

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. All my life I heard my aunt being sorry for one of her friends whose husband beat her and I had come to see that as the most infamous and humiliating and frightful thing that could be. Now, when I clenched my teeth in order not to cry, I received a few more blows and 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."

Suddenly 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. Despite my fright, I wished this secretly. I confess this without shame. What else would free me from a man who seemed determined to mutilate my life?

At last, when he came to, he got up, looking haggard, then recalled 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 81-82]

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 loves food, gets very angry but no longer beats me. . . I pass days before the window, my hands holding my knees, trying to comprehend this tragedy I'm living in. I'm married; I'm Madame Percheron, I have a household expense book; I'm only a little more than 18 years old; I still feel myself to be a child and a young girl and yet it seems to me I'm 50 years old.

I'm sick again. Yesterday I fell on the steps. They were icy and I slipped down the five steps which lead to the garden. Tonight I went into a false labor and, in short, it seems I won't have my child. I cried, but Paul is content.

[Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 83-84]

My aunt comes to see me while I'm sick and she brings me some fresh linen and some oranges. We're going to go spend the day at her house the first Sunday after I'm able to go out. That, doubtless, will be next Sunday. Tomorrow I'm going to get up. I will only go into the garden because Paul doesn't want me to take a walk without him. Besides, I never have money. He brings back the provisions from Paris for the next day and picks up the wine and the spices we'll need for a couple of weeks. He takes care of the accounts. Without doubt, he finds me too young for that. Too wasteful. . .My aunt, however, takes my husband's side. "It's

necessary that you be kept in bounds," she said. "You've proven that you're capable of the worst deeds." That's one of her favorite expressions.

Yesterday, after we went to Paris to spend the day with her [and] my uncle acted very coldly but didn't stop looking at me. . . When I left, he 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 cafe 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 H       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 H       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 H      .

"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."

H       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 6 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 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 2 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 any more 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.

Helène 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 83-93]

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

Each Sunday we go to lunch at my aunt's house. . . .Yesterday I went to look for my uncle and said to him, "I will not be able to continue this life any longer."

"You must get used to it, poor child. You're married. That is the definitive condition." . . .

I looked at him sadly. He will never understand me, I thought. He believes I exaggerate. . .

All the same, my uncle found it necessary to speak to Paul, as I learned when 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." . . .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 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 93-95]

Part IV:

Pablo and Fernande

-12-

It may be worth taking another look at Paris on the eve of
the Exposition of 1900. The entrance to the Moulin de la
Chouette had this appearance in daylight hours:

-1-

It may be worth taking another look at Paris on the eve of the Exposition of 1900. The entrance to the Moulin de la Galette had this appearance in daylight hours:

17 - PARIS - Entrée des jardins
du Moulin de la Galette



Whereas, at night, it offered another kind of scene
altogether:



Marchers in the March on the Lincoln
and the Great March on Washington, D.C.
March 28, 1963, Washington, D.C.



Entrance to the Moulin de la Galette
and the new Dance Hall there, 1898.
Photos: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

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

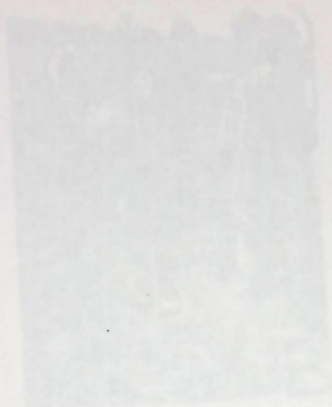


A little later, as the weather grew colder, he spent no time
on paper of Michel, Robert, Vasquez, Brown, Picasso, and
some building in a black field; Picasso is so much up to
the point of his life.



Place du Tertre, Montmartre. Photo.
c.1904; Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.

A little later, as the weather grew colder, he does an oil on paper of Pichot, Mañach, Casagemas, Brossa, Picasso, and Genee huddling in a bleak field; Picasso is so bundled up we cannot see his face.



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Picasso. *Group of Catalans in Montmartre* (left to right: Pichot, Mañach, Casagemas, Brossa, Picasso, Gener). Paris, 1900. Oil on paper. 23×17 cm. Barnes Foundation, Merion Station, Pa. Inscribed to "Odette."

He will make up for it with a self-portrait in which he looks wise, thirty-five years old at least, and sufficiently cosmopolitan for any banquet in Paris.



Picasso. *Self-Portrait*. Paris, 1900. Pen on paper, 32×22cm. Museu Picasso, Barcelona. To the left of the head (upside-down) is a drawing of Alexandre Riera and to the right of Pompeu Gener ("Peio").

Once again we can see how intrigued he is with visual puns. The lower left-hand corner of the drawing offers a sketch of round bare 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.

-2-

Let us go back to Fernande. The Paris Exposition of 1900 has to be having its effect on her. It is a new century, and she is ready to leave her husband.

It's over. I've escaped. I'm free. I've left that hell.

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?

This morning, soon after he left on his train, I got my papers together, my birth certificate, marriage certificate, school diplomas, and the notebook in which I keep this journal. Having put all that in a little flat bag, I took a train around 10 o'clock and reached the Bastille at 10:30. I had taken out of a newspaper the address of an employment office for teachers and salesgirls. I went there, explaining I wanted to find a place and left my papers with the office manager, who told me to come back around 4 o'clock.

What am I going to do until then? Walk around? This is just about the first time that I find myself loose in Paris and I am afraid of meeting someone in my family or some friend of my uncle's, so I returned to a little square to read a book I'd brought along, but soon enough I began to walk again. How I ended up at the Rue de Rivoli I no longer know, but I was hungry and tired and ready to cry. I had one franc on me. I didn't dare buy a little bread and eat it in the street.

I had been raised on principles that forbid such matters. Like a young idiot, I was still obedient to them. . .

The window of a bakery shop stopped me. I have such a sweet tooth, but I didn't dare to go in and eat one little cake. That would hardly satisfy my hunger. 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 then I still hadn't realized what had happened when 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. 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 was hungry, therefore I was sad; now that I had been restored, I felt full of optimism. I was still nineteen. I had nothing I owned except a few unhappy memories which would serve, perhaps, to calm any mad ideas that might push me into absurd acts. What must I do? I asked myself. To thank

him would be idiotic. To go away would be crude. Speak to him? Wouldn't that be brazen?

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

"First," he said, "let me introduce myself. Laurent Debiegne, 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. . .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. "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 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. Above the nook

under the stairs, there was a loft in which a good many mice held forth. But I fell asleep at last in the dawn rolled up in some kind of animal skin...

Laurent came by at 10 with drapes, linen, a coverlet, a package of biscuits and some sliced roast beef wrapped up in white paper, a small bottle of eau de cologne, face powder, and a curling iron. But my hair curls naturally and I never use powder. He laughs and looks at me curiously. We make the bed together and then do the housework. He usually has a cleaning woman but she's sick, it seems.

After we have coffee, he plays the piano. Then he kneads a large ball of clay and seats me under the light to model for my bust. He undoes my collar and then, since I'm still not sufficiently decolleté, asks me to pull down my blouse and drapes over my chest a cloth in such a way that my shoulders are free of all clothing. At the end of an hour, I begin to feel a powerful desire to sleep. He notices this, asks me if I am tired, and lets me rest for a quarter of an hour. We work in this fashion until 5:30--I never knew it could be so tiring to pose. . .

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

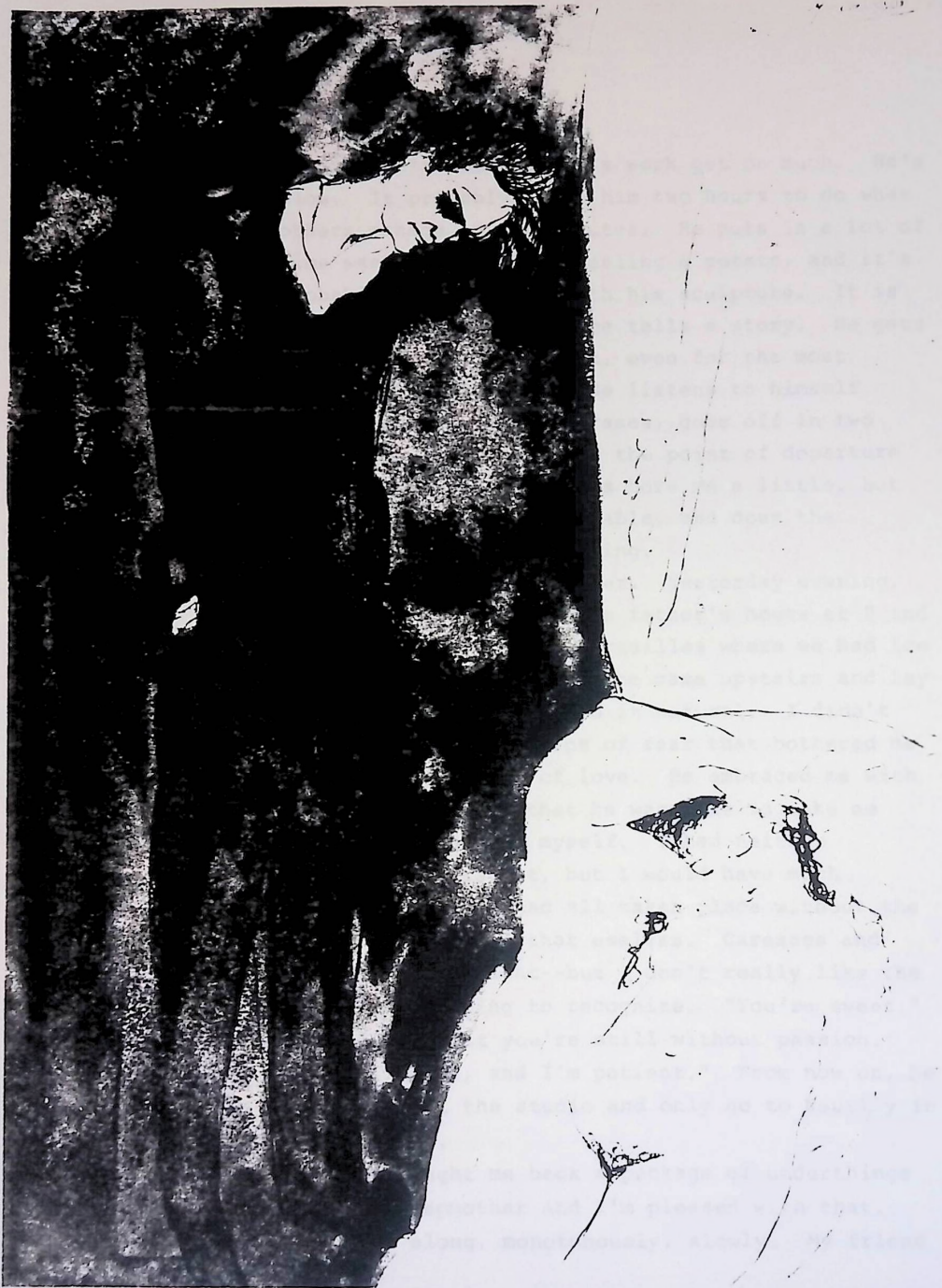
Saying goodbye yesterday, Laurent approached and embraced me gently. I put my arms around his neck and returned his kiss, thanking him for what he's done for me. "It's nothing," he said. "You will give all that back to me by posing. You're the most beautiful model and I'm the one who owes you thanks."

After his departure, I went to sleep; I was tired. I had no nightgown but found 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 nightshirt. 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. The maid will come back tomorrow. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 97-105]

-3-

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



'Nu endormi, aquarelle et dessin à la plume.

1904

Picasso - Shird 1971

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 8 and took me to the Cafe 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.

He brought me back a package of underthings from his stepmother and I'm pleased with that. Life runs along, monotonously, slowly. My friend

seems to be attached to me and as for myself, Laurent advised me to pose for some artists. That will make me a little money and so permit us to live a little better. I like that.

Yesterday I began to work. I'm a model. I posed for an old Italian sculptor who lives in Neuilly. I have to get there at 8:30 in the morning and leave at 12:30 for which I've earned 5 francs. I also go to the studio of a painter who's seen me in the court of our house and asked me if I'd pose for him nude. "Certainly," said Laurent when I told him about it. "For an artist, a nude woman is more decent than a girl in a blouse."

This life isn't always that agreeable. For the last two weeks I've been working without stop: a sculptor in the morning, a painter in the afternoon, Laurent after dinner, Sundays for pleasure and Laurent at night. I've grown thin; I'm tired. But he doesn't notice that. He does think above all of himself. I bring back ten francs a day which I put in a cash box. It's important that I begin to dress a little better. Yesterday, however, I wanted to take some of that money to buy a hat and gloves but the cash box was empty. Laurent told me he had had to buy clay and also some shirts. I had to ask myself why he didn't leave a little money for me. 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? I believe that one day I will set out to live alone as soon as I am able to work regularly. Already I have more jobs than I can keep up with and we are going to leave here in order to live in Montmartre on a hill in the Rue Ravignan. So much the better. Since I pose for artists who live over on the Boulevard de Clichy, I'll be much nearer my work.

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 and thereby satisfy his material concerns.

I've decided that as a sculptor he's also banal. Without ideas. Even if I'm just a little

girl without much experience, because of seeing so many artists now, posing for them, hearing them think out the problems of their art, I'm beginning to get an idea what the life of a real artist is like. Laurent, with all the stinginess of a too-orderly man, always trying to perceive and be sure of himself, gives me a lot to think about on this subject. As a lover, he is certainly far from what he promises to be. He's always talking a good deal, exalting the beauty of free love, of the understanding between two beings, of the disinterestedness of true love, but he takes everything and gives nothing. He works but doesn't produce. What an odd young man, so much older than his age. He treats me like a little girl although he permits me to work like a woman.

I continue to model, and since, when I need something, I can never find any money in the house, I try to keep a part of what I earn. . . That doesn't please Laurent. [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 118]

Something happened that disgusted me. Coming back early one day from a modeling session, I found Laurent sitting next to a pretty little twelve or thirteen-year-old girl whom he has been using as a model lately. The little one was nude and he hadn't time to get up when I arrived. What a hypocrite he is! With all his beautiful sentences about beauty, purity, the grace of a child. He has been speaking just this way about this model the last few days. I told the girl to get dressed and go away and never set foot again in this house. Then this poor little child turned

ugly and began to argue with me, and she was virtually jeering at me because before leaving, she said, "I won't go away without being paid," and when I handed her five francs, the money for a session, she said, "Five francs? No, thanks. It's ten that he gives me each time." I was stricken. I am not going to stay long with this jumping-jack, I thought.

What's nicest about this story is that he... has adopted an attitude of dignity and reproof 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 all that in me."

I didn't know if I were stifling everything in him, but I certainly knew that . . .the painters I pose for don't ~~even~~ spend their day stingily adding a touch of color. The statues Laurent's begun 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 121-122]

Laurent has a charming friend, Jacques, a singer in Montmartre cafes who seems to like me a lot, although he's more than 30 years older than I am.

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 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 4:30, 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."

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. I have come to decide that I'm just not made like others. Poor Jacques, I hope to God he doesn't pursue me. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 125-133]

Fortunately, the model's job allows me to dream. That is why artists consider me a perfect model. . . [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 136]

After Jacques, she has an affair with a student named Roland. It is as if each romance is a step in 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 had 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.

Now Laurent wants to take me back, as if he had never had me at all. Now I am the one who sometimes does not come home for two days in a row, although when I do, he wishes to make love to me. He seems to believe that it would bring me closer to him, but not for anything in the world would I permit him any caress. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 142-143]

Another year passes, she meets Picasso, months pass, and we are in the present, which is to say, the spring of 1905, a period when Fernande is debating the relative merits of two Spaniards, Sunyer and Picasso.

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 his arms. However, on waking up, I think 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. 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 love-making 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? This isn't only because he is very poor that I don't accept the idea of living with him, but 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 178-180]

A curtain closed off an alcove in one corner of Picasso's studio, and not long after he first met Fernande, he assembled a shrine for her in that space. It had an altar built up from a crate covered with the white blouse Fernande had worn on the day he met her in the rainstorm and on top were two cerulean blue vases holding artificial flowers. That would later impress Fernande as having to be very much like the flowers "Cézanne must have had." [Picasso and His Friends, p. 48] On the wall behind the altar was a blue

chemise Fernande had left behind in his studio and on it he had mounted an ink drawing much like the one he had done in August, 1904, of their first embrace.

Fernande perceived the shrine as mystical, nostalgic, and full of self-mockery. Given her rational French insight, she may have given insufficient attention to the first element. Picasso was naturally drawn to magic, Max Jacob was an adept at it, and their new friend Apollinaire was well-read on the subject. How could they not have conspired to create a miniature magical house to exert an occult induction upon her? If the alcove had earlier 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 could enhance the magic.

Waiting, he did an etching of Fernande--



Picasso, *Head of Fernande*, Paris,
January 1905. Etching, 12.1 x 9 cm
Musée Picasso, Paris.

--where she still looked suspiciously like Madeleine. The spring and summer of 1905 went by miserably, if his longing for Fernande was anywhere as large as she has described. At the least, his vanity must have been outraged; this, after all, is the period in which her body finally declared the end of its long war against the fundamental act. So, her pleasures 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 Schilperoot, a friend of some Dutch artists he knows, Picasso takes a poor man's trip to the town of Schoorl, a remote village nestled in the high sand-dunes of the north Holland coast.

Schilperoot-from-Schoorl has recently come into a little money and is spending it. Picasso seizes on the trip. His only disbursement will be the fare and he borrows that from Max Jacob.

In Holland, he paints his first heavy-limbed women. Many more will follow over separate periods in the next twenty years, but then his comments coming back to Paris give a suggestion of the sizable impact he feels making love to women large enough to remind him of the overweight women of his childhood, the huge grandmother and his aunts.



Picasso, *La Belle*
Hollandaise, 1905
 gouache on cardboard
 27 x 30.5 cm. Queensland Art
 Gallery, Brisbane & Art & Design
 Centre, 1965. Inscribed to Pablo
 Picasso

He will tell Andre 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."

It is not inappropriate that Fernande at this time is modeling for a Dutchman. It is Van Dongen who had no small sexual reputation in the Bateau Lavoir. The painting of Fernande done by him in this period proves a fair trade-off for La Belle Hollandaise.



Van Dongen, *Portrait of Fernande Olivier*, Paris, 1905. Oil on canvas.
100x81 cm. Samit Traubouls Collection.

After his return, Picasso's studio is equal in heat to any metaphor of a furnace in summer. 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," Souvenirs Intimes, p. 48) and is always ready to receive visitors and friends half-naked.

In this primal heat, on an exceptionally hot day in September, their affair, dormant since the previous summer but for occasional interludes, now passes into another phase.

One should certainly not deprive the reader of her 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 returned 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 [on military service], 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 kneading the teardrop-sized piece of pate 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, this odorous smoke, taking it in, bit by bit, breathing it in carefully to keep from choking...
[Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 184-185]

Despite the sickness of stomach and the heavy headache that kept me in bed the next day, I can only think of beginning again 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 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 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, although I have decided. . . .

However, I fear his jealousy. He can be violent. But Benedetta advises me not to wait... 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! Get away from this den, this lair where artists live a full-hearted life that you do not know. Here is hope, love, thought which comes alive. . . Youth makes the law. Guarded people, reasonable people, logical people, leave those who live here alone. They know nothing of ordinary life. They're crazy, illogical, biting, scornful. They only venerate beauty."



157 La Place Ravignan à Montmartre.

La place Ravignan à Montmartre, carte postale - 1903.

Concerning Picasso and his friends, I've begun to think in this fashion. I would like to wave a standard on which would be written, 'Place of the Artists! They Alone Have the Right to Live Outside Society!'. . .

Yesterday, Pablo sold, for sixty francs, several drawings to a bedding merchant in the Rue Des Martyrs in order to be able to take me to dinner at the Lapin Agile. With us were Apollinaire, Max Jacob, and several others.

This gay meal introduced me to some interesting people. Guillaume Apollinaire was very attentive around me, and Pablo was very sad and jealous amid all this gaiety. He cannot tolerate that anyone else is interested in me...

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 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. To live near you, with you. In the months that I have known you, I resisted your entreaties, resisted your eyes, full of desire. A caprice threw me in your arms on that stormy day a year ago. I only gave way then to a

momentary and silly impulse. You took my gift seriously and then, suddenly, I'm taken by you. You, who suffered all these months. I refused so often to see you. I avoided you. But you still managed to capture my attention. Little by little, I had to think of this love that I was inspiring, which did not yet attract me. A warmth grew in my heart when I thought of you. I became accustomed to this love. You weren't far away, living in the same house as me. 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 184-188]

There is another drawing of Pablo and Fernande making love which he dedicated: "To my dear friend Guillaume Apollinaire." It is tempting to assume he gave this gift to his friend after Fernande moved in, and from gratitude--Apollinaire had helped him to clean his place with

^{THL}
all eau de cologne and gasoline in preparation for her visit
that night when he would introduce Fernande to opium.





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Pablo loves me. I sleep beautifully. The old habit of waiting after love, forgoing days I still, allows me. I go to bed at night. Pablo looks at me, makes me, works through the night. Love goes around me in the morning, as he professes to work through the night in order not to be disturbed, as if it is the night when he lives most. He repudiates me for sleeping all the time. He's alive. It is necessary for me to surrender myself to another type of life in order to be able to live a little more pleasant while with me. *1940/1941*

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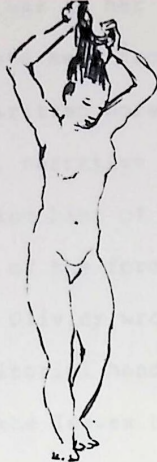
There are bound to be questions about the validity of her manuscript; for now, however, let us enjoy Fernande's aria to love:

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 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 191]



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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 step-sister, who according to some accounts of the period (the unreliable Andre Salmon, among others) lived with a sculptor, Orthon Friesz, who introduced Fernande to the first artists she modelled for; that is certainly not so intriguing a scenario as her entrance into modelling by way of Laurent Debienne. 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 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, but these are merely descriptions. In Fernande's account, we are offered Pablo rather than Picasso. Pablo is so much a presence that in the literary sense, we can smell the garlic he eats. 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, nor the out-size expression of vanity, but as a species of self-imprisonment in which one's most profound relations are with oneself and one's most intense loves and hatreds are experienced within (one part of the self reacting to the other person in oneself--"I hate myself," or "I love myself," etc.) 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. A love affair between narcissists can be the most intense form of romance we are privileged to witness. So much depends on it.

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 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... [since] the narcissistic relation insists that the other continue to be good for one's own resonance, it is not love we may encounter so much as fine tuning. ... Other people exist for their ability to excite one presence or another in oneself. And are valued for that. Are even loved for that. Of course, they are loved as an actor loves an audience (or another actor).

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 equalled 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. . . [pp. 185, 188-190]

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.

Part V:

Apollinaire

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We are now going to be in the full company of a gang of fabulous narcissists. If Fernande, in her account, is centered entirely on the variations in the beat of her heart, a good deal has been going on with Picasso through the winter of 1904-1905 when he was, by his fashion, wooing her. A whole other half to his life took on intensity. His friendship with Max Jacob continued at full throttle, and his fructifying relationship with Guillaume Apollinaire commenced. A few months after he began to live permanently with Fernande, Leo

and Gertrude Stein were to enter his life. The decades-long friendship between Pablo and Gertrude was to commence. 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.

Pablo has left to look for a few sous. I'm happy despite all that. I don't feel us as miserable. We love each other.

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 Vernin. 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 becomes full, bit by bit, rings with our laughter. Foolishness takes us over, 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. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 192-193]

When Picasso introduced me, I looked with some astonishment at this sprightly little man. his eyes strange and penetrating behind the lens of his pince-nez. There was something ceremonious and complacent about him as he bowed very low, hat in hand.

He was already bald, with a nervous, evasive expression, high colour and a pretty, elegantly-curved mouth, which gave a suggestion for delicacy, wit and malice as well, [but] his head was too large and sat on a badly-proportioned body with narrow shoulders. . . His whole personality seemed to be suffused with an indefinable anxiety... [Picasso and His Friends, p. 33]

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." 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."

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



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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 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 blonde 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. [Steegmuller, p. 125]



Vlamincik. *Portrait of Apollinaire*. 1905.
Pen on paper. Private collection.

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."

On to Picasso's poet! Cocteau would follow in the Twenties, Paul Eluard in the Thirties and Aragon in the Forties, but Apollinaire was the one who will live.

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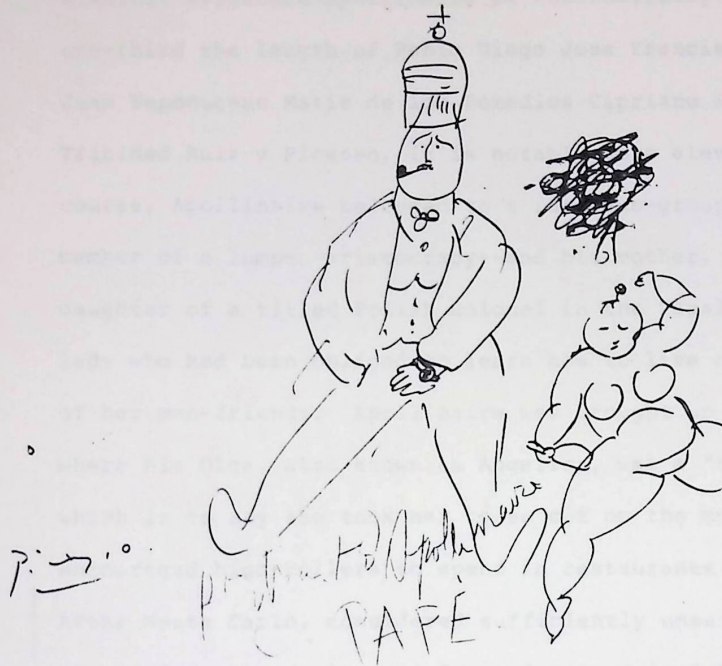
A cosmopolitan at a time when the word had barely gained currency, it was hardly out of character for Apollinaire to be drinking in an English bar. He had roots in half a dozen countries. Born in Rome on August 26, 1880 of a Polish mother, his father, legally speaking, was unknown, but by way of the gossip, he may have been so grand as a descendant of Napoleon (which name, it will come as no large surprise, is all but an anagram of 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 wrist watch.



XXII

108-290 Zeros



XXII 108-290 Zeros

The baby was christened Wilhelm (later to be Guillaume) Wladimir Alexandre Apollinaire de Kostrowitzsky. While not one-third the length of Pablo Diego Jose Francisco de Paulo Juan Nepomuceno Maria de los Remedios Cipriano Santissima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso, it is notably more elevated. Of course, Apollinaire belonged to a rare sub-group-- he was a member of a lumpen-aristocracy--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 on the affluence of her men-friends. Apollinaire was brought up in Monte Carlo where his Olga, also known as Angelica, was a "traineuse," which is to say she took her house cut on the money she encouraged high-rollers to spend in restaurants and nightclubs. After Monte Carlo, 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 long-standing Jewish lover, Jules Wiel, 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 St. Lazare out of which he would take a late train every night after his day of work in a bank. At the age of twenty-four, to Picasso's twenty-three in November

of 1904, the poet was still afraid of the drunken rages of his mother. Andre Salmon who went back one night with Apollinaire speaks of how she greeted her son and his friend at the door with the following inquiry: "Which of you debauched the other?"



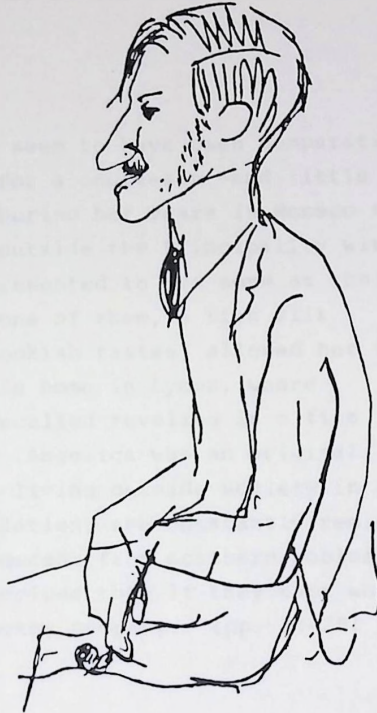
Olga de Kostrowitzky

Guillaume Apollinaire

*Original in
p. 21*

ANDRÉ SALMON

79



André Salmon by Pablo Picasso, 1907.

P...

971

Richardson states that "she treated her 'Wilhelm' as if he were an incorrigible child and would beat him, as she would her lover." Francis Steegmuller, in his biography of Apollinaire, adds:

The men in her life seem to have been 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. [pp. 27-28]

At one point, during this adolescence, Apollinaire's mother and Jules Viel 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. [Richardson, p. 331]

In July of 1902, sounding not unlike Henry Miller thirty years later, Apollinaire writes to an old Monacan school friend describing the aftermath of the penniless retreat from Stavelot.

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.

He must be lying. He is still too innocent, and as we
shall later see, his active sex life will prove peculiarly
abstemious. His letter is being written in July of 1902 at the
Villa Holterhoff, Honnef-on-Rhine, where is he working as a
French tutor for Vicontesse de Milhau who is described as an
extraordinarily ugly woman with a most 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 brings credit to Queen Victoria when it
is a matter of proper upbringing. Apollinaire, sensitive to
the atmosphere of the Rhine, fell 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 in this same letter reads:
"Since then I've seen all of Germany and sleep with the English
governess, 21, what curves!" [Steegmuller, p. 66]

Yes, we can be confident he is a liar when it comes to sex, for here is Annie Playden's (now Annie Postings) description of this encounter which she relates some fifty years later to Francis Steegmuller:

"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." [pp. 348-349]

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 continental seducer. Capable a few years later of consuming two full meals in immediate succession, he 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."



Picasso, "Ex-Libris: Guillaume Apollinaire," 1905

Guillaume, p. 123

Good. We have a purchase on Apollinaire. He is a sensualist, a pétomaniac, but, no, we are caught short. When in his apartment, he exacts the propriety one would expect from an abbe. 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 forbidden 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. If one of us decided shamelessly to sit on the bed, there was a scandal. Even his mistress hadn't the right to do that.

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 childish, so unconsciously mean, that it made us laugh. Some of his friends were amused by this failing: Cremintz, among others, used to 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. [Picasso and his Friends, pp. 63-64]

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 pere fut un sphinx et ta mere une nuit." 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:

"Ma chere Maman, Mon cher Albert," young Kostrowitzky wrote on the 19th of October, 1901, when he had been in Germany less than two months, "I have been traveling for the past week. We spent a night in Rhondorff because of motor trouble, and then traveled by train for seven days. I saw the Apollinaris spring near the Rhine. . ."

And at nearby Remagen he saw the Apollinaris church, the Apollinariskirche. . .on the site of an ancient chapel. . .atop the vineyard-planted bluff called the Apollinarisberg, beside the Rhine. Here reposes the miracle-working head of none other than St. Apollinaris, first Christian bishop of Ravenna... [and in] 1852 a mineral spring was discovered... beside one of the pilgrims' roads leading to the Apollinaris shrine. It was promptly given the name of the saint whose head worked miracles and Apollinaris Water. . .has been bottled and sold throughout the world ever since.

In 1907 a minor Paris newspaper called the Censeur politique et litteraire published an article in which Guillaume Apollinaire was described as entering a cafe, a little drunk, and calling for Apollinaris water, crying "C'est mon eau! C'est mon eau!" Apollinaire promptly sent two of his friends to demand a "formal retraction" from the journalist, refusal of which, he ordered them to say, would constitute acceptance of a challenge to a duel. Andre Billy, another friend

of Apollinaire's, was secretary at the Censeur, and handled the matter in his own way. "One morning the poet's two seconds, wearing very shiny top hats, rang at the office door," Billy has written. "I would have been happy to open it for them but I wasn't there. They wrote, but I was rather careless about the mail, and the letter would still be lying on the mantelpiece at the Censeur if the building hadn't later been torn down."

Clearly, Apollinaire didn't insist on having the journalist's blood, but equally, clearly the journalist had scored a hit: for Apollinaire, Appolinaris water was "mon eau." . . . 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. [Steegmuller, p. 74-75.]

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



Picasso, *Apollinaire*, Paris, c 1905
Pencil on paper. Whereabouts
unknown