



PICASSO. *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)*. Paris, June–July 1907
Oil on canvas, 8' × 7' 8" (243.9 × 233.7 cm)
Daix 47. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest

Per B. p. 23

Part VIII:

The Suicide and the Banquet

1907, all other emotions were present and basic. The artist
cannot continue to exhibit fear of death when one has taken a
step and the other has fallen back into the hands of previous
experience.

Fernande wrote a letter to Gertrude Stein who was
residing in Venice (CN) in the late summer of 1907:

Dear Gertrude,

Would you like to hear some interesting news?
It's that my father and I are through. He will
inherit definitely most wealth. It all waits on
the money. Father will give us that money and give
us enough money to be able to wait for something
else--what those other things will be and what I
can still do with my life after he's gone, oh, what
a situation! And then, don't begin to think
that it all should be put together yet.

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In the spring and early summer of 1907, Picasso had taken
a visionary leap against all the formidable resistance of
friends. As in the Blue Period, he had transcended his past by
depriving himself of a large part of his skills while moving
from themes that were tender and beautiful into ugly and
discordant material.

If, indeed, it was during the spring of 1907 that Fernande
adopted a child and gave her up, then we have one more
explanation for their separation through the summer and fall of

1907, but other reasons were present and basic. Two mates cannot continue to cohabit free of misery when one has taken a leap and the other has fallen back into the bonds of previous experience.

Fernande wrote a letter to Gertrude Stein who was vacationing in Venice [CK] in the late summer of 1907:

Dear Gertrude,

Would you like to hear some interesting news? It's that my Pablo and I are through. We will separate definitely next month. It all waits on the money Vollard owes us [so that Pablo can] give me enough money to be able to wait for something else--what these other events will be and what I can still do with my life after he's gone, oh, what disillusion! And above all, don't begin to think that it all could be put together yet.

No, Pablo's had enough. These are his words, although, says he, he has nothing to reproach me with. He just isn't made to lead this kind of life. Excuse me if I bore you in telling you all this, but I have a need to. And no one other than you is interested the least bit in me, and I am truly desperate. Imagine my life, now that I have to put up a front that all is the same as before. I am doing everything possible in order not to allow my despair to appear. . .and I have no confidence in the future. Oh, I'm brokenhearted, believe me! Truly brokenhearted. . .

I saw the end before this, but I was hoping still. How many times this summer have I not hoped in vain? You can see that I've had some crises of frightful despair. Send me a word. That would give me pleasure. How will all this end? Give my best to your family, I beg you.

Sincerely, Fernande

PS--I'm looking for a place to live. If you were here, you would go looking with me. That would have made it a little more gay. Tell Alice that I cannot write to her; I'm too sad really and hope she will excuse me. I believe that I haven't any luck. [Souvenir Intimes, p. 218]

2 sept. 1907

Dear Gertrude,

I received your letter. Thank you. I am feeling much better in spirit at this moment than when I wrote to you last. Although I'm still very distracted. I spent these last several days looking for an apartment which I found after much trouble...

Perhaps, in a week, I will definitely have moved, [but for the present] Vollard is absent from Paris and so leaves us in a dark misery, and in all the difficulties of our situation. I look forward to seeing you soon. Pablo has been taking the thought of our separation most lightly. The several years we've lived together don't seem to have left any trace in him. No regrets. I believe that a great sigh of satisfaction will salute my

departure. I have not, however, bothered his life, nor interfered with his work--he said so himself--although, then, what do you want?

It's a little hard to think one has been a toy, or a caprice. . .I feel mistaken in my path. Perhaps now, I can find something good. I hardly have confidence, however, in my destination. Finally, we will see. There has to be an end to all this, and the idea that I can finish off with it when I wish, [my italics] that reassures me a little. While waiting, however, it is necessary that I buy some furniture. That's almost done.

I have just about renewed relations with one of my aunts. I learned recently and by chance of the tragic death of an uncle that I loved a good deal when I was young, a death that took place two years ago. I've written to my aunt on this subject, and she answered me, while manifesting a desire to see me again. I do not know yet what will come of this; we hardly were sympathetic to one another before. Perhaps I will be so full of ennui this winter that I'll be happy to go see her from time to time.

I would like to find a complete calm. And you--is the weather beautiful in Italy? Here, there are only storms and bad weather. Say hello to everyone for me.

Sincerely,

Fernande. . .

[Souvenir Intimes, p. 219-220]

Gertrude is helpful. She dragoons Alice Toklas into taking French lessons with Fernande, but, dependably, Miss Stein will be less nice in recollection.

The conversation around the tea table of Fernande was not lively, nobody had anything to say. It was a pleasure to meet, it was even an honour, but that was about all. Fernande complained a little that her charwoman had not adequately dusted and rinsed the tea things, and also that buying a bed and a piano on the installment plan had elements of unpleasantness. Otherwise we really none of us had much to say.

Finally she and I arranged about french lessons, I was to pay fifty cents an hour and she was to come to see me two days hence and we were to begin. Just at the end of the visit. . . Fernande asked Miss Stein if she had any of the comic supplements of the american papers left. Gertrude Stein replied that she had just left them with Pablo.

Fernande roused like a lioness defending her cubs. That is a brutality that I will never forgive him, she said. I met him on the street, he had comic supplements in his hand, I asked him to give it to me to help me distract myself and he brutally refused. It was a piece of cruelty that I will never forgive. I ask you, Gertrude, to give me myself the next copies you have of the comic supplements. Gertrude Stein said, why certainly with pleasure.

As we went out she said to me, it is to be hoped that they will be together again before the next comic supplements of the Katzenjammer kids come out because if I do not give them to Pablo he will be all upset and if I do Fernande will make an awful fuss. Well I suppose I will have to lose them or have my brother give them to Pablo by mistake.

Fernande came quite promptly to the appointment and we proceeded to our lesson. Of course, to have a lesson in french one has to converse and Fernande has three subjects, hats, we had not much to say about hats, perfumes, we had something to say about perfumes. Perfumes were Fernande's really great extravagance, she was the scandal of Montmartre because she once bought a bottle of perfume named Smoke and paid eighty francs for it at that time sixteen dollars and it had no scent but such a wonderful colour, like real bottled liquid smoke. Her third subject was the categories of furs. There were three categories of furs. . .

There we were, she was very beautiful but it was a little heavy and monotonous, so I suggested we should meet out of doors, at a tea place or take walks in Montmartre. That was better. She began to tell me things. I met Max Jacob, Fernande and he were very funny together. They felt themselves to be a courtly couple of the first empire, he being le vieux marquis kissing her hand and paying compliments and she the Empress Josephine receiving them. It was a caricature but a rather wonderful one. Then she told me about a mysterious horrible woman called Marie Laurencin who made noises like

an animal and annoyed Picasso. I thought of her as a horrible old woman and was delighted when I met the young chic Marie who looked like a Clouet. . .

The next time I saw Gertrude Stein she said to me suddenly, is Fernande wearing her earrings. I do not know, I said. Well notice, she said. The next time I saw Gertrude Stein I said, yes Fernande is wearing her earrings. Oh well, she said, there is nothing to be done yet, it's a nuisance because Pablo naturally having nobody in the studio cannot stay at home. In another week I was able to announce that Fernande was not wearing her earrings. Oh well it's alright then she has no more money left and it is all over, said Gertrude Stein. And it was. A week later I was dining with Fernande and Pablo at the rue de Fleurus. [Alice B. Toklas, pp. 30-34]

Since The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas was published in the early Thirties, we can be fairly certain that Fernande read it, and was obliged to put up with the amused and cynical description of her. In 1955, in the preface to Souvenirs Intimes, Fernande will write to Picasso:

I am going to try to tell you about my life; perhaps you will understand me better. You always doubted me--doubted my love, doubted that I had feelings deep enough to give all of myself to you alone.

Those years I lived next to you were the only happy time in my life. Now that age has whitened my hair, that hair you loved so much, and has wrinkled the hands which you also loved, and has pinched off the laughter that you used to enjoy--although not always--I find a desire to tell you about my life before I knew you and after.
[Souvenirs Intimes, p. 11]

Just how they come together again after this first breakup is left unsaid in Souvenirs Intimes. Picasso's comments on the separation and reconciliation are unrecorded. We only know that in November of 1907 Pablo and Fernande began to live together once more in his studio, and that he continued to work actively in the wake of Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, doing study after related study in canvasses and in sketchbooks, as if he had been himself so dazzled by the energies that erupted from the canvas that he now had to do variations on the theme much as if he were an art student absorbing the influence of a formidable master.

Fernande cannot have enjoyed his new preoccupation. Careful beyond measure to avoid inflammatory comment-- "I have not. . .interfered with his work--he said so himself,"--we can feel the intensity of her urge to suggest other directions he might take, and, in turn, can feel how his reflex must be one

of annoyance as he ingests her silent disapproval of all the
garish and misshapen forms he insists on setting loose.



PICASSO, *Bathers in a Forest*, Paris, [late 1907]
Gouache, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 15" (26 x 35 cm)
Daix 127, Sprengel Museum Hannover



PICASSO, *Bathers in a Forest*, Paris, [late 1907]
Gouache, watercolor, and pencil, 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (47.5 x 58 cm)
Daix 128, Philadelphia Museum of Art
Samuel S. White III and Vera White Collection

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20 The Dance of the Veils (Nude with Drapery)
Cat. No. 20



Standing Nude. Paris. Spring 1908
Oil on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (150 x 100 cm)
Zervos II, 103. Daix 116. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



Picasso, *Friendship*, Paris, [winter 1907-08]
Oil on canvas, 59 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (152 x 101 cm)
Dax 104, The Hermitage Museum, Leningrad



Three Women (version rythmée), Paris, Spring-Summer 1908
Oil on canvas, 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (91 x 91 cm)
Zervos II, 107, Daix 123
Kunstmuseum, Hanover, Sammlung Sprengel



PICASSO, *Three Figures under a Tree*, Paris, [autumn] 1907
Oil on canvas, 59 × 59" (99 × 99 cm)
Daix 106, Musée Picasso, Paris



31 Three Women
Cat. No. 28

*1911
Picasso, Soviet Museums, p 79*

How intense and private must have been her reactions. in Souvenirs Intimes we obtain a suggestion as she writes about his work. Almost fifty years have gone by since he did Les Demoiselles but we can still sense her horror at the damage that canvas did to their love affair. By dispatching him into Cubism, it helped to produce their final withdrawal from each other. "Forever searching, forever dissatisfied, the irreconcilable enemy of all that's already been done," she wrote, "he will pass his life looking into himself for his art, sometimes as if lost in a labyrinth, but," she goes on:

. . .he will pursue himself even in his meanderings.

He alone can look to understand himself. Only, he will never succeed. He struggles desperately against his profound instincts. I repeat it, Picasso is a repressed will. He is a classic artist who will not admit to it. He is an ambitious artist who wants to be an innovator despite the hostilities he arouses. But is he a creator? As paradoxical as this may appear, there is a timidity in all his audacities except the one of being what he really is profoundly: that is, a tender soul who, in art, has wanted to destroy all human sentiment, everything that his innate talent has been able to do simply...

He can no longer live but by searching higher and lower, and more wildly. Thereby, he goes

beyond nature. He knows it, but he will not submit himself to it any more. Will he not come to rest at the bottom of himself in a despair that he will conceal, but which he will mine, until, without doubt, the success and money that he no longer disdains will insulate his anxiety, so that he will succeed in forgetting himself. But I believe that, despite all, he will never be content, because he is an artist in all the beauty of the word. Further and further he will always go, toward himself and against himself, in order, yes, that he does not return insidiously toward tradition. . .
[Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 225-227]

It is the view of a woman in her seventies, rejected by a man in her youth, and it is even an adversarial estimate of his achievement. Doubtless, she would have been happier if he had never gone beyond the Blue and the Rose periods. Yet, it is interesting to pose what she has to say against Apollinaire's insights on Cubism and Gertrude Stein's explanation of Picasso's process:

This Malagueño bruised us like a brief frost. His meditations bared themselves silently. He came from far away, from the rich composition and brutal decoration of the seventeenth-century Spaniards. .

His insistence on the pursuit of beauty has since changed everything in art.

Then he sharply questioned the universe. He accustomed himself to the immense light of depths. And sometimes he did not scorn to make use of actual objects, a twopenny song, a real postage stamp, a piece of oilcloth imprinted with chair caning. The painter would not try to add a single picturesque element to the truth of these objects.

Surprise laughs savagely in the purity of light, and it is perfectly legitimate to use numbers and printed letters as pictorial elements; new in art, they are already steeped in humanity.

It is impossible to envisage all the consequences and possibilities of an art so profound and so meticulous. [Guillaume Apollinaire, Les Peintres Cubistes, Paris, 1913]

In 1909, Gertrude did a pen portrait of Picasso which was published in 1912 as part of her book, Camera Work.

This one was always having something that was coming out of this one that was a solid thing, a charming thing, a lovely thing, a perplexing thing, a disconcerting thing, a simple thing, a clear thing, a complicated thing, an interesting thing, a disturbing thing, a repellent thing, a very pretty thing. This one was one certainly being one having something coming out of him.

Again, in her book Picasso, London, 1938, Gertrude must characterize everything whether she has an instinct for the subject or not.

Picasso was always possessed by the necessity of emptying himself, of emptying himself completely, of always emptying himself, he is so full of it that all his existence is the repetition of a complete emptying, he must empty himself, he can never empty himself of being Spanish, but he can empty himself of what he has created. So everyone says that he changes but really it is not that, he empties himself and the moment he has completed emptying himself he must recommence emptying himself, he fills himself up again so quickly.

Picasso, informed by Richardson of this passage, would comment, "She's confusing two functions." Perhaps she wasn't. Gertrude would die ten years later in 1947 [CK] from cancer of the colon [CK].

In any event, it is interesting how much more Fernande has to tell us about Picasso than her literary betters who are here serving respectively as a torch-bearer and a high priestess of the high-colonic.

and it was a picture of great confidence, with
a certain and appealing simplicity. He was
not too much of a dreamer, though, like me
and the others I met at that time.
(Journal of the Author, p. 120)

Wiegels was a man of great confidence, with
a certain and appealing simplicity.

Wiegels was a man of great confidence, with
a certain and appealing simplicity. He was
not too much of a dreamer, though, like me
and the others I met at that time.
(Journal of the Author, p. 120)

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Just before the summer of 1908, a catastrophe would
indeed ensue. A young German named G. Wiegels, "an unhappy
little painter. . .a drug addict," as Fernande describes
him, committed suicide in the Bateau Lavoir.

He was a man of curious habits, and his
unnerving appearance--smooth, bald head, a
young face with the brutish and emphatic
features of a Prussian, and a hard,
penetrating expression--did not inspire
sympathy. We gradually got used to him,
though, as he opened up more and revealed
himself to be something of a poet. Once he
had acquired a little confidence he turned

out to be a person of great gentleness, with a delicate and appealing sensibility. He was rather too highly-strung, though, like so many of the Germans I met at that time. [Picasso and His Friends, p. 120]

Richardson gives a fine description of Wiegels's situation before the demise:

Poor Wiegels! His mother and a group of art-loving ladies from Dusseldorf had clubbed together to finance his studies in Paris. But instead of fulfilling his promise, he succumbed to drugs and rapidly went to pieces. . . Wiegels's slavish capacity for hero-worship, his sexual problems and inadequate gifts, must have been all too fatally reminiscent of Casagemas. When his roommate. . .left Montmartre. . .Wiegels was encouraged by Picasso to move into the Bateau Lavoir. . .

"In his ingenuous way he attached himself to us," Salmon says. Besides being taken up by Picasso, he had "the redoubtable luck of getting to know Matisse, Braque, Derain, Jacob and Apollinaire. . .but looked and listened without ever understanding anything, except that he managed to convince himself that his professors in Munich had led him astray, that he was not on the right track." Salmon also confesses to "having often wondered whether we were not all partly responsible for Wiegels's suicide." . . . Shortly before killing himself, Wiegels complained to friends of hallucinations . . . and took a massive dose of opium, ether or hashish (accounts differ) and hanged himself. . . the suicide was discovered the following morning by the mailman who had come to deliver a money order from Germany. He gave the alarm, whereupon Picasso, who was

painting a full-length nude on a cupboard door, rushed to Wiegels's studio and found the body hanging in the window. . . {R., pp. 322-324]

The effect on Picasso and on Fernande was not small. ". . . sick in spirit," she writes, "our own nerves deranged, we decided to no longer touch the drug." [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 228]

Indeed, they didn't. Picasso never went near the narcotic again, and this was despite his serious appreciation of the pipe. As he would say in later years to Jean Cocteau, "Opium has the most intelligent of all odors,"--a fair example of Picasso's insight: odors are embodiments of human qualities.



22 Composition with a Skull
Cat. No. 22

Painted. Soviet Museums, p. 60

To get away from a place that would recall to us this tragic event, we left Paris to stay in Rue-des-Bois, a little hamlet on the border of the forest of Halatte, 7 km. from Criel. We rented a pavilion there, situated on a farm, without any comfort, surrounded by. . . peasants who were so ignorant they would ask us the name of the Queen of France. We were obliged to live there, more as campers than not. [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 228]

[Pablo] had taken his dog and his cat, who was expecting kittens, with him, and a funny assortment of other luggage. We ate in a room that smelled like a stable, and we slept rocked by the vague murmurings of the forest. We rose late in the mornings, oblivious to the sounds of the farm, where life had been going on since four o'clock. [Picasso and His Friends, p. 122]

Pablo was in a state of nervous depression, which didn't permit him either to work or to be alone. He made me stay ceaselessly by his side. I was also in a bad enough state, but in the face of his weakness, I tried to dominate mine. It was then, in this magnificent forest, that I understood how little Picasso felt for our French countryside. "It smells of mushrooms," I heard him say. But if he didn't like this sort of nature, he wasn't less happy for the calm and serene life that we led. [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 228]

In any event, he went back to Paris as soon, Fernande observes, as "he felt himself freed of this obsession that was tormenting him." All the same, he succeeded while staying at the farm at Rue-des-Bois in doing a number of paintings in a verdant palette that inspired Roland Penrose to suggest that it should be called his "Green Period."

Penrose, who is at his best when writing in technical terms about art, offers a good passage on the painting of landscapes and their pitfalls.

In contemplating a landscape, the eye has the ability to extend the sense of touch so that it seems possible to caress the surfaces spreading out into the distance. The walls of a house or the slope of a distant mountain can become as tangible to the imagination as a match-box held in the hand. The great landscape painters in the past had neglected this sensation in favour of atmospheric effects. Strong contrasts of tone and colour were situated in the foreground while a blue haze was reserved for the furthest distance. . . The image obtained according to these rules, however, made objects too intangible and indeterminate for Picasso. Just as he had taken liberties with the human form to enable the eye to embrace its shapes more completely, so now he began to treat landscape as sculptural form. . . The time-honoured rules of perspective were abandoned, together with any attempt to give an effect of immeasurable distance

in the background. In fact, in the landscapes of Rue-des-Bois, background and foreground are merged together in a play of surfaces which seem to touch each other. The eye is invited to travel among them and enjoy the definite though subtle way in which it can be led into the depths of the picture, exploring paths as they disappear into recesses and returning over angular planes that push forward into the light. In the three-dimensional pattern made up of definite planes, the eye is never allowed to lose itself in awkward holes which could break the continuity of the surface of the picture and destroy the coherence of the composition.

[Picasso: His Life and Work, pp. 141-142]



Picasso, *House in the Garden, La Rue-des-Bois*, August 1908
Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 25 1/2 (73 x 60 cm)
Daix 189. The Hermitage Museum, Leningrad



Picasso, *Cottage and Trees, La Rue des Bois*, August 1908
Oil on canvas, 50 1/2 x 28 1/2 (127 x 73 cm)
Date 190. The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

This is all very good as far as it goes: it may not, however, take into account the depth of Picasso's rebellion against conventional landscape. Natural vistas remind us not only of our insignificance but, paradoxically, our timelessness. Even as we sense ourselves small before the vista, we commence to feel the endless out-reach of the universe. Picasso had no desire to submit to such a reduction of himself, not to such a pantheistic extension; it was better to close off the view. One could thereby obtain a three-dimensional box--precisely of the sort Cézanne had developed for his work. If Picasso was now expanding the artistic means that Cézanne had developed, it was with a different motive. Possessing a box, one could be free to examine the contents; one could explore into that caver^e where forms can be converted into other forms, supine women into the roots of trees, and women standing erect in^{to} the trunks of trees.

Landscape with Two Figures, Paris, late 1908*
Oil on canvas, 22⁷/₈ x 28³/₈" (58 x 72 cm)
Zervos II, 79, Daix 187, Musée Picasso, Paris



During this period at the farm following Wiegels' suicide, Fernande was to comment:

Difficulties alone attract him. He smiles with a sort of condescending spite for the prettiness of the French countryside. Our beautiful forests don't move him. He turns away from this too easy emotion. He detests it like the plague. He refuses any inspirations if they come to him with emotion. He loves the harsh odors of thyme, of rosemary, the wild dusty cactus of his country. He admires grave beauty, austerity, even, in the countryside of the Mediterranean coast which keeps a moorish tone, or shows a few vestiges of the people who lived there in antiquity. [Souvenirs Intimes, p. 224]

Can Picasso's condescension toward beautiful form be accounted for by the knowledge that it is not eternal, that it decomposes into other forms? Why not find, instead, the uglier form that could serve as an amulet one could take along into one's death? (Rousseau may not have been wholly off the mark when he spoke of Picasso as being in the Egyptian tradition.)

In any event, beauty was not to be depended upon. It was impermanent. It broke down. The severity of rock, and the containment of a cave were forms to offer real promise. If the cave could become a labyrinth, it was at least more

representative of the perverse requirements of exploration than any open view. Cubism, as we know, was certainly approaching; Wiegels' death may have accelerated the process. As we approach the complexities of Cubism itself, it may not be extravagant to suggest that it enabled Picasso to explore such states as the approach of death, a sizable proposition to bring to the subject, but then, where is the Cubist painting by Picasso that does not speak of the inside of the body, its cave-like interior? We must never forget the autopsy of the two women he witnessed by lantern light on a night in Horta some ten years earlier. If death was a journey, deterioration and the coalescence of forms were the travelling companions; besides, in the blurring of all forms could be found an iridescence, a bizarre and subterranean light:



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XVII

A tree, a plant, a nude, a mountain, a breast, a shrub, a reptile wrapped around a tree--the forms draw toward one another even as Picasso lives in fear of his own death.

That fear will plague him through his years and take a hundred hypochondriacal forms. If it was never a manageable anxiety, if it never became a resignation to the inevitable, it is worth remembering that he never saw himself as being a man like others.

To the contrary, he was possessed of extraordinary powers. Cabanne offers a nice anecdote to this point:

Among the canvasses Gertrude Stein had to relinquish when she and her brother split them up, there was an Apple by Cézanne that she deeply regretted losing. As she complained of it one day, Picasso retorted, "Don't let it worry you. I'll do your Cézanne over for you." And on Christmas Day, 1914, he brought her an Apple (today the property of Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller) that was the exact duplicate of the one she had lost. . . .
[Cabanne, p. 171.]

Obviously, Picasso's eye could recall objects and paintings as if they were still sitting before him. He had the equivalent of a literary memory that will continue to see a

text as it appeared on the printed page when first read. Add to such a faculty the vibration of images that came to him on opium or at the edge of dreams and one begins to appreciate the delights and torture of the inner imagery in which he lived. It would have been difficult not to think of himself as possessed of superhuman powers--or, as he would also have to wonder--of Satanic gifts. There is even some evidence of this attitude in Lydia Gasman's brilliant dissertation "Mystery, Magic and Love in Picasso, 1925-1938," published in 1981.

The story of Picasso's rise to renown includes numerous instances of his recurring belief that he was different--a demiurge. . . To Malraux, Gilot and Parrot, Picasso said that "God is really another artist," "like me," he joked. The sculptor Fenosa who was Picasso's "protege" from the early 1930s on reported that he heard Picasso saying "...I am God." To Leiris, Picasso hinted at his urge to wrest from God His lifegiving prerogative... to take an inanimate thing and breathe life into it: "one should be able to take a piece of wood and turn it into a bird!" he exclaimed. Quoting Cocteau, he added that "to make a dove you must first wring its neck," implying that a magic sacrifice must be performed in order for him to share in God's attributes. . .one grasps that he felt that he was a demiurge [and] his art had an operative magical power. . .

Even when Picasso exercised conscious self-control, he did not entirely renounce his feelings that his art is a form of magic. . . "In looking at the object. . ." writes Kris, "[the artist] takes it in with his eyes until he feels himself in full possession of it," [and Kris] illustrated artistic "possession" by a mot attributed to Picasso: "Drawing is a kind of hypnotism; one looks in such a way at the model, that he comes and takes a seat on the paper." . . . Rubin, to whom Picasso described it, writes, "Picasso's drawing is really a way of possessing things. Not just the woman he draws, but everything in his visual world. It somehow becomes part of him through being drawn." [pp. 520-525]

Cave drawings must have been seen by their artists as presences, declarations and conclusions by the gods. Who else could have sent them? Let us take on then the immodest thesis that Picasso, the most secretive of men, saw his mission as one of coming closer and closer to the mind of God--to appropriating, that is, not His spiritual secrets nor His pain, but His engineering, His camouflage techniques. Picasso was looking to determine not only how God put us together, but how He might conceal Himself from us in the knowledge that some of His creations, and now, most specifically Picasso, were out to lay bare His secrets. As a corollary, it can be added that

Picasso, in turn, did his best to hide his own nature from biographers, lovers, and where possible, friends, and looked for a set of legends about himself that would distort comprehension. Of course, given his penchant for moving in two directions at once, he was also, in later years, concerned with dating his sketchbooks in order to contribute to a better comprehension of his own processes at work. For in his loneliness he also wished to be understood; his vanity was that his genius could prove a scientific resource for future students of art. And, after all, why not?

We may as well assume that he extrapolated his conception of God from his own contradictory nature. If Picasso could conceal and reveal himself with the most dynamic ambivalence of purpose, why could he not conceive of God as enmeshed in even larger revelations and deceptions?

Of course, on the day of his own death, Picasso would have to face an enraged chieftain who would not look lightly on this little man's attempts to raid the center of His secrets--as easily would a young Mafia lieutenant visit his godfather after being discovered with a hand in the till.

Since we will soon follow Picasso into the interstices of Cubism, an austere period to be certain, it is probably worth reminding ourselves that for all his seriousness and dire

commitment to an exploration whose end he could not foresee, he had not yet relinquished his friends, his amusements, his evening charades, and his delight in looking for the kind of pataphysical gatherings that artists sixty years later would refer to as happenings, which is to say events whose aesthetic intensity depends on some adroit mixture of the quotidian, the absurd, the cruel, and the magical.

The famous homage in 1908 for le douanier Rousseau in Picasso's studio in the Bateau Lavoir is without question the archetypal party of this sort in this period. Over and over it has been written about, and most often repetitively, the contributions of earlier biographers being redone by later ones. To substitute for such a vice, one will take on another and quote from original accounts by the principals. Auctorial passivity is more acceptable than routine recapitulation when the initial testimonies are directly enjoyable.

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A prefatory note. Before we move on to the festivities, we ought to have the pleasure of meeting Apollinaire's mistress, Marie Laurencin.

André Salmon describes how she became part of the bande à Picasso.

One day, George Braque who had stopped going to the Academy Humbert because he could see that he was wasting his time, brought over to the Bateau Lavoir an astonishing young lady, escaped just like

Braque, and by his advice, . . . from the same Academy Humbert where she had enrolled without any greater ambition than to learn a little of this and that in the hope of practicing the pretty little craft of painting on porcelain. With her mother and her cat she lived on Boulevard de la Chapelle. She was beautiful if of an unorthodox kind of beauty, a Savoyard. She made one think, however, of certain beautiful Russian descendants of Pushkin who had Negro blood. [Souvenirs Sans Fin, Vol. I, pp. 188-189]

Now that she had been introduced to the Bateau Lavoir by Braque, Picasso presented her to Apollinaire. Despite the fact that she could say, "My happiest days were when I used to be taken as a girl to a little community of nuns: the sisters took me in their arms, showed me picture books and let me play on the harmonium. . ." Picasso told Apollinaire, "I have a fiancée for you."

In later years, Marie Laurencin proved to be wild enough to war with Apollinaire on equal terms. But that was later. Steegmuller describes the early days:

. . .before long, Apollinaire moved away from his mother for the first time since returning from Germany. He rented a flat in the present Rue Henner on the lower slopes of Montmartre, where

Marie Laurencin visited him; and when she and her mother moved to Auteuil he followed them. "She is bright, witty, kind-hearted, and very talented," are his best-known words about his new mistress. "She's like a little sun-- a feminine version of myself. She's a true Parisian, with all the adorable ways of a Paris child. Just think--when she came to see me in the Rue Gros she would skip rope all the way across the garden."

"A feminine version of myself. . ." There were dangers in that. "[In Marie Laurencin] he had acquired a graceful mistress, as original and unconventional as he was himself: not that the similarity was conducive to continual peace and harmony," one of his friends later commented. [Steegmuller, p. 158]



Marie Laurencin, self-portrait, 1906

Fernande came to detest her. We know as much by her description of Marie Laurencin to Alice Toklas: "the old lady who makes noises like animals and annoys Pablo." Actually, there may have been no small reservoir of wounded ego here at work. Picasso had advised Fernande to learn painting on her own. Now, in contrast to what she must have seen as lack of interest in her progress was the contrary example provided by Apollinaire: he advanced Marie Laurencin's work as if she were on a par with Picasso, Braque, Derain, Matisse, Vlaminck, a further proof of Apollinaire's loyalty to friends, and his essential incapacity to make hard critical judgments. Marie Laurencin had a flair, her work was charming if in large part because she settled early, perhaps too early, on a style that can only be described as stylized, but she certainly did not develop as fully as his encomiums on her talents.



Marie Laurencin, Apollinaire and his friends by Marie Laurencin. Picasso is on the left, Fernande Olivier on the right.

In any event, despite a gang of remarkable participants, she proved to be the dramatic element in the banquet for the douanier Rousseau. What a party was to ensue.

It is not difficult to comprehend why Picasso was ready to honor Rousseau's work. The ability to paint like a primitive must have been seen by Picasso as the happiest route back into the perceptions of children. If, in the course of attempting such simplicity, Picasso had been obliged to reject all he had learned at La Llotja and the Beaux Arts in Madrid--had had, indeed, over the last ten years been forced to pull out one by one the academic ligatures tied into his painterly reflexes, and thereby strip his style of the myriad of conventional techniques his brushes had acquired--the process must have left him feeling like a libertine who has decided to make love only in the missionary position. How attractive must Rousseau have seemed then in his freedom from schooling.

Fernande, predictably, exercises her French sense of measure in describing the old painter:

Guillaume took us to meet Rousseau, who is a poor and charming man, with a candor and a naiveté that are hardly conceivable. He is not particularly attractive, and his face, under his

white hair, has a surprising banality. I didn't see anything in him that could reveal the artist...

We went to a soiree at the house of Rousseau. A little platform at the back of the studio served for a stage. Chairs were placed in straight rows, one behind the other, and benches against the walls. He had there a mixture of people: the spice man, the butcher, the dairy man, the baker--and their wives; other people were a little uneasy, perhaps the concierges from the neighboring buildings; then a whirl of intellectuals and artists--Georges Duhamel and his wife, the comedienne Blanche Albane; the painter Delaunay and his mother; Guillaume and his woman; Braque and us.

The evening was begun by listening to several people from the quarter. The women sang love songs and the men offered ditties that were more risqué. Then Rousseau played his violin, a long piece; at last he began to sing, "Oh, oh, oh--but I have a toothache!" all the while pantomiming his pain. It was funny, but, at the same time, a little sad, and I was not greatly amused. I was thinking how it's regrettable that Rousseau would give himself to such a spectacle. He seemed to be something of a backward child whose family surrounded him with compliments in order to conceal his craziness. But this crowd had so little to do with his great canvases, so minutely painted, and yet, of a large, strange, and powerful set of works. . .The Douanier must live in a perpetual enchantment. . .[Souvenirs Intimes, pp. 229-230]

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Just so. Perpetual enchantment. The word went out on the party. Given the limited resources and the sardonic gleam in the collective eye of the bande à Picasso, there was hardly a possibility that the evening would not be misinterpreted. Picasso was getting up a banquet at his own expense in his own studio for a crazy primitive painter--it had to be a hoax. "The project," writes Fernande, "was received enthusiastically by the gang who were overjoyed at the prospect of pulling the douanier's leg." [Picasso and his Friends, p. 68] Their plans were to invite thirty people plus anyone who wished to drop in after dinner.

Gertrude's sustained account is worth printing at length. If, by habitual reflex, she gets a good bit of it wrong, we can still enjoy her shamelessness: she never feels any more guilt than a hot television writer as he is warping history to suit the network's needs:

Fernande was lunching with us one day and she said that there was going to be a banquet given for Rousseau and that she was giving it. She counted up the number of the invited. We were included. Who was Rousseau. I really did not know but that really did not matter since it was to be a banquet and everybody was to go, and we were invited. . .

Fernande told me a great deal about the menu. There was to be riz à la Valenciennes, Fernande had learnt how to cook that on her last trip to Spain, and then she had ordered, I forget now what it was she ordered, but she had ordered a great deal at Felix Potin, the chain store of groceries where they made prepared dishes. Everybody was excited...everybody was to write poetry and songs and it was to be very rigolo, a favourite Montmartre word meaning a jokeful amusement. We were all to meet at the cafe at the foot of the rue Ravignan and to have an apertif and then go up to Picasso's atelier and have dinner. I put on my new hat and we all went to Montmartre and all met at the cafe.

As Gertrude Stein and I came into the cafe there seemed to be a great many people present and in the midst was a tall thin girl who with her long thin arms extended was swaying forward and back. I did not know what she was doing, it was evidently not gymnastics, it was bewildering but she looked very enticing. What is that, I whispered to Gertrude Stein. Oh that is Marie Laurencin, I am afraid she has been taking too many preliminary apertifs. Is she the old lady that Fernande told me about who makes noises like animals and annoys Pablo. She annoys Pablo alright but she is a very young lady and she has had too much, said Gertrude Stein going in. Just then there was a violent noise at the door of the cafe and Fernande appeared very large, very excited and very angry. Felix Potin, said she, has not sent the dinner. Everybody seemed overcome at these awful tidings but I, in my american way said to Fernande, come

quickly, let us telephone. In those days in Paris one did not telephone and never to a provision store. But Fernande consented and off we went. Everywhere we went there was either no telephone or it was not working, finally we got one that worked but Felix Potin was closed or closing and it was deaf to our appeals. Fernande was completely upset but finally I persuaded her to tell me just what we were to have had from Felix Potin and then in one little shop and another little shop in Montmartre we found substitutes, Fernande finally announcing that she had made so much riz à la Valenciennes that it would take the place of everything and it did. . .

As we toiled up the hill we saw in front of us the whole crowd. In the middle was Marie Laurencin supported on one side by Gertrude Stein and on the other by Gertrude Stein's brother and she was falling first into one pair of arms and then into another, her voice always high and sweet and her arms always thin graceful and long. Guillaume of course was not there, he was to bring Rousseau himself after everyone was seated.

Fernande passed this slow moving procession, I following her and we arrived at the atelier. . . I had just time to deposit my hat and admire the arrangements, Fernande violently abusing Marie Laurencin all the time, when the crowd arrived. Fernande large and imposing, barred the way, she was not going to have her party spoiled by Marie Laurencin. This was a serious party, a serious party for Rousseau and neither she nor Pablo would tolerate such conduct. Of course Pablo, all this time, was well out of sight in the rear. Gertrude

Stein remonstrated, she said half in english half in french, that she would be hanged if after the struggle of getting Marie Laurencin up that terrific hill it was going to be for nothing. No indeed and beside she reminded Fernande that Guillaume and Rousseau would be along any minute and it was necessary that everyone should be decorously seated before the event. By this time Pablo had made his way to the front and he joined in and said, yes yes, and Fernande yielded. She was always a little afraid of Guillaume Apollinaire, of his solemnity and of his wit, and they all came in. Everybody sat down.

Everybody sat down and everybody began to eat riz and other things, that is as soon as Guillaume Apollinaire and Rousseau came in which they did very presently and were wildly acclaimed. How well I remember their coming. . .

Everybody was presented and everybody sat down again. Guillaume slipped into a seat beside Marie Laurencin. At the sight of Guillaume, Marie who had become comparatively calm seated next to Gertrude Stein, broke out again in wild movements and outcries. Guillaume got her out of the door and downstairs and after a decent interval they came back Marie a little bruised but sober. By this time everybody had eaten everything and poetry began.

Fernande gives a considerably different account of Marie's activities:

The first thing she did when she came back into the studio was fall onto the jam tarts which had been left on the sofa and, with her hands and dress smothered in jam, start kissing everybody. She got more and more excited, and then found herself quarrelling with Apollinaire. . .

At the end of the room, opposite the big high window, was the seat intended for Rousseau: a sort of throne, made from a chair built up on a packing case and set against a background of flags and lanterns. Behind this was a large banner bearing the words, "Honour to Rousseau."

The table was a long board set on trestles. The chairs, plates, and cutlery had been borrowed from our local restaurant, Azon's. Thick glasses, small, heavy plates and tin knives and forks; but nobody bothered about such things.

We can return here to Gertrude's account:

Oh yes, before this Frederic of the Lapin Agile and the University of Apaches had wandered in with his usual companion a donkey, was given a drink and wandered out again. Then a little later some italian street singers hearing of the party came in. Fernande rose at the end of the table and flushed and her forefinger straight into the air said it was not that kind of a party, and they were promptly thrown out.

Who was there. We were there and Salmon, André Salmon, then a rising young poet and journalist, Pichot and Germaine Pichot, Braque and perhaps Marcelle Braque but this I do not remember, I know

there was talk of her at that time, the Raynals, the Ageros the false Greco and his wife, and several other pairs whom I did not know and do not remember. . .

Fernande again:

There were speeches and songs composed especially for the occasion; then a few words from Rousseau, who was so moved that he spluttered with pleasure. Indeed, so happy was he that he accepted with the greatest stoicism the regular dripping of wax tears on his brow from a huge lantern above him. The wax droppings accumulated to form a small pyramid like a clown's cap on his head, which stayed there until the lantern eventually caught fire. It didn't take much to persuade Rousseau that this was his apotheosis. Then Rousseau, who had brought his violin, started to play a little tune.

Gertrude once more:

The ceremonies began. Guillaume Apollinaire got up and made a solemn eulogy, I do not remember at all what he said but it ended up with a poem he had written and which he half chanted and which everybody joined in the refrain, *La peinture de ce Rousseau*. [Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, pp. 126-130]

If Apollinaire was mean as a churchmouse with his food and his money, he was as rich as a monarch when it came to praise:

Nous sommes reunis pour celebrer le gloire,
Ces vins qu'en ton honneur nous verse Picasso
Buvons-les donc puisque c'est l'heure de les boire
En criant tous en chœur: "Vive! Vive Rousseau!"

Here we gather to celebrate your glory,
These wines Picasso pours are in your honor
Drink up now since it is the hour to drink.
And let's sing out as one: Live, long live
Rousseau!

Other toasts followed. We can pick up Gertrude's account once more:

. . .all of a sudden André Salmon who was sitting next to my friend and solemnly discoursing of literature and travels leaped upon the by no means solid table and poured out an extemporaneous eulogy and poem. At the end he seized a big glass and drank what was in it, then promptly went off his head, being completely drunk, and began to fight. The men all got hold of him, the statues tottered, Braque, a great big chap, got hold of a statue in either arm and stood there holding them while Gertrude Stein's brother another big chap, protected little Rousseau and his violin from harm. The others with Picasso leading because Picasso though small is very strong, dragged Salmon into

the front atelier and locked him in. Everybody came back and sat down.

Fernande offers her version of the episode:

Two or three American couples, who had got there by accident, had to make the most excruciating efforts to keep a straight face. The men in their dark suits and the women in pale evening dresses seemed a bit out of their element amongst us, [and André Salmon] did an imitation of delirium tremens, chewing soap and making it froth out of his mouth, which horrified the Americans.

From Gertrude:

Therafter the evening was peaceful. Marie Laurencin sang in a thin voice some charming old norman songs. The wife of Agero sang some charming old limousin songs. Pichot danced a wonderful religious spanish dance that ended in making of himself a crucified Christ upon the floor. Guillaume Apollinaire solemnly approached myself and my friend and asked us to sing some of the native songs of the red indians. We did not either of us feel up to that to the great regret of Guillaume and all the company. Rousseau blissful and gentle played the violin and told us about the plays he had written and his memories of Mexico. It was all very peaceful and about three o'clock in the morning we all went into the atelier where

Salmon had been deposited and where we had left our hats and coats to get them to go home. There on the couch lay Salmon peacefully sleeping and surrounding him, half chewed, were a box of matches, a petit bleu and my yellow fantasia. Imagine my feelings even at three o'clock in the morning. However, Salmon woke up very charming and very polite and we all went out in the street together. All of a sudden with a wild yell Salmon rushed down the hill. Gertrude Stein and her brother, my friend and I all in one cab, took Rousseau home. [Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, pp. 130-132]

When The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas came out in 1933, André Salmon was enraged:

The story of the Rousseau banquet is very badly told. There is no respect for details, as we might have had the right to expect from Gertrude Stein since she enjoyed our friendly confidence, and the way she recounts this banquet is very flighty, to say the least. I am all the more astounded for I had thought, along with all our other friends, that she had really understood things. It is evident that she had really understood nothing, except in a superficial way.

Her description of my drunkenness on this occasion is entirely false. Madame Fernande Olivier, in her book, Picasso and his Friends, tells it much better. "Salmon pretended delirium

tremens in order to frighten the American ladies present." It was exactly that. Guillaume Apollinaire and I had spent the afternoon together writing the poems that were read. The banquet was not given just for the fun of it either, as Miss Stein seems to have thought, but because we sincerely admired Rousseau. The spectacular features of it were intentional and after the joke of drunkenness I simply went back to my own studio in order to make it seem more plausible. It is evident Miss Stein understood little of the tendency we all had, Apollinaire, Max Jacob, myself and the others, to frequently play a rather burlesque role. We made continual fun of everything. When we dined together, for instance, Jacob would often pretend that he was a small clerk, and our conversations in a style that was half slang half peasant amused everybody in the restaurant. We invented an artificial world with countless jokes, rites and expressions that were quite unintelligible to others. Obviously she did not understand very well the rather peculiar French we used to speak. ["Testimony against Gertrude Stein," Transition no. 23, Pamphlet no. 1 (Supplement), The Hague, February 1935, pp. 14-15]

Since it was the first large party Fernande and Picasso had ever given, it is not difficult to speculate on their motives. Given Gertrude's Saturday evenings at the Rue de Fleurus where Pablo and Fernande not only met a number of

American and English artists and writers and collectors but began to obtain their own kind of celebrity; given an income which was now, by way of his earlier work, selling more each year, there can be small doubt that Fernande was feeling a few social ambitions. Probably she had been looking for some time to give an important party.

And Picasso? He would have wanted a large successful party, and he would have detested the idea. One could lose much bohemian honor by behaving even a hint bourgeois.

Rousseau, however, would resolve the problem: one might at the same time be serious, yet mock the event. The idea had precisely that double foundation on whose irony Picasso could depend.

As for Rousseau, he was indeed simple. Patrick O'Brian quotes a conversation between Rousseau and Ambrose Vollard about ghosts:

Vollard: No, I don't believe in them.

Rousseau: Well, I do. I've seen some. There was one that persecuted me for quite a while.

Vollard: Indeed? What did it look like?

Rousseau: Just an ordinary man. . .He used to come and defy me when I was on duty at the octroi. He knew I couldn't leave my post, so he used to put

out his tongue or make long noses at me and then let off a great fart.

Vollard: But what makes you think he was a ghost?

Rousseau: Monsieur Apollinaire told me so.

[O'Brien, p.]

Since it was her party, let us give the last word to Fernande:

Rousseau remembered that dinner with emotion for a long time afterwards, and the good man took it in good faith as homage paid to his genius. He even sent a sweet letter to Picasso, thanking him.

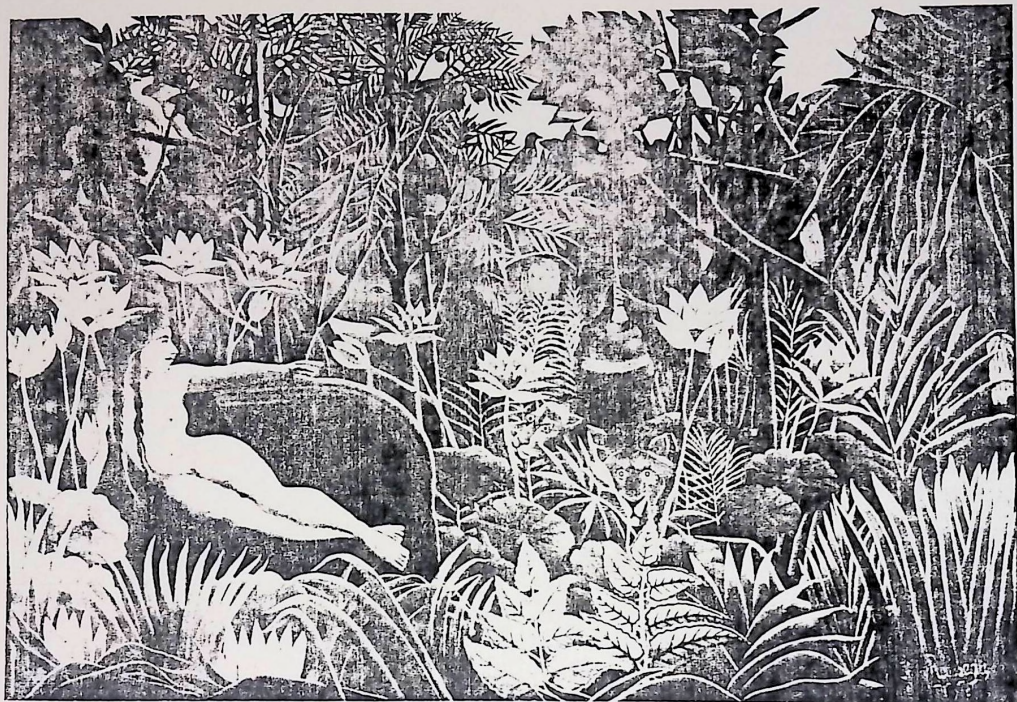
It was some time after that that Rousseau, twice a widower, became engaged to be married for the third time. His self-respect was greatly wounded by his future father-in-law, who thought him too old for his daughter. She was, in fact, fifty-nine. Rousseau must have been a little over sixty-six. As for the father-in-law, he was eighty-three. Rousseau was desolated by the fact his fiancée would not act against her father's wishes. He was quite cast down by this:

"One can still be in love at my age without being ridiculous. It's not the same sort of love as you young people go in for, but must one resign oneself to living alone, just because one's old? It's dreadful going back to lonely lodgings. It's at my age that one most needs one's heart warmed up again and the knowledge that one won't have to die

all alone and that perhaps another old heart will help one's passing to the other side. It's not right to laugh at old people who get married again; you need the company of someone you love when you're waiting to die."

He said all this in a soft, tearful voice. He hadn't the time, as it turned out, to put all this into practice: he died alone, in a hospital, a few months later. [Picasso and his Friends, pp. 69-71]

Nonetheless, two years after the banquet in his honor Rousseau did bring off what may be his greatest painting, The Dream, and it would be mean-spirited not to think that the adulation received on a fall night in 1908 could have had a little to do with it.



Part IX:

Cubism

Toward the end of 1908, Picasso and Braque were in
disagree that in the course of working independently, they had
come to move on remarkably similar paths.

It was a curious situation. The two men had known each
other for more than a year, but had not been close except for
the proximity of sharing, even before they met, a number of
artists in common, notably Manet and Maurice Raynal, Derain,
Matisse, and Apollinaire. On the day that Picasso tried
dinner with Derain, Braque had most likely been there; he and

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It was a curious situation. The two men had known each other for more than a year, but had not been close except for the propinquity of sharing, even before they met, a number of friends in common, notably Manolo and Maurice Raynal, Derain, Uhde, Matisse and Apollinaire. On the day that Picasso tried boxing with Derain, Braque had most likely been there; he and

Derain boxed frequently. Moreover, Apollinaire had brought Braque over to Picasso's studio in 1907 long enough for Braque, taking in Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, to make his famous remark about eating rope and drinking kerosene. Braque was outspoken--one of the numerous differences between himself and Picasso. Braque was tall and extraordinarily strong, more so than any of the other painters in Montmartre, more powerful even than Derain and Vlaminck. He was French and came from Le Havre; he sang well and danced well; he could play Beethoven on his accordion. Or such was his boast. Not a mean feat for a man who came from skilled working class stock. His father was an up-to-date house-painter who sent Braque to Paris in order to acquire "special decorating techniques that would be useful to the family firm and enhance his standing as an artisan: how to paint imitation marble, exotic wood grains, mosaics, cornices, moldings, paneling--in short, how to render all the expensive embellishments of turn-of-the-century interiors as relatively inexpensive two-dimensional illusions." [Wilkin, Georges Braque, p. 16]



Braque, c. 1904-05



Braque, c. 1908. Photograph published in
Cecile Burgess's article "The Wild Men of
Paris" *The Architectural Record*, May 1910

By 1902, Braque was also going to art school. Living in Paris had decided him; he wished to become a serious painter. Calm, patient, practical, and logical, he was not out of accord with the general agreement of his fellow artists that he did not draw very well, not even, indeed, by 1908.



BRANCUȘI. *Large Nude*. Paris, spring 1908
Oil on canvas, 55¼ × 39½" (140 × 100 cm)
Romilly 3, Collection Alex Maguy, Paris

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Of Large Nude, the critic Charles Morue was to comment at the time: "I think a stone moves him as much as a face."

Like Cézanne, Braque had little conventional facility in drawing, and he rarely strayed, even later in life, beyond the Cubist draftsmanship he had shared in forging. With sublime honesty, Braque described Cubism as a means he had created "whose purpose was above all to put painting within the reach of my own gifts." Those gifts included an extraordinary sensitivity to the subtleties of light and space, a great inventiveness in the exploitation of textures and materials, a remarkable lucidity in the handling of complex pictorial ideas, and an ethical rigor rivaling Cézanne's. But they did not include a particular talent for drawing. [Picasso and Braque, William Rubin, pp. 16, 17.]

To compensate for his lacks as a draftsman, Braque had powerful sentiments. That impressed Picasso. Braque wanted his work to offer tactile sensations. If he put a smoker's pipe into a still life, he preferred to make it life-size so one's hand would itch to pluck the object off the canvas.

". . . in nature there is tactile space, I'd say almost a manual space."

A few years later Braque enlarged upon this idea: ". . .The discovery of the tactile space that set my arm in motion in front of a landscape made me seek an even closer, palpable contact. If a still life isn't within reach of my hand, it seems to me that it ceases to be a still life, ceases to be affecting." Even Braque's choice of still life objects was influenced by his sense of "manual space." He explained that his now-familiar Cubist iconography was not accidental. "Musical instruments, considered as objects, were special in that a touch would bring them to life." [Wilkin, Georges Braque, p. 50]

Neither Braque nor Picasso are ever going to be more forthcoming than that about their work together, but Braque, from an early stage, must have had intimations that his future relations with Picasso might prove interesting, because in the first visit he made to Picasso's studio, going alone before Apollinaire agreed to accompany him, Braque, discovering that Picasso was out, left a card with the inscription, "Anticipated Memories."

A little later came Braque's initial reaction to Les Demoiselles, but the work must have obsessed him, for by 1908 he was no longer painting like a fauve; indeed his style, while working apart, had grown closer to Picasso, so much

closer, indeed, that Fernande commenting later, twenty-five years later, would write that Picasso "was rather indignant" that Braque was showing a canvas "of Cubist construction... painted in secret without informing anyone, even Picasso."

[Picasso and His Friends, pp. 97-98.]

Her recollections suffer, of course, from the slack of memory. The word "Cubist," never one of Picasso's terms, would certainly not have been used by him in 1908; moreover, Braque had made a point on his return from Estaque in the early fall of that year to show Picasso the work he had done that summer. On the other hand, it would have been uncharacteristic for Picasso not to have undergone contradictory reactions to a striking event; doubtless, he was furious that Braque was stealing a march on him, and had told Fernande as much. At the same time, he must have been feeling some mixture of awe, even of vindication, that the lonely direction he had chosen seemed to have produced a companion.

Kahnweiler is interesting here:

While Picasso was painting. . .at La Rue-des-Bois, Braque, at the other end of France, in l'Estaque (near Marseilles) was painting the series of landscapes we have already mentioned, [yet] Braque arrived at the same point as Picasso.

If, in the whole history of art, there was not already sufficient proof that the appearance of the aesthetic product is conditioned in its particularity by the spirit of the time, that even the most powerful artists unconsciously execute its will, then this would be proof. Separated by distance, and working independently, the two artists devoted their most intense efforts to paintings which would share an extraordinary resemblance. This relationship between their paintings continued but ceased to be astonishing because the friendship between the two artists, begun in the winter of that year, brought about a constant exchange of ideas. [Kahnweiler, p]

Be it said that Cezanne had offered them a foundation in common before he died on October 22, 1906, twenty-five years (short three days) after Picasso was born. Note that Bend in a Road cannot be dated more closely than 1900 to 1906, but again we can assume that both painters were familiar with it.

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91. BEND IN A ROAD. 1900-06



BRAQUE, *Rond near L'Estaque*, L'Estaque, summer 1908
Oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 19 1/2 (60.5 x 50.2 cm)
Romilly 17, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Given anonymously (by exchange)



PICASSO, *Cottage and Trees, La Rue-des-Bois*, August 1908
Oil on canvas, 56 1/2 x 28 3/4 (92 x 75 cm)
Date 190, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow



BRACQ, E. *Trees at L'Estaque*. L'Estaque, [August] 1908
Oil on canvas, 31 × 23½" (79 × 60 cm)
Romilly 18. Private collection



Picasso, *Landscape. La Rue-des-Bois*, August 1908
Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (73 × 60 cm)
Dair 192, Private collection

All the same, Picasso's sentiments about Braque had to be mixed. If he could enjoy the Frenchman's strength and good looks as a companionable reinstallation of the manly security he once felt with Pallarès, he also had to be jealous of the athletic and musical abilities of his new friend. Braque had legitimate machismo. If this could prove sufficiently oppressive for Picasso to speak of Braque behind his back as "Mme. Picasso"--a reference most likely to Braque's occasional docility face to face with Picasso's greater brilliance and superior technique, well, to Picasso's credit, it had to be seen as an unequal relationship. Picasso was bringing more to it.

By the time Cubism got under way in 1908, Picasso had already mastered at least five different manners and was a famous vanguard painter, whereas only two years of Fauve painting separated Braque from his student work. Picasso already had an established market, his work selling for much higher prices than Braque's, a distinction that remained in force throughout the years of Cubism during which Kahnweiler paid Picasso roughly four times more per picture than he paid Braque. [Rubin, Picasso and Braque, p. 74]

Even Kahnweiler, normally cautious, does say in 1916 in Der Kubismus, "admittedly Braque's art is more feminine than Picasso's brilliantly powerful work," and goes on to suggest that "gracious" Braque is the "gentle moon" against "austere" Picasso's "brilliant sun."

Indeed, there is a species of truth to this: If one studies their work in these years, one can usually distinguish a Picasso from a Braque. Not always, however. For Picasso would often pick up Braque's themes and produce canvases in Braque's vein; Braque, however, cannot often come off like Picasso. Machismo, obviously, has its mansions and no one was going to be more macho than Picasso when it came to painting. Fair enough. He was not in a hurry to forgive God for making him short when his father was tall.

So, there were obstacles to the early friendship. One of the paintings Braque brought back from l'Estaque in the fall of 1908 was a seminal work that impressed Matisse, and he said as much to his intimates, a noteworthy reaction considering that Braque had been one of Matisse's followers and was now moving in Picasso's direction. It may have been Matisse's pride to possess objective judgment in art matters, or, for all we really know, it could have been his deliberate intent to annoy Picasso, but Matisse did talk a good deal about Houses at

l'Estaque, and his always detailed opinions probably made their way over to the Bateau Lavoir.

Later, a couple of years after the publication of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas in 1933, in which Gertrude with her usual felicitous inaccuracy offered her pontifications about a war between the Matissites and the Picassoites, caused in part by Braque [CK], Matisse would sum up his earlier reactions:

According to my recollections, it was Braque who made the first Cubist painting. He brought back from the south a Mediterranean landscape that represented a seaside village seen from above. In order to give more importance to the roofs, which were few, as they would be in a village, in order to let them stand out in the ensemble of the landscape, and at the same time develop the idea of humanity that they stood for, he had continued the signs that represented the roofs in the drawing on into the sky and had painted them throughout the sky. This is really the first picture constituting the origin of Cubism, and we considered it as something quite new, about which there were many discussions.



BAWOT E. *Houses at L'Estaque*. L'Estaque, [August] 1908
Oil on canvas, 28½ × 23½" (73 × 60 cm)
Romilly 14, Kunstmuseum Bern.
Hermann and Margrit Rupf Foundation

Given the critical pummeling Picasso had absorbed from his friends concerning Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, he could well have felt something close to absolute rage over Braque's investiture of his creative path. It is just as well for the future of Cubism that a magical juxtaposition took place at this time. In Gil Blas, on November 13, 1908, a review by Louis Vauxcelles of Braque's show at Kahnweiler's was reviewed next to a story of Wilbur Wright who had just set an altitude record at Le Mans with his biplane:

EXPOSITION BRAQUE

Chez Kahn Weiler, 28, rue Vignon. — M. Braque est un jeune homme fort audacieux. L'exemple déroulant de Picasso et de Derain l'a enhardi. Peut-être aussi le style de Cézanne et les souvenirs de l'art statique des Egyptiens l'obsèdent-ils outre mesure. Il construit des bonshommes métalliques et déformés et qui sont d'une simplification terrible. Il méprise la forme, réduit tout, sites et figures et maisons, à des schémas géométriques à des cubes. Ne le raillez point, puisqu'il est de bonne foi. Et attendons.

Louis Vauxcelles

La Conquête de l'air

AU MANS

Wilbur Wright gagne le prix de la hauteur

Le Mans, 10 novembre. — M. Wilbur Wright a gagné à 4 heures pour le prix de hauteur de



Review of Braque's exhibition at the Kahnweiler gallery, printed in the *Paris* November 14, 1908. Clipping from the Kahnweiler press album.

Wilbur Wright piloting his biplane over a racetrack near Le Mans, August 1908.

It would take a few years before Picasso would begin to call Braque "mon cher Wilbourg" but coincidence had meaning for him--nothing less than the whole of his work attests to that! Besides, he was fascinated by airplanes. As Penrose remarks, flight was an effort "to conquer another dimension in space." [Penrose, Life and Work, p 161] Or, converted to Picasso's logic: If airplanes can fly, space can be reinvented. Adventuring into the air was one more way of exploring into the secrets. That autumn of 1908, Braque would bring Houses at L'Estaque over to Picasso's studio. By 1951, Matisse, contradicting his remarks in 1935, would say in an interview with Teriade: "I saw the picture in the studio of Picasso who discussed it with his friends."

"Before long," as Braque would later remark, "Picasso and I had daily exchanges; we discussed and tested each other's ideas as they came to us, and we compared our respective works."

In turn, Picasso would agree: "Almost every evening, either I went to Braque's studio or Braque came to mine. Each of us had to see what the other had done during the day."

Years later, Braque, meditating on this period from 1909 to 1914, would declare: "Picasso and I said things to one another that no one will ever say again. . .things that would

be incomprehensible to others, but that gave us great joy. It was like bring roped together on a mountain. . . All that will end with us." [Vallier, 1954, Le Peinture et Nous]

During the years of their dialogue, the two painters maintained an absolute public silence concerning their art; their later remarks on Cubism were rare, fragmentary, and occasionally contradictory. Braque characteristically declined publishing a statement in 1909, asserting that he hoped his ideas were "sufficiently expressed in my canvases" [undated letter from Braque to Kahnweiler]; for his part, Picasso typically eluded the problem, telling a 1911 interviewer, "il n'y a pas de cubisme," ["there is no Cubism"] and [proceeded to excuse] himself on account of his monkey, El Mono, who was hungry. [Paris Journal, January 1, 1912] It is not surprising, therefore, that although Cubism benefits from the largest bibliography by far of any artistic movement in the twentieth century, there are still aspects of its formation about which we know little. [Picasso and Braque, p. 41.]

When it comes, therefore, to definitive understanding of Cubism, it is evident that every explorer will have to cut his own route through the brush. There are, as we shall see, a few more-or-less accepted theories, (often no more than coherent

muscular jargons) but the more stolid academic notions that derive from Kahnweiler and much of the museum literature, have garnered authority by now, if no great insight. Remarks on their merits can come later, however; it may help to have something else in mind before we take up the established view.

Let us make the attempt. The following argument is adapted from my book, Of a Fire on the Moon, published in 1969:

An artist draws a face, and on a whim adds a wen to the back of the neck, and a wrinkle high on the neck. Abruptly, a second face emerges. There with the wen and the old boil for eyes, the wrinkle has become a mouth. But the artist has lived with form for so long that he is far from surprised: he would assume that the wen, the boil and the wrinkle are exactly where they are because the flesh desires to become a draftsman, because the back of the neck secretly wished to draw a particular face on its own skin, as though to say, "If I must suffer a boil, let it at least do some work for me, let it establish that I have not one head but two; one biological, and another less tangible--a second spirit to be discerned only on the back of my skull."

Most painters are not notably articulate. They tend to live quietly with such thoughts rather than look to express them. So an argument that would claim the vulcanism of the skin is designed not only to draw attention to the unhealthiness of boils, but to the secret urges of the spirit to

display a few items one cannot otherwise display--a hint of buried horrors if one is timid, or of humor if one is pompous--is beyond the usual critical purview. It is not easy to suggest that the visual statement offered by the drying-up of the boil is significant, and flesh draws its own design.

Yet, what if form is a language that seeks to express itself by every means? If man has his voice, nature has wind, it has thunder, the sound of running waters, its cataracts and Krakatoas. If we agree that the urge to create a language is basic to man, so basic that one can begin to define his nature by saying that he is an animal with the irrepressible desire to develop formal speech, does it have to be wholly uncomfortable to assume that other categories of nature will attempt to shape forms that could delineate their inner meaning? Why, indeed, is it not as natural for nature to declare itself as for man to speak? If common sense would ask immediately why nature would not also wish to conceal itself, and can, in fact, elaborate a labyrinth of false and misleading form to protect itself, let it also be agreed that not all form reveals, and some form may be designed to betray meaning. Still, one might as well assume that there is an economy to nature, for that is easier to comprehend than lack of economy. A prevalence of wasteful and misleading communications might prove a luxury the cosmos could not necessarily afford. [Of a Fire on the Moon, pp. 291-292.]

This argument would suggest then that Picasso and Braque were looking to find elements of a new language that might be found in the inter-relations of form, shapes that nature insinuated subtly as clues to concealed meaning. (It would be safe to assume that this search was instinctive rather than articulate and developed to a good degree out of where their brushes led them.)

Since they were both in Paris until April of 1909, their early collaboration would go on for several intense months. The partnership had begun. If, by way of Cézanne, they knew already that a tree could serve as a torso, and a white towel in a still life might be equal visually to a mountain slope, form offered new paths across space. (Not for too little had Braque employed the image that they were roped together like mountaineers.) It can be said that they were opening their eyes to the vertigo of existence itself. Wholly different objects that possessed similar forms could now present dizzying associations. It would take two years and more for Cubism to mature into its full complexity, but to stare at length into any one of the major works they did between 1909 and 1912 is not unequal to marching into the architecture--or is it the inner organs?--of existence itself.

Even by autumn of 1908, Braque had managed to demonstrate in a work titled Landscape that his canvas, held upside-down, or rotated through ninety degrees on either side, had as much to show as when studied right-side-up: It was hard not to feel as if one was inhabiting in turn a forest, a cave, a village, and a storm at sea. "It's all the same to me," Braque would say in 1959, "whether a form represents a different thing to different people or many things at the same time," [Richardson, Georges Braque, 1959, p. 26.] and indeed the next print is worth examining from all four sides.



CEZANNE, *Landscape*. [Paris, autumn] 1908
Oil on canvas, 32 × 25 1/2" (81 × 65 cm)
Romilly 26, Kunstmuseum Basel. Gift of Raoul La Roche, 1952

Freedom had opened to them, and with it a fell complexity of problems. A writer ponders his psyche, as well as other individuals and society; a painter works from living and inanimate objects. The writer moves toward philosophy; the painter toward biology and physics--toward a better comprehension of living form and of space, mass, light, time, the laws of motion.

Cubism had already entered space--with both fists and both feet. Space was no longer an empyrean void with selected objects--space was a field of force where objects lived in close collaboration with each adjacent object. In Cubist paintings, magnitude lost its character: one need only compare Braque's tentative, even weak, portrayal of the Castle at La Roche-Guyon (when he was without Picasso's company in the summer of 1909) to the far superior depiction of a castle done later by him in Paris in the early winter of 1910. It is just that now the castle is titled a Violin and Pitcher.

So the echo of a form used previously could invoke an object of another magnitude; on his side, Picasso was ready to integrate light and time. If the Fruit Dish of 1908-1909 is still somewhat uncommitted in treatment of light, nonetheless, its illumination springs from contradictory sources, from overhead, for example, and from underneath; it is early in Cubism, however; the result speaks more of stagecraft (a most agreeable stagecraft) than the exercise of a new theory. The Fruit Dish remains a still life. It may sit luminously on its base, but still it sits. Just a few months later, Picasso takes a huge stride--he embarks on a new kind of figure drawing that he will not relinquish for the next six decades--he conducts the nude through a passage in time as if his eye is in company with a travelling source of light, as if indeed his eye is the source! Thereby, he manages to go around the breasts and belly to view the back and buttocks. It is as if he is saying that conventional light imprisons reality since it offers only one theme per painting--the theme created by the light source, thereby fixing the painting at an instant in time. Picasso will demonstrate that one form can revolve into another so soon as one uses a moving source of light; so, on one canvas he suggests, and so naturally-- there is his art!--motion through time.

Of course, his life is not always lived on the frontiers of aesthetics. He will also look for his amusement as he goes along. Around the beginning of 1910 he does a portrait of Braque that he will later claim was never of his colleague but merely that people thought it was. Of course, he could hardly admit to such an action since his devoted partner is drawn with horns. By Picasso's logic, he is giving good measure. He has introduced Braque to Marcelle Lapre and she soon becomes the Frenchman's mistress. In a couple of years, they would marry. What Braque does not know is that for a short period, Marcelle was Picasso's mistress. It would have called for tenderness of spirit of a kind that Picasso did not often keep on hand to abstain from putting horns on Braque. Dedication to collaborate with a friend is one thing; to eschew every last form of petty treachery is another.



PICASSO, *Man with a Hat* (also known as *Portrait of Braque*).
Paris, [winter 1909–10]
Oil on canvas, 24 × 19½" (61 × 50 cm)
Daix 550. Collection Heinz Berggruen, Geneva

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Picasso's increasing renown had produced a concomitant increase in the price of the paintings now being sold by Kahnweiler, Uhde, and Vollard. The increasing interest of collectors suggested that he might never be poor again. He chose at this time to take another trip with Fernande to Barcelona, and then, probably attempting to recapture their idyll at Gosol, he took her up to Horta.

Little went right, however, for Fernande. Picasso would be active that summer and come back with six landscapes and

fifteen portraits of her, but the trip did not draw them closer. Their long separation through the summer and fall of 1907 was bound to have left its irritating memories concerning each mate's romance with other people; then Weigel's death did quit oppressing Picasso altogether; he was not the man to fail to understand that madness sits next to attempts to comprehend the universe; worse, he was living with a woman who hardly comprehended Cubism and did not like it. He would be without Braque for the summer.

Picasso may have been working this side of an organic depression; it is certain that after the summer, back in Paris, he would come down with a stomach ailment, a near-ulcer generated, doubtless, by the stimulations, permutations, and godawful combinations opened by every brush-stroke in each new painting--Cubism was easily as complex as three-dimensional chess.

Nonetheless, it was Fernande who became ill first. She started to suffer in Barcelona and by June when they reached Horta in June, she was in misery. By July it was worse.

Dear Gertrude,

Excuse me for not having written you, but my bad health is the cause of it. Everything wears me out, and I have not been able to do a thing. I

think I have an illness of the kidneys. . . Already in Barcelona the doctors warned me about it, but here I can confirm the sickness myself. I would certainly be better in Paris, where I could have it cared for. But the voyage would aggravate the illness. I am annoyed, moreover, that here there is no way to treat it other than by a regimen. I stay almost all day in bed because I cannot bear to be seated. Pablo is bored with all that. What is even more regrettable is that without this we would be very happy here. The country is beautiful, the people are very nice. At the inn where we stay, they do all they can to make me content. . .

Sometimes I have an intolerable pain in my kidneys which makes me feel as if I am going to die soon. That sort of pain has only happened a couple of times, but I'm always very tired and very weak. There is much blood in my urine, and sometimes, nothing but blood. What to do?

Life is sad. Pablo is in a bad mood, and I have received nothing from him in the way of moral or physical comfort. When this acute pain takes me, he gets very pale and that's all. . . To you alone, I say that I am very depressed. Nothing in the world, not for anything would I want Pablo to know to what a degree I am depressed in spirits. But just recognize that since the last two months in Spain, I haven't been able to rest for a single day. . . I assure you that if it lasts another month, I believe it will all be over. I will die of it. And Pablo doesn't help me, he. . . is too egotistical to wish to understand that now it is I who have need of him, that he's responsible for my state, that in great part he brought me to this and

he has completely undone me. . . If I become sad,
he's furious. [Souvenirs Intimes, pp.233-236]

"He's responsible for my state. . .He brought me to this."
There is blood in her urine and sometimes it is all blood. She
suffers from acute pain. It is possible that one of his old
venereal diseases now inhabits her. Before antibiotics, people
lived with the after-effects of syphilis and gonorrhea as if
such afflictions were comparable to herpes--an ongoing if
intermittent annoyance. Of course, he will shrug. It is her
turn in the barrel, that's all. If he seems heartless, he
probably is, but in the manner of an investigator, a general, a
consecrated athlete. The goal is paramount; one's mate is
present, therefore, as an effective and useful aide-de-camp, or
as an impediment. Guilt is the one overload he will not
accept. He cannot afford it. There would be no limit to the
corpses that could come back to life in his dreams, and he
needs energy and powers of concentration. He is moving out
into the jungles and ice-fields of outer aesthetics.

At this point, how she must suffer with his work. How he
must ignore such suffering. The rest of her letter tells us as
much:

. . .I am so unhappy, so alone. Despite the fact that he really loves me, I believe it, Pablo would let me die without being aware of my state. Only when I truly suffer does he stop a little to occupy himself with me. He knows nothing. . . You're going to find that I am concerned much too much with myself, but to you alone, I can tell all... And don't speak of this to anyone.

O'Brian adds a telling factor:

It may seem trifling to speak of a somewhat vain young woman's reaction to Cubism, but [her] face was her fortune, and she could scarcely watch with philosophic detachment while it was carved into ridges, especially as the ridges and the corresponding hollows . . . belonged to a woman of sixty or more. Braque once said something to this effect: "A portrait is a job in which there is always something wrong with the mouth. . . Show a bourgeois the most advanced art you like and he is delighted; but just you touch his mug and there's all Hell to pay." As far as her physical appearance went, Fernande was a true bourgeoisie. Hitherto Picasso had been kind to her face and her person. . . Now all this was changed. [O'Brian, p. 172.]

As, for example, we can turn from the way he painted her in 1905 to the manner three years later: