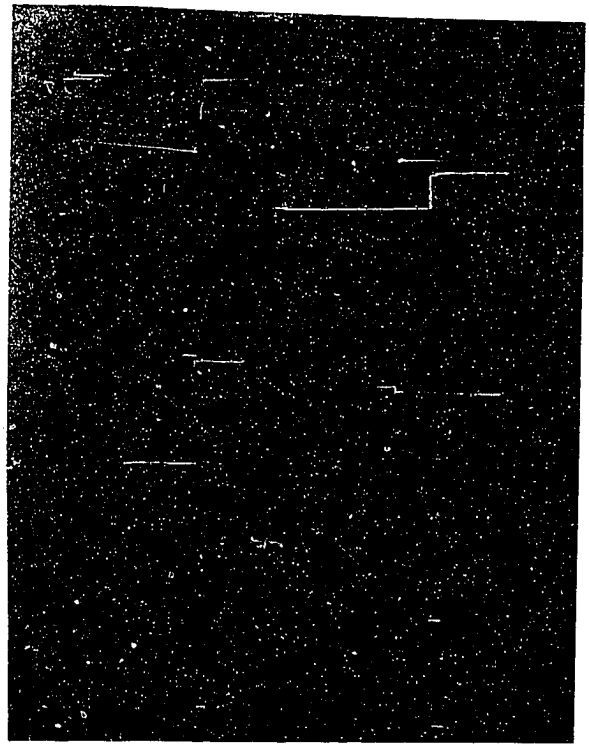
5.71. Grande Yemanja, 1977, bronze.

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6.1. The Astral Harp, 1944, oil on canvas.

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6.2. Femme, 1942, gouache on paper.

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