

Part III



Change
this
picture
use the
one on p 98



but
lighten
it up.

Fernande

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In the summer of 1904, when Picasso met Fernande Olivier, he was twenty-two and she had just turned twenty-three. If their affair began soon after they first spoke to each other, they would not begin to live together until the end of the summer of 1905, a full year later. Every indication provided by Fernande makes it clear that it was Picasso, not she, who was in love for the interval between.

Since Fernande is agreeably candid in her translated book of memoirs, *Picasso and His Friends*, published in 1933, and even more so in her second set of memoirs, *Souvenirs Intimes*, written in 1955 but not published in Paris until 1988 (and as yet untranslated), we can probably accept a good deal of her evaluation of the relationship. Her presentation has authority. Once Pablo and Fernande commence to share his studio at the Bateau Lavoir, Fernande becomes the first woman whom he is ready to accept as a serious mate. He has passed from male bonding—at the least!—with Pallarés, Casagemas, Sabartés, and Max Jacob to the constant company of a woman who is neither a whore nor a playmate but a woman in his domain, his serious mistress. According to Fernande, he was ready to marry her, and was uncontrollably jealous. (That was with some cause, we can assume, since she was tall, red-headed, and beautiful; she stood out vividly in their impoverished bohemian circle.) For that matter, she had become a successful artist's model before they met and was much in demand by other painters.

Indeed, in the week preceding the hot summer Sunday when she finally agreed to move in with him, Fernande had been posing for two well-known academic stalwarts named Corman and Sicard, and they were each in the middle of large can-

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vases for which she was the model; Picasso, however, insisted she stop. He would not trust such a situation. How many nude and half-draped models had he seduced himself, after all! Besides, he could amplify his own memoirs with the sexual anecdotes of a hundred other painters. As Fernande writes:

I no longer work. Corman, the old buzzard, understands when I inform him that I can't pose, and he doesn't insist. Sicard wrote to Picasso, however: "Come with her, then, during these sessions. There is only another two weeks of work."¹

"I don't give a fuck,"² Picasso was to reply. He certainly didn't. If he was going to live with a woman, why then treat her with less possessiveness than he brought to his paintings? Would he allow another artist to put a stroke to one of his works-in-progress?

They would not separate until the spring of 1912, and in those seven years Picasso was to move from the Blue Period through the Rose Period and on to the explorations that would result by 1907 in *Les Femmes d'Alger*. By 1908, he had entered Cubism and his collaboration with Georges Braque, and by 1909, at the age of twenty-eight, he was already an international figure, and prosperous enough to move with Fernande into a bourgeois apartment on the boulevard de Clichy. He had by that time become fast friends with Guillaume Apollinaire and Gertrude Stein and was on the verge of becoming the innovative center of the most passionate artistic controversy of the preceding fifty years in Paris, larger, perhaps, in its impact upon the avant-garde than the visual shocks presented by Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Pissarro, Seurat, Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, or *les Fauves*. With Cubism he had become, for some, a mutilator of aesthetics, for others, the artist-as-hero, which is to say he had already commenced to be *Picasso*. As *Picasso* he would live in the forefront of Western culture for the next sixty years and more; he would die as the wealthiest painter who had ever lived, and possibly the most prolific.

A great deal was obviously shaped in him over those seven years from 1905. Let us enjoy the presence of the number. Fernande was the first of the seven major mistresses and wives who would exercise a measurable influence upon his work. If he has often been depicted as a monster in his relations with women, let him also be characterized as wholly magnetized by such relationships. He would extract a unique inspiration out of the different style in which he lived with each woman. And he would honor each of them in his fashion. Even in depicting his detestation of his first wife, Olga, or in the portraits of Dora Maar and his second wife, Jacque-

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line, which could hardly be more savage, we can see that he lived, nonetheless, with these women in a manner that some men never do: He was *in* each relationship—he saw the women as his equal. No matter how hideously he presented these three women, he could never have delineated them so if he had not entered into a

Bust of a Woman with Self-Portrait, February 1929. Oil on canvas, 28 x 24 in.



redline
slightly



Woman Seated on a Chair, 1939. Gouache, 18 x 15 in.

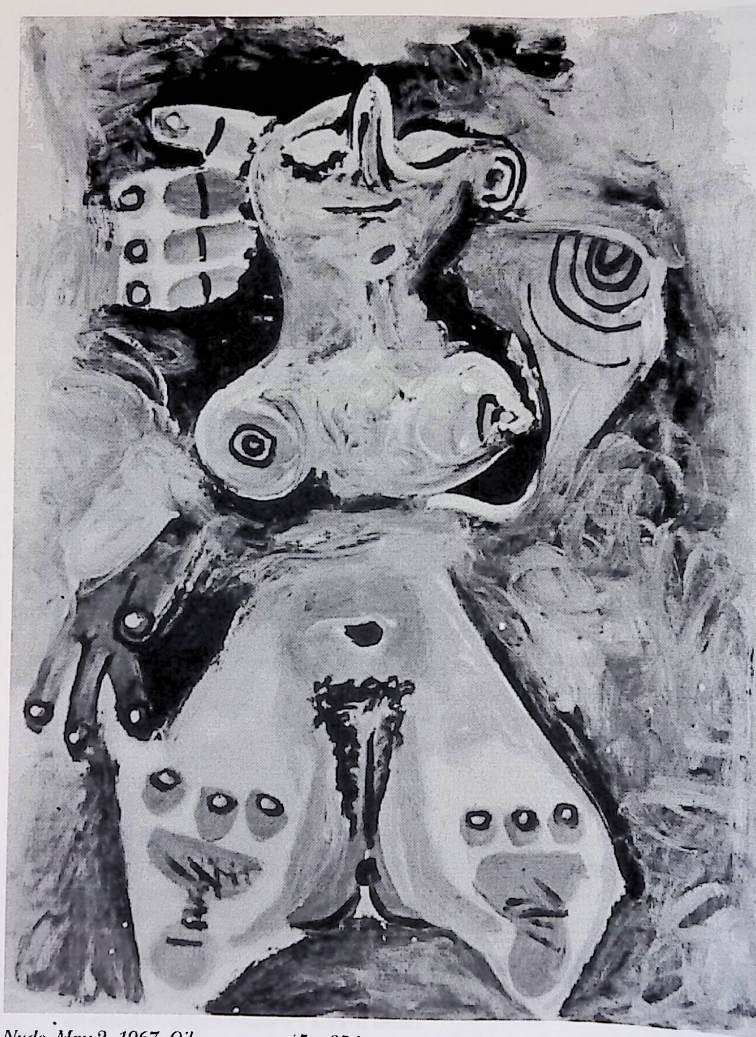
depth of revulsion for what their relationship had become, and that, in turn, disclosed how hideous were his own spiritual sores. The physiognomy of his psyche is present in each of these portrayals, respectively, of Olga, Dora, and Jacqueline.

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enlarge
slightly

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Nude, May 2, 1967. Oil on canvas, 45 x 35 in.

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Such extremes of cruelty would come later—by which time (in the late 1920s and 1930s, and certainly by the 1960s) he was as wealthy as Midas and profoundly disappointed. He had taken his long decline down an aesthetic retreat from the great discoveries between 1907 and 1912. Those had been the five most creative and astonishing years of his life. But for the working presence of Georges Braque, he had been alone, each Cubist painting a reconnaissance through ambiguities of perception that would have endangered the sanity of a weaker man. In the face of such inner peril, this Spaniard, of weak and intermittent machismo, drenched in his own temerity, full of sentiments of social and intellectual inferiority, short in stature, was possessed of the ambition to mine universes of the mind no one had yet explored. His female companion for these most creative years of his life was a woman who is not without interest in her own right. While their love will suffer the fate of most passionate relationships—at a point they will fail to come closer,

and so drift just a little apart, thereby to grow some distance apart—she is, nonetheless, the first of those women who will love him for all of his life. Since it is more than likely that she gave him the dignity to believe in himself as a man, so too did he acquire that indispensable buttress to extreme ambition, a measure of self-respect in the social world. Of course, she is worth our close attention!

Fernande Olivier has described herself as indolent, and the description has generally been taken up. Some biographers speak of her as a charming odalisque or as “la belle Fernande,” and she has even written:



van Dongen, *Portrait of Fernande Olivier*, 1906.
Pastel on paper, 28 x 24 in.

I remember our childish joy on those days when Picasso managed to make a few extra francs. He used to spend it on eau-de-Cologne because I adored scent.

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Then there were the days when we were obliged to fast, and the piles of books bought at the little bookshop in the rue des Martyrs: sustenance which I found essential since Picasso, out of a sort of morbid jealousy, forced me to live like a recluse. But with some tea, books, a couch, not much housework to do, I was very very happy.

It was Picasso who swept the studio and did the shopping. I was, I admit, extremely lazy.³

Dreamy may be the more generous word. From an early age she lived with the best of her memories and the sweetest of her fantasies under signally unhappy circumstances. If her literary gifts are modest, still they are not without talent. If she had had a better childhood, where more attention was devoted to her, it is not unlikely that she would have become a good novelist. Her perception is incisive, and in *Souvenirs Intimes*, written when she was seventy-five years old, on the basis, she claims, of a journal she kept through her adolescence, a variety of sharply drawn characters are seen with the same unsentimental clarity that Picasso brought to his portraits in late adolescence; the personages in this second book are evaluated with enough composure to suggest that she has absorbed a few lessons from Flaubert. The list of novelists manqué is always long enough to wind out to the horizon, but Fernande Olivier did live with a great painter through his most profound period of artistic transition and so we are in debt to her for *Souvenirs Intimes*. She will have considerably more to tell us about Picasso than does Gertrude Stein.

The accepted view of Fernande is that she was not only lazy but lusty, a healthy female animal, born to model and share a painter's bed; but then, the common view of Picasso is that he was a priapic demon and screwed everything not nailed down, a glorious oversimplification created in large part by the painter himself. Over her late adolescence, Fernande had to travel through a succession of miserable experiences. Her romantic life began abominably, at the age of seventeen, and for the next five years, she feared, detested, and put up with attacks of copulation—so she virtually saw it—as a necessary concomitant to having any relations with men at all. On the other hand, she had to deal with men constantly. Having left home without a trade, nothing was more logical in her situation than to become an artist's model.

Let it be said that by the time we turn the page and allow her to speak for herself, she has picked up a good bit of the art of living with a man as best she can.

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I was staying at 13 rue de Ravignan when I first noticed a rather curious person who had just moved into the house . . .

There was nothing especially attractive about him at first sight, though his oddly insistent expression compelled one's attention. It would have been practically impossible to place him socially, but his radiance, an inner fire one sensed, gave him a sort of magnetism . . .¹

That is from her first memoir, *Picasso and His Friends*. As if it were all one work, we can pick up her account in the second book, *Souvenirs Intimes*.

For some time now, I've been finding him always in my path, and he looks at me with large, heavy eyes which are both acute and pensive at the same time, full of contained fire, and he stares so intensely that I can hardly keep myself from looking back. I cannot guess his age. The pretty line of his lips suggests he is young. The deep wrinkle that runs from his nose to the corner of his lips would make him older. His heavy nose, with thick nostrils, gives his face a certain vulgarity, but it is a most fascinating and moving personality that comes off this person. An acute spirituality emanates from him. Despite his smile, his eyes remain solemn and his pupils are shrouded in a bottomless melancholy. His gestures, simple and clearly sketched, reveal a kind of timidity from which one cannot exclude an intense pride.

However, I've not yet answered him when he tries to engage me in conversation.

In the evening when I return [from work], I've taken the habit of sitting myself

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in front of my door with a book. I rest there until night falls. When friends come, we bring our chairs from the studio and we form a little circle. This Spanish painter, in his turn, is in front of the main door surrounded by a group of artists of his nationality who speak noisily. They annoy me a little but, all the same, add a good deal of color to this corner already so colorful.²

On a hot evening in August, coming home from work, she is caught in a heavy downpour and finds this "rather curious person" in her way as she is hurrying to her door. "He was holding a tiny kitten in his arms and he held it out to me, laughing and blocking my path. I laughed too, and he took me to see his studio."³ Inside, she was suitably impressed. He was obviously a painter of remarkable talent.

[He had done] an etching . . . of a man and a woman sitting at a table in a wine-shop. There is the most intense feeling of poverty and alcoholism . . . the effect was strange, tender, and infinitely sad.⁴

Nonetheless, she would later characterize her seduction in quintessentially French terms: "For several days now, I've been coming around to think that I've gotten into a new stupidity. It's the rain that was the cause of it."⁵



Pablo Picasso, 1904

The Frugal Repast, 1904. Etching, 18 x 15 in.



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She must have been not only intrigued but, to a degree, repelled. The studio had two dogs living in it and a white mouse in a bureau drawer; animal effluvia was in the air and on the floor. There were cobwebs everywhere and dirt in the corners. The floor was pocked with the scars of old cigarette burns and the squalor of dead butts. The bathtub, the mattress on legs, the rusted cast-iron stove, the cane chair, the trunk that served as a substitute for a second chair were all repositories for half-squeezed tubes of paint. Large unfinished canvases had been stacked at every angle, and there were no curtains. It was summer. The studio was a furnace.

Her new lover, however, was smitten with her. Never has there been better evidence of a profound beginning to an affair than the drawing he made of them on that

hot August day, as if he had been looking through one of the windows that had no curtains and saw them floating away on a sea of peace.

Her feelings are considerably less intoxicated:

I go back to the house of the Spanish painter. He has an absolute adoration for me. That touches me. He's sincere, but it's necessary that I be cautious because I don't want Laurent to know where I go.⁶

Laurent is the sculptor with whom she has been living for the last few years. She has been getting ready for some time to leave him, but still!

The Lovers, August 1904. Ink, watercolor, and charcoal on paper, 15 x 10 in.



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Meditation (Contemplation), 1904. Pen and watercolor, 14 x 10 in.

Can I, perhaps, love this boy at last? Picasso is fine, intelligent, and extraordinarily taken with his art. And yet, would abandon everything for me. His eyes implore me. He watches, religiously, whatever I do . . . when I awake, I find him at the head of the bed, his eyes full of anguish, fixed on me.⁷

He no longer sees his friends, no longer works or rests. Yet he remains in his studio in order to see me more often. He asked me to come live with him. I'm taken by him. It's sweet to be loved so much, and physically, he pleases me

also. He's sweet and gentle, but he's not well groomed and that does bother me. I don't give a damn about disorder, but I have a horror of people who don't take care of their person. I don't dare to let him become aware of that; it's too delicate. But I have to get to that point with him.

I've decided to sleep no longer over at Laurent's place . . . I go to Pablo's studio.

It's all still a mess, however. Laurent, who has never been jealous, is that way now. Despite my rebuffs, he is obstinate in trying to convince me to remain with him. However, I leave after dinner, and go running over to Pablo's place; he is

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waiting for me behind the open door. For the ten days or so that I've been playing this little game, there's not yet been an ugly row; it is even amusing. However, I don't want any trouble. Laurent, despite his laziness, can be a brute. Besides, a fight with Pablo could turn bad; Pablo speaks immediately of using his revolver. I'm not afraid, but I have a horror of scandal. It's much better to act softly, peacefully, circumspectly. Besides, I can't decide whether to move in with Pablo. He's jealous, he hasn't any money, and he doesn't want me to work. Well, then, it's stupid. And I don't want to live in his miserable studio.

There it is: I don't love him. I've made a mistake again. What an idiot nature I have. I no longer want to go to bed with him, and so this perpetual adoration of his that I took to so strongly at first is now monotonous. I'm bored. I'm bored whenever I am no longer alone. I am never bored when I'm with a book, but a lover bores me, irritates me. When *will* I fall in love?⁸

We may as well orient ourselves to a few of her concerns. Fernande Olivier was born out of wedlock and began life as Amélie Lang, then was raised by her mother's half-sister, who married her off at eighteen to a brute named Percheron. Later, Fernande seems to have taken on Laurent's last name, which was Debienne, and promptly changed it to de la Baume. Madame de la Baume—one of the names she went by. We can suspect that she often felt an inclination to move on to a new role, a not uncommon ambition, but her need to re-make herself was genuine; the young girl who lived in any of these names did not always have the finest chances for survival.

Before we look more closely at her life, however, it is worth picturing that unique habitat, the Bateau Lavoir, where Picasso and Fernande have met. We are speaking, after all, of a piece of architecture that will never be repeated. Old and funky, it is by any conventional measure a decrepit slum-tenement, but it is also, in lopsided manner, half grand. The edifice in which Picasso has his studio and Fernande shares living quarters with Laurent Debienne is no more than one story high, on rue Ravignan, but plummets in the back four stories down to the street behind. The Bateau Lavoir was attached to the side of a cliff. Yawing wooden stairways, slanted halls, cockeyed rooms and a variety of skewed angles, moldering windows, and crusted skylights gave a view onto the roofs of other buildings, few of which could have offered as many closet staircases, trapdoors, oubliettes, and warped floors. Christened by Max Jacob after the laundry barges on the Seine, the Bateau Lavoir offered no more for running water than a tub-sink on the cellar floor, and further along, as Fernande tells us . . .

a bad-smelling corridor led to the only WC, a dark closet whose door could not be closed for the lack of a latch. It shook at every current of air, which is to say each

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Entrance to the Bateau Lavoir.

A staircase in the Bateau Lavoir

time that someone opened the large wooden door to the street.

A narrow corridor was lit by a glassed-in ceiling, but such studio lights were darkened by an accumulation of dust that must have been there forever . . . A strange and sordid house, the most diverse noises resounded from morning to night, discussions, songs, exclamations, cries, the racket



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of slop pails being emptied and dropped to the floor, the noise of pitchers being set down on the stone of the fountain, doors slammed, and the most questionable groans which passed right through the closed doors of these studios. Laughs, cries, we heard everything; all resounded, without reserve.⁹

To the inhabitants, the Bateau Lavoir must have been not unlike the crazy attics and cellars some had known in childhood; its odors could recall many a painter's infancy. Stinks abounded, and as much mess as was to be found on any playroom floor. If infancy is where a large part of one's creative powers are impounded, then voyages of the psyche back to that state (like drunkenness) can free up many a stimulation. It is true, in any event, that the Bateau Lavoir was filled with painters and had its share of poets, anarchists, and students for its thirty studios and apartments. Van Dongen, Max Jacob, Modigliani, André Salmon, and Pierre MacOrlan would live there at different times. Even Ricard Canals, for all his contemporary renown in Barcelona, was dwelling in the place with his wife, Benedetta.

Since painters were always moving in and out, Picasso soon acquired the rudiments of furniture—a bed of sorts, a broken-down chair and table, and a few other amenities for the sum of eight francs.

Arriving in May of 1904, Picasso found congenial company. He saw a great deal of Max Jacob and of Ramón Pichot, a Spanish painter now married to the same Germaine Cargallo whom Casagemas had wished to marry. Indeed, in these days, about all of his friends were Spanish, a reflection perhaps of the difficulties he still experienced in speaking French. There were many besides Fernande who saw him as shy in those days.

Still, much was stirring. The ice-bound reaches of his depression had begun to thaw. A suggestion of warmer hues came into his palette.

Following the beginning of his affair with Fernande, all too soon cut off by her, he found other mistresses among his models, and there was one he would keep seeing during all of that winter of 1904–1905, when he was courting Fernande but failing to convince her to live with him. The model's name was Madeleine



Portrait of Madeleine, 1904. Pastel and gouache on cardboard, 26 x 20 in.

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Mother and Child and Four Studies of Her Right Hand, 1904.

Woman in a Chemise, 1904. Oil on canvas, 28 x 23 in.

His oil *Woman in a Chemise* may also be of Madeleine. As Richardson remarks: "Picasso would always take pleasure in the fact that the skinny allure he contrived for his Blue Period girls predicted a look that fashionable women would cultivate decades later."¹⁰

There was also a young woman named Alice who was living with a mathematician named Princet. In a couple of years she would marry Princet and then quickly divorce

and she was sylph-like, bird-like—her nose formed a straight line with her forehead.

By the summer of 1904, Madeleine was pregnant. With Picasso in full accord, she had an abortion. All the more reason, then, to commemorate the loss with another drawing of Madeleine in the fall. No humor is, perhaps, as hard-eyed as the Spanish knowledge of how sentimentality is to be derided. Of course, the drawing is so fine that he is also telling Madeleine that he loved her and they suffered a loss, but then, of what great use is an artist who cannot bring off several things at once?



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him in order to marry André Derain. In this earlier period, she had a brief affair with Picasso, who aroused her desire one day with *L'Anti-Justine*, a pornographic book by Retif de la Bretonne. If her face reflects an intense but guarded excitement, it is, according to Picasso's biographer Pierre Daix, the moment when Picasso chose to do her portrait. Is he commemorating her mood by putting an exclamation point after her name?

L'Anti-Justine had been loaned to Picasso by a new friend he had met in October. All through that long winter of 1904-1905, as Picasso diverted himself from his failure to impress Fernande by moving from woman to woman, his relation deepened with his new friend Apollinaire, the unique and soon-to-be-legendary Guillaume Apollinaire. In *La Plume* of May 1905, Apollinaire, writing about the Blue Period, would say:

These children, who have no one to caress them, understand everything. These women, whom no one loves now, are remembering. They shrink back into the shadows as if into some ancient church. They disappear at daybreak, having achieved consolation through silence. Old men stand about, wrapped in icy fog. These old men have the right to beg without humility.¹¹

and then would add:

More than any other poet, sculptor, or painter, this Spaniard sears us like a sudden blast, his meditations are unveiled in silence.¹²

It was as if Picasso had been waiting for years for just such a fine pen to confirm his talent, a poetic voice to certify what he knew already, if with but one part of himself—that he was a great painter. Now, the intervals in which he did not



Alice Derain, 1905. Sepia on paper, 14 x 10 in.

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believe in himself could be shortened. He would have splendid language written about himself to read again in bad moments.

So, a double life began in the winter of 1904–1905 and would proceed through the spring and into the summer. On the one hand, there was his new friend Apollinaire, a huge presence bringing with him evenings of poetry and intense intellectual stimulation. He will develop into a very large figure in Picasso's life, but we will wait to take our understanding of his influence on the painter. Our emphasis is still at this point on Fernande, and she, by her account, is deliberating in the wings. Her relations with Laurent, although seriously deteriorated, nonetheless continue after her brief fling with Picasso. In the passage to follow, she has just come back from a sojourn in the countryside with the sculptor:

When I arrived, I went looking for Pablo. He wasn't in his place, and so I climbed the stairs to Canals' place, where he usually ate. When Pablo heard my voice, he suddenly dropped a guitar, and ran around like a wild man. His joy at seeing me gave me pleasure. I was very well received by Canals and his woman—a beauty, a red-head.

I ate with them, and then, Pablo and I went back to his place. He was desolated when I told him I only wanted his friendship, but he prefers that to nothing.¹³

Having decided to leave Laurent permanently, she accepts a more permanent invitation from the Canalses, paying them room and board out of the sums she makes as a model.

They are so nice to me. I'm really much happier here than at Laurent's place.

Pablo, in turn, is much changed now. He asked me to marry him. If they knew that I'm already married, what a shock! The evenings are gay here; there are always five or six friends playing the guitar and singing Spanish songs after dinner, a meal that usually consists of an enormous plate of spaghetti.

Benedetta is Italian, and this plate is one of her specialties—nourishing, and at the level of our means. The men, all artists, speak among themselves of their work. Benedetta and myself spread ourselves out on the couch, content to be admired. Benedetta is very beautiful.¹⁴

Fernande then describes a young man who has been following her in the street. When he is finally ready to speak, he explains that he has traced her to Canals' studio and was awfully pleased to discover that that is where she lives. He is, after all, a friend of Ricard Canals. What luck!

He turned out to be a Catalan painter with a not-wholly-sympathetic quality.



Fernande Olivier and Benedetta Canals, 1904

He looked less like a painter than someone who was a Spanish guitar player, still young, with an energetic face and lots of egotism. Very carefully dressed, but something I can't quite describe irritated me. He was, however, gentle and immediately commenced to give me compliments. Canals told me, "I can't even recognize Sunyer. He seems intimidated. He's so sure, usually, of himself. I believe you've made a great impression on this guy, for generally speaking, he only runs after rich women. He owes them a good deal, for that is why he's well dressed."

Sunyaer ate with us. As for Pablo, naturally, he never misses a day, and spends his time looking at me with a sad expression in his eyes that seem always ready to enter you in spite of yourself.¹⁵

No matter, she maintains her reserve. There are lacks in Picasso she can hardly ignore: "Poor Pablo is very unhappy, but I can do nothing about it. He writes to me in a French that's full of, I can only call it, high fantasy. And it's in rather barbaric grammar and spelling. Desperate letters."¹⁶

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She is certainly French enough to be appalled by this form of incompetence. Even so late as 1911, there is a letter from Picasso to Fernande that reads: "*Yer de toute la journée, je ne ai pas eu de letre de toi et ce matin que je t'attendais non plus espérons que cete après-midi je serai plus heureux.*"¹⁷ A translation weighted for errors would go about like this: "Yisterdey, all dey long, I did no get a letre from you and this mornin I'm not waiting anymore but hope that thes afternoon I'll be more hapy."

Considering the state of his orthography in 1911, one doesn't want to speculate too long about 1905. "Barbaric grammar and spelling" has to be a deterrent to her, a fact we can confirm as soon as we encounter the middle-class pinch-mindedness of the aunt who raised her.

There is probably no better way to summarize Fernande's life than to present some full-sized excerpts from *Souvenirs Intimes*. If this will take us on a considerable excursion away from our protagonist, Pablo, it will also provide the special flavor of Fernande's presence. She will prove by turns piquant and banal, vain and wounded, critical and generous, wise and full of folly. She is not ordinary, and her story has the added advantage of its considerable readability. Of course, we will be obliged to make the acquaintance of a number of people who have nothing to do with Picasso's life, and so the impatient reader, here to be informed about Picasso, is advised to skip ahead. The rest of us may yet feel superior for resisting such a move, or will, so soon as we recognize that Fernande has something to tell us of the psychology of beautiful young girls who feel unloved. How many of us, comes the next question, can ever know enough about that?

In any event, the proof of how nicely she writes is that the best way to get a sense of her personality is to take a few generous extracts from her work, and live with some of the people she encounters before she meets Picasso.

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My aunt and uncle . . . had a daughter two years younger than myself, whom they adored and spoiled . . . There were never caresses for me, and that induced me to live very much within myself.¹

I did like my uncle, but he didn't dare to show openly any of his affection for me. My aunt would reproach him, nonetheless, for preferring me to his own daughter . . . In my turn, I preferred the housemaids. As soon, however, as I attached myself to one, she would be replaced by another . . . My aunt was the cause. She could never keep a maid. She found them full of faults: They ate too much, they were dirty, they stole, they were too "emancipated." That was a word dear to her, and I would hear it whenever I took a liberty. No manifestations of independence had been permitted at the Augustine convent where my aunt, the aristocrat of the family, had been raised.²

I passed my early years with a heavy heart, waiting for a sweet or tender gesture, sometimes searching for it without even recognizing what I was up to. I would've liked my uncle to have gone off with me, to have left his wife, his daughter, in order to love only me, as if I had been his true, his only daughter, but there it was. Life does not rearrange itself so easily.³

I've taken first in my exams. It's too bad; I would have preferred being left back. I would like to become a great tragic actress; I am gifted for that. Some time ago, my uncle took us to the theatre, and since then I no longer think of anything but that. When I said, somewhat fearfully, that I would like to work at the conservatory, my aunt uttered loud cries, "Go on the boards? Oh, well! We no longer

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lack for anything for you to dishonor us completely. A circus performer! It doesn't surprise me a bit."⁴

A few pages later in this account, Fernande, with considerable trepidation, invites a few friends from her lycée to visit after school, but she is most uneasy waiting for them to arrive. She has neither told her aunt of what is about to happen nor given her friends a true picture of what life is like at home. Be it said that the dialogue that follows will be believable only to those who have had the experience of living in a French middle-class home.

When I heard the bell ring, I felt ill. My aunt knew Antoinette but not one of the other three girls. When she learned that they were there on my invitation, I heard her call out for me. Ready to cry, I arrived in time for her to say, "Since when do you give invitations to *my* house? This is not your home; you know it. You are being brought up by charity. You certainly don't lack for cheek. How are you going to end up, I ask myself? I ask you to judge, ladies, for I'm sure that in her place you would all have acted differently. Anyhow, since you are here, let her take you to her room and you can all have a moment together." With that she had wholly demolished the impression I had been trying to give of my life to conceal how abnormal it was.⁵

Today, at the table, they were talking about my appearance. Uncle Charles found my eyes and my hands intelligent, and pretty. But my aunt thought my eyes were small, and my hands were like spiders. As for my hair, I had too much of it, she said; that took away any distinction. I'm indifferent to being treated in this fashion by her, because I'm now old enough to be able to notice several things, and above all, that my uncle is proud to go out with me.⁶

Hélène, the nice maid, has just spoken to me in secret. It seems her brother-in-law has seen me in the street and can no longer think of anything but me. I don't know him, but he's old—twenty-eight years old, and isn't really her brother-in-law, just the brother of her fiancé. I don't believe I want to meet him. If my aunt ever suspected that Hélène was talking to me like this, she wouldn't wait a moment to fire her.⁷

Yesterday Hélène brought me a letter from this brother-in-law in which he begged me to speak to him. He sends me little presents. I'm flattered. These attentions from a grown man please me. But I've never seen him. I don't even know how he looks.⁸

My aunt's latest mania consists of wanting to marry me off to an old account-

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tant. She even made a scene and slapped me in front of him because I said, in his hearing, that I would never get married to a fat old man. That gave me a notion of the kind of life I would have if married to him. I promised myself I would cut these family ties. Since my aunt won't give up on the idea, we will see which of us is going to have the last word.⁹

Abruptly, without warning, we are given a transition worthy of a good novelist:

For the last three days I've been locked up in a little apartment that I don't dare leave, so great is my fear that my family will find me. Yet I want so much to be far away from here.

It isn't funny, and I no longer know how it happened because the man who abducted me also disgusts me profoundly.¹⁰

All right, then, the other day I met the brother-in-law and he went along with me to Saint Sulpice. His name is Paul Percheron . . . a small guy, with regular features and large dark eyes, a little wall-eyed and yet without expression. He has a dull complexion but beautiful teeth in a thick-lipped mouth above a small chin. His hair is black and curly, which I don't like in a man. Bearded, a little heavy, his arms too long, his hands too short, and on top of that, he's ordinary. When I met him, I didn't dare to tell him my real desire, which was that he should go away at once. But instead of taking the trolley-car, he hailed a carriage and before you knew it, there we were sitting next to one another in the cab. He was looking at me in a way to frighten me. He took my hands and covered them with kisses. Then he wanted to put his arms around me, but I cried out and he drew back. However, he then began to tell me that he loved me, that he was wild about me from the moment he had seen me, that he could no longer think about anything but me, and so I ended up by finding that nice.

At the City Hall (where I had to go to get some of my documents stamped), he waited for me, and when I was done, he suggested that we have a hot chocolate in the Bois de Boulogne. I was tempted, but I told him that I had to be back before 6 o'clock so my aunt would not know anything . . . All right, I found myself in a carriage again under the trees. I was beginning to feel aware for the first time of my importance. In the Bois, in a restaurant already filled with people, I felt a little ashamed because I was hardly well dressed and we were being stared at. Paul, however, seemed proud to have me. We ordered and I ate cakes and bonbons, and as I was mad about sweets, I no longer thought of the time. When we did look at his watch, I was terrified. It was 6:45. I would never be brave enough to go back to

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my house. Surely this time, as I had so often been warned, it would be the convent or the House of Correction. I began to cry. What was there to do?

Paul didn't say anything, but I could feel that he was pleased. At last he said to me, "Don't go back. I'll take care of you, and tomorrow I will see your uncle and ask for your hand in marriage." That, however, did not console me, and I continued to cry. We walked along a path in the woods and he drew me bit by bit further into the trees, and then took me by the waist and glued his mouth on mine, giving me the most disgusting of kisses so that I almost suffocated. "I have to teach you many things," he said to me, and he paused: "Now you are my woman and I must teach you above all how to make love." "You will never teach me like this," I answered. "It's dirty and useless."

He began to laugh and I laughed too despite my fears because his face was so pitiful and happy at the same time. I had nothing to do now but to follow him. I couldn't go back to my aunt after this escapade. He'd made me well aware of that. We took another carriage and the thought of going to a restaurant consoled me somewhat: to enter such a place, to order what I wished, soup, consommé, chicken casserole, foie gras, salad, ice cream—I drank wine and some cherry brandy. I left the restaurant very gay. We walked along together as he led me to his house.

He lived in a tiny apartment on the sixth floor of a new building in front of Montsouris Park. What happened next? A night of horror. How could the child I had been just a few hours before have been able to bear up under these odious revelations? I know I will atone painfully for this folly, and my life will be marked by it forever. What are they going to do? Surely they will come looking for me. Hélène, whom I saw yesterday, knows nothing other than that my aunt is shaking her head and saying, "It's her funeral," and they're all whispering about me.

Hélène and her fiancé, Henri, have spent the day with us. Paul seems to swim in happiness. He brings me so much in the way of cakes, chocolates, fruit that it seems to me I've never seen so much in my life. This morning he searched the neighborhood in order to bring me some linen. At noon, Hélène began to prepare the meal. Since we can't go out, we play cards, but I feel sick, heartbroken, sad enough to die. The others are all so happy. I can hear Paul confiding in Henri. He went on about my beauty, my innocence, and Hélène, with a bright smile, said to me, "Is it true what Paul's saying? Seven times last night? Oh, I congratulate you." She began to *tutoie* me and I was annoyed by that. Then, at the mention of last night, I fell sobbing on the couch and almost became hysterical. Henri, the brother . . . spoke severely to Hélène, who, on his direction, put me to bed. I needed that; I was sick, weak, feverish in my bones, my flesh. She covered me with warm linen. Then it was decided they would all spend the night here, Paul and Henri on the

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divan, Hélène and myself in the bed [but] Paul has now begun to menace his brother with I don't know what threats in order to make him leave. Poor Henri, who only wanted to protect me, can't stay [so] Paul again passed the night in loving me—as he put it. What a horror.

I'm alone all day. I don't go out. When night comes, I'm there, curled up on a sofa with the magazines spread all around me. I've forgotten what time it is, whose life it is. When Paul comes back from work toward 6 o'clock, he finds me uncombed, not dressed, in bed—stupefied. I know he's not happy about that.

Another terrible night. How to get out of this? I would like to look for a job but don't know where to go. I have a fear of the stairway I'd have to go down, of the concierge, of the street, of the police. I go back to reading. I eat bread and drink chocolate. I don't know how to cook; I don't even know how to comb my hair. My curls are tangled.

What an agreeable life I would lead if there wasn't the menace of these nights with Paul. What pleasure can he find in making love? It all seems so dirty. Can't we sleep peaceably, side by side? What does it get him to go in for such activities? I don't understand a thing. Paul becomes crazy at such moments. Besides, he makes me so afraid that I tremble; I let him do whatever he wants to me. He tells me that I'm like a beautiful marble statue that nothing can bring to life. Thanks to God, I hope it's true. I don't want to see myself ever caught in such madness.¹¹

Well, there it is: My aunt is going to come. Hélène arrived just now in a total state of fear. How does my family know? It seems that they put the police on a search, interrogated Hélène, who admitted to everything and gave my address . . . When I told Paul, he turned green. But of what is he afraid? I know my aunt. She's going to treat me as someone infested with lice . . .

What have I done? I would prefer to die than to live with Paul for the rest of my life. He asked me if I think there might be a dowry. I look at him with horror. A dowry? I'm an orphan, and my aunt has taken care of me because my father (her brother) asked her to, and left a little money for my upkeep and my studies. Paul had a dissatisfied attitude when I explained all that to him. "Ah," he said. "I love you enough to take you one way or another." With a weird laugh he threw himself on me and I had to submit to his caresses . . .

I wake up and dress early expecting the arrival of my aunt, but she doesn't come. Hélène is here; we've eaten together and we're going to prepare a *pot au feu*. It's easy, but the cleaning of vegetables—that's not agreeable. She told me to put in some butter, and since there was a good deal of water, I put in half a pound. When Hélène, who had gone to look for some bread, came back, I told her what I'd done and she was almost in a rage and told me that I was as stupid at cooking as I

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was at love. I'm shocked, because now Hélène treats me as an equal and I sense her vulgarity.

My aunt arrives with a policeman. In a fury, she leaps upon me and slaps me and I begin to cry. She contemplates me with a look of disgust and stupefaction . . . Then, her fury and her hate relieved, she begins to look the place over. "How badly it's kept up," she says. "And you who don't even know to comb your hair—why have you done this?" I don't answer; I'm afraid. "Why didn't you tell me that you didn't want to marry M. Deforce?" In a nicer tone, "I wouldn't have married you off against your will." The policeman comes near me. I believe he wants to take me away, and I feel sick. I must have passed out for a short while because I found myself stretched out on the couch and my face was soaked in water . . . The policeman said to my aunt, ". . . the little one, she looks innocent. The man has to be a swine." . . .

My aunt said to me, "You must get married as soon as possible to this individual. Give me some information about him."

But I didn't know anything about him, not what he earned or if he loved me. I said to my aunt, "I don't want to get married to Paul . . . Every night, he keeps me from sleeping and I am covered with bruises."

The policeman had a crude laugh.

"It's your fault," answered my aunt. "When one is immoral, one is punished. You must get married; you will get married or I will no longer want to hear anything about you, and you will go to reform school."

"No, put me in a convent."

"Convents don't want fallen girls like you . . . Marriage or reform school."

I was disheveled, my eyes brimming with tears. My mouth dry. I was shaking.

When Paul came in, my aunt didn't reproach him at all. She looked at him with disdain and asked, "How do you intend to save the situation?"

"We'll get married as soon as possible," he replied.

"You understand," my aunt then said to me. "I hope that you will choose marriage."

I nodded my head. Like a heroine in Racine, I felt myself sentenced to the gallows, and swore to myself to leave after I was married. Nonetheless, I asked, without any great hope, "Don't you want to keep me in your house till the day of the marriage?"

"Never," she replied . . . "You will only come back to my house once you are married. [Then] you'll have a thousand francs to get you started with the house-keeping expenses, and that's all. You can tell that to monsieur," she said inclining her head toward Paul, who seemed as frightened as myself. At last, she was gone . . .

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Hélène and Henri arrived in the evening, and I asked her to sleep over. I was sick following this scene with my aunt, and I began to shiver with fever. Paul was frightened. I spent the night next to Hélène, who got up and covered me with warm clothes. Then she made me drink warm sugared wine, but I vomited it up and began to have convulsions. Fever took me over . . .

The doctor came, and I believe he made some reproaches to Paul, who seemed penitent and has promised to let me alone or leave me with Hélène for a day or two till I'm getting along better. Paul will sleep over at his brother's house; Hélène will stay with me. I am going to bless this illness which frees me from Paul for a little while.

Paul has brought me several books, Anatole France, D'Annunzio, Abel Hermant—I don't know these authors; I've read so little. I am grateful for this attention. He also offers me long red and yellow gladiolus, which are so beautiful in the sunlight that I spend a good deal of time contemplating them. If he were willing to leave me alone at night, perhaps I could get around to having a little affection for him. I begin to feel a little hope again and am almost happy. There's a lot of sun in this poor apartment.¹²

There we go. It's all begun again last night. Almost no rest and he still desires me while I am worn out, used up, and want to go to sleep. Then he throws himself on me again, crying out, "Oh, but you are so fresh and sweet, so pretty, how I want you! The more I take you, the more I want you. I'm wild about you!" and begins to make love to me all over again. I let him do it. I'm half asleep . . .

Each night is like this. He becomes wicked; he's impatient; he asks me what I'm feeling, why I remain inert. He swears to me there will come a day when he will give me pleasure and happiness. When I beg him to let me sleep, he rolls on top of me like a madman. I prefer to say nothing, but then his eyes bore into me and he says between his teeth, "I will bring you to life," and I feel fear. It seems this fear he reads in my face excites new embraces.

Yesterday, I cried out in revolt, "My God, my God, despite my faults, despite my unworthiness, protect me, or let me die!" Then he looked at me and began to cry. He no longer touched me that night.

This morning, he's on his knees by the bed asking me to forgive him. He cries and he holds my hands very sweetly and I began to feel a little hope, but suddenly his face changes, it goes tense and there, again, he's on me. Can this be love?¹³

We are being treated to the great love of a brute. It might be comic if he were not such a bad piece of work and she were not suffering so. Abstractly speaking, however, it remains a comedy. He is full of violence and the bullying reflex of a

man who was probably beaten often as a child. Now, in his turn, he beats her for the smallest infraction on his vanity or desire. But then, his ugliness purged, he loves her terribly all over again and takes her forcibly, trying to express the intensity of his love, only to recognize, once he has quieted down, that she still can't bear him. So he weeps because he loves her and she doesn't love him. But then the injustice of it so overcomes him that he beats her again. Yes, if the blows didn't hurt, it would be a comedy.

Well, it's done. Yesterday I was married to Paul. He was all attentive, very proud, he had tears in his eyes.¹⁴

Fernande's aunt is not present, but she has sent over a trunk with Fernande's clothes, a gray robe, hat, and shoes to be married in, and a minimal dowry—1,000 francs—which Paul uses to move them out to the suburbs.

Now the newlyweds dwell in a *banlieue* called Fontenay-Sous-Bois, and it is Paul's hope that Fernande will now pay attention to the housekeeping. However, it bores her. He comes home, finds her curled up with a book, far-off on exotic seas of her imagination, and he crashes a vase full of marigolds to the floor.

"You're no better at housekeeping than you are in bed!" he cried out. Then he struck me violently. I was so afraid that I wanted to escape and made for the door. With a leap he was on me and began to beat me. Blow after blow . . . my look must have been wicked indeed because he beat me even harder and said, "Don't look at me like that—I'm capable of killing you."

Finally he threw himself on me, thrust me onto the sofa, and took me brutally, in his fashion. Then he lay on me inert, heavy on my body, without even seeming to breathe, and I didn't dare to move. I felt sorry that he wasn't dead . . .

At last, when he came to, he got up looking haggard, then, recalling what had happened, got down on his knees and again asked me to forgive him. Then he went out to look for some dinner and came back with his arms full of flowers, presents, bonbons.¹⁵

I'm pregnant. The doctor that Paul brought over warned him that I shouldn't have too many emotional scenes. Paul says he doesn't want to have a child, that he will take me in a month to see a woman his friends know.

I cry and ask why. "I love you alone," he says. "A child will annoy us and cost too much. I don't earn enough."

I try to do the housekeeping. I attempt to cook. But it bores me. And I don't succeed despite the cookbook. It's always either under- or over-cooked. Paul, who

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loves food, gets very angry but no longer beats me . . . I pass days before the window, my hands holding my knees . . . I still feel myself to be a child and a young girl and yet it seems to me I'm fifty years old.¹⁶

The steps to the garden are icy, and she slips and falls, goes into false labor, and loses her child. She cries, "but Paul is content."¹⁷

When she recovers, they spend a Sunday in Paris visiting her aunt and uncle for the first time, and her uncle, jealous and offended by her marriage, acts coldly but never stops looking at her.

When I left, my uncle slipped 20 francs into my hand. I'll probably buy some handkerchiefs and a bottle of perfume. I've always wanted that.

Yesterday, on coming back, Paul smelled the perfume on me. He was furious because I hadn't told him about my uncle's gift and then had gone out from the house without permission. "How did you do it, since you don't have a key?"

For the first time, I felt anger build up in me. "I left the door open," I answered him. "When I want to go out, I leave the door open. And if somebody comes in and steals from us, all the better. You bore me, and the furniture, and the house, everything, everything!"

Then he began to beat me again, like the first time, and like the first time I was capable of reacting without making a sound, without tears, and he therefore got worse and worse. At last he took me in his arms and carried me over to the bed while saying things so stupid and obscene that I was ashamed and he took me the way he always does, and the way it always happens. I felt frightened, inert, cold, and there's my life.

Hélène comes. She told me that she'll take me to Paris and Paul won't know anything about it. It's the unemployment season for her and she's going to stay several days with me. She asks if I'm beginning to get along in this new life, if I'm growing at all attached to Paul. Witnessing the anger and disgust that appear in my eyes, she understands that there's nothing at all going on.

She smiles and says, "I believe I know someone who could console you, the friend of a friend that I have . . . Henri doesn't know anything; it's not necessary for him to know."

All this frightens me: Two men at the same time, and she loves Henri? Is it so easy to fool each one? Despite my fear that Paul may find out, I leave with her the following day. She takes me to lunch with her friend at the house of another friend, L., who manages a large café on the boulevard de Saint Denis . . . After the lunch we drink some liqueurs and spread out on some sofas. Suddenly I feel myself embraced by powerful arms which nonetheless hold me gently and I feel myself

disappearing into the huge chest of L. However, when he makes another gesture that announces the beginning of the act I undergo with Paul each night, I utter a cry, and want to leave. Hélène calms me down, leads me to another room, and promises that no one will enter. Through the open door I hear her tell L. how at a certain point the act of love begins to frighten me; then she makes me return with her to L., who assures me that he only wants what I am willing to give him happily, and I am caught up again in the sweetness of his voice and his two large arms which hold me tenderly, and his lips are warm on my neck and on my eyes. His light, skillfully applied caresses slip me over into a daze that I find adorable, even astonishing in the way it leaves me. I stay that way, curled up against this man for I don't know how long. I don't know. But I only have awakened from this dream when the voice of Hélène warns me that we have to go back. I would be happier to stay. I would be happier if we never had to return to Fontenay, but I promise to come back tomorrow.

"Oh well," says Hélène to me on leaving, "Paul's the one who's going to profit by it."

I look at her with disbelief. "How can my husband profit from what another has shown me?"

"I believe that you're still frigid," says Hélène.

"I'm what?" I don't understand what she's saying. "Aren't I like others? Isn't Henri sweet and gentle? It's impossible that he carries on the way Paul does."

Hélène bursts out laughing. "Do you believe Paul's different from the others? He's passionate, that's all, and you're frigid."

Another thought obsesses me then. Why has she taken this lover? I ask it of her and she replies to me, "I stay with Henri because he's going to marry me, but in bed I like the other better." I found that ugly of her, and told her to confess everything to Henri—how could she live in these lies? That seemed to amuse her and she said, . . . "I have to have several men. That's my temperament. I'm fickle."

To have temperament! Does that mean you have to desire getting into these filthy things?

We got back at six o'clock in order that Paul would not learn anything. [The next time] L. took me to his house, and we ate together at a little table. I had caviar and oysters and drank white wine. It was delicious. After lunch, I lay down on the divan and L. began to undo my skirt. I didn't have the will to resist him; I was becoming all soft and strange. An odd sensation grew in me and it made me wish to bury myself in him. Soon enough, I found myself nude and his lips ran all over me, stopping on occasion for a time, then leaping on, but it was I who led him back to me when I felt him withdraw. It was like a game. Then suddenly, his

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caresses made me lose my senses completely and I shivered from the effect of a sensation that I would not have believed was possible. Unhappily, I came back most brutally into reality when he took me in the same way my husband did. If he hadn't, disgust might have overwhelmed me less and I would not have been so suddenly sobered up. I felt more than ever that I could never get used to the idea of this act . . . I will not go back on Saturday.

I did return there after all—not for lunch, but to be embraced. I told him that I would get there at two o'clock and that I didn't want the conclusion that repulsed me so. He took me in his arms laughing, and embraced me like the other time, and undressed me. Same procedure, same drunkenness, same disgust at the end. I will no longer go back to him, but certain of his caresses I will miss. I'm missing them already. Despite all that, I can't overcome my repugnance.

When Paul starts the same games with me, *everything* he does is revolting.

Hélène comes over and I tell her about my decision not to go anymore to Paris. "Ah," she answers, "for certain things you're full of feeling, but for others you're like marble?"

I'm annoyed by what she says, but I don't have any rebuttal.

What a silly story is mine! Yesterday, after lunch, Hélène lay down next to me on the sofa and then she began to embrace me and I commenced to feel very strange, just as with L. Then she slid down to my feet and began to offer me the same caresses and made me tremble completely, but it was very agreeable. To be able to experience this sensation nearly divine for so little.

Hélène comes sometimes for lunch and her caresses calm me, but I don't love Hélène.

Ugly scenes between my husband and me now take place daily. An egg overcooked and he wants to beat me. I show him my temper. I tell him I will go away someday. He shrugs his shoulders. "I will catch you, and you will go through a very bad moment," he tells me. All the same, I answer, "I'm going to leave, and soon."

1900: It's spring now. The month of March is marvelous. The Exposition is going to open. All the world is happy. I can't go to Paris. I have no money except for the two and a half francs I have saved.¹⁸

It is worth interjecting that this is, of course, the same Exposition Universelle that accepted a canvas of Picasso's and thereby drew him to Paris for his first trip.

On another visit to her aunt's house, she confides in her uncle concerning the misery of her marriage, and he speaks to Paul.

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My husband reproached me for having complained. "And me?" Paul added. "Don't I have my complaints about your indifference, your inability to keep house? You don't do anything to please me. And I am obliged to find in your disgust, in your rejection of me, in your indifference, the excitement I was hoping to find in your love." I burst into a wicked laugh and repeated, "My love? But where would you put such love, since I cannot begin to understand what you mean by love. I'm repulsed by ugliness and everything in you is ugly, the expression of your eyes, your gestures, your pleasures." Yes, I was able to say that. I'm beginning to understand that mine is the life of nearly all those women who have married without love to human beings without delicacy. Hearing me say this, he took on the expression of a madman and I only succeeded in having him throw himself upon me once more.

I close my eyes—I don't defend myself in order that everything will be more quickly finished. Now he wants to force me to open my eyes, to look at him. He plays with the fear that he reads in my expression, that he augments by his wild words. He will kill me, he says, and only his ferocious and brutal orgasm frees me from the embrace.

I am going to leave. I am going to leave. Whatever, the first job that comes to me, even to be a maid, but to flee from this, to get away, to get away.

And, as always, when I find myself alone, my good spirits come back and I forget. I place myself again in the warmth of my dreams; I see an interior life put together out of all the elements of my imagination and I succeed in tasting a few moments of happiness, but when evening falls, the anguish which has been waiting for me comes to me again and I feel my heart tremble in my trembling body.¹⁹



Part IV



Pablo and
Fernande



1

1. The first step in the process of creating a new document is to create a new document. This is done by clicking on the "File" menu and then clicking on "New". This will open a new document window. The next step is to create a new document. This is done by clicking on the "File" menu and then clicking on "New". This will open a new document window. The next step is to create a new document. This is done by clicking on the "File" menu and then clicking on "New". This will open a new document window.



1

In another few weeks she will leave her husband and begin to live in Paris. So, too, will Picasso be leaving Barcelona for the first time, and they will even live within a few kilometers of each other, although they will not meet until 1904. Since we will stay with Fernande until then, it may be worth taking another look at Paris in 1900. The entrance to the Moulin de la Galette had, for example, this appearance in daylight hours:

The entrance to the Moulin de la Galette, c. 1898

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Whereas at night, it offered another scene altogether:

In 1900, Picasso would visit the Place du Tertre, in Montmartre. Here an old photograph can remind us of how much a city square could still look like a painting at the turn of the century.

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Picasso is still nineteen in 1900, but he does a self-portrait in which he looks wise, thirty-five years old, and sufficiently cosmopolitan for any banquet in Paris—indeed, a perfect and elegant bachelor for all the

The Dance Hall at the Moulin de la Galette (left), 1898



The Place du Tertre, in Montmartre, 1904

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banquets to which he was not invited.

Once again we can see how intrigued he is with visual puns. The lower left-hand corner of the drawing offers a sketch of bare round buttocks that can also serve as a plump face staring upward, the dimples in the cheeks serving as eyes; in the upper left-hand corner, the pen drawing of Riera looks at first like a pair of sad breasts about to droop, but then Riera has been drawn upside-down.

He is preparing himself, doubtless, for all those pleasures of sex that lie somewhere between appetite and the study of the human form, precisely those observations of the female body that one can only make in the course of a long affair.



Self-Portrait and Other Sketches, Barcelona, 1899-1900. Pen on paper, 12 x 9 in.

2

Let us go back, then, to Fernande. The Exposition Universelle of 1900 is also having its effects on her. It is a new century, and she, as we know, is about to leave her husband.

Yesterday evening one of the most brutal scenes took place. I am wounded—I have actually been wounded in the shoulder by a piece of broken glass, which went a full centimeter into my flesh, such was the force of the blow. He struck me with a carafe; I was bleeding, and I was obliged to pull out of the wound a piece of material from my dress that had gone in with the glass. All of which did not prevent Paul from ending this scene by throwing me on the couch before I could even take care of my shoulder. Afterward, coming back to himself, he was overcome with anguish because the flow of blood wouldn't stop. I didn't want his attentions. I believe I was ready to kill him if he came near me.

I refused to lie down near him. He must have cried all night, for in the morning he had a wholly swollen face. He was hideous. I see him as hideous. How have I been able to wait so long?¹

That morning, so soon as he leaves for work, she collects all her papers—her nest egg as a French citizen!—marriage and birth certificates, school diplomas, even the notebook in which she keeps precisely this journal—so she claims—and, going to the station, she takes the half-hour train ride to Paris, gets off at the Bastille, and goes to an employment office whose address she had clipped from a newspaper. Told to come back at four o'clock, she is afraid to wander for fear she

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will run into someone she knows, so she tries to read in a small park, but is restless and ends up on the rue de Rivoli, where she stops in front of a bakery shop, afraid to go in since she has only one franc.

I was rooted in front of this exciting store window when I felt an arm slip under mine and pull me literally across the threshold. In a moment, I was aware of myself being seated at a little round table with a bearded, smiling young man who was already ordering something from the waitress, but I still didn't realize what had happened to me until a hot chocolate and some brioches were put in front of me, upon which, incapable of holding myself in, I consumed them voraciously. It was only after having devoured several cakes full of icing and having emptied my cup that I became aware of things again and so was obliged to look into two large, gleaming, and much-amused black eyes fixed on mine, and I surprised myself by bursting out with a laugh so happy that it brought forth an equal laugh from this man facing me, as if I'd suddenly hugged him to me. I do have the ability to pass from despair to gaiety. And suddenly, without reason . . . I can only explain it by saying that I love life and wish to believe in it . . .

I said, "I was so hungry. I hadn't eaten. I have to ask your pardon."

"First," he said, "let me introduce myself. Laurent Debienne, sculptor. Who would like, if you would permit it, to do a bust of you. I have just the right piece of lovely marble. Would it be disagreeable for you to pose for me a few times?"

He interested me suddenly. I had dreamed for so long that I was a young girl who knew artists . . .

He told me that he lived in Neuilly with his family, that economically he was dependent entirely on his father, but he did have a studio in Montparnasse. He got there around nine each morning, worked till noon, had a hasty lunch in order not to lose time, and left at six o'clock. "My father is only giving me two years to earn my own living. He'll help me until then, but after I must fix things so I can get along on my work. In a few months, I'll have to serve with my regiment. I've been postponed several times already in order to keep studying at the Beaux-Arts, but I must, by the time I'm twenty-five, leave for a period of three years. There it is. You know everything about me. Tell me about yourself. Is it so embarrassing?" he asked, seeing me redden . . .

At the recollection of the employment office to which I must soon go, tears came to my eyes and I had to make a strong effort not to cry. At last I began to tell him my story. His eyes called forth my confidences. Large black eyes were the only beauty of his dark face; otherwise, wrinkles marked the corners of his eyelids, and his nose was too large and jutted out even more given the thinness of his cheeks,

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which were covered by a stiff and much too dark beard. His hair was brilliant, but too dark also. His head was too large for his skimpy little body. And he had a long thin neck within which moved a voluminously large Adam's apple, which seemed always in movement. His hands were heavy and hairy, thick and hard, but something that was agreeably calm came forth from this unknown fellow that suddenly gave me some confidence to speak.

He listened without interrupting me. At the end he said, "Do you really want to work in an office? You ought to take account of the difficulties you're going to meet. Even if you get a job, it will not allow you to begin living alone immediately. You'll have to rent a room in a hotel. They'll ask for your papers and if your husband is looking for you, he'll find you immediately. Besides, you have to work for a month before being paid. And," he added laughing, "I will not always be there to offer you cakes and hot chocolate."

I felt stupefied. It was true. I hadn't thought of all that.

His words chilled me. My new friend watched me fall back into my fears, then he proposed, "Come with me. I will set you up in my studio. I don't sleep there, but in a little room under the stairs there's a bed. To pay me back, you will pose. That's it. And I will give you a little money in order for you to live. Very little, I warn you, for I have nothing beyond the pocket money my father gives me . . . However, you'll be well hidden . . . Don't be afraid to come; you will sleep alone—I give you my word of honor on it."

And now I am there. I can breathe. Laurent left me alone yesterday after taking care of the provisions: bread, apples, nuts, ham; there is tea, sugar, chocolate, coffee in the little kitchen . . .

How nice I felt on this first night despite awakening at the smallest noise.²

In the morning, true to his promise, Laurent comes by with bed linen, roast beef, face powder, and they chat, do the housework together, have coffee, and he plays the piano for her. Then, politely, he asks her to pull down her blouse while he drapes her, shoulders bare, to pose as his model. They work all day, and she discovers that it is very tiring to pose, but . . .

Already, I've begun to forget my past life, my foul nights with Paul . . . I'd rather die than take it up again.

Saying good-bye yesterday, Laurent approached and embraced me gently. I put my arms around his neck and returned his kiss, thanking him for what he's done for me. "It's nothing," he said. "You will give all that back to me by posing. You're the most beautiful model, and I'm the one who owes you thanks."

After his departure, I went to sleep; I was tired. I had no nightgown but found

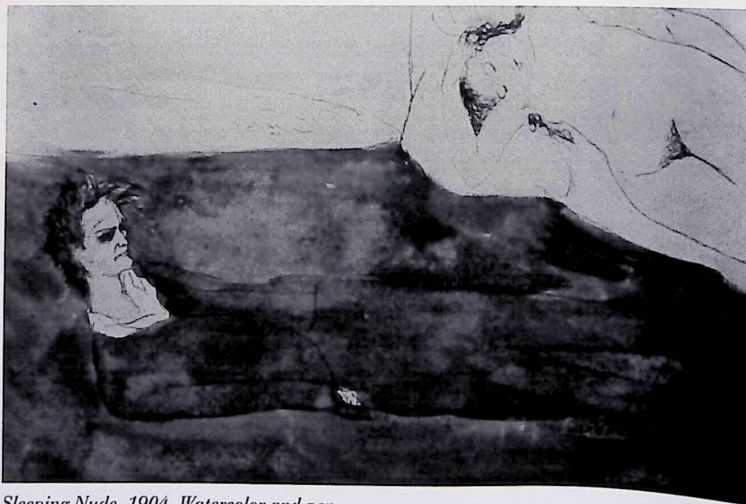
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that I got along very well rolled up in the fur rug. What an odd situation for a young lady brought up in the strictest bourgeois code—naked in the skin of a beast . . .

Time passes. I've been here for five days already. Laurent takes on the job of selling my little trinkets and I came out of it yesterday with some 50 francs that allows me to buy two shirts, two underpants, two sets of stockings, and a night-shirt. Washing each day, I'll have something clean left in reserve. I'm calm with this new life . . . It all amuses me—to pose for Laurent and he does the cooking.³

3

After a few weeks of this, however, the Law of Monotony, that solemn critic of many a new relationship, takes jurisdiction: She begins to feel less content with her new companion. Perhaps, as Picasso would later assume, the sculptor stared and stared at her while she was asleep.



Sleeping Nude, 1904. Watercolor and pen

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I don't see Laurent's work get on much. He's slow. It probably takes him two hours to do what others manage in ten minutes. He puts in a lot of time washing a dish or peeling a potato, and it's probably the same way with his sculpture. It is certainly that way when he tells a story. He gets ready for it, so to speak, even for the most insignificant subject. He listens to himself speak, rearranges his phrases, goes off in two directions, comes back to the point of departure, and begins again. He does bore me a little, but he's sweet, gentle, agreeable, and does the housework. That's something.

He also becomes tender . . . Yesterday evening, Laurent came back from his father's house at eight and took me to the Café de Versailles, where we had ice cream. When we returned, he came upstairs and lay down next to me. I found it natural. I didn't experience the sentiment of fear that bothered me so much at the idea of love. He embraced me with so much tenderness that he was able to take me without my guarding myself. I had neither pleasure nor disgust, but I would have much preferred that it had all taken place without the final act. I find that useless. Caresses and kisses are all right—but I don't really like the man, I'm beginning to recognize . . . "You're sweet," he told me, "but you're still without passion. That will come, and I'm patient." From now on, he will sleep at the studio and only go to Neuilly in order to eat.¹

Soon enough, Laurent advises her to pose for other artists so that she can have money for herself. He finds work for her with an old Italian sculptor in Neuilly. A younger painter who had seen her outside Laurent's studio then asks if she'll pose in the nude. Laurent is all for that. "To an artist," he explains, "a nude woman is more decent than a girl in a blouse."²

Soon enough she is working mornings and afternoons with the sculptor and the painter, then with Laurent in the evening. She grows thin, but at least she brings back 10 francs a day and puts it in a cash box so she can buy new clothes. She soon discovers, however, that Laurent has used the money to buy clay and shirts.

What an egotist!

Now he asks me to help the cleaning woman do the laundry once every two weeks. I told him no. I'm working too much for that. He's annoyed for the first time; myself as well. We quarrel. We have a fight and he proves stronger, carries me to the couch in the studio afterward, and finishes by acting like my husband except he was gentle where Paul was brutal. Why, then, do men find so much excitement in violence?³

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Her dissatisfactions increase. She watches with annoyance as he does some carpentry.

Have I already said that he did everything as if he were fulfilling some task of the priesthood? It all had to be foreseen, arranged, decided. He didn't undertake any task until he had prepared it completely in his head, and if he made a mistake, well then, patiently, without revolt, without anger, he would undo what he had done and begin again. How could he have been able to pick me up and decide to take me to live with him so quickly? Now that I know him well, I imagine that while I was gobbling my brioches and swallowing my chocolate, he was thinking of the profit to be gotten from a live-in model that he could send out to pose for others.⁴

Having seen the work of a good many other artists by now, she also decides that his work is banal. He is too stingy to be a good artist, and his lovemaking is less interesting than his talk about it. He is always extolling the virtues of free love, but she has decided that if he speaks a good deal about the generosity of love, he gives little.

Then she comes back from work one day to discover him sitting next to a thirteen-year-old model he has been using. The model is nude! And rude! When Fernande tells her to dress, leave, and not come back, the girl not only insists on being paid but demands 10 francs instead of 5. She is making twice as much as Fernande!

What's nicest about this story is that he . . . has adopted an attitude of dignity and reproval toward me.

"You can't understand an artist like me," he said. "The meanness of your thoughts makes me so sick that I don't even care to take the trouble to show you your error. I could have done a masterpiece but you wrecked that in me."

I didn't know if I was stifling everything in him, but I certainly knew that . . . Laurent's statues . . . remain in a half-worked state. He spends his time uncovering them in order to re-cover them with wet cloths so they don't dry out.⁵

Laurent, however, has a friend, Jacques, a café singer, she finds charming, even if he is thirty years older than her.

He came over one day when Laurent was away with his family. I was down in the mouth, and told him everything, and how I couldn't seem to love Laurent, of my character, my heedlessness, my desire to evade everything.

Jacques consoled me, spoke to me so reasonably, so gently, that I understood then it was all my fault . . . I stay with a man I neither love nor esteem out of a sort of latent laziness. I must have need of steadiness more than anything else. While I

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am almost tranquil, I am so unsatisfied in this tranquillity that it changes into nervousness. I laugh without explicable reasons. "Come back often," I said to Jacques. "Come back when Laurent is not here."

He answers, "Come back often? That's dangerous. You are very seductive, my child, and I am no longer young."

At first I felt very put off by this but then was in a wonderful mood and I put my arm around his neck and kissed him sweetly. When he left, I asked myself if it would be all right to give myself to a man much too old for me, but I had a desire to be rocked in his arms and be caressed and protected. He was divorced; he had a family; he had children older than me. I felt troubled. I want to see him again, even this evening. I feel a new emotion being born . . . He's not beautiful; he's too big, sort of fat, although he has the attractiveness of a heavy man, heavy features, deep eyes, good and thoughtful; his mouth is thick but of a fine design. He has beautiful white teeth which show themselves in a large smile. Profound wrinkles cover his forehead and his cheeks, the corners of his mouth and nose. Beautiful hair. I don't know why I love him. Without doubt, because he's spoken to me so affectionately, has confided so. In any event, I love him and want to be near him.

When I saw Jacques again, I reproached him for not having given a sign of life all week. "I'm going to see you this week," I said. "I'm going to see you alone at your house. I love you."

He held me against him, put his lips on mine, and I thought I would faint from happiness.

Since Laurent was going to return any minute, I became reasonable, however, very quickly. After all, I was now sure of seeing Jacques again. Despite a storm that shook the shutters outside and made the house quiver, I passed a delightful day. What a happiness was in me. My life, suddenly enriched, had become precious to me. I went to sleep with Jacques as my imaginary companion. Tomorrow, about four-thirty, I will go to his little place in the Batignolles neighborhood. I can barely contain my impatience. What is this great love going to reveal?

I'm ashamed to say it, but I no longer love Jacques. Wednesday, when I arrived at his home, he had prepared a nice meal with cakes, flowers, and various sweet things he knows I love. Alas, I tasted a joy that I believed was going to be marvelous up to the moment that I cannot get used to, not any part of it.

All of a sudden I saw myself next to an old man whose beard smelled of old cigarette smoke and beer. I felt such disgust that I dressed in a hurry. The poor man held me by the hand and said, "I was certain it would end like this. I've experienced these sudden passions of young ladies. But you leave me with a desire for you that I didn't know yesterday."

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As for myself, what could I answer? I didn't understand anything any longer about this madness that swept over me during the last few days.⁶

After Jacques, she has an affair with a student named Roland. Her life may have more logic than she will allow. It is as if each romance is a preparation for the next and larger romance.

... he was waiting for me, feverishly. And his kisses left me feeling sweet. I found myself in his bed and undressed without having noticed just how it happened. I was sweetly happy, gently happy, and his tender caresses didn't disillusion me. The act of love has not brought me any joy, but I had gone through it at least without displeasure, simply in order that he be happy. And I was happy in his happiness. We stayed in bed all day long and I slept there that night, close to him, and tranquil. Provided that Laurent doesn't bother me too much, I'm going to spend the night at Roland's house whenever I feel like it. He's asked me to come live with him, but I won't do that. Life together, becoming accustomed to one another, spoils everything. It is necessary that a great love come alive in me.⁷

Still another year passes. It is 1904, and finally she meets Picasso. They have their brief affair, she loses interest, and months go by, then the winter. We are almost in the present, which is to say, we are back in the spring of 1905 in that period when Fernande, living with Canals and his wife Benedetta, was trying to decide which of two Spanish painters, Sunyer or Picasso, she would now choose as a serious lover. Sunyer, the more attractive one, who supports himself on the pretenses of ladies older than himself, wins out.

I've become Sunyer's mistress. A consenting and even amorous mistress, physically speaking. But only physically. That which hadn't yet happened to me, did happen. Why with him rather than with someone else? It's strange. Sunyer hardly pleases me outside of "that." I don't like to spend the night in his place, so I leave. Love, apparently, has nothing to do with sensuality.

Sunyer is a young man, nicely dressed, with a pleasing body, and he's not stupid, but he doesn't touch my heart. I fell into his arms almost by accident, and he revealed to me sides of life of which I was ignorant! It's splendid, it's exciting! But if my senses have spoken, my heart stays closed. I find, on leaving his arms, that I have nothing but a desire to get back to my own bed, to sleep far from him. However, on waking up, I know that come evening I will go to see him again, and nothing can prevent me from doing so.

Poor Pablo. If I could only love him. Yesterday, Laurent arrived like a wild man and brought me over to his place. I was taken to bed. I had to open for him.

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He wasn't brutal, but he did take me as if I were his prey. Stocky little Laurent, with heavy, muscular hands, developed by the force of sculpting—he's very strong. But he doesn't excite me at all. I didn't, to my surprise, resist his ardor, and I didn't remain inert, as I used to, but despite all that, he disgusted me. I feared his brutality when I refused him a second time. This evening I will go to Sunyer's place . . .

Sunyer invites me to live with him, but I hesitate. His studio is sad. He has no money, and I don't love Sunyer. I do, however, continue to enjoy his caresses, and ceaselessly. But what makes it happen? Such lovemaking doesn't give me anything on which to live. If I didn't work, I wouldn't eat, and he's out all day long. Yesterday he came back with a package. It was linen for himself. Silk linen, shirts, underwear, socks. Is it true that he has, as I've heard, an old mistress who gives him all that he needs except for money? Ha! I don't give a damn!

I run across Pablo, who doesn't leave me. Happy to see me, his eyes filled with tears, and in his amusing accent, he said, "Come to my house. I love you. I'll do everything for you. You don't *know* what I would do for you!" But I still said no to him. He looked at me greedily, with his large eyes, so brilliant, so restless, so sad. Oh, he loves me, but I don't love him. Can it be that he loves me too much? It isn't only because he is very poor that I don't accept the idea of living with him. Something in me refuses to accept . . . However, his love does warm me up. Perhaps I will get together with him, if he is patient, and if he still wants me, in some future time.⁸

4

In one corner of Picasso's studio, a curtain closed off an alcove. Not long after that summer day in August when he first went to bed with Fernande, Picasso assembled a shrine for her in this space; a wooden crate served for the altar. As Fernande describes it, it had a "pretty pen-and-ink portrait" of her, and "a very fine, white silky blouse lay beside two magnificent cerulean blue Louis Philippe vases containing bunches of artificial flowers like Cézanne must have had."¹

Fernande interpreted the shrine as not only mystical and nostalgic but full of self-mockery. Given her rational French insight, she may have paid insufficient attention to the first element. Not only was Picasso drawn to magic, but Max Jacob was an adept and their new friend Apollinaire was well read on the subject. How could they not have conspired to create a magical house to exert occult induction upon her? If the alcove had once been given such names as the maid's room and the mortuary, since it had served as the closed-off area in Picasso's loft for matinees and one-night stands, well, all the better. The resonance of old fornications would contribute to the magic.

Waiting, he did an etching of Fernande—where she still looked suspiciously like Madeleine. The spring and summer of 1905 went by miserably, and miserable it had to be if his longing for Fernande was

*Head of Woman, January
1905. Etching, 7 x 4 in.*



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as large as she has described. At the least, his vanity must have been outraged. For this is the period in which her body has finally declared the end of its long war against the fundamental act. She has discovered that she can have pleasure in it. That these new experiences were with Sunyer, a fellow Spaniard, a contemporary—even worse, a fellow painter—must have bothered Picasso all the more. In the summer of 1905, invited to stay in Holland by a Dutch journalist named Tom Schilperoort, a friend of some Dutch artists he knew, Picasso took a poor man's trip to the town of Schoorl, a remote village nestled in the high sand dunes of the north Holland coast. His new pal, Schilperoort-from-Schoorl, had recently come into a little money and was spending it. Picasso's only disbursement would be the fare.

In Holland, he paints the first of his heavy-limbed women, *La Belle Hollandaise*. Many more will follow in separate periods over the next twenty years, but his comments on coming back to Paris suggest the sizable impact on him of making love to women large enough to remind him of the overweight women of his childhood, the huge grandmother and his aunts:

He will tell a friend, André Salmon, "Fernande is a big girl, but those Dutch women are enormous. Once you get inside them, you could never find your way out again."²

It is not inappropriate that Fernande at this time is modeling for a Dutchman.



La Belle Hollandaise, Schoorl, 1905. Gouache on cardboard mounted on wood, 30 x 26 in.

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It is Kees van Dongen, who had no small reputation in the Bateau Lavoir. The painting of Fernande done by him in this period may have been a species of trade-off for *La Belle Hollandaise*.

After his return from the Netherlands, Picasso's studio is equal to any metaphor of a furnace in summer. Because of the heat, he works virtually in the nude with, according to Fernande, no more than "a scarf tied around the waist." She remarks that he is obviously proud of his good if short and stocky build ("the beauty of his limbs was no secret") and is more than ready to receive his visitors and friends half-naked.³

In this primal condition, on an exceptionally hot day in September of 1905, their affair, often dormant, but with occasional interludes, now passes into a more serious phase.

One should not deprive the reader of Fernande's account of it:

Coming back from Corman's studio at noon, I ran into Picasso. He was with Guillaume Apollinaire, whom he introduced to me, a large and jovial man, rather simpatico. I promised Picasso that I would come to see him when I came back from work at five o'clock. Upon entering his place as promised, I was suffocated by a new mixture of odors: gasoline, eau de cologne, eau de javel, all done in order to make the studio neat for me and proper. Picasso and Apollinaire had spent the entire day cleaning it, brushing it with the aid of a broom soaked in gasoline. Then the eau de javel, then the cologne. The joy of Picasso! I was almost happy, and felt tender to see him so moved. Since Laurent is away, I promise to see Picasso this evening. He said to me that during this time he's been smoking opium in the home of some friends, but for tonight he will buy a pipe and prepare it for us to smoke. I listened to him, absolutely dumbfounded. This is something new, and in consequence, interests me.

Picasso had bought the necessary ingredients, that is to say, the little mysterious oil lamp, the long bamboo stem with its ivory tip, the pipe with its small octagonal clay bowl in which one smells the sensitive, acid, and penetrating odor of opium, which gave off glints of a beautiful golden amber brown.

Propping ourselves up on the dry mat that covered the floor, as if we were on a bed of feathers, the smoking materials held in the hand, preparing the pipe while



Van Dongen, Portrait of Fernande Olivier, 1905. Oil on canvas, 39 x 32 in.

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kneading the teardrop-sized piece of pâté on the end of a needle, applying it to the oil lamp held above the colorless flame of the lamp, taking the end of the ivory pipe between the lips, and breathing slowly into one's open lungs, slowly we took in this odorous smoke, bit by bit, breathing it in carefully to keep from choking . . .

Despite the sickness of stomach and the heavy headache that kept me in bed the next day, I can only think of beginning to find once more that spiritual acuity, that intelligent, refined comprehension, that quickening of mental sensations experienced under the effect of the drug. Everything then seemed beautiful, clear, and good. I owe it to the opium, perhaps, for allowing me to understand the real sense of the word *love*. I discovered that I understood Pablo at last . . . He was the one that I'd always been waiting for.

Love grew in me, sudden, burgeoning. A curious intimacy made it seem as if he was now a part of myself. So much did my imagination wish it to be so that this sentiment did not leave me; that, without doubt, was the cause of my sudden resolution to join my life to his.

I stayed for three days with Pablo. I love to smoke opium. I love Pablo. He is tender; he is nice and amorous. He pleases me. How could I have been blind for so long? Not to understand that right here was happiness waiting for me? I no longer



The Lovers Making Love (also called Erotic Studies), 1905. Oil on canvas

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The Place Ravignan, in Montmartre, postcard, 1903

think, as I used to, of getting up in the night to visit Sunyer because his caresses gave me so much pleasure.

Now I am happy in Pablo's arms, much more happy than with Sunyer. I love Pablo. I am going to love him so much. Pablo insists that I come to live with him. What am I to do? I am going to try to get a week for myself . . . But Benedetta advises me not to wait [and] the sun renews all of this old, shabby Place Ravignan, now gay and full of life. This little plaza, scorched with sunlight, its benches so heated in the summer warmth that the paint is melting off, the cobblestones shine, the leaves are dried off their branches, but the old Bateau Lavoir stands on guard and defends its bohemians from the approach of undesirable people: "Bourgeois, prosperous people, don't approach! . . . Here is hope, love, and thought which comes alive . . . All you guarded people, reasonable people, logical people, leave those who live here alone . . .

One very hot Sunday I brought over all my things to Picasso's studio. Now, many years later, I've found again a passage that's a bit lyrical in my diary. Here it is:

"Pablo, it's very hot today. It's a Sunday. I've never liked Sunday. It's a heavy day. It's a starchy day, it has an odor. I hadn't even left my studio. The tired heat

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did not encourage any movement. I was meditating, somnolent, stretched out on a couch, a book that I was not reading in my hands. Toward five o'clock, suddenly, I took the decision to leave everything in my short and joyless past in order to go join you . . . I called you. You were working, but you left your canvas and brushes and you came running. I borrowed from you the little wooden black suitcase that you had brought from Barcelona. I threw into it, pell-mell, all the finery and clothing that I possess. You stood there, in front of me, not believing. I poked you a little. Then, in a leap, you were outside, pulling the trunk, carrying the trunk as easily as I would carry any one of my small packages."⁴

How intensely do Pablo and Fernande personify at this point all those delicate, lovely, and exploratory romances that flourished like sensuous flowers on slender stems, those marijuana romances of the Fifties and Sixties in America where lovers found ultimates in a one-night stand, and on occasion stayed together. There was always an element of the *other* in such romances—they were a gift from the beyond—and so the lovers who came together on marijuana could never trust their love altogether: The marijuana was the third creature in the act and might disappear someday.

Of all such romances, Pablo and Fernande's seems one of the first. We can wonder if they would ever have begun to live together without the opium. Once the bridge was crossed, however, once she knew she could have extraordinary experiences in bed with him, then many a need and many a mutual social advantage would keep them together for years.

5

There are bound to be questions about the validity of her memory and her manuscript; for now, however, let us enjoy Fernande's aria to love:

At last I'm happy. And Pablo? He no longer sleeps, he tells me. He now does nothing but wait on me since I've consented to live with him. Life goes by sweetly. I, in my turn, feel tranquil, nicely enclosed in this studio. It seems to me that I'm beginning to live my real life.

Pablo loves me. I sleep beautifully. The old habit of resting after long, fatiguing days I still adhere to. I go to bed at nine. Pablo looks at me, draws me, works through the night, lies down

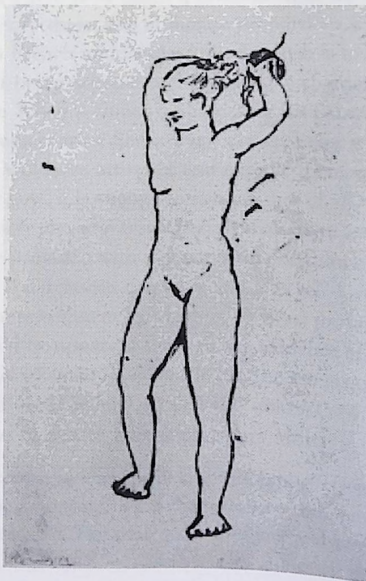


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around six in the morning, as he prefers to work through the night in order not to be disturbed, as if it is the night when he lives most. He reproaches me for sleeping all the time. It's true. It is necessary for me to accustom myself to another type of life in order to be able to live a little near Picasso while wide awake.¹

Questions do arise. We are dealing with a manuscript that was composed when she was in her seventies, on the basis, she claims, of a journal she kept from the age of fifteen. While *Souvenirs Intimes* is written more or less artlessly, the effect is not unprofessional, narrative skills are certainly present, and there is an elevated hint of the romance novel—indeed, it is an elegant example of the form. One has to wonder how much of this book Fernande Olivier wrote herself and how much was added by way of an editorial hand; one can also question some of the facts. After she leaves home, she makes no further mention, for example, of her stepsister, who according to some accounts of the period (the unreliable André Salmon's, among others') lived with a sculptor, Orthon Friesz, who introduced

Untitled (three drawings of Fernande Olivier), all 1905: no. 737 Pen, 9 x 6 in.; no. 738 Black lead, no. 739 Pen, 11 x 16 in.



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Fernande to the first artists she modeled for; that is certainly not so intriguing a scenario as her entrance into modeling by way of Laurent Debiegne. We must also assume that Fernande's account is at least as self-serving as most memoirs. All the same, we are offered the sexuality of a young woman who begins her amatory experiences with a disaster yet manages over the years to complete her journey from disgust and frigidity into concupiscence. If that is many a woman's story (as well as many a man's), it can be argued that sexual happiness comes only at the end of a number of such rites of passage; so her account, unless wholly fabricated by someone else, has, whatever its misrepresentations, real value.

Paradoxically, given its wholly self-centered vein, it also provides vivid insight into Picasso's palpable presence in a room. We can read in any and all of his biographies about his moodiness, the incomparable power of his eyes, the feminine delicacy of his hands, the small but well-built torso, the forelock of hair over one eye, the animal magnetism he emits in combination with the social insignificance of his presence—he *looked like a bootblack*, comments Nellie Jacot, a friend of Gertrude Stein's;² but these are merely descriptions. In Fernande's account, we are offered Pablo rather than Picasso. Pablo is so much a presence that we can smell the garlic on his breath. He is twenty-three, and of human proportions. Fernande has, in addition to her beauty, a French middle-class mind, which is to say some crucial portion of her mental well-being depends on her ability to characterize and to classify. She is not bad at it. When it comes to discussing his painting, she is, of course, like many of her contemporaries: She will not always know what she is talking about. Nonetheless, she will have attitudes and express them well. We will enjoy such examples later. For now, it is enough to remark that of all who have written about Picasso, she is the only one who treats herself with more attention than she offers him, and so we are provided with a portrait that enables us to think about his nature as well as hers. If narcissism can be seen not as self-love or outsize vanity but as a species of self-imprisonment in which one's most profound relations are with oneself, then it should be apparent through the evidence of her narrative that she is a narcissist, and by what we know of Picasso, he too is one.

At the risk of quoting from myself—and indeed, in just this context!—I will offer the following passage from *Genius and Lust*, a book on Henry Miller:

It is too simple to think of the narcissist as someone in love with himself. One can detest oneself intimately and still be a narcissist. What characterizes narcissism is the fundamental relation—it is with oneself. The same dialectic of love and hate



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that mates feel for one another is experienced within the self. But then a special kind of insanity calls to the narcissist, for the inner dialogue never ceases. Each half [is] forever scrutinizing the other. So two narcissists in love are the opposite of two mates. Narcissists do not join each other so much as approach each other like crystals brought into juxtaposition. They have a passionate affair to the degree that each allows the other to resonate more fully than when alone . . . So, it is not love we may encounter so much as fine-tuning . . .

The paradox is that no love can prove so intense, therefore, as the love of two narcissists for each other. So much depends on it. Each is capable of offering deliverance to the other. To the degree that they tune each other superbly well they begin to acquire a skill which enables them to enter the world. (For it is not love of the self but dread of the world outside the self which is the seed of narcissism.) So narcissists can end by having a real need of each other. That is, of course, hardly the characteristic relation. The love of most narcissists tends to become comic, since, seen from the outside, their suffering manages to be equaled only by the rapidity with which they recover from suffering . . .

To the degree, however, that narcissism is an affliction of the talented, the stakes are not small, and the victims are playing their own serious game in the midst of the scenarios. If one can only break out of the penitentiary of self-absorption, there are artistic wonders, conceivably, to achieve . . .³

It is obviously not uncommon for writers, actors, or painters to be narcissists—the exception may, in fact, be the rare case, and there is nothing pejorative about the category (except for its intolerable sense of self-imprisonment). One's narcissism can be handmaiden to one's art. Sometimes it takes no less than a long immersion in oneself to deliver the artist within—sometimes. The graves of suicides remind us that there is no royal road to exceptional endeavor.

If this has seemed a diversion, let us recognize that we are soon going to be immersed in a full company of narcissists. Some royal examples are in the wings.

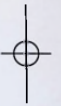


Part V

Handwritten note: "Hand to pick up for the owner"

Handwritten note: "right hand print of Apollinaire 22/7/1944"

Apollinaire



Part V

Need to pick art for
this opener

*right hand print
of Apollinaire
on p 154.*

Apollinaire



1

During the winter of 1904–1905, when Picasso was still wooing Fernande, another domain was opening. His friendship with Max Jacob continued at full throttle, and his fructifying relationship with Guillaume Apollinaire commenced. Then, a few months after Fernande moved into his studio, Leo and Gertrude Stein entered his life. The long friendship between Pablo and Gertrude came alive. We will need our wits if we are to follow it. When it comes to narcissism, Gertrude Stein is equal to Catherine of Russia.

It is easier and chronologically more exact to take account first of Guillaume Apollinaire. Since his personality is, in itself, one bona fide whale of a work of art, we may have to approach him by degrees. Let us call upon Fernande one more time. She will describe Max Jacob for us, and he, in turn, will offer his impression of Apollinaire.

It's now six months that I've been living here with Pablo. When I arrived, it was very hot in the studio. At present, it's fearfully cold. I stay in bed, covered up, to avoid being frozen by the cold. There's no coal, no fire, no money . . .

How was I able to resist Pablo so long? How I love him now. Yesterday, Pablo succeeded in selling several drawings. Quickly we brought the coal merchant over. Quickly the stove turned red. How happy we are now, so much so that we don't even go out to eat at Chez Vermin. We dine with Max, near the fire . . .

Max Jacob and Apollinaire come each day, and Max, so spiritual, so amusing, so full of life and dynamism, is the director of our games. Picasso and Guillaume can laugh through an entire night of suggestions, inventions, songs, games that

Max plays with his face. The studio rings with our laughter. Foolishness takes us over and, like children, we encourage each other, mutually, to see who can become the most absurd. But the award always goes to Max. He can be so droll.¹

In 1953, Picasso did a drawing of Jacob that suggests those evenings four and a half decades earlier.

We have to remind ourselves that this is the same Max Jacob who has already written to Picasso, "You are what I love most in the world after God and the Saints, who already consider you one of themselves. The world does not know your goodness and your qualities, but I know and God too knows."

² On another occasion, he was sufficiently inspired to characterize such feeling for Picasso as "an admirable love, an homage to God paid to his successful creations."³

Such intensity of love would lead us to expect an abyss of jealousy, but there is no such sign in Max Jacob's description of an evening when Picasso brought him over to meet Apollinaire at Austen's Railway Restaurant near the Gare Saint-Lazare. There, the poet was holding court:

Apollinaire was smoking a short-stemmed pipe and expatiating on Petronius and Nero to some rather vulgar-looking people whom I took to be jobbers or some kind of traveling salesmen. He

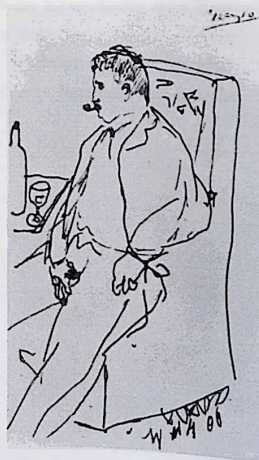
Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire (two), both 1905 or 1906. both Pen and ink, 6 x 4 in.



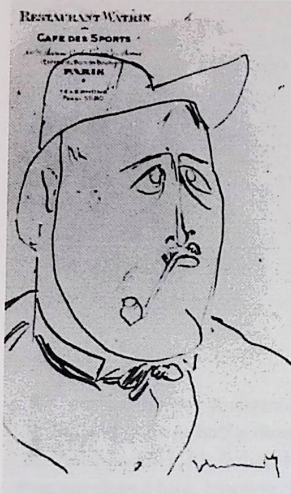
enlarge



Untitled lithograph (Vallauris, September 23, 1953) of Max Jacob published in Max Jacob's Chronique des temps héroïques, 1956



→ P 157



Flaminck, Portrait of Apollinaire, 1905. Pen on paper

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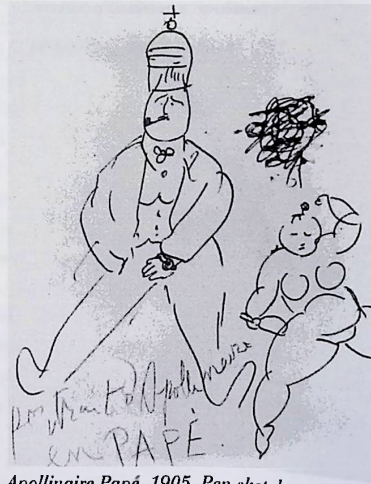
was wearing a stained light-colored suit, and a tiny straw hat was perched atop his famous pear-shaped head. He had hazel eyes, terrible and gleaming, a bit of curly blond hair fell over his forehead, his mouth looked like a little pimento, he had strong limbs, a broad chest looped across by a platinum watch-chain, and a ruby on his finger . . . Without interrupting his talk he stretched out a hand that was like a tiger's paw over the marble-topped table . . . Then the three of us went out, and we began that life of three-cornered friendship which lasted almost until the war, never leaving one another whether for work, meals, or fun.⁴

Picasso, always partial to descriptions that offered a wry purchase on the subject, was to say years later to Hélène Parmelin, "Picture to yourself an English bar. Everything was English . . . The bar was very long, made of very nice wood, perhaps mahogany, but English mahogany. The beer was English . . . all the drinks were English."⁵

2

It was hardly out of character for Apollinaire to be drinking in an English bar. He had roots in half a dozen countries. Born in Rome on August 26, 1880, of a Polish mother, his father, legally speaking, was unknown. By way of the rumor that enveloped him, however, he may have been a descendant of Napoleon (which name, it will come as no large surprise, can be spelled with the letters in Apollinaire); equally, the father is reputed to be a high official in the Vatican—just so, Picasso did a caricature of Apollinaire wearing the Pope's tiara plus a wristwatch.

In keeping with the specifications of a royal bastard, he was christened Wilhelm (later to be Guillaume) Wladimir Alexandre Apollinaire de Kostrowitzky. While not one third the length of Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paulo Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Crispín Crispiano Santísima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso, it is notably more elevated. Of course, Apollinaire belonged to a rare sub-group—the lumpen-arist-



Apollinaire Papé, 1905. Pen sketch

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tocracy—and his mother, Olga, while the daughter of a titled Polish colonel in the papal guard, was a lady who had been obliged to learn how to live off her more affluent men-friends. Apollinaire was brought up in Monte Carlo, where Olga, also known as Angelica, was a “*traineuse*,” which is to say she took her cut out of the money she steered high-rollers into spending in restaurants and nightclubs. Considerably later in her career, now considered sufficiently unsavory to be banned from the casinos of Spa and Ostend in Belgium, she would conduct illicit high-stakes card games at a villa she rented in a suburb of Paris called Le Vesinet, where she lived with her longstanding Jewish lover, Jules Weil, a professional gambler. Indeed, on the night Apollinaire met Picasso and Max Jacob at Austen’s English bar, one reason for choosing the place was that it was near the Gare Saint-Lazare, from whose tracks the poet would take a late train every night after his working day in a bank. Twenty-four to Picasso’s twenty-three in November of 1904, Apollinaire was still afraid of the drunken rages of his mother. Richardson recounts how André Salmon, who went back one night with Apollinaire, was greeted in company with her son at the door with the following inquiry: “Which of you debauched the other?”¹

“She treated her ‘Wilhelm’ as if he were an incorrigible child and would beat him, as she would her lover.”² For that matter, she beat her other son, Albert, as well. Francis Steegmuller, in his biography of Apollinaire, adds:

The men in her life seem to have been



Photo of Angelica (Olga) de Kostrowitz, mother of Guillaume Apollinaire

Drawing of André Salmon, 1907

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comparatively few—few, that is, for a courtesan—and little is known about them. During her years in Monaco she made several trips outside the Principality with admirers whom she presented to her sons as their “uncles”; at least one of them, a rich silk manufacturer with bookish tastes, allowed her to bring the boys to his home in Lyons, where Apollinaire later recalled reveling in a fine private library . . . Angelica was an original. Handsome, strident, living outside society in a strange kind of isolation, she constantly reminded her sons of their descent from northern nobles of the dim past, and scolded them if they kept what she considered unworthy company.³

At one point, during his adolescence, Apollinaire’s mother and Jules Weil were virtually on the run. He and his brother, Albert, were left

. . . masquerading as “young Russian counts” in a pension at Stavelot in the Ardennes. His charm and courtesy ensured the penniless Guillaume infinite credit. He spent the next three months rambling over the peat bogs of the Fagne, courting a local girl, communing with elves and filling notebooks with ideas . . . At Stavelot he developed an obsession with medieval legend and magic rituals; he took to signing his poems with a cabalistic swastika. His most prized possession was a mildewed book on demonology, from which he read aloud as if already a magus.⁴

In July of 1902, Apollinaire writes to a Monacan school friend about the next episode in his life after Stavelot. It is intriguing how much his style calls to mind how Henry Miller would do it thirty years later in *Tropic of Cancer*.

In Paris, a hard winter. It looked as though we were going to have to eat bricks. I even wrote addresses in an office at four sous an hour, the lowest work imaginable, along with jailbirds, broken-down ex-lawyers, adventurers back from the gold mines. Plenty of them would have been glad to enlist for the Transvaal if they had been eligible; I was one of this starving rabble. At the end of the month I was left with 23 francs I had earned: it was handed to me by the *patronne* of the establishment . . . she paid the poor wretches herself, burning perfume-papers so as not to smell their odor. The lowest I ever sank.

I hang around jobless. Meet up with old Esnard whom I knew in Monaco. He is a Bohemian lawyer who has a novel to write for *Le Matin* and is too busy to do it himself. He asks me to help him . . . I write a few chapters and *Le Matin* publishes the novel serially under the title “Que Faire.” Other serial-writers imitate my chapters [but at] home I make a meal of herring. Esnard forgets to pay me for the trash I wrote for him. I see a lot of him anyway, and make his mistress, twenty years old to his 53.⁵

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He must be lying. He is still too innocent, and his sex life soon after is peculiarly abstemious. His letter is being written in July of 1902 at the Villa Holterhof, Honnef-on-Rhine, where is he working as a French tutor for Vicontesse de Milhau, who is described as an extraordinarily ugly woman with an unhappy skin disease. Since she wishes her daughter Gabrielle to learn French and English, the Vicontesse has also hired a young English tutor named Annie Playden, who might just as well have been brought up by Queen Victoria. Apollinaire, sensitive to the massive silences of the Rhine, falls in love with her like an eighteenth-century German romantic; he was willing to kill her, and/or commit suicide, and/or remain chaste.

His description of the romance is given in the same letter: "Since then I've seen all of Germany and sleep with the English governess, 21, what curves!"⁶

Yes, when it comes to sex at twenty-two, we can be confident he is a liar, for here is Annie Playden's (now Annie Postings) description of her friendship with Apollinaire, whom she calls Kostro. She will offer it to Francis Steegmuller fifty years later:

"I'm sorry, of course, if I was *too* mean," Mrs. Postings went on, "but what was I to do? Kostro couldn't properly make love to me in words since I knew so little French and his English was almost nonexistent, and neither of us spoke German—the countess hired us because we couldn't; she wanted Gabrielle to learn English and French. And I wasn't one to allow him to do anything else. I'd been warned so before leaving home. My sister and I were the most rigidly brought-up girls in Clapham. My father was so straitlaced that he knew it, and called himself 'the Archbishop of Canterbury.' 'Never speak to anybody, never be alone with anybody,' and all that: my parents kept dinning it into my ears. It was only because the countess's doctor in London was a friend of my father's that I was allowed to take the position and go to the Continent: the doctor said he could vouch that I'd be with a respectable family. I don't suppose that at the time any of us had been told there was going to be a young man in the house. Kostro was so intense! I refused to be alone with him, but sometimes the countess *ordered* the two of us to go out for a walk together. When she did that, she didn't know what she was doing; but then, she thought Kostro was in love with *her*, she thought everybody was. I was amazed by his behavior to me. He terrified me. He'd take me on a dangerous mountain path and tell me if I refused to marry him he was quite capable of hurling me down a precipice. He'd say to me, 'Each man kills the thing he loves!' When we traveled, if he saw me having the most casual, innocent conversation with anybody, he'd stride up in a fury and order whoever it was to leave me alone because, he said, I belonged to him. Then I'd be furious with him and refuse to have anything to do with him, refuse to speak to him."⁷

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It is not hard to conceive of this hulking awkward youth, gross and genteel by turns, cultivated, boorish, and rendered near-violent by his inability to converse with her, this Kostro, soon to be Apollinaire, with a gift for conversation that would transport him (on a favorable wind) from a fat young man to a café potentate. Capable a few years later of consuming two full meals in immediate succession, he



Ex-Libris: Guillaume Apollinaire, 1905

would be described soon enough by Francis Carco as this "gourmand, huge in size, yet somehow appetising to look at, [who] would crush between his jaws the bones they served him, would suck on them, become smeared with grease, and in the course of relating some story about a painter, would fart into his seat cushions without the least concern for his reputation. What had he to fear? He was like some hilarious god."⁸

Good. We have a purchase on Apollinaire. He is a man of engorgements, a *pétomaniacque*, but, no, we are caught short. When in his apartment, he exacts the propriety one would expect from an abbess. Fernande gives a good account:

If one went [into the bedroom] one had to be careful not to disturb anything, as this would have displeased Guillaume exceedingly. It was for bidden ever to touch the bed. The slightest crease or hollow in it was

noticed at once and could provoke a good deal of frowning and irritation. His mistress was a friend of mine and she used to say they'd never made love anywhere but the armchair. His bed was sacred! He insisted that it remain intact until the moment he went to bed. No one was allowed to put anything at all on it, though there was never enough room in the hall for all the coats . . .

Apollinaire always had dozens of visitors. He would be friendly and direct with some; with others he rather overdid his easygoing act. Tea was served, very sparingly: Apollinaire was so childishly, so unconsciously mean, that it made us laugh. Some of his friends were amused by this failing: Crennuitz, among others, used to

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open the cupboards and cabinets and take anything edible he found in them. Apollinaire would rush at him in a rage, try to save what he could, and demonstrate his sense of ownership with a good deal of belligerence. His egoism conflicted, though, with his kindheartedness, which could easily be aroused by emotional troubles, never by financial ones. He could often be tender and sympathetic to the point of tears. I don't ever recall that he responded favorably to a request for a loan. I can hardly think of any friends he helped, whereas nobody asked Max for help in vain; he always gave what he had.⁹

If requests for money must have reminded him of his own years of debt and decamping from hotel bills, his mind teemed, however, with other gifts. He had read omnivorously, and was always ready to give away analogies, metaphors, aperçus, and images of a loveliness that could warm the body almost as nicely as the brain. He could give what came to him spontaneously, but he could not bring himself to let others take his food, his money, or poach on the approaches to his name. He was a self-made man when it came to that name—he had written after all, "*Ton père fut un sphinx et ta mère une nuit.*"¹⁰ Yes, his father was a sphinx, his mother was "a night." Conceivably, he was the product of one night of love—which is every bastard's fear—yes, sleep is sacred for those who live above the abyss, and he would protect his bed from any likelihood of aftermaths left in the mattress by those who sat upon it. Like most people who fart a lot, he thought all others were guilty of the vice. Be it said, he was even more ferocious about defending his name. Once he was satirized in a Paris tabloid for coming into a café and ordering a bottle of Apollinaris water with the statement "*C'est mon eau, c'est mon eau.*" When he did not obtain a retraction, he challenged the journalist to a duel which, given a certain lassitude in both parties, never did come off. But the name was not to be played with.

All his life he was to speak mysteriously or grandiloquently of his ancestry . . . "I am descended from Rurik, the chief of the Varangians, the first king and first law-giver of Russia," he announced to a friend in one of his last years.¹¹

Of course, he could also look like a Dutch burgher.



Apollinaire, c. 1905. Pencil on paper

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This is but preface to engaging his unique qualities as a poet. He had traveled through Europe considerably more than other young writers of his time, and Roger Shattuck could write with justice that he might be called "the first European poet since Goethe [because] his poems are never content to speak of France alone; their prophecies and conversations and descriptions are all Europe."¹²

Apollinaire inhabited the vowels and consonants of French like no foreigner before him; his verse exhales the perfumed sonorities of the language, and if this excess of mellifluous resounds suspiciously—perfumed sonorities, indeed!—well, a people who equate good luck with *merde* have obviously kept some primitive connection between the workings of their entrails and chance. At his worst, Apollinaire writes in a cloud of scented bombs; at his best, there seems no delicate emotion of twilight or evening able to escape him. His poet's sense of wonder is full of startling transpositions, imperious and child-like at once. Let us give him the honor of quoting three stanzas from his first great poem, *La Chanson du Mal-Aimé*, written in 1903, while he was still mourning for the affair that never took place with Annie Playden:

*Mon beau navire ô ma mémoire
Avons-nous assez navigué
Dans une onde mauvaise à boire
Avons-nous assez divagué
De la belle aube au triste soir*

My lovely ship my memory
We have never sailed out to sea
On that dreary wave so vile to drink
Nor have we wandered long enough
From dawn to melancholy dusk

*Adieu faux amour confondu
Avec la femme qui s'éloigne
Avec celle que j'ai perdue
L'année dernière en Allemagne
Et que je ne reverrai plus*

Farewell false love whom I mistook
For a woman far away
For the lass that I did lose
A year ago in Germany
And will never see again

*Mars et Vénus sont revenus
Ils s'embrassent à bouches folles
Devant des sites ingénus
Où sous les roses qui feuillolent
De beaux dieux roses dansent nus¹³*

Mars and Venus with their wild mouths
Have come back to embrace
All those innocent places
Beneath the blossoming rose
Where rose gods dance nakedly

3

“**W**here rose gods dance nakedly.” Let the line serve as our introduction to the Rose Period. Of course, *La Chanson du Mal-Aimé* has only been quoted so far by its more beautiful verses. Not ten stanzas further along, we are treated to:

*Rotting fish of Salonica
Endless chain of repulsive dreams
Of eyes torn out by pointed stakes
Your mother loosed an awful fart
And birthed you in a colic pool¹*

— French?

The capacity to live with opposites in oneself confirms the point: Apollinaire and Picasso were artists to enrich each other. Ready to evoke every transport of romantic loss and longing, Apollinaire lived with an equally powerful vision of coruscation and putrescence; so he could provide the poetic overlay needed then for Picasso's vision. Roger Shattuck, speaking of Apollinaire's revolving roles as clown, scholar, drunkard, gourmet, lover, criminal, devout Catholic, wandering Jew, soldier and, finally, good husband, adds:

His boldest acts and his boldest works display a desire to touch simultaneously the extremes of tragic despair and of exultant gaiety. Today we have given to the products of this boldness the name “surrealism” or rather we have accepted the name from Apollinaire himself.²

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The poet soon becomes the guide who will conduct Picasso from the Blue Period into the Rose. Other friends and other factors are present, of course. The successful courtship of Fernande is one; a little later, when Leo and Gertrude Stein enter his life, Picasso will begin to sell his paintings more regularly. That is hardly going to inhibit his palette. There was also his increasing interest in the Médrano Circus at the foot of Montmartre. Picasso's choice of color required more, however, than the alteration of his personal circumstances. An outsize impetus was also needed. After all, there were other forces still locking him into the Blue Period, and they were fully employed to wall in larger fears.

It is hopeless to attempt to comprehend Picasso without assuming that he would never let anyone come near to the immensity of dread he contained within himself. One of his most honorable achievements over the ninety-odd years of his life is that he dominated his inner terror sufficiently to use it as a stimulus to work; how he worked! Work was his nostrum for dread. So we do well to view the Blue Period as his palisade built against dread. If we ask, Dread of what?—there can be no answer. Dread is characterized by alienation. We cannot point to the origin or the object of our fear. We know only that we are afraid, we wake up afraid, and this fear lives with us like a delicate nausea of the soul. At its most intense, everything takes on too much meaning—insanity begins to lurk outside that circle of sanity one has cleared for oneself—a circle of sanity often established through an act of will seeking to fortify the last boundaries separating a disturbed person from explosive forces in his psyche.

If this sounds close to insanity itself, we are obliged to recognize that sanity is often maintained by a mental balance which depends upon insane equations. In those years, Picasso must have seen the color blue as a force, an abstract power capable of holding off malign interventions. His limited palette could protect him against invasions which he could hardly name yet that he nonetheless believed were ready to destroy him. We can do worse than to comprehend him in this last of the Blue Period, from 1904 to 1905, as a perfectly sane hardworking young artist with but one insanity, a highly useful and functioning insanity—his belief that he could not shift his palette from dark blue to bright green, let us say, or to brilliant red without being rent apart.

This is shamanism. But then, where is the highly talented painter without some primitive belief that magic is a presence in all artwork? It is not difficult to see a painting as an occult act: It transforms a piece of paper, a sheet of cloth, or a cave wall into a life-like presence. If I am an actor and shape my mouth to look like the

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man or the emotion I am seeking to emulate, then I come closer to that man and that emotion. Conversely, if I feel myself taking on the emotional states of someone else, then my mouth is bound to form into similar lines. Put in simplest fashion, the actor is one person mimicking another. A painter, however, mimics an object, which is to say that he leaves a record of the object, he transfers it to another existence, he initiates a line that becomes a particular form. Soon enough, the painter is aware that one form can often represent more than one kind of object. The figure 7 can always be seen as a nose upside-down.

Let us go back once more into Picasso's depression as he entered the Blue Period. We can assume that he was close to fears he knew as a child. Everywhere he looked—at a stain on a wall, or a crack in a window—was evidence of an artist more divine than himself, a creator who could show a gargoyle's face in the crumbling of a slab of plaster. Were the lines of a penis at rest revealed in the drooping of a flag? We can hardly conceive of how powerfully did objects impinge on him. Objects spoke of other objects with similar form but highly different function (7, to repeat, equals a nose upside-down). He must have believed that if he allowed himself to follow his visual stimulations, he might lose his mind. So he protected himself with a severe palette, and painted an assemblage of humans imprisoned by poverty, hunger, tragic memories, and dread. No old man was ever as old as the young Spaniard who painted these exorcisms in his Blue Period. If there are cynics who believe that Picasso's work at this time is merely a reflection of the fact that Prussian blue was probably the cheapest pigment available when Picasso was poor, why, they can give this book away right now.

In depression, goes our claim, was his mental safety; in gloom was a force sullen as smoke to keep dank madness outside the circle of his creative fires. Profound gloom was the last and best defense against psychosis, and Picasso, bringing life to paper and canvas with a turn of his wrist, had to feel uncomfortably close to that all-inclusive force which introduced an earthquake to Málaga and took away his young sister in Corunna. Psychosis is the sense that one is in touch with the gods even when one does not deserve to be, or *wish to be*. It is then that monochromatic palettes can be set up as filters to hold cosmic forces at bay. Have we entered the subtext of Picasso's actions through that year, 1904 to 1905, when he was courting Fernande and painting all night, every night, like a watchman on a parapet? André Salmon describes him as "dressed altogether in blue, the blue of workingman's clothes, Picasso painted in blue by the light of a candle."³

Now, Apollinaire enters his life, and the poet is ready to conquer the road to

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madness by taking excursions upon it. Since there was a side of Picasso that believed one could only find personal significance in the bizarre (as if conventional scenes, still-lives and landscapes were all part of some gigantic social prison ruled by precisely those powers not particularly congenial to him), it is not surprising that the painter was ready to be influenced profoundly by a friend who had come to manhood out of a childhood and adolescence even more uprooted, grand, debased, cockeyed, and bi-valued than Picasso's. Yet, this variety of unique, even baroque, imbalance had led Apollinaire to build structures of eccentric habit that Picasso had to admire; the poet was not only a prodigious diversion but an advanced piece of human sculpture. To keep up with Guillaume Apollinaire, one had to view him from so many angles that he was already a spiritual model for the Cubism to come.

Together, however, they could share a vision of damnation, apocalypse, and the downfall of the bourgeoisie. In a personal period of prodigious inner anxieties, a collateral imbalance in society can seem reassuring. (You are not as fucked up as the people who are fucking you up!) The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth had produced a generation of bohemians, symbolists, and as-yet-untitled crypto-dadaists and surrealists ("pataphysicians," as Alfred Jarry would call them) who were prepared—it was the only solution they could see—to blow up the world, spiritually, socially and, if the dynamite was available, why not physically as well? Richardson shows his powers of synopsis here:

Reassured by the whiff of brimstone and brilliance they detected in each other, Picasso and Apollinaire became the best of friends . . .

Until he died, fourteen years after they met, Apollinaire would be a constant solace, a constant goad to Picasso. He opened up his imagination to a vast new range of intellectual stimuli: to new concepts of black humor, to the pagan past and the wilder shores of sex. Apollinaire, who was already obsessed with the works of the Marquis de Sade—"the freest spirit that ever existed," he wrote—had no difficulty converting Picasso to the cult of the Divine Marquis [nor to de Sade's] definition of art as "the perpetual immoral subversion of the existing order."⁴

De Sade believed in absolute freedom. As a corollary, he was opposed to property. Inasmuch as property commences with one's body—speak of sexual harassment!—Sade argued that all men and women should have full if temporary rights over the bodies of all other men and women. The question of rape immediately raised by this is quickly carried over to: What does one do about murderers? Sade's answer was: Beware of the dead man's friends. If, as a consequence, everyone is obliged to live in gangs who will serve, if need be, as avengers, the ultimate resolu-

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tion of such an implicit pyramid is monarchy: When it comes to retaliation, who can be more powerful than the king?

How could it not prove convivial then to Apollinaire (and Picasso) to come across a philosophy that could ingest anarchism and monarchism into the same system? Magical worlds germinate from the collapse of logic.

If one is to speak, however, of magic, it is worth attempting a small exposition. Let us assume that magic can adhere, for example, to a painting—particularly if it is a fine work, and one owns it—because the artwork can now be contemplated a thousand times rather than on a few occasions in a museum. Each time the owner comes to appreciate more in the composition than he glimpsed before, the painting takes on an added endowment. It becomes a center of meaning, it stimulates new thought, it induces energy in the viewer—that is to say it has assumed magical powers. (Magic offers priceless energy.) If the same can be said of a memory, of athletic victory, of a ritual ceremony, or of political leaders who take on charisma, if it can be said as well of lovers, of children, and of friends, we have a species of equation: Whatever provides us with continually enhanced connotation is magically endowed.

This is, of course, not true of all paintings we own, or of politicians who bore us, friends and lovers who depress us, rituals that weary us, or of relations in which we lose interest. Repetition can also kill the soul, and so a ceremony, a person, or an object is able to enrich us only when its nature, its *artful* nature, rewards further study or calls for more relationship—that is to say, its nature transcends familiarity. And that, indeed, may be why good poetry is more magical than good prose—the message is more elusive, more compressed, and more responsive to sensuous study.

Picasso was in need of new magic to dare to leave the Blue Period; Apollinaire provided it. Here is a last look at the transition:

... taking his place somewhere between the blind beggars and the prostitutes, sharing with them the same café tables, another character makes his appearance. He is a youth disguised for a performance in which, to judge from his fragile looks, he is merely another victim, one of a troupe of players who impersonate the behavior of a society from which they are outcasts . . .⁵

Of course, Germaine Cargallo is also in this portrait, and therefore Casagemas is present by connection. It is necessary to recognize that part of his difficulty in finding an exit from the Blue Period is that Picasso had to take Casagemas through the same door.

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... there are some pictures belonging to 1904 and 1905 that make one wonder how he reached the apparent detachment of Cubism without hanging himself. One of these is a big oil that shows Picasso and Germaine Pichot at the bar of the Lapin Agile with Frédé in his wooden shoes playing a guitar in the background: Germaine, wearing a tawdry hat and a pink dress, is sulking in front of her empty glass; Picasso, dressed as a harlequin—and the red lozenges clash subtly with her pink—is half turned from her and his greenish face has a look of profound disgust and weariness.⁶

Au Lapin Agile (also called The Harlequin with the Glass), 1904–05. Oil on canvas, 39 x 39 in.



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We have, however, to keep reminding ourselves that Picasso's inspirations also come from traditional sources, and the first of them may well have been Cézanne. Apart from the several exhibitions in Paris that Cézanne had been given in these years (which Picasso would certainly have seen), Ambroise Vollard kept any number of the older painter's works in the store-room of his gallery. Picasso may have had the opportunity to study these canvases by himself, alone with the brush-stroke of the artist. There was so much about Cézanne that was not only profoundly seminal in its offering—a veritable realm of new concepts on the paradoxes of perception—but there was also his clumsy hand, begging to be improved upon.

Who knows how much good morale was generated for Picasso by the knowledge that he could do a better and more interesting harlequin than Cézanne?

Cézanne, Mardi-Gras. Paul Cézanne fils, en harlequin et Louis Guillaume en pierrot, 1888-90

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Early in 1905, when Picasso, in the course of pining for Fernande, is still very much engaged with Madeleine, a transitional work appears. It shows a variety of fifteen limbs, some all but hidden, in its four personages (if we count the monkey), yet only the mother and child clasp each other. Since this painting is probably done in the period when Picasso is encouraging Madeleine to have an abortion, the ironies are acute. Motherhood, he seems to say (now that he will not be close to it), is the truly tender emotion—the rest is holding on to oneself. But what a harlequin, what a monkey, what a mother and child!



Family of Acrobats, with Madeleine, baby, monkey, harlequin, 1905

Another transitional work is enriched for us by the story recounted by André Salmon.

... Picasso had painted without a model the extremely pure, simple image of a young Parisian workman, beardless and dressed in blue. Very much as the artist himself looked when he was at work.

One night Picasso deserted the group of friends deep in intellectual discussion: he went back to his studio and, taking up this picture, which he had left untouched for a month, gave the young artisan in it a crown of roses. By a sublime stroke of caprice, he had turned his picture into a masterpiece.⁷



Boy with a Pipe, 1905. Oil on canvas, 39 x 32 in.

For Picasso, that wreath of red roses could have been the battering ram that breached an old fortified inner structure. Before long, his palette and his themes would move over to the *saltimbanques*.

They are traveling jugglers and acrobats, performers living on the last line between society and the nomadic life; and if one is looking for influences on him, they abound. He had seen traveling circuses in Spain and street entertainers in Paris; he was now, during the fall, winter, spring, and summer of 1904–1905, frequenting the Cirque Médrano at the foot of the Butte de Montmartre.

There, as Patrick O'Brian describes it so well, he could see a troupe of

... lion-tamers, broad white horses, trapeze artists, jugglers, riding-girls, acrobats, clowns, and at least figuratively its harlequins: when they were in funds Picasso and his friends went there three and even four times a week. He loved the smell of the place, the artistic integrity, and the total professionalism of the people: it was an international world—Dutch clowns, Serbian tumblers, Indian elephants—making little use of any language, French or otherwise, a world apart, remote and often hungry, made up of outsiders whose contract with the public was confined to the performance of very highly skilled and often perilous motions, the fruit of endless practice.

Furthermore, the circus was a link with his past: ... all over the Spain of his childhood hereditary troops of tumblers were to be seen, sometimes leading apes or bears ... and it is significant that most of the "saltimbanque" pictures that he painted in those years show not so much the circus proper as dusty vagrants, wan-

dering through bare, indeterminate landscapes in the clothes they wore for their performance.⁸

At the hub of all these influences is Apollinaire, the vital center of the Rose Period. It is interesting to compare Picasso's work in late 1905 with some of Apollinaire's verses in the same season. How compatible they are! The Rose Period with its bouquet of mystery offers a subtle mood of fear and longing, of tender concern, and a full sense of the sinister edge of the silences one feels in the mood of certain evenings when one does not know if one can cross the night.

Saltimbanques

*Dans la plaine des baladins
S'éloignent au long des jardins
Devant l'huis des auberges grises
Par les villages sans églises*

Acrobats

Beyond the plain a troop of clowns
Is strolling through the garden lane
And past the doors of worn gray inns
Lie churchless villages and towns

Circus Family, 1905. Pen and black ink, brush and gouache on brown composition board, 10 x 12 in.



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*Et les enfants s'en vont devant
Les autres suivent en rêvant
Chaque arbre fruitier se résigne
Quand de très loin ils lui font signe*

*Ils ont des poids ronds ou carrés
Des tambours des cerceaux dorés
L'ours et signe animaux sages
Quêtent des sous sur leur passage*

Children run quickly to the fore
And others follow in their dream
Each tree bearing fruit seems subdued
As from afar they make their sign

All weight carried is round or square
The tambourines have gilded hoops
Old wise beasts are the ape and bear
While begging pennies on the way⁹

Family of Saltimbanques, 1905. Oil on canvas, 83 x 90 in.



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Crépuscule/

*Sur les tréteaux l'arlequin blême
Salue d'abord les spectateurs
Des sorciers venus et Bohème
Quelques fées et les enchanteurs*

*Avant décroché une étoile
Il la manie à bras tendu
Tandis que des pieds un pendu
Sonne en mesure les cymbales*

*L'aveugle berce un bel enfant
La biche passe avec ses faons
Le nain regarde d'un air triste
Grandir l'arlequin trismégiste*

La Tzigane

*L'amour lourd comme un ours privé
Dansa debout quand nous voulûmes
Et l'oiseau bleu perdit ses plumes
Et les mendiants leurs Ave*

*Young Acrobat on a Ball, 1905. Oil on
canvas, 57 x 37 in.*

Twilight

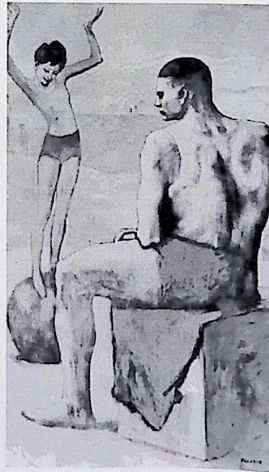
High on the stage pale harlequin
Prepares to salute the throng
Sorcerers arrive as Bohemians
A few fairies and magicians

Having unhooked a shining star
One holds it by his outstretched arm
And all the while a hanged man rings
A cymbal with his dangling feet

The blind man rocks a lovely child
The roe walks by and all her fauns
The drawf looks on with his sad air
And magic swells in harlequin¹⁰

The Gypsy

Love like an obese lonely bear
Danced upright when we desired
The bluebird lost his lovely plumes
And all the mendicants their beads¹¹



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He always loved making other people laugh and he could be brilliantly witty and animated when he wanted to be. He was a singer, a singing-teacher, a pianist, a comedian if called upon to be and the life-and-soul of all our parties. He used to improvise little plays in which he was always the main actor. I must have seen him do his imitation of a bare-footed dancer a hundred times, and each time I enjoyed it more. His trousers were rolled up to his knees to reveal two hairy legs. In shirt-sleeves, his collar wide-open to expose a chest forested with curly black hairs, with his bare-bald head and his pince-nez, he would dance with tiny steps and pointed toe, doing his best to be graceful and making us rock with laughter at his superb overacting. It would be impossible to remember all the rich details of that performance. He used to make us laugh so much that we felt physically exhausted. There was the gay songstress, which he did with a lady's hat on his head and a translucent veil swathed about him and singing in a heady soprano which was in tune but somehow totally ridiculous . . .

He used to sing *Langoustes atmosphérique* by Offenbach and *Sur les rives de l'Adour*. These and dozens of other songs used to delight us evening after evening. We never grew tired of them.¹

Fernande is writing, of course, about Max Jacob, and the evening usually takes place in Picasso's studio at the Bateau Lavoir, their friends squeezed in on whatever will serve for a seat between the squashed tubes of paint on the floor and the burnt umber, ochre, and cadmium-yellow turds of the dogs. There will be Apollinaire, of course, and André Salmon, and Manolo the sculptor who stole his father's

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watch, and there may be Paco Durio, who has already given Picasso his first lessons in sculpture, and presumably there are Canals and his wife, Benedetta, although one reads no mention of Sunyer anymore. Van Dongen is there from time to time, and Maurice Princet, the actuarial mathematician for insurance companies who would give them his own popular introduction to Einstein's work before long.

We have to remind ourselves that most of the guests were in their twenties and smoked pipes of opium the way later generations would take to pot; if on some nights the mood grew so deep that few could pass from the filigree of their own thought to the conceivably greater depth stirring in the mind of the person next to them, well, they caroused at other times.

Here are two of the songs Jacob would sing:

*Ah, superbe Pandore
Toi que mon coeur adore
Si tu résist's encore
A mon amour pour toi,
Je te de dis, crois-moi,
Il faudra final'ment
Que tu me mett's dedans*

Ah, superb Pandore
You whom my heart will adore
If you resist once more
My real sweet love for you
I tell you, kid, it's true,
Something has to be
Put inside of you—me!

*Sur les rives de l'Adour
Là-à vivait un pastour
Libre, heureux exempt de vices
Qui pêchait des écrevisses*

On the banks of the Adour
There was living a pastor
Free, happy, sinless, pure
Enticing crayfish to his lure.²

There is no humor so long gone as translations of funny old songs sung by people who died before most of us were born, but some trace of their happy delirium may perhaps remain.

Vlaminck and Derain, occasionally present, were doing a sex book for money on the principle that ink and paper cost less than oil and canvas. It was written by Vlaminck and called *From One Bed to Another*; Derain was doing the illustrations. Vlaminck, when it came to painting, was full of his own maxims: "One doesn't paint to earn money, one paints as if one is making love." His faith: pure color. "Pure color as it comes out of the tube . . . Museums are cemeteries . . . Don't set foot in them."³

Sometimes the games had a cutting edge. The spite felt toward Apollinaire was intense. Max Jacob had already walked his long mile in welcome; perhaps he had

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decided that the presence of a major poet would strengthen his own ties to Picasso, but his jealousy was not small. Picasso, in turn, was not without envy of Apollinaire's culture, his command of other languages, his talent as a poet, and his familiarity with those who had titles or money; it might be basic to despise the ruling classes, but it was not agreeable to feel oneself outside them.

Besides, Apollinaire was so above his own eccentricities that it must have been close to intolerable not to make fun of the man, at least behind his huge back. He had the habit, for example, of signing off on the smallest note, with the grandest flourish, "*la main amie* [the friendly hand] *de Guillaume Apollinaire*," and Max Jacob was quick to exploit the opportunity. Salmon returned home one white night in winter to find a snow-filled glove wedged into his door handle. Jacob had written in English, "Snow-glove" and then "*la main sanglante* [the bleeding hand] *de Guillaume Apollinaire*."⁴

They were quick to compete on variations to this theme. Letters now ended with the salutation: "The friendly hand of . . ." and were signed Jacob, or Salmon, or Picasso. Before long, it was refined to "The bloody hand of Max Jacob," etc. Salmon, having told the others about the splendid greeting offered him by Apollinaire's mother, inspired Maurice Princet to write: "Guillaume Apollinaire has such fear of vice that he doesn't dare look at his mother."⁵

And then there was the following verse:

Epouser la mer'd'Apollinaire
La mer'd'Apollinaire
La mer'd'Apollinaire
De quoi qu'on aurait l'air?
*De quoi qu'on aurait l'air?*⁶

La mer'd'Apollinaire could stand for "the mother of Apollinaire" or "the shit of Apollinaire." A fundamental pun!

To be wed to the mother of Apollinaire
The mother of Apollinaire
The mother of Apollinaire
What will you have for air?
*What will you have for air?*⁷

Salmon's memoir, *Souvenirs sans fin*, suggests that Apollinaire was not cognizant of these amusements, but Picasso later told Françoise Gilot that Apollinaire

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chased Max Jacob around the studio after he heard the song.⁸ Some twelve years later, in *La Femme assise*, back from World War I with a head wound, Apollinaire would satirize Picasso by way of a half-Spanish, half-Albanian character “born in Spain, in Málaga,” named Pablo Canouris who—in case anyone should fail to discern the model—was also “the painter with hands of a celestial blue.”⁹ Canouris had an exaggerated Spanish accent and suffered from avalanches of jealousy due to the faithlessness of his mistress, Elvire, a typical Apollinairian creation. Elvire’s peregrinations introduced her to a range of anecdotes and royal documents concerning Utah, the California gold rush, Brigham Young, some Mexicans, some blacks from the state of Missouri, a Ute Indian chief named Milopitz, and a few dozen adventurers from Western Europe and the Balkans. Elvire, whose eyes quiver with malice when she is with Pablo, waits for his embraces to end while she thinks of her girlfriend Mavis and “other caresses infinitely more sweet . . . caresses that she knew how to bestow that could only move the heart of a woman . . .”¹⁰

On one occasion, Pablo runs after her through the streets, catches her outside her door, and embraces her passionately. She gives way long enough for him to fall to his knees in gratitude, whereupon she unlocks her door, whips inside, and closes the portal on him. “For the rest of the night she heard Pablo Canouris banging on the shutters of the ground floor windows, while crying out, *‘Elbirre, écoute-moi oubrre-moi, jé te aime, jé te adore et si tu né m’obéis pas, jé té touerrai avec mon rébolber.’*”¹¹ More knocks on the door, then, “*Oubrré-moi, Elbirre! L’amourr c’est moi . . . oubrre à ton Pablo qui té adore.*”¹² Which in translation might go something like, “Elbeera, listen to me, operma up, I love ya, I adore ya, and if you no obey me, I’ll keel yiz with my rebolber. Openna up, Elbeera, luv, that’s me . . . openna up to Pablo who’s wild about ya.” No one in English or American novels has spoken like this since the turn of the century, but the misuse of *b* for *v* and the rolling of the *r*’s is not without humor in French, and the grammatical errors are basic enough to suggest that Canouris-Picasso would never be able to speak the language decently, an evaluation designed to wound Picasso. Like most expatriates, he was sensitive about his French. (The French make sure of that!)

Invoking the revolver is no small part of Apollinaire’s satire. In legend, and probably in fact, it was Alfred Jarry who sent Picasso the gun. Nonetheless, they probably never met face to face.

As Richardson points out in a detailed argument, Apollinaire, Jacob, and

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Salmon had been friendly with the "pataphysician" and detectably influenced by him. They had met, according to Apollinaire, at one of the soirées of the magazine *La Plume* that were then held at a café in the Place Saint-Michel.¹³

Jarry, however, was ill by the time Picasso encountered Apollinaire, and the closest the painter came, probably, to meeting him was to enjoy Apollinaire's wry description of the man's abode. It was on the second-and-a-half floor! The landlord, in possession of a house with gracious height between its landings and greedy for more income, had succeeded in installing two floors where before there had been only one.

"Monsieur Alfred Jarry?"

"Second floor and a half."

I was somewhat puzzled by that answer from the concierge. I climbed up to where Alfred Jarry lived—second and a half turned out to be correct. The stories of the house had seemed too high-ceilinged to the owner, so he had cut each of them in two. In this way the house, which still exists, has fifteen stories, but since it is actually no higher, it is but the reduction of a skyscraper.

For that matter, reductions abounded in Alfred Jarry's abode. His second and a half was but the reduction of a story in which Jarry was quite comfortable standing up, but I was taller than he, and had to bend. The bed was but a reduction of a bed—a pallet; low beds were the fashion, Jarry told me. The writing table was but the reduction of a table; Jarry wrote on the floor, stretched out on his stomach. The furnishing was but the reduction of furnishing, consisting solely of the bed. On the wall hung the reduction of a picture. It was a portrait of Jarry, most of which he had burned, leaving only the head, which made him look like a certain lithograph of Balzac that I know. The library was but the reduction of a library, to put it mildly. It consisted of a cheap edition of Rabelais and two or three volumes of the *Bibliothèque rose*. On the mantel stood a large stone phallus, made in Japan, a gift from to Jarry from Félicien Rops. This virile member, larger than life, Jarry had kept covered with a purple velvet sheath ever since the day when the exotic monolith had frightened a literary lady. She had arrived breathless from climbing up to this second floor and a half, and bewildered at finding herself in this furnitureless "Grande Chamblerie."

"Is it a cast?" she inquired.

"No," answered Jarry, "it's a reduction."¹⁴

Richardson also makes the point that it was Max Jacob who created the legend that Picasso knew Jarry well, and quotes Hélène Parmelin for support: "[Picasso]

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regretted not having known Jarry . . . he went to see him one day with Apollinaire, but Jarry was out, *'et puis c'est fini.'*"¹⁵

. . . Jarry had barely survived the winter of 1905–1906 [and] received the last rites around the same time that the *Demoiselles* was receiving its last touches. The breakthrough that this painting constitutes has yet to be seen in the light of the breakthrough that Jarry had made ten years before when he crashed the barrier between fantasy and reality, and established the parodic science of "pataphysics," which would detonate all traditional canons of beauty, good taste and propriety.¹⁶

Of course, Picasso did receive the gun, and by the laws of Jarry's new logic, that was a profound connection.

Picasso did Jarry's "pataphysical" weapon proud; he claimed that he constantly used it to scare off bores and morons. There was the evening at the Lapin Agile when he fired a fusillade of shots after three earnest young Germans had exasperated him with questions about his aesthetic theories . . . No less Jarryesque was the time when Picasso and Manolo . . . found themselves sharing a cab with yet another boring German, who insisted on reciting his poems. Such was the tedium that Picasso fired through the cab's roof and left the German to be locked up by the police.¹⁷

It is reputed that Jimmy Hoffa said, "Run from a knife—move in on a gun." The theory must be based on the idea that a man with a knife is agile enough to use it, and usually slender enough to be defending himself, although not necessarily aggressive enough to chase you. A pistol, on the other hand, cannot be employed without some inner justification, no matter how warped. If one walks toward a handgun, the man holding it has to decide that he has the right to fire. In this case, therefore, we are not speaking of a defensive reflex but of a moral choice. One can, of course, make the gesture of firing into the air—so often Picasso's practice—achieving great effect without victory, defeat, or any serious choice at all. One is mixing gesture with significance.

Richardson bears on this point in the following passage:

Again and again (sometimes in the same work) the very same symbol is made to stand for principles or ideas that are totally antithetical. . . . "The identity of opposites" is how Jarry explains this phenomenon. "Not only are the signs plus and minus identical but so too, ultimately, are the concepts of day and night, light and darkness, good and evil, Christ and Antichrist." It is a theory by which Picasso

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would always live and paint . . . "I remember," Paulo Picasso told his father, "that I used to hear you repeat again and again, 'Truth is a lie.'"¹⁸

Yes, and anarchism, by way of de Sade, is monarchism. One habitat can serve two opposed symbols. A cellar can be cold, dark, and evil-smelling or warm, womb-like, protective. Picasso, dazzled into new connections by opium, must after a year of the Rose Period have been envisaging a new kind of painting; indeed, under opium, the new palette may have begun to seem cloying to him precisely because of its virtues—that all-too-successful creation of the evocative, the romantic, the dream-like, the tender, all embraced by the tastefully sinister. So, he may have been contemplating more disruptive approaches.

If we are to try to conceive of the subjects that were now being discussed by Picasso and his poets, we have to assume, given the talents of Jacob, Apollinaire, and Picasso, that they pondered many a curious and/or mysterious concept. Since the turn of the century, more than a few exceptional, even incredible, events had occurred. For example, Marconi had sent a wireless message from England to Newfoundland, 2,232 miles away. To the *bande à Picasso*, that must have been replete with aesthetic wonder: If the air could transmit messages, then spirits might be consorting with electricity! These are the thought processes of painters and poets after all!—they had an instinct for the intrinsic oddity of technological transactions. The second half of the nineteenth century, by way of the steamship and the train, had demonstrated that large numbers of people could traverse space much faster than at the rate of a horse, and now, individuals in their own machines—automobiles!—could race along roads at an equally advanced rate of speed. If distance was no longer to be measured by human or animal rates of locomotion, then the artist's space on his canvas might also have to be treated in a new manner.

The Wright brothers lifted themselves up into the air at Kitty Hawk, and our elemental relation to the heights above us was forever altered. A balloon had been essentially a slow-moving point in the sky, but a flying machine was an arrow. Fantastic dreams took on more realism. In New York, the first subway was being completed; the earth, therefore, was no longer a womb for nature or a vault for the departed but a network of new underground routes. One could begin to conceive, as Apollinaire certainly would have had the capacity to do, of a subterranean city, a gastrointestinal sub-structure to the urban surface.

In those years, Freud was already offering interpretations of dreams that could stimulate many a painter into new visual transports. The great bowl of the uncon-

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scious had been partially exposed to light. Disruption was everywhere. Queen Victoria was not the only one to have died. President McKinley had been assassinated; so, too, the Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, uncle of Czar Nicholas. There had been a mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin*, and the Czar had established a Duma. The Fauves were demonstrating that color itself, pure color, was also a force powerful enough to dominate form and composition, and these young men were exhibiting in Paris—Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, Braque, Dufy, and Rouault were Fauves by the autumn of 1905. Max Jacob was studying cabala. Apollinaire, in *La Plume*, in May of 1905, six months after he had met Picasso, was writing:

It has been said . . . Picasso's work shows a precocious disillusionment. In my opinion the contrary is true. Everything he sees enchants him and it seems to me he uses his incontestable talent in the service of an imagination that mingles delight and horror, abjection and delicacy . . . One feels that his slender acrobats, glowing in their rags, are true sons of the people: versatile, cunning, dexterous, poverty-stricken, and lying.¹⁹

This was all very well, but Picasso was approaching a recognition that the Rose Period might be no more than a rest camp. Deeper instincts in himself may have been urging him to set out on pursuing a more terrifying vision. He was approaching the crossroads of his aesthetic career. His father, with all the unacknowledged authority of the academic painter—"This is how it looks, after all!"—had imbued his son from childhood with the first imperative of the academic establishment: One must offer one's audience highly skilled works that provide refined pleasure. In the Rose Period, Picasso was still satisfying this paternal injunction.

If he had always seen life and his own existence, his own talent, as subject to unforeseen powers of destruction, he now was coming closer to the belief that he could countermand such forces, could even fight an active rather than a passive battle against the overpowering treachery that was always waiting in the Creation. Or so his experience suggested.

Part VI



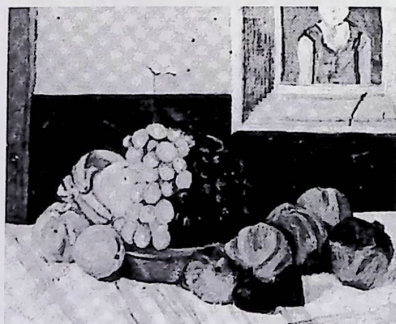
Gertrude Stein



1

Fernande is still fabulously in love with love. As a consequence, she does not always comprehend Picasso's artistic needs. This strange, small, intense, old-young man, forever engaging, wickedly entertaining, sullen, or cruel is the object of her love, but she has little insight into the aesthetic anxieties of her beloved. Nonetheless, she sees him by the manner she sees him, and so we, with added perspective, receive increments of benefit.

I've been trying, for some time, to paint. I have gifts. I would like to be taught, to receive Picasso's advice, which he refuses to offer. "Amuse yourself," he says to me. "That will be enough. What you do is more interesting than what you would do under the instruction of another."



I, however, am bothered by getting into things that arouse my passionate interest without my being able to search more deeply into the subject. That is why I give myself, above all, to reading, which permits me, at least, to study seriously.¹

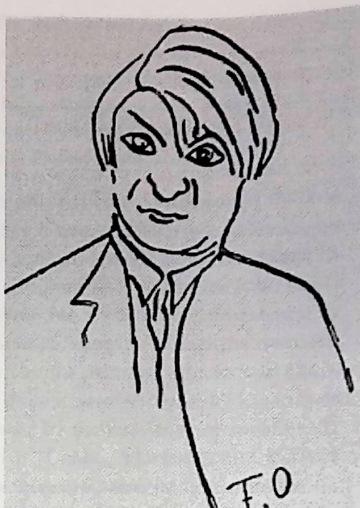
So she remains a dilettante, and

Fernande Olivier, Still Life. Oil on canvas, 19 x 22 in.

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Fernande Olivier, Self-Portrait (left)



Fernande Olivier, Portrait of Picasso(right)

Fernande Olivier, Vase of Flowers (left). Oil on canvas, 19 x 15 in.

an intelligent observer of Picasso's highly ambivalent behavior with dealers. The trouble is that he hates to give up a canvas.

One day, however, Picasso found himself with absolutely no money, no paints, and no canvases, and he went to see Sagot, to ask him to visit his studio. The dealer knew perfectly well that only desperation would have prompted such a request.

Sagot goes up with Picasso and settles on three studies . . . offers seven



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hundred francs for the lot; Picasso refuses. The dealer leaves and does not return. Several days go by. The painter decides to go and see him again. The dealer is still prepared to buy but this time is only offering five hundred francs for the three studies. Picasso is furious, tells him to go to hell, and comes home in a rage.

The same performance is repeated a few days later. Sagot is only offering three hundred francs now. Driven by sheer necessity, Picasso finally accepts.²

There has been so much written about Picasso's poverty in this period that one is tempted to pass over it, except that even when it was a question of economics, his determinedly quirky relation to practical life is on exhibit. He would, for example, unlike other painters, not try to exhibit: The criticisms he had received from earlier reviews had scored his self-esteem; he preferred his work to be characterized by friends like Apollinaire. In consequence, he sent paintings to neither the Salon des Indépendants nor to the Salon d'Automne, where the painters he knew were showing. Instead, he had to listen to increasingly more intense accounts by friends and artistic acquaintances of the excitement aroused by the Fauves. How could he not have had his share of envy concerning Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, and Braque? He did stay in touch with dealers, but, as we have just seen, suffered humiliation. Once he sold ten drawings for twenty francs to Père Soulié, who dealt mainly in mattresses and bed frames. On another occasion, when his bill at an art-supplies shop reached 900 francs, he was cut off from artists' supplies. He was also rebuffed frequently by Ambroise Vollard, who, no matter his formidable reputation in Montmartre for promoting Cézanne, seemed unable to decide whether he approved or disapproved of this young Spaniard whose style didn't change so much as metamorphose; when Picasso sent a work over to Vollard by way of Max Jacob, the dealer turned down the painting. "Your friend is mad," he said to Max. "Go away." Or, so Jacob reports the dialogue.³

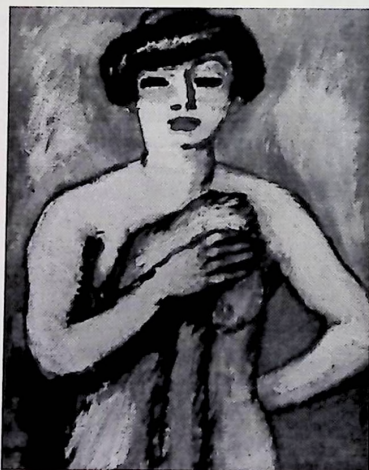
One time, their studio cat went prowling over the rooftops and came back with a large piece of stolen sausage. Fernande maintains she washed it well, and "I cooked it for us, who are much obliged, however, to share it with Minou."⁴

One day, when we were absolutely without anything, somebody came by to ask Picasso to do a series of drawings for *L'Assiette au Beurre*, a humorous review then in vogue. The offer was for eight hundred francs. He studied me, looking to know whether I wished he would accept it. He had a most unhappy air. I made him a sign: "No." He insisted, "Don't you want it? I understand, you know, I would do it for you." But—"No," I told him, "—it isn't necessary for you to do

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anything that makes you unhappy." And I was thinking, Why, why do it? He will be disgusted, sad. And I, who am happy, wouldn't I then be unhappy? All right, then, let's avoid all that and everything will be fine. Tonight, however, won't we be hungry without our restaurant? And I am often without shoes. But I still had my little flask of perfume, my powder, my books, my tea, and Pablo's tenderness.⁵

It is a fetching tale of young lovers, but she leaves out some of the background. This offer has come by way of Kees van Dongen, who is the in-house artist for *L'Assiette au Beurre* and has passed this 800-franc job on to Picasso. On the one hand, an offer of friendship; on the other, van Dongen did use Fernande as a model in the summer of 1905 while Picasso was having his fling in Holland, and van Dongen, we may recall, owned an even wilder reputation than Picasso in Bateau Lavoir circles when it came to conquests with women. Now, a year later in 1906, he has painted Fernande most attractively, and certainly with more insinuation than Picasso. It is worth looking at the two portraits again. In 1905 van Dongen is obviously attracted, but sees her as one tough slut. By 1906 he seems to have acquired a subtler and more



van Dongen, *Portrait of Fernande Olivier* (left), 1905. Oil on canvas, 39 x 32 in.



van Dongen, *Portrait of Fernande Olivier*, 1906. Pastel on paper, 28 x 24 in.

Lighten up ↑

loving carnal knowledge; he is, in effect, saying, "Very attractive indeed!"

One can ask, therefore, how much these two portraits of Fernande are a factor in Picasso's reluctance to accept the assignment.

On the other hand, he would play ceaselessly with van Dongen's child, Gusie:

She could do with him anything she wished. I didn't know until then that he could please himself so with children. We had often wished to have one for ourselves, but this wish never realized itself, so it was necessary for us to content ourselves with little Miss van Dongen.⁶

While the evidence is not wholly established, the likelihood is that because of her marriage to Percheron and the attendant falls and beatings, Fernande could no longer have a child. Harlequin's wife now appears as a mother.

We are asked to feel the *pathétique* of the man who is ready, to love Fernande and their child; on the other hand, Fernande is being punished. She lost her womb before she ever met him; that he will not forgive.

Picasso, whose morbid, sickly jealousy is the unique cause of our occasional fights, has forbidden me to go to the Lapin Agile alone. One day, the proprietor, Frédéric, being attacked, had answered through his window by firing his pistol on a man who was menacing him. The next day, I did go alone to see his wife, Berthe, in order to hear the news about it. Picasso, who followed with the same idea, found me there. I received the most unexpected and formidable blow and felt myself being pushed brutally and with-



Harlequin's Family, 1905. Crayons and wash on paper, 6 x 5 in.

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out concealment out of this place, under the horrified and ironic looks of the curious people who were gathered on the terrace.⁷

His jealousy is so intense that he locks her in when he leaves the Bateau Lavoir; indeed, he will not allow her out by herself. She can stay home and read; he will shop, he will see what is going on in the streets. He knows her well enough to suspect that she is no more trustworthy than himself.

The other day I opened my door and the neighbors and the concierge were all in front of it, crying out to me that there'd been a fire started in one of the studios under ours. We would all burn up in this building of wood, and me with it. By the time I dressed, the fire was out. An alcohol lamp had burst, no more. However, I was afraid retrospectively. Pablo often closed and double-locked the door in order to keep me from going out. After that, he, feeling a good deal of fear when I told him the story, no longer carried the keys.⁸

The unhappy outbreaks, however, continue:

Pablo had a stupid, jealous scene coming back yesterday evening toward midnight. We'd been at Lapin, and it seemed that I had unwittingly attracted some looks from one of the diners. I, then, reproached Pablo for some of his familiarities with women who are more or less friends. Hadn't I even found one of them sitting on his lap?

At last, I became angry and, no longer knowing what I was doing, leapt out to the street and swept down rue Lepic, crying with rage. No longer even asking myself where I was going to put up for the night, still running. Pablo, who had followed, took me brusquely by the arm and wanted to go back to the studio. I refused to follow him, and he wouldn't let go. We were almost fighting. But my anger gave way to a sort of despair, and at last I let myself be brought to our house.

The danger is that after such scenes, I begin to think of the meanness of the material life that I lead. I couldn't resist remarking on this to Pablo. He turned pale, didn't say anything. I thought that he would be angry with me, that I had lost something delicate between us, but I made no apologies and went to bed. He began to work, and I slept for a long time before he stretched out near me.

I didn't hear Pablo leave. When I awoke toward noon, he was gone. I had fear. My love came back, reawakened most powerfully. I regretted my behavior. I asked myself if he would come back or if I was never to see him again. I didn't have the courage to get up. I tried to go back to sleep, and I'd almost succeeded when I heard the door open and Pablo came in. He came near the bed and said to me, "You sleep? You still want me?" I looked at him. He held out several bills and a

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little package of perfume. Dear Pablo! If you knew how, at that moment, one thing alone made me happy. Your presence. Your love.⁹

It is tempting to receive all this as evidence of a passionate romance, and to a degree, it was: Long after it had ended, the romance, purified by recollection, kept a pristine life in Fernande's mind. If, in actuality, there had been the day-to-day reality of sexual roommates grating on each other's most private needs, she hardly suggests that in her account, even if it is obvious by the end in 1912 how they do not get on anymore. It is tempting, all the same, to think that they were truly happy for a period, and that their love might have gone on much longer if not for the entrance of Gertrude Stein into their lives. Gertrude's presence would change his grasp of the universe.

2

Such a premise is, however, hardly based on any clear evidence. New women, after all, were almost as important to Picasso as new concepts for his work, and since Fernande was ready on occasion to repay his infidelities with her own, their relationship contained its own large potentiality for coming apart. Moreover, Fernande's bourgeois roots had to irritate his own—she was an avid social climber. Given her miserable childhood in that ferociously French middle-class family, her social ambitions are comprehensible, but that, too, had to irritate Picasso. A judge can rarely forgive you for a crime he is capable of committing himself, and Picasso had his own agenda for social advancement. It was just that he was considerably better at hiding it, from himself as well as others.

We cannot blame Gertrude Stein, therefore, if the romance eventually failed, but it is hard to believe she was a force to keep them together. Too virulent a strain of concealed contempt for Fernande lurks in Stein's writings. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (that classic tour de force of boundless vanity where Gertrude Stein had the wit to write about herself through the eyes of Alice while never allowing her mouthpiece one irreligious reaction to her beloved mistress), we learn that Fernande is not to be taken too seriously. If Alice B. Toklas sounds most of the time like Gertrude Stein, lay it to Gertrude's reluctance to sound like Alice any longer than necessary. After all, why be Toklas when one can be Stein?

The geniuses came and talked to Gertrude Stein and the wives sat with me.
How they unroll, an endless vista through the years. I began with Fernande and

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then there were Madame Matisse and Marcelle Braque and Josette Gris and Eve Picasso and Bridget Gibb and Marjory Gibb and Hadley and Pauline Hemingway and Mrs. Sherwood Anderson and Mrs. Bravig Imbs and Mrs. Ford Madox Ford and endless others, geniuses, near geniuses and might be geniuses, all having wives, and I have sat and talked with them all all the wives and later on, well later on too, I have sat and talked with all. But I began with Fernande.¹

... Fernande was . . . not the least amusing. We talked hats. Fernande had two subjects hats and perfumes. The first day we talked hats. She liked hats, she had the true french feeling about a hat, if a hat did not provoke some witticism from a man on the street the hat was not a success. Later on once in Montmartre she and I were walking together. She had on a large yellow hat and I had on a much smaller blue one. As we were walking along a workman stopped and called out, there go the sun and the moon shining together. Ah, said Fernande to me with a radiant smile, you see our hats are a success.²

What is missing from this characterization (written a quarter of a century later, in a style that owes as much to early Hemingway as Ernest once owed to early Stein) is that Alice spoke so little French that she had to take lessons from Fernande. It is not easy to amuse someone who does not speak your language! As

for Gertrude, however, let there be no mistake. She is more than amusing. On page five of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, she gives, by way of Alice, the balanced measure of herself:



Picasso and Fernande in Montmartre, c. 1906.

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... I may say that only three times in my life have I met a genius and each time a bell within me rang and I was not mistaken, and I may say in each case it was before there was any general recognition of the quality of genius in them. The three geniuses of whom I wish to speak are Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso and Alfred Whitehead. I have met many important people, I have met several great people but I have only known three first class geniuses and in each case on sight within me something rang. In no one of the three cases have I been mistaken. In this way my new full life began.³



Gertrude Stein at home in the rue de Fleurus, Paris, 1905

Patrick O'Brian gives a nice description of Gertrude's first meeting with Picasso:

Leo and Gertrude Stein, wandering along the rue Lafitte, saw two paintings in Sagot's shop that pleased them, the one by a young Spaniard whose name is not recorded, the other by Picasso. Stein bought the first and showed interest in the painter of the second, so Sagot sent him to Père Soulié [who] perceived that they

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were Americans and therefore asked as much for his Picasso as Vollard asked for the Cézannes the Steins were then buying. They went back to Sagot who laughed and said that in a few days he would have a big Picasso for them, presumably at a reasonable price. When they returned to the rue Lafitte the dealer showed them the "*Fillette à la corbeille fleurie*," a slim rebellious blackhaired child, worm-naked but for a little necklace and a hair-ribbon, looking sullenly at the painter as she stands on something tawny and holds an ornamental basket of red flowers, brilliant against the blue-grey background. Gertrude Stein did not like the picture; she found the child's long legs and big feet repulsive. But in the ensuing contest she was defeated; the price of a hundred and fifty francs was paid, and Leo Stein carried the "*Fillette*" home to the rue de Fleurus to join the Cézannes, the Gauguins and Matisse.

Presently the Steins were taken to Picasso's studio by a French writer who knew him, and they bought eight hundred francs' worth of pictures straight away.⁴

Here is Fernande's description of the same encounter:

One day Picasso and I had the surprise of seeing two Americans come to our studio, a brother and a sister, Leo and Gertrude Stein. He had the air of a professor, bald, with gold-rimmed spectacles, a long curled red beard, a wicked eye. A tall thin stiff body with cultivated gestures. She, fat, short, powerfully built, a beautiful strong head with noble features, highly accented intelligent eyes that see a lot, a clear spirit, masculine in her voice, in all her appearance . . . Both of the Steins were dressed in chestnut-colored corduroys and were wearing sandals. Too sure of themselves to pay attention to what others think, the brother is interested in being a painter and she in writing. She has received compliments from H. G. Wells and is more than a little proud of that.⁵

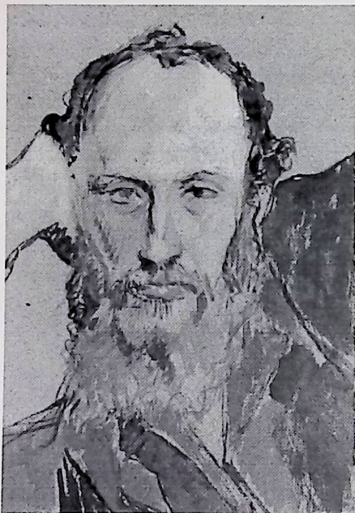


Young Girl with Basket of Flowers, 1905

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On this occasion, it was the brother one might notice first. He was tall; he was arrogant. Focused on the stimulations of his own mind, he was barely able to contain his contempt for the minds of others—a rich American eccentric, in short, who happened to come from a German-Jewish family so little Jewish that if Leo shared any attitude with Gertrude it was that they were both comfortably anti-Semitic.

Gertrude Stein who has an explosive temper, came in another evening and there were her brother, Alfie [Maurer] and a stranger. She did not like the stranger's looks. Who is that, said she to Alfie. I didn't bring him, said Alfie. He looks like a Jew, said Gertrude Stein, he is worse than that, says Alfie.⁶



Leo Stein, 1906. Gouache on tan cardboard, 10 x 7 in.

Leo Stein had studied medicine at Johns Hopkins and did not practice; he was a writer not able to write for four decades, a painter who gave up painting, an art connoisseur who spent time with Bernard Berenson only to become an early collector of the avant-garde, yet would be so repelled by Cubism that he ceased collecting. He had a "neurosis," as he would explain it. When not overbearing, however, he must have been a somewhat comic figure.

The best sense one can obtain of Leo Stein is from his book *Appreciation: Painting, Poetry and Prose*, published in 1947. It was intended to be the work that would show his sister up; he wished to demonstrate that he had forgotten more about painting than she ever knew, but Gertrude had the immaculate timing to die shortly before it came out. A full page

of excerpt is worth presenting: It is not as if he had nothing to say.

... one day it occurred to me to ask the definite question: how does a painter see when he paints? ... There is no use speculating when one can experiment; so I began to experiment.

I put on a table a plate of the kind common in Italy, an earthenware plate with

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a simple pattern in color, and this I looked at every day for minutes or for hours. I had in mind to see it as a picture, and waited for it to become one. In time it did. The change came suddenly when the plate as an inventorial object, one made up of parts that could be separately listed, a certain shape, certain colors applied to it, and so on, went over into a composition to which all these elements were merely contributory. The painted composition on the plate ceased to be *on* it but became a part of a larger composition which was the plate as a whole. I had made a beginning to seeing pictorially.

What had been begun was carried out in all directions. I wanted to be able to see anything as a composition, and found that it was possible to do this. I tried it on everything from a scrap of paper torn from the corner of a sheet, to a line of trees extending half a mile into the distance; and I found that with practice seeing pictures was possible everywhere . . .

This habit of mine of seeing pictorial composition in nature, and seeing it anywhere and whenever I am so inclined, in little or on the grandest scale, makes me difficult in the acceptance of pictures. Such a landscape as Claude's and Turner's is for me picturesque only, not really pictorial. It is landscape as anyone sees it, composed, that is, within the limits of a naturalistic vision. In many cases Cézanne does not get beyond that in his composition as a whole. Only in China and Japan was this higher grade of landscape common, and its greatest master in Europe is Poussin.⁷

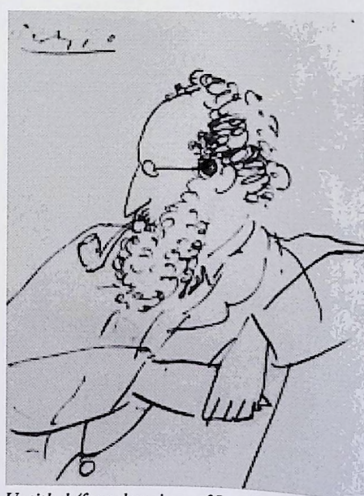
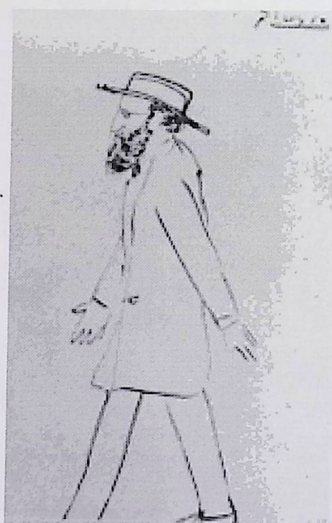
Stein is an archetype of the ideologue who legislates aesthetics. His definition of art is:

. . . nature seen in the light of its significance. Then, recognizing that this significance was one of form, I added 'formal' to 'significance.' Significant form was then born for me.⁸

He exhibits a mind more powerful than Gertrude's, but even as she is a social creature whose greatest appreciation is for the ripples of social surface, so he is, by his own definition, an "explainer," and people who explain are an obstacle to be avoided in social life. He lives for the supremacy of his own opinion; her judgments are always social, which is to say, paradoxical—she would have been perfectly capable of making the following remark: *Apollinaire has strictures in his talent but his manners are redeeming, while André Salmon has talent in his strictures but no manners.*

One can conceive of Leo Stein grinding his molars at having to listen to such profitless equations when he is primed to declare that surrealism is overrated because it is structureless and no aesthetic can exist without structure.

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Untitled (four drawings of Leo Stein), 1905.
Pen and ink.

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It is tempting to imagine them together at rue de Fleurus. They were obviously once so close as brother and sister that she followed him to Johns Hopkins in order to study medicine alongside him, at which she was apparently a failure.

In anatomy, she could never succeed in drawing the human brain, or would it be fairer to say she came up with drawings of the brain that were like no others? She was always delighted, or pretended to be, in her absolute lack of depth, her resolute refusal to associate with the occult or the profound. Her self-satisfaction at this characteristic beams out of her prose in the *Autobiography*:

Gertrude Stein never had subconscious reactions, nor was she a successful subject for automatic writing. One of the students in the psychological seminar of which Gertrude Stein, although an undergraduate was at William James' particular request a member, was carrying on a series of experiments on suggestions to the subconscious. When he read his paper upon the result of his experiments, he began by explaining that one of the subjects gave absolutely no results and as this much lowered the average and made the conclusion of his experiments false he wished to be allowed to cut this record out. Whose record is it, said James. Miss Stein's, said the student. Ah, said James, if Miss Stein gave no response I should say that it was as normal not to give a response as to give one and decidedly the result must not be cut out.⁹

She certainly detested the deep. Her values were to be found in her pleasures, and her pleasures were social. *So-and-so has a well-cut suit*, she might have written at any time, *but here-and-now does not. That is because here-and-now is half-German and half-Armenian and, as everyone knows, Armenians and Germans never mix*. It is more than worthy of the kind of talk one would later hear from people who congregated around Andy Warhol.

Beneath her impenetrable skin, as hard-larded as a walrus, she must have contained wounds, traumas, volcanoes—we don't know: She never lets us know. Once she did reveal that she was happy in her childhood when her father, a cold, domineering man, died, and it could certainly have been no routine matter to be an open practicing lesbian at the turn of the century, but she will never give us any of that. She is instead forever impressive in her own determined way, the way of a hostess; it was probably her first talent. As a writer, it is hard to say whether her reputation would be larger now or non-existent if Hemingway had not been her pupil in the Twenties. But he was—he took the live ember of her perception of a new kind of prose and carried it to places that affected generations of writers; if he had not come along, her work might have perished. Little of it does more than

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entertain us today; much of it is pretentious or, worse, lumpy. She can be a very bad writer. Her book *Picasso*, published in 1938, shows a lazy mind, self-indulgent, and slab-sided. She is all too swollen in her sense of the importance of her perceptions and, surprisingly, unable to make a good point and keep it. The truth is that apart from her recognition of Picasso's talent—which is, admittedly, no small matter—she did not understand much else about him, and kept faking it.

Despite the incisive things she can certainly offer on occasion, her vanity proves oppressive. She must characterize everything whether she is near to the subject or not. At her worst she shovels obese generalizations from one pile of words to another. Here, for example, is her reaction in 1938 to Picasso's work following his marriage in 1918 to Olga Kokhlova.

The Spanish character is a mixture of Europe and the Orient, the Russian character is a mixture of the European and the Oriental but it is neither the same Europe nor the same Orient, but as it is the same mixture the struggle to become once more himself was harder than ever and from 1924 to 1935 this struggle lasted.

During this time his consolation was cubism, the harlequins big and little, and his struggle was in the large pictures where the forms in spite of being fantastic forms were forms like everybody sees them, were, if you wish, pornographic forms, in a word forms like Russians can see them but not forms like a Spaniard can see them.¹⁰

It was, in retrospect, inevitable that she and Picasso were absolutely taken with one another, she who could approach the deep only by way of these orotund excrescences, and Picasso who would never speak of the deep for fear of being cast instantly into the very abyss he was getting ready to explore.

3

Picasso's relationship with Gertrude Stein was at its most intense and interesting during the first few years.

He had an instinctive and immediate reaction to her. Gertrude stimulated him in ways no other person ever had. While neither of them could recall just when she began to sit for him, both agree that he asked her to model soon after their first meeting, and their acquaintance developed with an easel and canvas between them.

At the Bateau Lavoir she would sit through many an afternoon—she claims ninety such occasions, a large claim, but there may have been scores of such meetings through the fall of 1905 and the spring of 1906. She would take the trip across the Seine from the rue de Fleurus on the Left Bank to the top of Montmartre on the Right, and he would add to the portrait and wipe it away, and explore new passages and paint them over, looking for what he certainly could not name, and Fernande, nearly always present, would read from one or another French classic.

Fernande spoke a very elegant french, some lapses of course into montmartrois that I found difficult to follow, but she had been educated to be a schoolmistress, her voice was lovely . . .¹

In such manner would the hours pass, and it is hardly possible not to speculate on their inner state. Richardson suggests that "a powerful charge

. . . was generated between them: a deep psychic feeling that went way beyond friendship and yet was not in the least amorous, often not even amicable . . .²

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We are speaking of one of those rare but powerful relationships where people who have not much intimate affection for one another are nonetheless welded for a period in a Draconian relationship—not unlike serving in the Army, which is to say one of the most grueling experiences of one's life and one of the most valuable. Of course, this may exaggerate the difficulties. Those sittings, to the degree they were meditations, could also drift into more agreeable turns of thought, and Gertrude-by-way-of-Alice is quick to emphasize all that was pleasurable and profound in their meetings; but then, she is writing from the vantage point of 1933, twenty-seven years later, and Picasso is now comparable to Einstein in his fame.

During these long poses and these long walks Gertrude Stein meditated and made sentences. She was then in the middle of her negro story *Melanctha* Herbert, the second story of *Three Lives* and the poignant incidents that she wove into the life of *Melanctha* were often those she noticed walking down the hill from the rue Ravignan . . .

Practically every afternoon Gertrude Stein went to Montmartre and then later wandered down the hill usually walking across Paris to the rue de Fleurus . . . And Saturday evenings the Picassos walked home with her and dined and then there was Saturday evening.³

The Saturday night salon had begun. It grew quickly. Picasso was soon able to invite his friends to accompany him, and to their ranks were added any number of visiting Americans and several of the Steins' acquaintances. One of them, a spinster from Baltimore named Etta Cone, later remarked, "I found the Picassos appalling but romantic." (She is presumably speaking of Pablo and Fernande rather than the paintings, although Pierre Cabanne believes she is referring to the paintings.)⁴

Gertrude, by way of Alice, has another description of Picasso's appearance in her salon:

. . . small, quick-moving but not restless, his eyes having a strange faculty of opening wide and drinking in what he wished to see. He had the isolation and movement of the head of a bull-fighter at the head of their procession.⁵

Others, Fernande and Salmon among them, will use the same image to describe him: A year or two later, entering a room followed by men as large in size as Braque, Derain, and Vlaminck, Picasso is the *torero* at the head of his *cuadrilla*; and when he is an old man, he will look like nothing so much as a venerable

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ganadero, proud of his ranch and the bulls he has raised. We do well to remember the little boy on that Sunday afternoon in Málaga, ensconced in a famous bull-fighter's lap and dazzled by the suit of lights.

Now, at Gertrude's, he dazzles odd American ladies with his panache and his utter lack of it. Alice Toklas describes how in the course of the first meal Picasso would have at the rue de Fleurus, he was placed at Gertrude's right hand. When she picked up a piece of bread, he grabbed it back from her and cried out, "It's mine," only to look sheepish immediately thereafter.⁶

Brothers and sisters snatch bread from each other while growing up. Obviously, Pablo and Gertrude were related from the start. How much she must have reminded him of his fat aunts in Málaga and his hefty nude models in Holland.

He must also have been impressed by the Stein collection. By dint of careful choices, it was well commenced. "[O]n all the walls . . ." we read in *Alice*, "were pictures . . . Cézannes, Renoirs, Matisses . . . Gauguins, a Toulouse-Lautrec . . . a little Daumier . . ."⁷ Here is a corner of the room in 1907:

Some of the paintings in the Steins' collection at 27 rue de Fleurus, Paris, c. 1907



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By way of Picasso, Apollinaire became a frequent guest at the rue de Fleurus, but he did not necessarily take the Steins too seriously. About them, he would make this small reference in 1907:

Vallotton . . . is exhibiting six paintings, among which is a portrait of *Mlle. Stein*, that American lady who with her brother and a group of her relatives constitutes the most unexpected patronage of the arts in our time.

*Leurs pieds nus sont chaussés de sandales delphiques,
Ils lèvent vers le ciel des fronts scientifiques:*

No more than Delphic sandals on their bare feet
Yet such scientific brows glimpse heaven's suite⁸

Afterward, back in the Bateau Lavoir, the week would commence with more sittings. At this point, Picasso's sentiments are nice to estimate. It is never routine to feel like a snob and a bohemian at the same time, but then, back in Barcelona during the Blue Period, Picasso and his friend de Soto had wanted to look well turned out but had only one pair of gloves between them:

They used to share it, keeping one bare hand in a pocket and gesturing ostentatiously with the gloved one. I remember Picasso telling me how elegant he felt, dressed in a green suit which he passionately admired, and his single glove.⁹

It is worth remembering that this is the same de Soto who is drawn in the winter of 1902-03 with a whore on his lap—a glove for one hand, a raunchy finger for the other. That can serve as an image for Picasso's social life now that Gertrude Stein has provided the glove.

A year or so later, Matisse would take his daughter Marguerite on a visit to the Bateau Lavoir:

More than fifty years later she still remembered . . . Fernande's extraordinary beauty, [and] her way of producing sugar for their coffee—she went to a cupboard, scooped up a handful, and emptied it onto a clear space on the filthy table.¹⁰

The outcome of all those ninety sittings is, of course, engraved in art history by now: Gertrude, in her blithe fashion, gives the account via Alice:

Spring was coming and the sittings were coming to an end. All of a sudden one day Picasso painted out the whole head. I can't see you any longer when I

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look, he said irritably. And so the picture was left like that.

Nobody remembers being particularly disappointed or particularly annoyed at this ending to the long series of posings . . . Gertrude Stein and her brother were going to Italy as was at that time their habit. Pablo and Fernande were going to Spain, she for the first time, and she had to buy a dress and a hat and perfumes and a cooking stove. All french women in those days when they went from one country to another took along a french oil stove to cook on.¹¹

By way of Gertrude, it is all part of the flow. Picasso paints out a head, *and* Fernande buys a hat, a dress, some perfume, an oil stove. Nothing in language or in life is more important, suggests Gertrude, than a conjunction. One thing does lead to another and then another. Structure is structureless, a river; how Leo must have halted her ever-flowing mind with never one composition to assert itself.

Hopefully, we are close enough to Picasso to assume that if life is a river, he was encountering a rapids. It was not like him to use a model over and over in the same pose. His virtuosity as a painter, his facility, his speed were all elements of his pride. He could work faster and better than any other young painter around. Now he is marooned for months trying to capture a short and very stocky woman.

We have to make the assumption that he is at a major crossroads in his life. He has been in the Rose Period for a long year and a half, time enough to recognize that it is a sinecure, not a breakthrough. He keeps hearing praise of the Fauves and of Matisse from people he respects—particularly, he is obliged to listen to Leo Stein pointing to Matisse as probably the most important young painter around. Matisse is certainly at the forefront of the avant-garde. The Rose Period is lovely, but it is safe. No one has to tell Picasso. Gauguin and Cézanne are his influences precisely because they have brought something radically new to painting. He is a young, competitive artist with the best-looking mistress in town, but he does not wish to be known for extraordinarily talented depictions of lovely and slightly eerie twilights with *saltimbanques*—not at all; he would rather push on into a visual world never explored, not even necessarily glimpsed. What we can count on is that in the person of Gertrude Stein he saw the embodiment of a set of exceptions to life that he, by his own perception, was also approaching. With his instinct he must have sensed that she was an appropriate Sphinx for him. She offered clues to his artistic future.

We have to assume that he is not only God-driven in his ambitions (which is

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to say that he wishes to reach some recognition of how God does it) but that he feels an uncomfortable intimacy with the Deity. God is more dangerous than a full-grown bull in the ring when you are only a naked man; God creates earthquakes and once again—night after night—lets your youngest sister die; God allows your beloved friend Casagemas to kill himself over a woman; God drives Max Jacob mad from time to time, usually when Max, far out on drugs, comes closest to Him.

God, however, is also a colleague. When Picasso draws, the line that delineates a limb seems to spring up out of some graceful collaboration between his hand and the power that conceived the design of that limb—God may be as amorphous as a cloud, but God is also as clear as a well-defined form. God is a dangerous foe because some of His secrets seem to be there to capture. That may indeed be the question: Can one enter the logic by which the forms of a human being are put together? Can one search out God's intentions, experiments, rejections, new explorations?

The key is to be found in form. Form is the language that God has decided to share with a few painters, the very best painters. They are apostles serving the mystery of form. They know more about it than other men and women; they know that a tree can have virtually the same form as a torso. To a verbal mind, tree and torso are separate words and so are wholly separate objects, each with an integrity that is not to be breached. But to Picasso in Paris in 1906, possessed of a power to draw that has to be terrifying even to him, to this young artist with a mistress whose body he explores form by form, to Picasso at the age of twenty-five embarked on opium twice a week into exceptional odysseys of his mind, it is no small matter that a tree can share the same form as a torso, and a man and a woman are not separate entities but meet and coalesce and cross over in gender. Even if we take his explorations with Fernande as no more than sex revealed by opium, his mind had to be influenced by notions about his own gender. He does the shopping and the housekeeping, and she is larger than he is. As O'Brian describes it,

the beautiful slattern Fernande, lying in bed at the Bateau Lavoir, sleepily watching Picasso sweep the lane that led from the divan "along a narrow valley among the empty sardine-tins and the respectable depth of oyster-shells" to his easel.¹²

• Fernande may have been his best-found pleasure, but she was also his equal

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and more; he lived in a state of bohemian tyranny where the sordid cohabited with the ideal, and he must often have felt—if in no other place than his dreams—that she was more of a man than he was.

Now with Gertrude, he could feel himself in the presence of another possibility for love, which is to say he could lock himself into the person of another woman.

Not all love affairs are carnal; some can rest on the weight of the meditation each person inspires in the other. Pablo and Gertrude must have gone through their plenitude of sittings engaged in unspoken psychic transactions; they must have sensed on meeting that each had at last encountered another person with an ambition as large as one's own. Perhaps they struggled silently through those meetings over who could steal the most from the other, a witch and a warlock contesting a lust for power which the other could augment or diminish. Since neither was much removed from the mean-spirited and the diabolical, the real question is whether the sum of their game was for good or for ill.

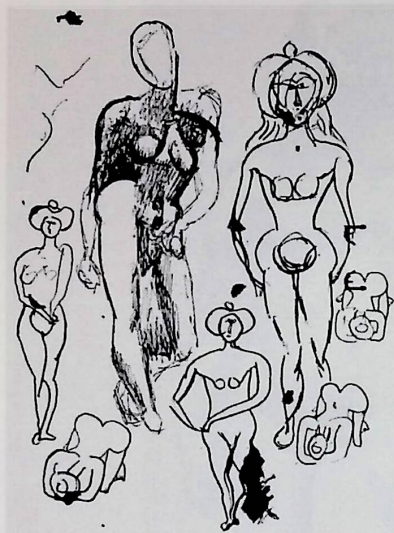
That calculation is beyond our means, but it is safe to assume that Gertrude Stein was the most monumental crossover in gender that he had ever encountered. He had to be knowing about this. With Fernande, he had entered the essential ambiguity of deep sex, where one's masculinity or femininity is forever turning into its opposite, so that a phallus, once emplaced within a vagina, can become more aware of the vagina than its own phallitude—that is to say, one is, at the moment, a vagina as much as a phallus, or for a woman vice versa, a phallus just so much as a vagina: At such moments, no matter one's physical appearance, one has, in the depths of sex, crossed over into androgyny.

Picasso was obsessed with the subject. For good cause—it spoke to his preoccupation with form. The range of Gertrude Stein's crossover from woman to man could simply not be charted by ordinary means; if she was more like a man than a woman, so she was still by birth a woman, and so a focus for his own preoccupation with androgyny. That confirmed his private sense of himself in acts with Fernande (as well, doubtless, with many another woman). If in the act he felt himself to be part man here, part woman there, whole man here, whole woman there, then sex might be seen as a pool where forms swam over into other forms.

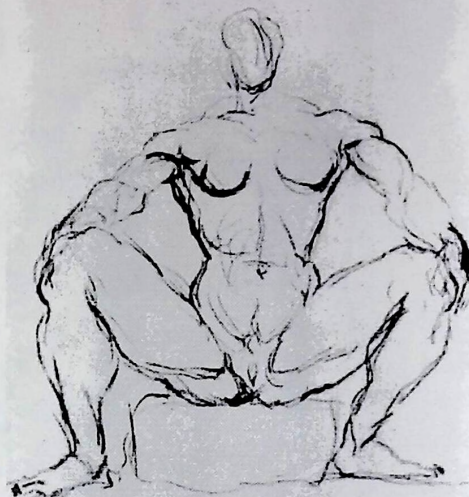
For Picasso, the virtue of androgyny was that it traversed contexts; a nude of a woman to which one added a phallus produced a man; a woman on kneeling face-down on the floor could show a back and buttocks that looked like a phallus

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and a pair of testicles. We need only peek at a couple of drawings taken from one of his sketchbooks early in 1907.



Untitled (Nude Studies), 1907. Pen on paper, 12 x 10 in.



Seated Nude, Legs Spread, 1907. Lead pencil on sketchbook paper, 10 x 8 in.

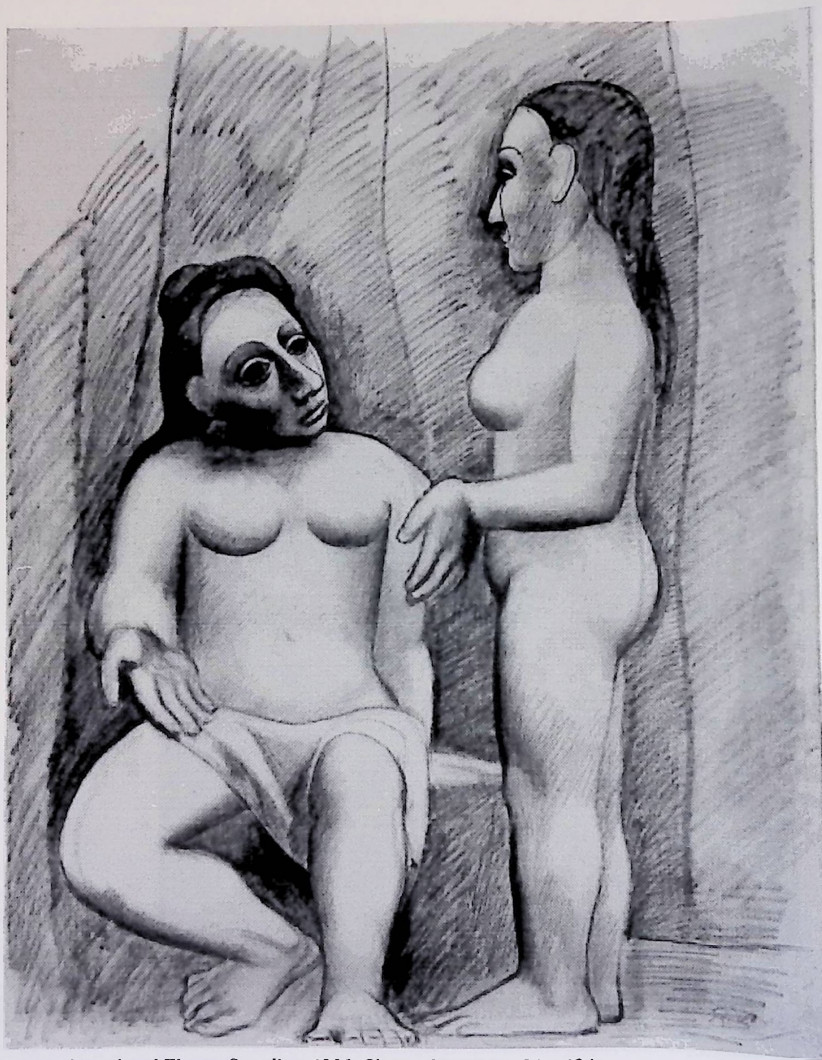
After the summer of 1906, he came back from Spain to the Bateau Lavoir and finally painted Gertrude's face in a manner to satisfy him. It had taken months, followed by a summer of being away from the portrait. Trying to obtain a canvas of Stein that would satisfy him, he must have had his fill of alternatives. If it took until 1907 for him to draw a woman with a phallus, he spent much time in 1906 attempting the opposite: He was looking to reduce the differences between Fernande and Gertrude. So he made Fernande heavier, gave Gertrude less bulk, and equated their faces, their expressions.

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Two Nudes Holding Hands, 1906. Pen and wash on paper, 19 x 12 in.

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Woman Seated and Woman Standing, 1906. Charcoal on paper, 24 x 18 in.

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Two Nudes, 1906. Oil on canvas, 60 x 37 in.

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He also made Fernande look older in order to bring her physiognomy closer to Gertrude's. We see Fernande as he thinks she might look in ten or fifteen years if, that is, she grows to resemble Gertrude.



*Untitled (drawing of Fernande Olivier), 1906.
Lead pencil*



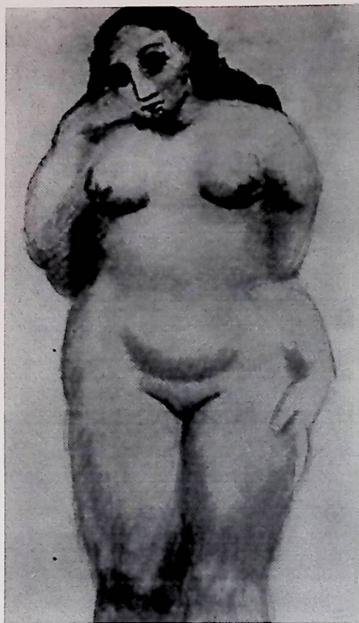
*Untitled (drawing of Fernande Olivier),
1906. Pencil*

Mainly, he wrestles with the enigma of Miss Stein. He must work on the premise that if he can solve the riddle she represents, much else will open. She is so exceptionally authoritative. God has come down to visit us in the form of a woman who acts like a man. It must add to his conviction that she is a creature out of the depths, there to provide him with clues.

Failing completely to capture any authoritative sense of her by the spring of 1906, he not only paints out her face but comes up with the formidable body of an earth goddess.

Still engaged in his contemplation of Stein, he paints one of the last of his Rose Period pictures. If it does not contain the hue of rose, it is one of his best all the same, one of his most famous, and forces the suggestion that he is the boy leading a horse more powerful than himself. Would Gertrude have liked or disliked the notion? She did, in any event, purchase the painting. The horse was so graceful

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Nude Woman Standing, 1906. Pastel



Boy Leading a Horse, 1906. Oil on canvas, 86 x 52 in.

quite the image of herself if she chose to come back as a quadruped.

The actual portrait of Stein was, of course, to become famous. The face is an astounding mask; the eyes are unseeing or, rather, in-seeing, and hint at the force buried within her. She is enough of a presence to make it an unforgettable portrait.

She also stands at the crossroads. She is asking in effect where Picasso can go next. Three years down the road, there will no longer be a road. He will live in a network of forms that have become crossovers between a still-life, a human, and a forest, between a forest and a city; in short, Cubism. But first, the Sphinx is fashioned in a formal portrait without more than a hint of the painter's underlying ambition to be ready to examine nothing less than the laws of existence. If a small part of him, still Catholic, had to be terrified of the sacrilege implicit in such pursuits, his work would throw up shields to keep him in check as often as he would

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sally forth to attack conventional vision. It is hopeless to understand Picasso without comprehending that he was not only a painter but a primitive hunter and a medicine man. If *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, now less than a year away, can in large be comprehended as an exorcism, a literal scarecrow—there to repel spirits and demons—Gertrude's portrait precedes it. In relation to what was to come, her painting sits like a great stone god on the path.

That he does a portrait of himself in the same period on a canvas almost as large can be, no coincidence. There he is, her younger sibling, her fellow mask. He looks haunted. He is hiding both of them.

One evening at the rue de Fleurus, Picasso would remark, "Everybody thinks she is not at all like her portrait but never mind, in the end she will manage to look just like it,"¹³ and that is true. By the time she died, no one said any longer that Gertrude's portrait did not look like her, but then, we have all heard that long-married people grow over decades to resemble one another more and more, and so could Gertrude have been married to the image Picasso had finally been able to offer of her.



Self-Portrait with Palette, 1906. Oil on canvas, 36 x 29 in.

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too
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Portrait of Gertrude Stein, 1906. Oil on canvas, 39 x 32 in.

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During those months, his life did not, of course, consist entirely of sittings between Stein and himself. He was having his nightlife in Montmartre. One of the secrets of Picasso's longevity must have rested on his ability to live not as one individual but two.

In *Picasso and His Friends*, Fernande is ready enough to give a picture of their milieu:

All the artists used to gather at the Lapin à Gill: on the terrace on summer evenings, in the dark smoke room inside during the winter.

Frédé, the *patron*, used to pay return calls on Picasso. I can still see him arriving at the painter's house, escorted by his donkey, Lolo . . . Frédéric used to bring the good, simple creature right into Picasso's studio, which was not difficult as the studio was on the ground floor. While we were drinking the *apéritif* Frédéric had brought with him, Lolo would be tied up in one corner and nibbling at everything within reach. One day he devoured a packet of tobacco and two silk scarves which had been left on the sofa.

Picasso loved animals; they always found favour in his eyes. He would have liked to possess a cock, a goat and a tiger, but he contented himself with dogs and cats, and later a monkey. There was a time, I think, when he had three cats, two dogs, a tortoise and a monkey.¹

Morale in bohemian life depends on war stories, and Lolo had already become famous. Fernande mentions how "as a result of an art-students' prank thought up by Dorgeles," a paintbrush had been tied to Lolo's tail, and the donkey's swappings

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Today, in a world of prevailing feminism, machismo is scorned. Yet, few men are able to sneer at it with absolute confidence. The case for machismo, if we can put its extravagances and violence to the side, is that it is not an easy way to live. When one puts a large investment in personal honor, day-to-day security is mortgaged for life. One's physical bravery is always to be called upon. Few men, therefore, are honestly macho—most depend on their ability to play a role rather than to embody such a life at all costs. If, even in the face of contemporary ridicule, men still strive for machismo, that is because it speaks to a primitive certainty in male gender—even as a similar claim might be presented for elegance in women. Yuppies and wonks may scorn the first, and liberated women repudiate the second, but their ridicule remains subtly uneasy. Not many have a conscience so comfortable or so blind that they can condemn either without a backward look.

If that is true today, what is to be said of the force of machismo upon Picasso's values at the turn of the century? He came from Andalusia, where men prided themselves, often over a lifetime of inflated and frequently absurd postures, on precisely how macho they were. Picasso began as the most timid, sensitive, and cowardly of little boys, a crybaby in school, a household pet with plump aunts to cozen him. It can be taken as fundamental that every one of his male qualities was earned in hard fashion, each bold new habit fashioned from his limited store of physical bravery. So he could be sure of none of his acquired macho characteristics. Full-grown, he still was short; well-muscled, he nonetheless was not significantly endowed with strength when compared to painters like Braque and Vlaminck and Derain.

[They] made an astonishing and certainly imposing trio. People would turn around to look at them in the street. All three of them were very tall, with big shoulders, and they gave an unusual impression of sheer physical power.

Derain was the tallest of the three. He was slim and elegant, with brilliant coloring and smooth black hair. His elegance was English and slightly over-done. He wore elaborate waistcoats and green or red ties. His pipe was always in his mouth; an essential feature of his phlegmatic, mocking, cold and argumentative nature.

Braque was shorter and heavier, with a powerful head which made him look like a white negro. He had the shoulders and the neck of a boxer, very brown skin, curly black hair, and a clipped moustache. There was something a little affected about the brutality of his expression and the coarseness of his voice and gestures

Vlaminck was massive, with red hair; he had a

brutal, stubborn expression, which made one think that he knew what he wanted

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... He had once been a racing cyclist and he was so strong that he believed he was naturally invincible. When occasionally, owing to lack of money, he had to walk all the way back to Chatou at night, he told us that he was sometimes obliged to defend himself on the way against various forms of aggression, and that he always emerged victorious from such encounters because of his superior physical strength.

He used constantly to deny the efficacy and value of boxing, as opposed to simple brute force, until that day when Derain and Braque, both of whom boxed regularly, beat him, one after the other, and conclusively. We met him as he was leaving Derain's studio, his nose swollen like a potato and in a pretty sad state, although totally convinced.

Picasso was attracted by boxing. He enjoyed going to fights and he used to follow them keenly. He would have liked to box himself, but he hated being hit, though he liked the idea of dispensing blows himself. He had one lesson with Derain, but that was enough to last a lifetime.

The four of them used often to go out together, Picasso looking very small beside them, but being thick-set he gave a quite illusory impression of physical strength. He delighted in the thought that he might be taken for a boxer because of his three companions.

The fact is that Picasso, though he always wanted fame and glory, longed to achieve it in spheres outside his own. Max Jacob once said of him that he would rather have won fame as a Don Juan than as a great artist.⁵

Yes, next to them, Picasso was a spoiled darling. It helps to explain his infernal possessiveness concerning Fernande. Doubtless, he had some cause to be insecure, but his jealousy smacks of a man who is always aware of his own sexual lacks—he seems to believe that any stud could come along and steal her. They are close, however; they are, according to Fernande, very close:

Our amorous life doesn't seem in any way diminished. To the contrary, I believe that more and more the ties deepen between us, the ties of our entire nature. Physically, morally, and sentimentally, we are in accord. There are wounds—our characters, our natures are too large not to cause that occasionally—but what is that? ... I know to what a degree he regrets that he is not able to offer me all that I could desire, but I don't ask anything, and keep jealously to his tenderness.⁶

Nonetheless, he rarely trusts her. And then, of course, it is never so simple as that. Orgies, if on a local Bateau Lavoir scale, had to be part of the game, and orgies rarely fail to be a study in prowess and, soon enough, a jealous drama.

In this light, we can take an anecdote out of a memoir from a bright young girl visiting Paris from San Francisco. Her name was Annette Rosenshine and she had

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a hare-lip disfigurement about which she was excruciatingly sensitive. She would later bring Gertrude and Alice Toklas together, but what is relevant here is the tale she tells.

I accompanied Gertrude to Montmartre one Sunday afternoon when she suddenly decided it would be interesting to drop in at Picasso's studio, at the Bateau Lavoir . . . Perhaps she may have had some curiosity about my reaction to the . . . painter whom she, as one of his co-discoverers, described as an artist of great promise. Well, he was surprisingly interesting, and I suspect Gertrude was as much surprised as I was when we finally found him. Gertrude had knocked at the door of his studio, but there was no response. Believing that he must be somewhere in the building, she prowled about and tried several doors without success. At last, recalling that Pablo had been planning on getting an extra room as soon as he could conveniently do so, she went to one that she knew had recently been vacated. Again, no response to her knock. She turned the doorknob and pushed—there on the bare floor of a completely unfurnished room lay an attractive woman between two men—Picasso on one side; I cannot recall the name of the other man.

They were fully clothed. The woman, I later learned, was Picasso's mistress, Fernande Olivier . . . They were lying there to rest from a Bohemian revelry the night before; life had caught up with them—Picasso's newly acquired atelier had been put to use. That was what Picasso told us without disturbing himself or bothering to get up. None of the three made the slightest movement towards changing their position.

My attention was instantly focused on Picasso. His eyes had a luminous, penetrating quality that was evident despite his having been so rudely awakened after his gay dissipation—so much so that only gradually did I become aware this sturdy well-knit body was actually that of a small man.

Picasso and his companions said nothing to indicate that we were *de trop*, but since they were disinclined to get up or incapable of it and did nothing to detain us, we left. As we stepped into the dimly lighted hall, closing the door behind us, Gertrude gave me a quick quizzical look that told her interest in my response to our Bohemian foray.

She obviously expected me to be shocked. I resolved to display nothing but complete aplomb. This was easy for me to do. What I had just seen had actually delighted me. Startled as I was by the sight of the three lying on the floor, I felt a keen pleasure to see people so completely natural, so free of the inhibitions that make most of us like automatons. Also, for me it savored of something out of du Maurier's *Tilby*.⁷

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Richardson ascribes the "luminous penetrating quality" of Picasso's eyes to hashish or opium and mentions a note in Picasso's Gósol sketchbook, "*opio, azafraan, alcool, laudano*."⁸ These were still the years when Picasso was pushing his explorations into sex, drugs, and the partouse, but it is well to keep in mind that he was also a man who could not dance and could not box. (Doubtless, his one session with Derain convinced him that his hands and his eyesight might be impaired.) Nor could he swim. In later years on the Côte d'Azur he would clown away at it, standing waist-deep in water, bent over from the hips and moving his arms at a great rate while he remained in place. Neither could he drive a car. Four decades later he would be enraged when his son Paulo, looking to be superior to his father on precisely one of Papa's weak links, would put his motorcycle through a series of stunts while riding in front of Picasso's chauffeur-driven Hispano-Suiza.

In compensation for avoiding all sport with hazard, Picasso would take his exceptional reflexes of hand and eye and give them over to his painting and to his fucking. Naturally, his impulse in those early years was to lock the door and keep Fernande inside. He had, doubtless, a large gift for lovemaking, but it was circumscribed by all the ways he could not protect it from other men. So, Fernande was well loved but under lock and key—except for the occasional orgy where he could not only participate but double as monitor. Paris days!

There will come a period, nonetheless, in the spring of 1906 when Pablo and Fernande, blessed with a windfall, use it to take a trip to Barcelona and the Pyrenees. There they have an idyll and he does a considerable amount of work and will even seem confident in his possession of her.

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Picasso had been away from Barcelona since the spring of 1904. Two years later, he was still hearing from his mother, who would send a copy of the Barcelona newspaper *El Noticiero* and an all-but-daily letter to accompany it. She was more than curious about Fernande. If Picasso had no great funds of affection left for his father, who shrank into progressive narrow-mindedness, his mother blossomed as she grew older, and her admiration for her son and his genius increased all the time whether she comprehended his work or not.

An unexpected visit later in April made it possible for him to leave for Spain and even take Fernande. Apollinaire arrived at the Bateau Lavoir bringing with him Ambroise Vollard. Picasso was in his



Picasso's mother, María, c. 1906

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studio with Fernande, Max Jacob and André Salmon. To the amazement of everybody present, the dealer who had not long before called Picasso mad proceeded to buy thirty paintings and leave behind two thousand francs, an incredible sum at their then rate of spending, more than enough to cover their household expenses for the next three years. It was a particularly moving moment for Max, who, a few years earlier, when Picasso was sick, had tried to sell Vollard one of his friend's landscapes. "The bell tower is crooked," he was told disdainfully, and with this the dealer, refusing to waste any more time, had turned his back on him. Now he watched triumphant as Vollard loaded the cab that had brought him to Montmartre with thirty canvases until there was no more room left in the back and he had to sit in the front with the driver. "Max and I," wrote Salmon, "gaped at this sight. [He] clasped my hand without saying a word, without looking at me, utterly content, his eyes like seascapes, full of tears."¹

They had the money at last for Picasso to return home in style. Fernande's voice reminds us that this is the first long trip she has ever taken:

I passed the night without sleeping. Exhausted and ill at ease in our third-class compartment . . . I was worn out, and sadness filled me.

In Spain, in a first-class compartment, since it was impossible to travel in any of the lower classes without large inconvenience, I found again a little of my first excitement, but toward evening, 7 o'clock, coming into Barcelona in the middle of a noisy and tumultuous Catalan manifestation, I felt despair surrounding me and, beginning to weep, I begged Pablo to take me back to Paris. He loved me and couldn't bear to see me cry. I believe, if there had been a train ready at that hour to leave for France, we would have gotten on it. Happily, there wasn't.

In La Place Catalan, at the Hotel D'Angleterre, after having taken a bath, I allowed myself to rest under the hopeless look of Pablo, and slept, without dinner. I awoke the next day, relaxed and happy, and was ready to stay. Dear Pablo, full of anticipation, had only been thinking of seeing me happy at the expense, even, of his personal pleasure. Except for his work, I think the most important thing in the world to him was the woman that I then represented. I would like to say that he loved me, because I believe that, despite all that followed, I was the great love of his life, as I was also his great torment.²

They spend a couple of exciting weeks in Barcelona, impressing his family and friends with Fernande's beauty and sophistication. Her perfume precedes her entrances and extends her farewells.

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Fernande, Pablo, and the writer Ramón Reventós at El Guayaba, May 1906

She is also seeing a side of Picasso not glimpsed before:

The Picasso I saw in Spain was completely different; he was gay, less wild, more brilliant and lively and able to interest himself in things in a calmer, more balanced fashion; at ease, in fact. He radiated happiness . . .³

Out of this splendid mood comes a desire to work again in the Spanish countryside.

Pablo decided to go to Gósol, a little village in the Pyrenees, near the valley of Andorra . . . It was necessary, in order to get there, to take a trip for several hours

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on muleback. Sometimes, one had to go along paths bordered on one side by a mountain wall so near that one rubbed one's knees and one's hands, yet on the other side was an immense drop, forcing me to close my eyes in order to avoid vertigo . . .⁴

Once arrived at Gósol, she finds it "enchanting." Its high altitude offered pure air and the sight of clouds below them. The natives appeared friendly, even hospitable, and the atmosphere was perfect. "Nearly everybody did contraband. We had found happiness, perhaps."⁵

The town offered a population of nine hundred people who had survived for centuries on agriculture, on sheep, goats, on cattle, a place not unlike Horta de Ebro. It had only one inn, the Cal Tampanada, where Picasso and Fernande would stay, but Picasso had the pleasure of being again with people who only spoke Catalan.

The views all around are superb, with the Cadi range of mountains on one side and the defiant peaks of the Pedraforca on the other.

The village was—and still is—a very healthy place, with "good air, good water, good milk and good meat," as I was informed in the usual abrupt manner adopted by Picasso's friend, Dr. Cinto Reventós, who used to send some of his patients there. . . .

This delightful natural environment had a very direct effect on Picasso, freshening and invigorating him, opening up his imagination, filling his lungs with clean mountain air.

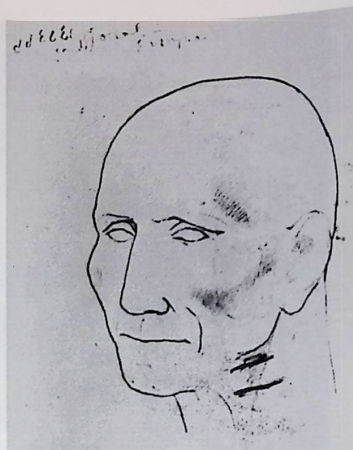
I should here point out, once and for all, that the earth of Gósol, contrary to what other writers may have said, is not ochre but grey. It is only after strolling all around the village and observing it carefully that we can understand the origin of certain colours that Picasso now added to his palette. Gósol is a village that nestles into a mountain slope, and so one's eyes often see, *below or straight in front of one*, the tiled roofs of the neighbouring houses or the ones in the next street. Thus one is constantly surprised by the rich variety of tiles in ochre tones, sometimes vivid yellow and sometimes burnt or rusty. I think these were the colours which, by contrast with the greys of Paris, attracted Picasso and were thus integrated into his work.⁶

Fernande remarks on the improvement in his health after simple food and much hiking on hunting expeditions. Such trips for game also served the villagers as a cover on smuggling expeditions across the border to Andorra, and Picasso made friends with an old and formidable man, an all but ancient smuggler of

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Head of Josep Fontdevila, Gósol, 1906. Oil on canvas 18 x 16 in.



Head of Josep Fontdevila, Gósol, 1906. Pencil on paper, 17 x 13 in.

ninety, José Fontdevila, who became his closest friend in Gósol. Richardson comments on how smuggling

is the activity that Picasso remembered most vividly about Gósol. The risk, excitement and profit; the way it pitted noble outlaws . . . against the inimical forces of law and order: all this made the smuggler someone with whom he could identify—a fellow outlaw.⁷

The middle-class artist is not only at war with the stultifying weight of his or her origins but, perversely, is trying to bring illumination to those roots. So the artist serves as a surrogate Robin Hood seeking to bring alms to the spiritually poor—that is, the benighted middle-class family that he or she comes from. Of course Picasso would love an old smuggler.

The air of the mountains now replaced the cigarette smoke of the cafés, and he was alone for the first time in years with his instincts. Much of his well-being had to be a reflection of his confidence in work; we can well suspect that he saw good uninterrupted work as the most profound blessing he would ever experience.

To say that within his labors he finds his strength is almost to miss the point. In his work was where he found the surest sense that there was iron in his soul, and

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Two Brothers, Gósol, 1906. Gouache on board, 31 x 23 in.



Two Brothers, Gósol, 1906. Oil on canvas, 55 x 38 in.

nothing would stop him—a necessary self-recognition without which one is no more than a genius to one's friends. The work in this period certainly reflects his calm and his certainty.

Picasso will embark on startling new directions soon after his return to Paris, so it seems reasonable to assume that in Gósol, he is taking artistic farewell of all that he has learned about painting in his first twenty-five years. It is as if he is enjoying a sensuous collaboration with all he has achieved up to this point and is



Woman with Boy and Goat, Gósol, 1906. Oil on canvas, 57 x 44 in.

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presenting those images and techniques of which he is supremely confident. He is further away from depression than at any time since he entered the Blue Period.

An event occurs, however, which shatters every security he has enjoyed in Gósol. If his fundamental belief is that one's personal life is but a prelude to catastrophe, this fearful intuition is activated again. And at a stroke! Soon after he completes a portrait of the smuggler Fontdevila's granddaughter, a ten-year-old, she comes down with typhoid!⁸ If we are correct in assuming Picasso believed that paintings were magical shields against ugly forces, then the converse proposition has also to be entertained: Magic is a gamble—one is changing the given by means of extraordinary procedures; one is tampering with the processes that govern everyday existence. Given the stakes of such a wager, magic must be immaculate. For if an error is committed, then one has set a trap for oneself and for one's friends. A magician whose curse or blessing goes wrong does well to feel terror, and Picasso was wholly panicked by the child's illness. Did he begin to see again the dead girl of the autopsy in Horta, struck by lightning, her head sawed down the middle?

To Fernande's considerable unhappiness, he decided to take leave at once. They set out from Gósol before dawn on mule-back for a town called Bellver. There they could obtain a coach, and go on to Ax, where there would be a train to Paris. On the route, however, their mule-train was thrown into disarray by some wild mares who ran by, and a set of near-catastrophes ensued, with rolled-up canvases and suitcases strewn over the trail by the bolting mules.⁹ It was all put together again by the mule-drivers and the mule-train continued, but they never reached Bellver that night, and Picasso, hard put not to see it as one more malign indication, was ill.

Fernande takes up the narrative:

Returning to Paris at last, we found the studio stifling in the August heat. The mice had come out in force and chewed up everything under their teeth. For want of anything better to eat, they had torn into confetti the yellow cloth of a parasol and a long shirt forgotten on my departure that I'd liked very much for its *chic*. I was very upset, but even more a little later when, lying down, we discovered that the bedbugs had also profited from our absence to take over the bed in our little room. Emigrating then to the divan, they found us there as well, which obliged us to take refuge I no longer remember where, and after getting some sulphur to burn, we were able to clean up our studio.¹⁰

Most striking is the way Picasso now finds himself in a good mood. If the

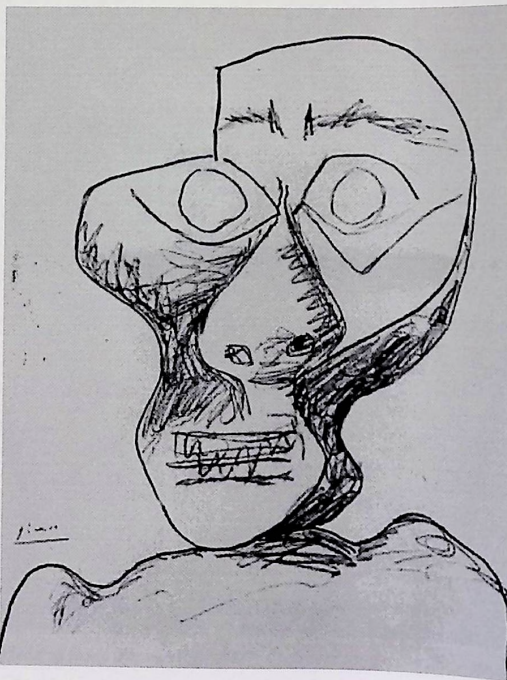
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mishaps on their route had suggested a curse so pervasive that it might be capable of following him, then how cheap a sacrifice were the bedbugs and the mice. Fernande loses a shirt and a parasol, and he is obliged to fumigate his studio. An acceptable loss!

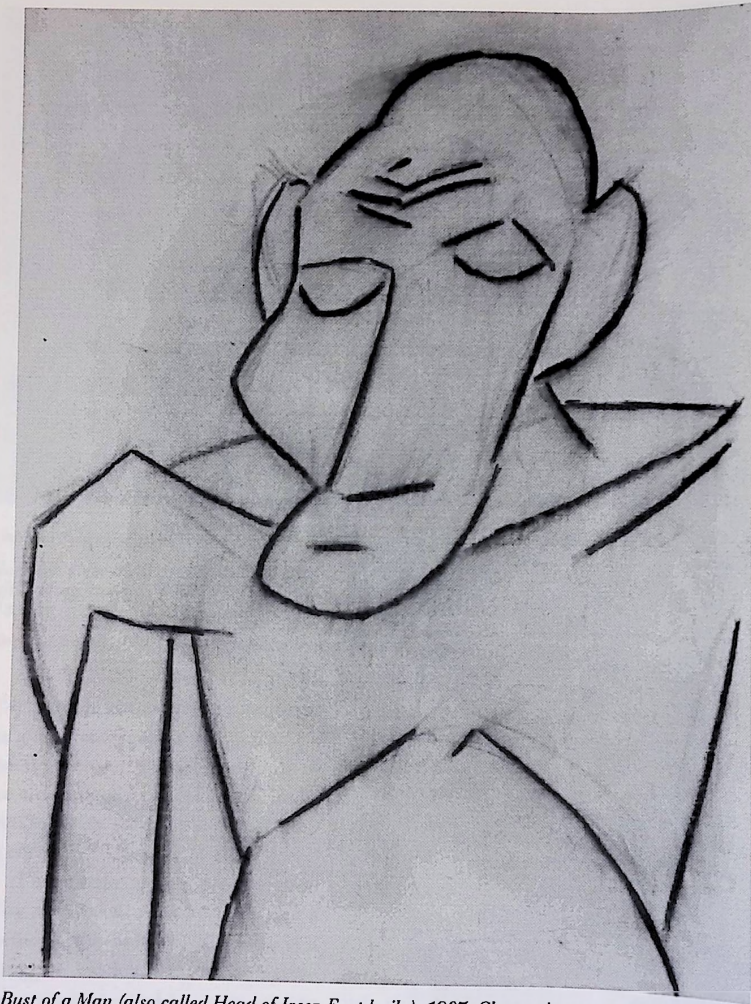
Soon after their return, he finishes Gertrude's portrait and provides her with a mask for a face. He will use masks in preference to faces many times over the next six and a half decades. If a form can represent more than one object, so can a mask serve for a multitude of men and women, and archetypes in nature as well. A face, once distorted, can also look like a teapot or a torso, or a misshapen rock. Soon, in Paris, he will draw again the face of the old smuggler Fontdevila—as a mask. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* comes nearer. But then, Picasso is so fascinated by the striking form of the old man's bone structure that it will be repeated sixty-six years later, when Picasso, after every delay and evasion, is now close to ninety years old and is facing into his death.

All but obsessively, that canted drawing of Fontdevila will reappear in other sketches through the winter. As Picasso's style grows older and certainly more harsh, intimations of *Les Demoiselles*

Self-Portrait, Mougins, July 1972. Pencil and white chalk on paper, 26 x 20 in.

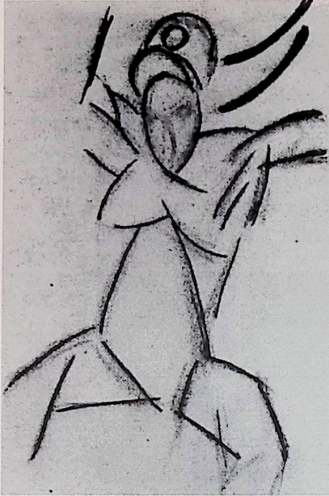


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Bust of a Man (also called Head of Josep Fontdevila), 1907. Charcoal on paper, 25 x 19 in.

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Untitled (drawing), 1907

Nude with Her Right Arm Raised (above left), spring-summer, 1907. Watercolor, 9 x 7 in.

Untitled (right), 1907. Watercolor, 9 x 7 in.

d'Avignon begin to appear; Fontdevila's face emerges in the guise of a female torso or a vase, and hints of the old smuggler's cheekbones can be seen in every jagged out-thrust limb or contour.

Fontdevila poses his enigma: Why does he present so obsessive a theme to the painter? Since he is a smuggler—which is to say, an agreeable criminal—and has managed to live to an old age, that obviously sat-



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isfies much in Picasso. To be free of society and yet to endure, to be even respected. That is a feat.

In any event, Picasso is fascinated by the form of Fontdevila's face. The distortion of the facial bones intrigues the painter endlessly. It is as if the angles of that carbuncular cheekbone hint of future distortions of form that Picasso will not use to full effect for another twenty-five years, of faces drawn as if we were walking around them, so that where one used to see a profile, a three-quarter view, and a full face in succession, now all three can be perceived at once.

Here are paintings from 1932, 1939, and 1943.

The Dream, 1932.
Oil, 50 x 38 in.



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Head of a Woman, 1939. Oil on paper, 17 x 11 in.

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Bust of a Woman, 1943. Oil on canvas, 28 x 23 in.