tombs commemorate the deceased woman in a fashion more personal and intimate than had hitherto been attempted. They therefore seem to reflect the changing importance and value accorded the woman as wife and mother. At the same time, these tombs anticipate attitudes suggested in later seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and even nineteenth-century tombs, where the expression of grief by the surviving family becomes a major theme.32

Nicholas Penny had noted two or three of these seventeenth-century tombs as precedents for the series of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tombs of women who died in childbirth,33 but their actual number and geographic distribution give them a greater significance than he recognized. Rather than being unusual, isolated monuments, these tombs form a large group. Further, they reflect a much wider concern with the menacing imminence of death in childbirth. Moreover, they provide important evidence to support the arguments of social historians that it was during this period that the origins of the modern nuclear family are to be found.34

32 Hurtig (as in n. 25), 227.

Bibliography


From Narrative to “Iconic” in Picasso: The Buried Allegory in Bread and Fruitdish on a Table and the Role of Les Demoiselles d’Avignon1

William Rubin

No phase of Picasso’s early development has been less adequately treated in monographs on the artist or in histories of Cubism than the two-year interval between the termination of work on Les Demoiselles d’Avignon (July 1907)2 and the artist’s first paintings in a fully realized Analytic Cubist mode (June–July 1909). In the work of these years, which saw the flourishing of Picasso’s “African” or “Negro” style and its absorption into an emergent Cubism, the monumental still life in the Basel Kunstmuseum, Bread and Fruitdish on a Table, completed early 1909 (Fig. 1), occupies a unique position. Distinguished by its quality and its unusually large format, this picture was also especially daring in its deliberate juxtaposition of highly finished and seemingly unfinished passages — a reflection, as will be seen, of the divergent influences Picasso was assimilating when he began the project in autumn 1908. During the entire two years in question, only The Hermitage’s Three Women (Fig. 2) — begun much earlier but reworked while Bread and Fruitdish was in progress — constituted a more ambitious effort.3

Together, these pictures mark the ascendency of an early form of Cubism over the last manifestations of Picasso’s equally abstract but very different “African” style. Despite the pivotal importance of both Bread and Fruitdish and Three Women in Picasso’s development, the two paintings suffered until comparatively recently from a remarkable scholarly neglect, which has left several generations of art historians with a fragmentary and distorted image of the beginnings of Cubism. Given the conditions under which early books on Cubism such as Apollinaire’s or Kahnweiler’s were put together (and considering their generally haphazard choice of reproductions), it is not entirely surprising that both pictures are missing from them. More difficult to understand is the fact that neither Bread and Fruitdish nor Three Women was reproduced or discussed in any of the three major scholarly accounts of Cubism that appeared in the decades following the Second World War, those of Alfred Barr, John Golding, and Robert Rosenblum — despite Zervos’s publication by then of both pictures in Volume Two of his

1 The thesis elaborated below was presented as an ex tempore lecture at a Picasso Symposium at Harvard University on February 21, 1981.
3 Cf. Appendix II: The Chronology of Three Women and Bread and Fruitdish.
1 Pablo Picasso, Bread and Fruitdish on a Table, Paris, begun November/December 1905, completed early 1906, oil on canvas, 54.4 x 52.4 cm (21 1/2 x 20 5/8 in). Basel, Kunstmuseum (courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York).

Pablo Picasso (hereafter Zervos). Apart from Zervos's catalogue, the earliest monograph even to reproduce *Three Women* was published only in 1936, and its ineptitude may be judged by the author's identification of the picture as "una de las Versiones de las Señoritas de Aviñón." It was another decade before *Three Women* resurfaced in 1939.


So overwhelming was — and in many respects still is — the authority of Barr's *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, New York, 1946, that such scholars of the following generation as Golding (in *Cubism: A History and Analysis 1907-1914*, London, 1959, and rev. ed. 1968) and Rosenblum (in *Cubism and Twentieth Century Art*, New York, 1960, and rev. ed. New York, 1976) may have been unconsciously influenced in their omission of Three Women and Bread and Fruitdish by the absence of these paintings from Barr's account. While Barr's selection of reproductions was in large part prompted by the content of his great Picasso retrospective of 1939, it nevertheless included a considerable number of paintings that were not exhibited, among them four of those he had seen in Russia — none of them, however, as large or as important as *Three Women*, which had earlier figured in the collection of Gertrude Stein.
Pierre Daix's monograph on Picasso, where it was reproduced in color and briefly discussed. Since then, the work has figured in Edward Fry's and Douglas Cooper's books on Cubism and has been the subject of several scholarly texts, notably Leo Steinberg's profound and poetic exegesis. Bread and Fruitdish has fared worse. No account of it can be found even today in any monograph on Picasso or Cubism, and discussion of it elsewhere has been limited. Aside from an analysis of the picture in relation to Cézanne by this author, and several exhibition

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5 Picasso, trans. from French, New York, 1966, 78, pl. 77


catalogue entries,\textsuperscript{10} the literature comes down to a single article by Christian Geelhaar.\textsuperscript{11}

Geelhaar's outstanding but relatively little-known commentary elaborated a thesis proposed shortly before by others,\textsuperscript{12} namely that the configuration of \textit{Bread and Fruitdish} derived from studies for an unexecuted large picture that depicted Harlequin, Gilles, and other figures, male and female, dining at a drop-leaf table — an image whose first state Zervos had called \textit{Carnaval au bistrot} (Fig. 5).\textsuperscript{13} Geelhaar dealt with the identities of several figures in \textit{Carnaval au bistrot}, and recorded some influences of Cézanne in the studies and in \textit{Bread and Fruitdish} itself (although there he overlooked the impact of Rousseau). His essay focused, however, on the structural aspects of Picasso's extraordinary transformation of the \textit{commedia dell'arte} banquet image into a still life. In building upon Geelhaar's excellent formal analysis, I hope to add some observations of a stylistic order. But this essay will be largely devoted to the as yet unexplored interlocking iconography of the progressive stages of the painting, and its implications for Picasso's evolution between the Rose and Cubist periods, with respect to the \textit{Demoiselles} in particular. As \textit{Bread and Fruitdish} is an exquisite example of a peculiarly modernist situation, where iconog-


\textsuperscript{12} The idea was first discussed among the staff of the Basel Kunstmuseum, notably Carlo Huber and Dieter Koepplin, and was first published by the latter in the notes to the exhibition catalogue, \textit{Kubismus: Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik aus dem Kupferstichkabinett Basel} (as in note 10).
raphy turns inward to engage style, a review of the picture's formal integration is imperative if we are to illuminate the imagery.

The contrast of "non-finite" and high finish that is unique to Bread and Fruitlish among the Picasso paintings of this period reflects a dualism that pervades the picture as a whole. It derives, at a certain remove, from the contrasting styles of Cézanne and Rousseau, who were (with Braque) the main influences on Picasso's art in the latter half of 1908. The Cézanne influence took root in a limited way in 1906, became central in Picasso's work by late 1906, and persisted throughout the history of Analytic Cubism. Rousseau's influence was less profound and shorter lived; it is incipient in some landscapes painted from memory (or imagination) in spring 1908, and paramount in those executed at La Rue des Bois in late summer of that year (Figs. 3, 4) as well as in a few still lifes and landscapes of fall and early winter 1908-09. The Douanier's stylized painting, with its exotic and often violent jungle themes, was closer than Cézanne's to the premises of Picasso's "African" manner, and it is logical that in 1908 Picasso should have turned to it first. Indeed, interest in Rousseau's painting is inseparable from a broad, unfocused sort of primitivism that had involved Matisse and Derain, among others, as early as 1906. Nevertheless, the Rue des Bois landscapes mark the beginning of the end of Picasso's "Africanism," and constitute a transitional phase into Cubism proper, for which Cézanne would be the dominant model. Bread and Fruitlish was the last important painting in which Rousseau's influence played a formative role and (with Three Women) the first in Picasso's work forthrightly to affirm the structural side of Cézanne's art.

The dual influences of Cézanne and Rousseau in Picasso's work of the second half of 1908 have been cited by a number of historians, who understandably approach these very different artists as mutually exclusive sources for Picasso. None of these writers, however, dealt with Bread and Fruitlish, in which Picasso cavalierly confronted and combined elements of the two alien styles, carrying off the endeavor by the force of his vision and the brio of his execution. Whatever formal problems Picasso had to overcome in realizing this amalgam, his pairing at that moment of Cézanne and Rousseau made perfect sense in psychological and poetic terms, given the nature of Picasso's feelings about the two artists. Of the same generation, and both "outsiders" even within the small world of vanguard painters, Cézanne and Rousseau were revered figures for Picasso, who admired them as paragons of conviction and integrity. Both were relatively hermetic in personality and maintained a quasi-religious attitude toward painting; both were scorned — even by some vanguard artists — as incompetents. In such

Matisse by having in his (Picasso's) own studio a picture that could be taken to be a poor Matisse. In fact, one has only to compare the head of Marguerite in this quite extraordinary little picture to Picasso's post-Cubist work, indeed, to the Iberian heads in the center of the Demoiselles, to see why Picasso might have preferred it to other Matisse's. Matisse's Marguerite belongs to a moment (late 1906) when, for the Faouves, the "primitive" meant a variety of "archaic," often exotic styles, art négro, Gauguin, and Rousseau, while for Picasso, it meant primarily the archaic Iberian, and secondarily Gauguin. Only later, more than a year after his June 1907 revelation regarding art négro, was Picasso's work influenced by Rousseau; once again the Douanier's work functioned as it had for Matisse, as a simplifying agent in the context of a major stylistic transition. Daix correctly sees the interest of both Matisse and Picasso in the work of Rousseau as "following quite naturally from their interest in 'primitive' arts."

The friendship of Picasso and Rousseau, and the latter's ubiquitousness in the Apollinaire circle, tend to make us forget that the Douanier, born in 1844, and Cézanne, born in 1839, were of the same generation. Both were considered strictly 19th-century painters by the artists and poets of the Cubist generation.

5 Pablo Picasso, Study for Carnaval au bistrot (first state), Paris, late 1908, watercolor and pencil, 8 3/8 x 8 3/8 (22.5 x 22.3 cm).
Private collection (photo: John Lindsay Ltd.)

16 Daix (letter to me of Dec. 15, 1962) insists on an interest in the Douanier on Matisse's part as early as 1905, and cites Barz (Matisse: His Art and His Public, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1951, 77) in regard to the possible association between Matisse's 1906 Pink Onions and the still lifes of Rousseau.

It is evident that the art of Rousseau played at least a certain role in the step toward simplification and reduction of means that marks Matisse's transition from Fauvism to his own personal style in later 1906 (the difference, essentially, between the two versions of The Sailor). This role was, however, subordinate to that of Gauguin, Cézanne, and the various "primitive" arts Matisse was already collecting. For me, the work that best illustrates Matisse's generalized primitivism of that moment (late 1906) is Marguerite (reproduced in Barz, Matisse, as above, 332), which Picasso would select in an exchange of works between the two artists the following year.

Some critics have interpreted Picasso's choice of this seemingly awkward, simple, and naive Matisse portrait as an attempt to show up
respects they constituted logical role models for the twenty-seven-year-old Picasso at a time when his own radical and seemingly “primitive” explorations had carried him beyond the understanding of those who had admired and collected his Blue and Rose period works. Picasso’s recorded remarks about Cézanne and Rousseau typically focus on what he found interesting and admirable in their character more than on the particulars of their work. "It is not what the artist does that counts, but what he is," Picasso would tell Zervos in 1935. "Cézanne's anxiety is what interests us. That is his lesson." 18 Later, he would speak admiringly of Rousseau’s dignity as an artist, describing the Douanier as maintaining, in the face of mockery, the austerity and gravity of "a Byzantine figure." 19

Although Cézanne’s influence on the style of Bread and Fruitdish was critical, it was neither as deep nor as pervasive as in some other paintings of the winter 1908-09. That aspect of Cézanne’s art which would prove fundamental to Analytic Cubism — the treatment of space and modeling as a simulacrum of bas-relief (with its concomitant passage of planes) — is not to be found in Bread and Fruitdish, though Picasso was exploring this form of construction during the same months in his reworking of Three Women. Nevertheless, the influence of Cézanne on Bread and Fruitdish is manifest in the composition’s monumentality and boldness (which recall the Barnes version of the Cardplayers, Fig. 7), in the high viewpoint that blunts the orthogonal of the tabletop and tends to align them with the frame, in the displaced or discontinuous contour of the rear edge of the table, and in the "non-finito" of the right side and bottom of the picture. 20

The influence of Rousseau on Bread and Fruitdish is visible primarily on the left side of the picture, in the simplified forms and purged, unbroken contours of the compotier and fruit as well as in their tightly painted, uniquely high finish, and in the ornamental leaflike pattern of nuanced greens in the drapery. The monumentality and frontality of the image may as much be considered affinities to Rousseau as to Cézanne, and the willful "awkwardness" of Picasso's contouring — his conscious attempt to suppress virtuoso drawing by means of an en-

forced naïveté — is difficult to imagine without the artist's experience of the Douanier. Rousseau’s own naïveté, both in his work and in his life, was far from an involuntary matter, popular accounts notwithstanding. With no lack of self-awareness, he identified "maintaining my naïveté" as a principal goal. 21 Nor was his "primitive" stylization of forms simply an instinctive manner. Rousseau consciously imposed it upon images that in their earlier bozzetto stages were often more improvisational, more realistic, and more dependent upon immediate perception.

The reductive drawing of the compotier and fruit on the left of Bread and Fruitdish — more austere than that of the Rousseau-like "toy" houses and stylized trees of Picasso's Rue des Bois landscapes — suggests, as in the Douanier, a strictly conceptual type of image. The exploratory, unfinished passages of the right side of Bread and Fruitdish recall, on the other hand, the searching, perceptual approach of Cézanne working before the motif. Indeed, the profound methodological and philosophical differences that separate Cézanne and Rousseau are nowhere better exemplified than in their notions of finish, surely the most obvious of the many stylistic differences that separate their work. It is not without significance, I think, that among Rousseau's few recorded observations about the Master of Aix was the suggestion that he "could finish" Cézanne's pictures. 22

Picasso's early involvement with Cézanne has been much discussed and needs no rehearsal here. His relationship with Rousseau is another matter. Treated only cursorily by art historians, it has been primarily a concern of Picasso's biographers and critics of literature (especially Roger Shattuck in The Banquet Years). These discussions, however, leave unresolved — indeed, generally untreated — certain issues of considerable importance to the art historian who would chart Picasso's development through early Cubism. Foremost among them is the question of when Picasso first saw Rousseau's work, and secondarily that of when he met the man. (At the end of 1908, Picasso was, by all accounts, a frequent visitor to Rousseau's studio.)

According to a number of authors, Picasso's first encounter with the Douanier's painting dated from his


19 In conversation with me, see Appendix IV: Quoting Picasso.

20 For Cézanne's new, organic, and pictorially autonomous conception of what constituted a finished work, see "Cézannisme" (as in note 9), 289-192. Two readily available instances of this "non-finito" are his Still Life with Apples in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and his Gardanne in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, both of which pictures might (wrongly) be taken for unfinished. They were among a number of such paintings Cézanne sent out from his studio during his lifetime. The letter was exhibited in Vollard's 1895 exhibition; the former may have been also, but appears in any case to have been sold by Vollard prior to Cézanne's death.

21 Letter from Rousseau to André Dupont, April 1, 1910, in Les Soirées de Paris, January 15, 1914 (dated 1913 by printer's error), 57-58.

22 This remark of Rousseau's is quoted not infrequently in the literature and is difficult to trace to any one source. An unpublished memorandum by Max Weber (cited in Sandra E. Leonard, Henri Rousseau and Max Weber, New York, 1970, 23), of which I possess a copy, describes a visit Weber made with Rousseau to the Cézanne Memorial Retrospective in 1907, where Rousseau suggested that he "could finish" the Wistick Bathers (Philadelphia Museum). Either Rousseau made such an observation more than once — which is probable — or Weber related the remark to others. In any case, it was faithfully recounted to me by Picasso (as something Rousseau said to him) on an occasion when we looked at the Cézanne and Rousseau paintings in his possession.

Despite Rousseau's profound admiration for Bouguereau, his tight economical finish was far from that of the Salon — which Cézanne had called "le fini des imbeciles." Nevertheless, it was considerably at odds with the more painterly handling that characterized modern art after Impressionism, and it thus imposed itself logically as a trait of style by which Rousseau and Cézanne could be contrasted within Picasso's picture.
purchase, in autumn 1908, of a large Rousseau figure picture, Portrait of a Woman, which he had come upon in the shop of the brocanteur Père Soulier. Cooper, who has written monographs on both Picasso and Rousseau, states unequivocally, for example, that "Picasso first became acquainted with the painting of Henri Rousseau through seeing and buying one of his finest works in a junk-shop." This charming claim entails a number of problems, however, not the least of which is that the influence of Rousseau on Picasso's painting is first evident many months earlier, in spring 1908 and dominates the Rue des Bois landscapes painted several months before Picasso's autumn 1908 purchase of the Rousseau. But even if the date of Picasso's lucky acquisition were advanced some months in order to accommodate the Rousseau influence — or a whole year, as Cooper does on no particular authority to resolve this same contradiction — it would still be far later than Picasso's first experience of Rousseau's painting. I believe it can be demonstrated that Picasso saw important paintings by the Douanier years earlier than Cooper's date, in fact, no later than the spring of 1905 — and that he almost surely saw them as early as 1901.

Rousseau had faithfully exhibited in the Salon des Indépendants almost every spring following the year of its founding in 1885. In the exhibition of 1901 he showed seven pictures, including La Mauvaise Surprise (the six others have disappeared). Picasso came to Paris in late April or May that year, in part to prepare his June show at Vollard's. We do not know his precise date of arrival and Daix suggests that it was very early in May; the Salon closed on May 21. Gustave Coquiot, the critic and animateur who arranged Picasso's exhibition at Vollard's and wrote its catalogue preface, was a long-time official of the Indépendants. We may assume, I think, that Coquiot would have mentioned the Indépendants in any correspondence with Picasso that took place prior to his arrival, thus adding impetus to what must have been the young provincial painter's natural impulse to arrange a May visit to Paris in time to see the exhibition. However that may be, there is little doubt that Picasso would have seen the Indépendants if he was in Paris prior to May 21, for the painter assured this author (in another context) that he saw every Indépendants and Salon d'Automne that took place in Paris during his sojourns there until the First World War (a fact that he also confirmed to Daix). Coquiot, who sat for a portrait during Picasso's sojourn, had long been one of Rousseau's most ardent supporters, and he would doubtless have drawn Picasso's attention to this singular French artist. But Picasso's own painting in the spring of 1901 was such that Rousseau's work would have little interested him.

As Picasso was absent from Paris in the spring of 1902 and of 1903, his next opportunity to see Rousseau's painting would have been at the Indépendants of 1904, in which Rousseau showed Éclaireurs attaqués par un tigre, as well as two portraits and a still life (all three of which have been lost). Pending a study of the memorabilia in the archives of the Picasso estate, the most accurate available dating for the artist's arrival in Paris in 1904 is simply "spring." As the Indépendants took place unusually early that year, closing its doors on March 24, we do not know whether Picasso saw this exhibition — and it is less likely that he did than in 1901.

We can, however, be absolutely sure of the situation in 1905. We know that Picasso was in Paris during the entire run not only of the Indépendants but of the third Salon d'Automne, the first in which Rousseau exhibited. In the Indépendants, the Douanier showed Une Noce à la campagne, as well as a cityscape and two portraits, now lost. In the Salon d'Automne, he exhibited three pictures: two riverscapes of the Oise and the monumental Le Lion ayant faim ... (200 x 300cm), which shares with the later Le Rêve (204 x 299cm) the distincting of being Rousseau's largest work. It became, moreover, his most celebrated and controversial one, as it hung in a room not far from that of the artists soon to be known as Fauves and was reproduced along with theirs on the famous double-page spread of L'Illustration for November 4, 1905, that also included works by Cézanne and Vuillard.

22 Certigny considered this picture a portrait of Rousseau's first wife Yadhwiga, but Vallier viewed it, more correctly I believe, as a commissioned portrait after a photograph (see Donation Picasso: La collection personnelle de Picasso, exh. cat., Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1978, 78, No. 33). Picasso came upon it by chance sometime in autumn 1908, probably in late October. Soulier, whose shop was situated opposite the Cirque Médano, had offered the picture to him as a worthless piece of art, suggesting that the canvas could be used to paint over; Picasso purchased it for five francs. Most authors agree that his fortuitous acquisition of this large and magnificent portrait was the immediate inspiration for the banquet Rousseau, held in late October or (more probably) early November. At the dinner, the picture, festooned with ribbons, was hung on the wall behind the place of honor.

23 Cubist Epoch (as in note 7), 34.

24 Coquiot Cooper is entirely alone in dating Picasso's purchase of the Rousseau in 1907 and he gives no documentation for his assertion. Apart from the fact that various witnesses (e.g., Max Weber) speak of it as acquired in the fall of 1908, Cooper's date would make it impossible for the banquet — which all sources agree took place in autumn 1908 — to have been occasioned by Picasso's lucky find.

26 La Vie de peintre de Picasso, Paris, 1977, 36.

27 As Picasso threw little away, some Coquiot material may emerge when the Picasso archives — still in the process of being catalogued — are made available to scholars.

28 While Rousseau had shown for almost a decade in the Indépendants, his envoi for 1895 seems finally to have elicited scandallized reactions — which led to a dispute among the organizers of the salon. Coquiot, who was active in trying to help Rousseau get portrait commissions, stoutly defended him and was aided in this by Gauguin and Redon. Coquiot's history of the Salon des Indépendants contains special references to Rousseau's participation, and in a biographical account he claims that he and Odilon Redon had been the first, around 1888, to "glorify Rousseau ..." (see G. Coquiot, Les Indépendants 1894-1920, Paris, 1920, 13, 15, 17, 18-19, 20, 130-33, 308).

29 The proximity at the Indépendants of Rousseau's violent jungle picture to the work of the Fauves may have played a reinforcing role in their misnomer, "wild beasts," which was hardly warranted by a style that largely constituted — especially in early 1905 — a reformulation of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.
paintings; the following autumn, he exhibited Joyeux Farceurs, a work whose foliage — with that of Combat du tigre et du buffle, shown in the fall of 1907 — anticipates more than other Rousseau's the decorative reductions of Picasso's Rue des Bois landscapes. By that time, however, it is possible that Picasso and Rousseau had already met through Apollinaire or Jarry. Thus Picasso would have begun seeing the Douanier's work in the latter's studio as well as attending his "soirées familiales et artistiques." In any event, Rousseau continued to show regularly at both spring and autumn Salons in 1907 and 1908, the Indépendants of 1907 containing a painting that Picasso would later acquire from Vollard.22

The paragraphs above demonstrate that when Picasso came upon the Douanier's Portrait of a Woman at Pére Soulier's shop in early autumn 1908, he was — Cooper and others notwithstanding — already thoroughly familiar with Rousseau's style and recognized the picture for what it was. My charting of Picasso's contact with Rousseau's painting is not merely, however, a matter of correcting the historical record. His familiarity with the Douanier and his art is a necessary precondition for understanding the stylistic and, even more, the iconographic complexities of Bread and Fruitbish.

As Geelhaar observed, the watercolor published by Zervos as Carnaval au bistrot (Fig. 3) is the fully developed formulation of Picasso's first conceit for the picture that would later metamorphose into Bread and Fruitbish.23 Three men and one woman (paired with the man in the center) are shown seated at a large drop-leaf table; to their right stands a waitress or "hostess," possibly wiping a glass with her napkin; a female servant arrives in the background carrying a bowl of fruit.

Zervos no doubt used the term "carnaval" because the man in the center wears the cocked hat of Harlequin and the one on the left the loose white suit and round hat of Gilles, as Picasso would have remembered him from Watteau's paintings and as in fact he drew him in certain unpublished studies of 1905 (Fig. 6). However, the term "carnaval" seems to me inappropriate for a picture in which the inclination of most of the heads communicates an inward-turning, pensive mood, and in which the static, symmetrical, and circular composition projects a hieratic,
also double as a halo. Why he might do this will become clear as we discover Gilles’s hidden identity.

The energetic pen and ink version of Carnaval au bistro (Fig. 9) is of interest primarily for the later addition in the margin of a sketch (Fig. 11) closely resembling Bread and Fruitdish. No doubt it was this juxtaposition of images that first drew the Basel Museum curators’ attention to the similarity between the banquet and still-life configurations. In his article, Geelhaar treated this margin sketch as the point of departure for Bread and Fruitdish. Since then, however, he has altered his opinion, and now considers it “could just as well be a notation of that composition made after the painting was finished.” For reasons that will soon become clear, I am convinced that this margin sketch was made during the execution of Bread and Fruitdish, at a moment when Picasso was struggling with the resolution of the canvas’s upper center.

The second state of Picasso’s banquet conceit is represented by a preparatory pencil drawing (Fig. 13) and a gouache (Fig. 14), in which the cast of Carnaval au bistro is reduced to four figures. Gilles is eliminated from the left and the “hostess” from the right, which permits conversion of the format from a horizontal to a nearly square vertical. The only other iconographic change, one that proves to be very significant, gives a Kronstadt hat to the man resting his chin upon his hand. The curvilinear forms characteristic of the earlier studies become elongated and more angular in this second state, and the pronounced light-dark contrasts of the earlier ink-drawing (Fig. 9) are synthesized so as to become quasi-architectural units in the composition. These changes combine to give the image a more specifically Cubist appearance paralleling advances that Picasso was making at this moment in his Cubist repainting of the original, “African” version of Three Women.

If we juxtapose the second-state gouache of the banquet (Fig. 14) with Bread and Fruitdish (Fig. 15), the immediate source of the still-life’s configuration is apparent. In what I would like to call a transmigration of forms — where shapes that remain constant pass to new identities — the arms of the man in the Kronstadt hat are recast as loaves of bread while his right hand becomes an inverted teacup. Harlequin’s left arm is also redefined as a loaf of bread, his right hand as a lemon, and the contours of his upper torso and hat have been more or less forced into a convoluted drapery pattern. In his description of these changes, Geelhaar also observes that Harlequin’s female companion has given way to the compoteer and fruit, but it should be noted that in this case the forms of the still-life objects are only indirectly derived from those of the figure.

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7 Paul Cézanne, Cardplayers, 1890-92, oil on canvas, 52½ x 70¼ (133 x 179 cm). Merion, Pa., The Barnes Foundation (photo: Barnes Foundation)

8 Pablo Picasso, Poster design for Els Quatre Gats, Barcelona, 1902. India ink, 32½ x 33½ (82.5 x 84 cm). Private collection (courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York)

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14 See note 13. Although Carnaval au bistro was clearly not intended as a Last Supper, it recalls, though at a distance, such 17th-century religious pictures as Rembrandt’s Supper at Emmaus. Reiff underlined the religious association of the image in Picasso’s thinking by juxtaposing it to a slightly later (early 1909) drawing that pairs Saint Anthony and Harlequin (Moderna Museet, Stockholm). There the Saint’s and Harlequin’s heads are inclined inward toward each other in a manner echoing the tilted heads of Gilles and Harlequin in Carnaval. (See "Picasso’s Three Musicians: Maskers, Artists and Friends," Art in America, Special Issue, December 1980, 121-142.)

15 Letter to me of July 8, 1980.

16 Kubismus: Zeichnungen und Druckgraphik (as in note 10).

17 Letter to me of July 30, 1980. The English rendering here is Geelhaar’s.
(although a few contours elliptically relate the large fruit and the lip of the compotier to the woman's breasts). The intervening step here is unquestionably, as Dieter Koepplin pointed out,28 the etching, Still Life with Fruitbowl (Fig. 17), which I reproduce in reverse as Picasso executed it. Within the vestigial contours of the seated woman, whose head has disappeared into the drapery pattern, Picasso has placed a glass fruitish, the Art Nouveau contours of which identify it as one seen elsewhere in his work of this time, as in a drawing at The Museum of Modern Art (not in Zervos). This compotier was eliminated as the artist progressed, giving way to a simpler, round ceramic bowl related to those in the lower left and middle right of the etching and ultimately transposed, as Geelhaar suggests, from the fruitish carried by the servant in Carnival.

We have seen that at the time of his article, Geelhaar believed Picasso to have decided on his new subject before actually beginning Bread and Fruitish; Geelhaar presumed the large canvas to have been laid out from the first as a still life, on the basis of the margin sketch (Fig. 11). Forms that I read in the finished painting as legs under the table. Geelhaar treated as vestiges of the second-state gousche, transferred to the still-life image simply as abstract design elements: "The layout in the space between (and outside) the table legs is still identical with the preceding studies. Yet that design of parallels no longer describes objects (i.e. legs and skirts) but now has taken on a life of its own."29 Geelhaar's assumption, however, contradicts a basic aspect of Picasso's practice. When Picasso lays in a picture, every contour has a relationship, however modified, to something in the motif. Only as he elaborates a painting do aspects of its configuration sometimes take on lives of their own. Picasso must therefore have painted the forms under the table in the Basel canvas as legs. To understand this is to realize that he really began the large canvas as a dining scene, and that its conversion into a still life occurred while he was working on the painting. This granted, Bread and Fruitish takes its place in a series of large early pictures made up of La Vie, Family of Saltimbanques, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, and Three Women, all of which underwent radical transformations during the execution of the canvases themselves.

To be sure, radiographs of Bread and Fruitish show no traces of another picture under the still-life forms — and this may be what led Geelhaar astray. But while Picasso painted Family of Saltimbanques directly over a very different earlier conceit, thus leaving an image that shows in radiographs, he must have washed down with solvent those contours of Bread and Fruitish which were no longer usable.30 With the absorption of the other contours into the still-life configuration, this washing down eliminated all but one significant trace (the legs) of the banquet image as such. Picasso no doubt elected not to wash away or "paint out" these new vestigial legs because, as Geelhaar implied, he liked the rhythmic architecture that their forms gave to the lower part of the composition. But the decision to retain them is also consistent with the artist's much noted love of contradiction, his not infrequent habit of leaving a joker in the aesthetic deck.31 And joker is probably just the right word, inasmuch as Picasso loved playing esoteric private games that taunt as well as challenge.32 By leaving the legs in the picture, he was, in effect, providing a puzzle — an instant palimpsest — and at the same time giving a clue to its solution.

Geelhaar now agrees that Picasso began the large canvas as a banquet scene: the still life in the margin of the ink drawing, he concludes, could therefore have been made after, rather than before, the painting.33 A careful look at that sketch (Fig. 11), however, shows that the compotier had not yet taken on its final form, and that the rear center space of the composition was occupied by a boxlike stand. The sketch just below in the same margin (Fig. 12), shows a pitcher on that stand and establishes the pitcher's relationship with the cut loaf of bread (previously the left arm of Harlequin). Indeed, this same pitcher is also visible under some fainter scribble in the left-hand margin of the ink drawing (Fig. 10). There can be no other explanation, I believe, than that Picasso, having difficulty resolving the middle rear of his painting during its conversion into a still life, experimented with the idea of placing there the pitcher we see in these summary drawings. The brushy overlay with which the sketch in the left margin is "painted out" probably records the moment when Picasso discarded this idea. It is perhaps to be regretted that the pitcher never made it into the painting, as the overcrowted area it would have occupied — where, as Geelhaar had observed, the drapery folds follow Harlequin's contours — is the only force and unconvincing passage in Bread and Fruitish.

28 This is precisely what Picasso had done with the first, "African" version of Three Women when he decided to rework it about a month earlier. See "Cezannisme" (as in note 9), 187, 200, n. 129.
29 As André Chastel observed in regard to high Analytic Cubism ("Bracq et Picasso: 1912" in Peur Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler, New York, 1963, 63): "Picasso is unwilling — or leads us to believe that he is unwilling — to deny himself the introduction of an erratic element, a factor outside the system — a disruptive element — a sort of wild card ...." (my translation).
30 Françoise Gilot has given us a detailed if caustic account of Picasso's love of private jokes and elaborate private games, a predilection that found a perfect match in Sabartès, his lifelong friend, secretary, and biographer. Picasso and Sabartès contrived an incredibly hermetic system of communicating with each other by means of arcane notes written almost daily to convey information only they would comprehend. According to Gilot, what mattered was not so much the information "but to impart it in the most artfully recondeate fashion imaginable." "Picasso worked so hard at being hermetic that sometimes Sabartès would fail to understand and more letters had to be exchanged .... to untangle the mystery." (See F. Gilot and C. Lake, Life with Picasso, New York, Toronto, London, 1964, 60-67, 167-182.) The kind of Cubist iconography that derives from such hermetic play — jokes included — is exquisitely exposed in Rosenblum's pioneering article, "Picasso and the Typography of Cubism" (in Picasso in Retrospect, ed. ). Goding and R. Penrose, New York and Washington, D.C., 1973, 48-75, 266-68).
31 Letter to me of July 9, 1980.
The metamorphosis of *Carnaval au bistrot* was first characterized, as has been seen, by a reduction in the number of figures and a concomitant shift of format from a horizontal to a (nearly square) vertical. Geelhaar, among others, points out that a comparable progression took place between the early and definitive states of the *Demoiselles* (Figs. 21, 23), and that another parallel situation may be said to have obtained if we read *Three Women*
as excerpted from the studies for the projected five-figure picture known as Bathers in a Forest. The recent radiographic discovery of an earlier composition (Fig. 19) under Family of Saltimbanques (Fig. 20) reveals, as E. A. Carmean observes, yet another instance of such a change, insofar as the earlier picture had contained four more figures and was a markedly horizontal image in its first incarnations (e.g., the Baltimore Museum gouache called the Circus Family, Fig. 18). The drypoint of the Circus Family that Carmean reproduces shows that Picasso had begun changing the image’s format in the direction of the square even before inscribing it on his large canvas. Eventually that squarer format was to bear only the six figures of Family of Saltimbanques. (It should be added that the canvas as we see it today is less square than Picasso intended because one of its owners cut off the very top of the picture. Carmean points out that a photograph of Family of Saltimbanques made prior to the event and reproduced in an early Art News shows the painting to have been more nearly square.)

Between the first and final conceptions of four of Picasso’s largest compositions of the period 1905 to early 1909 — Family of Saltimbanques, Les Demoiselles, Three Women, and Bread and Fruitdish — we are thus confronted not only with a reduced dramatis personae but with a shift in format in favor of the vertical. The consistent pattern of these changes reflected, I believe, a tendency in Picasso’s art of those four years to move from a narrative type of image (best suited to a horizontal format) to an “iconic” one (most natural in a vertical or square format). This narrative-to-iconic hypothesis is further supported by characteristics common to the metamorphoses of the pictures in question: a progressive disengagement from anecdote, an increased emphasis on frontality, and a shift from dispersal to intense concentration in the play of pictorial forces. Thus the random activities of the figures in the Circus Family — stage one of the Washington picture — give way in the definitive Family of Saltimbanques to a

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42 As is clear in Daix and Rosselet (Le Cubisme de Picasso, as in note 15, 214-15), there is no way of ascertaining whether the five-figure versions of these Bathers precede the three-figure ones. Picasso probably developed both projects together. There is, however, no question that he prepared for a large version of a five-figure picture prior to opting definitively for the three-figure one. Moreover, as the preliminary studies for the three-figure picture are mostly square or horizontal, and as the final Leningrad canvas is vertical, the format shift I have been discussing would apply in any case.


44 Ibid., 74, and fig. 102.
motionless introspection in which the now comparatively frontal figures almost appear to be posing in a studio. The relatively anecdotal bordello scene containing a medical student and a sailor that constitutes the first project of the Demoiselles (Fig. 21) gives way in the image's later stages to a more frontal, compressed, and "iconic" group of women comparatively abstracted from time and place (Figs. 22, 23). The pressure favoring this iconic frontality is nowhere better illustrated than in the remarkable 180° change in the position of the head of the seated demoiselle; at first aligned with her body, it revolves gradually until, in the final picture, it is wrenched into a front face, although the body still faces in the opposite direction. Three Women was never, to be sure, a narrative scene, but its early "African" versions, up to and including the first state of the large canvas, convey a vivid sense of energy and movement through their bright colors and/or roughly striated and staccato brushwork; this gives way in the reworked final state, with its deliberate brushwork and restrained palette, to a concentrated and static scene of somber introspection.

In the context of these transformations, the conversion of Bread and Fruitdish from banquet scene to still life, to a comparatively disengaged and wholly immobile motif, may be considered the radical culmination of Picasso's narrative-to-iconic transition, involving as it does for the first time a change of subject (but not, as I shall demonstrate, a significant change of content). The progression toward a static, frontal, and concentrated image that marks the elaboration of all of the four most ambitious 1905-09 pictures is paradigmatic for the progress of Picasso's art as a whole during this period. Viewed retrospectively from the vantage point of Bread and Fruitdish, such "iconizing" appears a necessary development for the establishment of Cubism and signals the disappearance of multifigure paintings from the Cubists' oeuvre until the devolution of the style during and after the First World War.

The reader will observe that I have studiously avoided the word "abstraction" in discussing these conversions, so as not to suggest that the modification of (or even change in) subject matter implied in any way its erosion. Indeed, the subject matter of the definitive "iconic" states of Family of Saltimbanques and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, although not anecdotal and hence not engaging the

nately see simply the back of her head or a profil perdu as the rotator it in varying degrees (figured). This rotation moves toward a profile view in the definitive version in the first state (Fig. 21) and has advanced slightly beyond a 45° turn — so as to be glancing somewhat toward the viewer — in the watercolor study (Fig. 22) from which Picasso proceeded to the canvas. This was unquestionably the position of her head in the first, "Iberian" state of the painting. Only when Picasso took up the canvas again in the "second campaign" did he wrench her head into an anatomically impossible frontal position while keeping her lower body facing inward;
viewer's attention as precipitately as that of their earlier states, is nevertheless more profound in content. The circus people of Family of Saltimbanques, for example, project a portrait-like psychological reality that would not have been possible in the rehearsal depicted in Circus Family. The portrayals of Saltimbanques, thus deepened and addressed in iconic fashion directly to the viewer, could tellingly express the existential pathos inherent in Picasso's analogy of circus performer and painter as "outsiders."

The "iconizing" of the Demoiselles was, in its turn, at the heart of those innovations in style and symbolic content which confirm this picture as an art-historical turning point. But for reasons rather different from those traditionally given. The Demoiselles is not "the first Cubist painting."49 Indeed, while marking the final stage of Picasso's transition from a perceptual to a conceptual way of working, and suggesting something of that shallow relief space which would characterize Cubism, this great and radical work pointed mostly in directions opposite to Cubism's character and structure — although it cleared the path for its development. The Demoiselles obliterated the vestiges of nineteenth-century painting still operative in Fauvism, the vanguard style of the immediately preceding years; it is thus more a "breakaway" painting with respect to late nineteenth-century modernism — and post-medieval Western painting in general — than a "breakthrough" painting with regard to Cubism in particular. The first Cubist paintings were Braque's L'Estaque landscapes of the summer of 1908 and Picasso's revisions later that year of Three Women and Carnaval au bistro (in the form of Bread and Fruit dish). The pivotal position of the Demoiselles makes it crucial, nevertheless, to an understanding of early Cubism, especially to an appreciation of the peculiarities of Bread and Fruit dish. For this reason, I am obliged to dwell on the Demoiselles at length, indeed, to offer a new reading of it — a reading that is nevertheless anchored in the pioneering reinterpretation of the painting proposed by Steinberg in 1972 (which has engendered a virtual second literature on the subject and put an end to certain erroneous assumptions).

Steinberg laid to rest the popular belief that Picasso's conversion of the Demoiselles was motivated primarily by a proto-Cubist interest in abstraction. The image's pictorial metamorphosis, he demonstrated, was consistently motivated by a desire for an increasingly profound and intense projection of what had been Picasso's expressive concerns right from the first sketches: his complex and contradictory feelings about women. Steinberg marshalled many convincing arguments to confirm the changes in the painting as functions of "the trauma of sexual encounter." He viewed the "African" figures on the right of the Demoiselles, however, exclusively as embodiments of "sheer sexual energy, as the image of a life force." This is consistent with his view of the picture as a whole as an image of "orgiastic immersion" and "Dionysian release." In this respect, I am obliged to consider Steinberg's characterization too narrow. As I believe that the two "African" figures (and, to a lesser extent, the Gauguinesque, "Oceanic" demoiselle on the left)48 were as much, if not more, inspired by the fear of death as by the life force. Indeed, in a Freudian sense, the shadow of mortality would be implicit in any picture that was a "sexual metaphor," as Steinberg calls the Demoiselles. But I am convinced that it is also explicit in the painting's first project, in Picasso's very deliberate pairing of the medical student and tailor, and that this dread of death survives in a more vivid, if generalized, form in the final image.

The thanatophbic dimension of the Demoiselles needs elucidation, I believe, not only because it confirms the last state of the painting as a deepening rather than an abandonment of the picture's original program, but because it clarifies the value of the iconic (as against the narrative) mode in achieving this end — and throws fresh light on the conundrum of "African" influence. The cohabitation of Eros and Thanatos in the Demoiselles recalls a particular

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47 Pablo Picasso, Still Life with Fruitbowl, 1909 (reproduced in reverse as executed), etching, signed in pencil, 5 1/4 x 4 3/4 (13 x 11.5cm). Basel, Kunstmuseum, Kupferstichkabinett (courtesy Museum)

48 For the characterization of the Gauguinesque/"Oceanic" figure as against the "African" ones, cf. Appendix VI: The Left-hand Figure in the Demoiselles.
component of Picasso's psychology: his deep-seated fear and loathing of the female body—which existed side by side with his craving for and ecstatic idealization of it. This dichotomous attitude was time and again evidenced in Picasso’s art as it was in his behavior; it is parodied in his admitted treatment of women as “either goddesses or doormats.” To be sure, comparable attraction/repulsion syndromes are commonplace in male psychology. But in the Demoiselles, as often in the work of a great artist, such inherently banal material is so amplified by the spirit of genius that it emerges as a new insight—all the more universal for being so commonplace.
Picasso's feelings of revulsion for the female body were projected in the first state of the Demoiselles through a narrative specificity that turned on the danger of venereal disease, at that time often fatal. This is the real meaning of the confrontation of the sailor and medical student (who carries a skull) in the first project — not the long-supposed morbidly insinuating memento mori commentary, for Picasso could not have cared less about the "wages of sin." The identities, props, and postures of the male figures do more than just enhance the narrative particularization of time, place, and transaction in the bordello. The image lends itself to many readings, but insofar as the sailor represents one who gets the pox in a brothel, and the medical student one who cures it, their pairing reflected a little reported but very important symptomatic aspect of Picasso's makeup — his exaggerated concern for and fascination with venereal disease, as reflected in his 1902 visits to St. Lazare Hospital to study prostitutes being treated for syphilis. This motivation has not gone totally unnoticed. Mary Mathews Gedo, although overlooking the reciprocal symbolism in the pairing of the male figures, hazarded that "the skull [carried by the medical student] may refer to the fact that somewhere, sometime during his youthful amatory career, Picasso himself had contracted a venereal infection." To postulate Picasso's having been diseased is hardly necessary, however; nor is there any firm evidence for such a suggestion. It more than suffices that the painter deeply feared such potentially fatal contagion.

The final painting no longer contains a specific narrative reference to Picasso's dread of disease and death. There, this dread is subsumed in a broader, more universal fear of mortality that is communicated through more direct pictorial means. We sense the thanatophobia in the primordial horror evoked by the monstrously distorted heads of the two whores on the right side of the picture, so opposite to those of the comparatively gracious "Iberian" courtesans in the center. One can hardly imagine the fear, shock, and awe these heads must have imparted in 1907, given the vividness with which we still experience them. And this despite their denaturing by a tradition that viewed the Demoiselles retroactively within a Cubist frame of reference, and by their mitigation through subsequent art (Picasso's as much as de Koon-

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66 In the final version of the first state (Fig. 21), the medical student carries a book rather than a skull. There are, however, many studies (e.g., Zervos xvi, 43) that show he was originally conceived holding a skull, and Picasso described him in that form to Kahnweiler, Beaux Arts, and me.

67 Beaux Arts, Fifty Years (as in note 4), 27.

68 In the course of a number of protracted visits to Picasso's villa, I discussed a variety of subjects with him. The frequency of Picasso's references to venereal disease (often, to be sure, of a humorous nature) struck me as noteworthy. Among his friends, Picasso was long known to have had an exaggerated, obsessive fear of death. And as he was a frequenter of brothels in his early years, that anxiety might well have intensified an understandable fear of fatal venereal disease.

References to the pox turn up in Picasso's work in the most surprising places, as on a plate in a drawing in the Preller Collection, not in Zervos). A more recherché example may be cited: Picasso and I were looking at a small photographic reproduction of his 1933 paper collage Guiter (then in the Nelson Rockefeller collection, reproduced in Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective, ed. W. Rubin, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1968, 966). Knowing Picasso's tendency to think of musical instruments in anthropomorphic terms — an aspect of African art that he particularly liked — I hazard that his combining of a curvilinear front plane for the guitar with a recumbent rear plane might almost be taken as
a male/female "fusion." Picasso not only accepted the anatomical analogy but, with a mischievous smile, drew my attention to an ad for one Dr. Casasa visible on a torn sheet of the Barcelona El Dilema, collaged on the lower left of the work. The small print describes Dr. Casasa as a specialist in venereal diseases. Picasso insisted, however, that his choice of that particular fragment of El Dilema, to the extent that it related to the sexual allusion, would have been unpremeditated. To cite another example: we were looking at the original monotypes of Degas's "Maison Teller" bordello series, which Picasso owned. He remarked that at least Degas never had to worry about catching syphilis (an observation stemming from his awareness of Degas's well-known sexual aversion to women).

In Picasso's art, images with references relating directly or elliptically to venereal disease are surely more common than in the work of any other major painter. A survey of them would take an article in itself.

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23 Pablo Picasso, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Paris, completed in first, "Iberian" state, late May/early June, 1907, reworked late June/early July, 1907, oil on canvas, 96 x 92" (243 x 233.7cm). New York, The Museum of Modern Art, acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (courtesy Museum)

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the medical student, and the prostitutes — particularly the association between physicians and diseased prostitutes — and, interpreting them as reflecting aspects of Picasso's own past history, formulated the hypothesis that the initial conception of the Demoiselles responded to Picasso's own "double-edged experiences as both objective observer and subjective victim of diseased prostitutes." Thus, the presence of the skull, rather than functioning as a memento mori reference, might refer to the possibility that Picasso had himself contracted a venereal infection, presumably syphilis, perhaps from Fernande Olivier. (Gedo, citing the gossipy and notoriously inaccurate Pierre Cabanne, remarks that Fernande was rumored to have had a history of promiscuity and actually to have prostituted herself when she had previously lived with another artist.) Elsewhere in Art as Autobiography (pp. 53, 267), Gedo, referring to the prevalence of the motif of blindness in Picasso's work of 1903 and the many interpretations as to its origin, speculates that this motif "originated in Picasso's guilt and anxiety over the damaging effects of a venereal disease he had contracted." In this, she invokes John Berger (The Success and Failure of Picasso, Harmondsworth, 1963, 43-44), who saw the artist as "probably ... suffering from venereal disease" and fearing blindness "as the result of his disease."
ing's or Dubuffet's). These "African" faces express more, I believe, than just the "barbaric" character of pure sexuality noted by Steinberg; in the first instance, their violence alludes to Woman as Destroyer — vestiges of the Symbolist femme fatale — but they finally conjure something that transcends our sense of civilized experience, something ominous and monstrous such as Kurutz discovered in the heart of darkness. It is precisely because Picasso was looking for new solutions to the direct communication of these primordial terrors, and not because primitive art supposedly offered a proto-Cubist morphology, that he chose it at that particular moment as a source of inspiration. To the extent, therefore, that the right-hand demoiselles were inspired by ideas about tribal art prompted by Picasso's Trocadero visit, their images open outward toward the collective implications of masking as elucidated by Lévi-Strauss. 

Insofar, however, as those visages were in fact arrived at by Picasso's search for plastic correlates in exorcizing his private psychological demons, they constitute a form of visual abreaction and lead us inward to the Freudian sense of masking, in which an emotion too painful to confront directly (here the artist's fear of death through disease) is dealt with by substituting a "cover" image.

Despite his assertions to the contrary, which began in earnest during the Second World War, Picasso had seen some examples of art nègre here and there for at least six months before he absorbed it into the fabric of the Demoiselles. But it had not registered with him — any more than his early confrontations with Rousseau — because it did not then relate to his needs. Picasso's "revelation" at the ethnological museum of the Trocadéro is said by Zervos, and others who see no reflection of art nègre in the Demoiselles, to have taken place in late July 1907, after Picasso completed the picture. But it was surely in June, after he had completed only the first ("Iberian") version of the Demoiselles, from which the two central figures remain. Picasso's admittedly galvanic reaction to his Trocadero visit would have been the logical inspiration for a "second campaign" of work on the canvas, which thus would have resulted from a renewed and more extensive confrontation with primitive art at precisely the moment he was casting about for an adequate visual idea to embody his dark forebodings and private terrors. Not by accident did he later characterize the Demoiselles as his "first exorcism-painting," "For me the [primitive] masks were not just sculptures," Picasso told André Malraux. "They were magical objects ... intercessors ... against everything — against unknown, threatening spirits .... They were weapons — to keep people from being ruled by spirits, to help free themselves ... If we give a form to these spirits, we become free."33

My conviction that the TROCADERO visit preceded the repainting of the two right-hand demoiselles follows from aspects of these figures that cannot be adequately explained by Picasso's experience of a handful of objects from the French territories in Africa or Polynesia, such as those he had seen in the studios of Derain, Vlaminck, and Matisse during the preceding six to eight months. The TROCADERO not only offered him a much larger number of more stylistically varied works but, more importantly, presented them in a different context. To see a few sculptures in an artist's studio is to see them in a situation of aesthetic delection. Viewed this way, art nègre clearly did not impress Picasso between autumn 1906 and June 1907. Then suddenly, we find him regarding these masks and "fetishes" by a compelling, new light that is relevant to what he is trying to get at in the Demoiselles. He now begins to think in terms of "exorcism," "intercession," and "magic." What could be more logical than that this "revelation" should have taken place in an ethnological museum, where the isolated masks and statuettes of the artists' studios give way to mannikin figures in full ceremonial regalia surrounded by artifacts evoking their cultures and accompanied by labels that declare their ritual function?

Although the magical, exorcistic roots of art constituted the main feature of Picasso's "revelation," there is another aspect of the "African" figures in the Demoiselles that leads me to relate them to the TROCADERO visit — and that is, ironically, their "Oceanic" coloring. (African objects are most frequently unpainted and when colored, tend to be muted in hue, which is consistent with their fundamentally sculptural plasticity — as against the essentially pictorial character of most Oceanic sculpture.) While the tactuality and morphologies of the right-hand demoiselles' mask-like faces are clearly, if only elliptically, reminiscent of Africa, their highly saturated colors, juxtaposed in brush, even brutal combinations (entirely alien to French modernism's fundamentally decorative chromatics)

33. No later than autumn 1906, Picasso had visited the studios of both Vlaminck and Derain, who had already begun collecting art nègre: before the end of 1906, he also exchanged studio visits with Matisse, who by then possessed what Gertrude Stein described as "a veritable collection" of primitive objects: she states fairly that Matisse got Picasso "interested in negro sculpture in 1906" (Picasso, Paris, 1938, 48). Indeed, Matisse spoke of having shown an enthusiastic Picasso an African statue at Gertrude Stein's which he had purchased on his way there (Andre Warsh, "Matisse est de retour," Arts, July 27, 1945, 1). 

34. Cf. Appendix VIII: Picasso's Equivalences with Respect to Art Nègre.

35. A. Malraux, Le Tète d'obsidienne, Paris, 1974, 18-19 [translation and italics mine]. This passage was based on notes from a 1937 conversation with the artist.

On the second of the two occasions that I was able to get Picasso talking about the Demoiselles, he mentioned that his 1907 visit to the TROCADERO had been profoundly moving. In the context of the conversation, however, the remark could as well have referred in general to the "African" pictures of 1907-08 as to the Demoiselles in particular. Picasso hastened to add, however, that at first it was not the style, but the spirit — the expressive, psychological, and magical aspects of masks and of the figures he called "fetishes" — that had moved him. As this corresponds in a general way to what Picasso says more eloquently about the Demoiselles in Malraux's account of his 1937 conversation with Picasso, I have permitted myself to use that text, although some passages in La Tète d'obsidienne have been rumored to be Malraux's inventions in whole or in part.
strongly suggest the raw and often grating juxtapositions of orange, blue, white, and yellow in certain Oceanic objects. Not, however, those objects from Tahiti, the Marquesas, or New Caledonia, which Parisian artists could have acquired in 1906-07, but those from New Guinea and other non-French territories. Such objects and, in particular, others from the New Hebrides (a joint British/French protectorate), were not yet commercially available in France. A number of them had, however, entered the Trocadéro in the nineteenth century, especially in 1887 and 1888 when Prince Roland Bonaparte made it possible for the state to acquire the Bertin collection. Bertin, a diamond merchant, had acquired them on his trips to Amsterdam and Antwerp, where sculptures from German as well as Dutch colonies could be found. Impetus to sudden stylistic change generally came to Picasso as a result of seeing a challenging, unfamiliar art that nevertheless spoke directly to his thinking and feeling at the moment. Given the sudden rupture in his development represented by the right-hand figures of the Demoiselles, a trigger has certainly to be assumed — and there is not only no better but no other candidate for this than the visit that the artist himself called a “shock” and a “revolution.”

Beyond hazy assumptions (often incorrect) that tribal sculptures related to concerns such as fertility and death, the early twentieth-century painters knew nothing of their real context, function, or meaning — which was an advantage insofar as it freed them to interpret the objects in manners suited to their concerns. Given the stasis, symmetry, frontality, and hieraticism of most primitive figure sculptures, they were considered paradigmatically “iconic” (although some were in fact, by means of their signs and symbols, essentially “storytelling” representations). In common with many artists of his generation, Picasso did not always distinguish, either in 1907 or later, in life, between African and Oceanic tribal art. Both were usually subsumed in the term art nègre. To the extent that a distinction was made, “Oceanic” tended to signify for Picasso’s generation of Paris artists a conflation of the Polynesian environment (even more than its art), its extrapolations in Gauguin’s work, and the premises (primarily literary) of the French “myth of the primitive” that had inspired Gauguin (and goes back to Montaigne’s essay, “On Cannibals”). Thus, along with a darkling substratum of mysterious ritual, “Oceanic” generally implied the luxuriant, unthreatening natural environment of Polynesia — Tahiti in particular — as celebrated in Bougainville’s Voyage autour du monde. For the mind of the Enlightenment, Tahiti, which Bougainville called “La Nouvelle Cythère,” was fixed as the paradisiacal abode of the “Noble Savage.” By identifying Tahiti with the island of Greek mythology where, under the reign of Venus, people lived in perpetual harmony, beauty, and love. Bougainville equated the “myth of the primitive” with the already long-established but almost equally unreal “myth of the antique.” Such connotations did not surround the word “African,” which evoked something more fetishistic, magical, and potentially malefic, far closer in mood to the Musée d’Ethnographie. The principal African gallery, for example, is known to have been officially closed for certain periods, which is not surprising as the museum had but three (and sometimes only two) guards for its too large halls. One commentator writes in 1910 of the principal Oceanic gallery having been officially closed for fourteen years, though the leading guide of the period, Joanne’s Les Musées de Paris of 1903, shows it as open (as does a revised edition of 1903). The resolution of such contradictions may be in the indications given by Baedeker during this period. The guards seem to have profited from a system not unknown even today in certain churches, monuments, and provincial museums. Baedeker lists the Oceanic gallery as officially closed, but indicates that one could visit the museum, even at normally closed hours for a “pourboire” — or, as the English edition quizzically puts it, “by feigning the guardian.” Not subject to closing, during regular hours at least, was the large Rotunda gallery near the entrance, which was devoted to a selection of African and Oceanic material. That access to this area of the museum was a somewhat casual matter is attested by the incredible number of thefts the Trocadéro suffered.

Picasso has described his first visit to the Musée d’Ethnographie as fortuitous. He had gone to see the casts of Romanesque sculpture (considered “primitive” in those days) in the Musée de Sculpture Comparée, which occupied the upper wing of the U-shaped Palais du Trocadéro, and wandered by accident into the ethnological galleries, where he found himself entirely alone. On the basis of such plans for the division of the Trocadéro spaces as exist, it is difficult to follow Picasso’s footsteps, not to know whether he was in the ethnological galleries when they were open or closed to the public. Neither the principal African nor the principal Oceanic gallery seems to have been directly accessible — as far as the present show — from the Musée de Sculpture Comparée, and one would apparently have had to exit, re-enter, and pass through the Rotunda gallery. The Oceanic gallery, which was a floor higher than the African one, could be reached directly from the latter by an interior stairway.
Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness* than to Gauguin’s *Noa-Noa*. The archetypal “night journey” of the soul recounted in *The Heart of Darkness* by means of the metaphor of Kurtz’s voyage to the interior of the Congo seems to me close in spirit to Picasso’s descent into his psyche during the elaboration of the *Demoiselles*. Indeed, Picasso’s radical primitivizing of the *Demoiselles* might well be considered a pictorial realization of Conrad’s words: “The mind of man is capable of everything — because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future.” Certainly the “African” figures on the right of Picasso’s painting were meant to express something alien, menacing, and virtually unutterable about “the primitive” such as Kurtz discovered in the recesses of his own unconscious when, in the heart of the Congo, he released himself from the constraints of “civilization” — something he could express in the moment of his death only as “the horror” of it.

While arguing that the primitivism of the *Demoiselles* was inspired by expressive, poetic, and psychological needs, I am not implying that Picasso was uninterested in the aesthetic qualities of African or Oceanic objects. Although they were not, as Picasso insisted, “just sculptures,” they were sculptures nevertheless, and they offered him a variety of figurational signs; indeed, Picasso’s new passion for them led to his acquisition of at least three Oceanic and two African objects within a year. Keep in mind, however, that this interest in *art nègre* represented essentially a deepening and sharpening of focus within a more generalized concept of primitivism that in the first years of the century, and still earlier in Gauguin’s work, was defined in Paris more by archaic than by tribal art — Egyptian, Peruvian, Cambodian, Iberian, and early Greek styles, for example, not to mention such disparate sources as Breton folk art and late medieval sculpture. While few of Picasso’s paintings or sculptures closely resemble any *art nègre*, some works of late 1907 and 1908 — drawings especially — are closer in conception to African or Oceanic typologies he might have seen than is anything in the *Demoiselles*. Whichever tribal carvings gave impetus to the so-called “second cam-

"...the final results show Picasso very far from any art nègre visible at the Trocadéro or in his friends’ studios in 1907.

Apart from Picasso’s aversion to directly copying other artists’ work — and no doubt the feeling that the tribal objects he could then see were too stylized and symmetrical for his purposes — the distance between the *Demoiselles* and available *art nègre* is a function of the fact that Picasso was solving his problems within the conventions of painting even as he was radicalizing those conventions, while the tribal art he saw was all sculpture. Moreover, as Ron Johnson observes: “Most tribal art is not roughly carved nor is it typically fraught with anxiety as are Picasso’s figures. This seeming anxiety is particularly due to the distorted asymmetry of Picasso’s women and is in contrast to the almost universal use of symmetry in tribal art.”

One should add that the two African prototypes most frequently compared to the *Demoiselles* — the celebrated Etoumbi mask, with its “quart-de-brie” nose, and the abstractly exagerrated and profoundly disquieting “Kifwebe” masks of the Basonge tribe — had not yet found their way to France at the time Picasso executed his picture. Indeed, not a single type of mask thus far proposed by scholars in connection with the *Demoiselles* could have been seen in Paris in 1907.

The resemblances signaled by these authors are thus fortuitous — reflections of affinities between arts that communicate through conceptual signs rather than through pictorial conventions directly derived from seeing. There are, in fact, certain asymmetrical Bapende masks that far more closely resemble the *Demoiselles* than anything yet proposed, even in their distortions (Fig. 25). And they provide an interesting example of imagistic parallelism insofar as such masks represent sufferers from *advanced states of syphilis*, among other disfiguring diseases. But again, there is absolutely no evidence for the presence of such *masques de maladie* in France for many years after the execution of the *Demoiselles*. Picasso’s distortions, moreover, are an inventive projection of an internal, psychological state; the Bapende artist simply imposed his tribe’s traditional counterpart to it in French literature. Indeed, Malraux embeds the phrase “coeur des ténèbres” in his discussion of Picasso and African art (*Tête d’obsidienne*, 158) in an obvious salute to the earlier novelist.

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58 Both Noa-Noa (which means “very fragrant”) and *The Heart of Darkness* were based on direct experiences of the Polynesian and African worlds of about the same moment, and were published about the same time. Gauguin arrived in Tahiti in June 1891, just one year after Conrad made his long voyage up the Congo river. Noa-Noa was published (in modified form) in 1901; *The Heart of Darkness* was serialized in 1899 and appeared in book form in 1902.

59 I have compared Conrad’s novella with Noa-Noa as providing an excellent idea of the contrast between European views of Africa and of Polynesia. Picasso could not then, of course, have read *The Heart of Darkness*, which was published in French as *Au coeur des ténèbres* only in 1926. But French attitudes toward Africa in the first years of the century — influenced by earlier commentaries on Stanley’s explorations as well as subsequent *récits de voyages*, and colored even more by the heavy losses the French were then suffering in their central African military adventures — were very different from their views of their Pacific possessions, and Picasso, an avid newspaper and magazine reader, certainly absorbed the moods and feelings in the Paris air. Francine N’Diaye, curator of African art at the Musée de l’Homme, tells me that French writers on Africa not infrequently cite *The Heart of Darkness* because there is no

60 Cf. Appendix VIII: Picasso’s First Tribal Objects.
62 Cf. Appendix IX: Masks Associated with the *Demoiselles*.
63 Even today there is not a single *masque de maladie* in the Musée de l’Homme (Trocadéro) and precious few in French collections; such masks are still rare in commerce in France, and Charles Ratton observes that before the change in taste that followed the Second World War they were considered too ugly to be saleable. The type of mask illustrated below (Fig. 25) is, according to Susan Vogel, curator of African art at the Metropolitan Museum, largely inspired by the advanced stages of syphilis or gangosa. This particular mask, which I came upon in the reserves of the Tervuren Museum, is at once more beautiful and more abstract than the norm; it was brought from Africa only in 1954, and while its age cannot be fixed, its fabrication in all likelihood postdates that of the *Demoiselles*.
stilization on a facial disfigurement that existed in reality. As Picasso’s studies for his revisions of the Demoiselles indicate, he arrived at his expressionistically distorted physiognomic formulations imaginatively, no doubt partially inspired at the start by such conventionally symmetrical African and Oceanic material as was available to him in 1907.

The Demoiselles was thus not visually derived from any specific type of tribal object, though it contains distant echoes of African masks, reliquaries, and figures — and of Oceanic coloring. Any of Picasso’s recollections of features from particular works were left behind in the metamorphoses of his picture. Indeed, the last thing we should expect of an artist when he profoundly absorbs an idea is that it would be recognizable — that he would quote the source rather than transform it in making it his own. Hence, I consider it axiomatic that most of the varied influences of art nègre on Picasso are the ones we cannot see and will never know about. This would surely have been the case, for example, as regards the connection between Picasso’s so-called “Wobi” mask and his openwork, relief constructions, especially the cylindrical sound hole of his 1912 Guitar (Zervos ii, 773) had Picasso not told Kahnweiler about it.63

Largely because the Demoiselles was for so long mistakenly discussed in the literature in teleological terms as the first Cubist painting rather than as a plastically revolutionary but ultimately Symbolist/Expressionist picture about sexual passion and death, its stylistic diversity has led to its being widely ratified as “unfinished.” Picasso was held to have been developing so rapidly that he could not maintain unity throughout so grand a project. Critics took their cue from Kahnweiler, who argued essentially that the Demoiselles was an epochal picture despite its lack of stylistic uniformity. Steinberg was the first to insist not only that the picture needed no such apologies, but that its stylistic multiplicity was “purposeful.” Impressed by the internal logic and consistency of the picture as it now stands, he strongly implied, if he did not state outright, that the Demoiselles was completed rather than abandoned. I believe we can now demonstrate that the putative unfinishedness of the Demoiselles is an art-historical myth launched only in 1920 during the conservative “rappel à l’ordre” and inextricable from a concomitant myth of that same moment which retroactively annexed the picture as “the beginning of Cubism.” The emphasis on Cubism as a purely classical conception, which was widespread following the First World War, required that if the Demoiselles was going to be called Cubist, its anti-classical mixture of styles would have to be explained away by a newly postulated unfinishedness.64

While Steinberg spoke of “the importance to Picasso of dissociating [the Demoiselles] five figures from one another” he did not consider the content of the three fundamentally different modes of figuration in the women in relation to an embracing idea. I believe that once Picasso had left narrative communication behind, his picture required these differences in style precisely in order to span the polarity from Eros to Thanatos — from the allure of the female body to “the horror” of it — inherent in his original concept. Moreover, the suggestion that the stylistic variations of the Demoiselles were functions of Picasso’s having developed too rapidly in the spring of 1907 to hold the large project together is rather silly. It would, after all, have taken no more than the work of an afternoon — or a few days, if sketches were needed — for Picasso to have redone the two “Iberian” figures in the center and the Gauguinesque “Oceanic” one on the left in the manner of the “African” ones on the right, had he wished to reestablish a uniformity of style. That he left the central maidens as they remain — so opposite in character and expression to their neighbors on both sides — was certainly no accident. As the Demoiselles stands, its center, left, and right-hand figures communicate progressively darkening insights into the nature of femininity. By projecting these differences in feeling and meaning through differences in style rather than through narrative implications, as had been the original plan, the Demoiselles not only gained in drama and directness, but initiated a procedural displacement that would become more the rule than the exception in Picasso’s later work.65

One of the most important of Steinberg’s insights, which followed from his recognition of “purposefulness” in the stylistic differences, was that in the Demoiselles Picasso challenged “the notion that the coherence of the art work demands a stylistic consistency among the things represented.” Certainly it is logical that at the moment Picasso was testing virtually every other received idea of painting, he would challenge the validity of this one. Could one not say, in fact, that in the Demoiselles Picasso demonstrated — by accommodating his elisions between other plastic polarities such as flatness and projection, and coolness and saturation of hue — that contrasting modes of figural representation can be made to cohabit successfully. To be sure, one must observe that Picasso was not the first modern painter to mix styles; he was the first to do it in a radical way — and, I believe, to succeed. Stylistic diversity appears here and there in the work of Gauguin, one of Picasso’s primary sources for the Demoiselles; in Gauguin’s painting, these stylistic borrowings usually constitute symbolic allusions to non-Western cultural values that the artist sought to idealize — and to that extent they anticipate Picasso’s picture. But for Gauguin, this was a rather self-conscious and sometimes contradictory practice, a kind of pictorial/cultural grafting, and it was generally less successful and less pictorially

64 See Appendix XI: The Supposed Unfinishedness of the Demoiselles.
65 For Picasso’s tendency, after the First World War, to make style rather

than subject the carrier of content, see “Pablo and Georges and Leo and Bill,” Art in America, March–April 1979, 141–43.
organic than Picasso’s instinctive extrapolation of Iberian and tribal material in the Demoiselles.**

Stylistic “contradictions” are to be found in a number of Picasso’s paintings of the late twenties and thirties — if usually in a less dramatic form. Yet no serious critic has ever characterized these later works as “unfinished” or “lacking in unity,” judgments that, since Kahnweiler, have traditionally attached to the Demoiselles. The reason depends in part on a difference in “mental set.” One doubts that even Kahnweiler would have found the Demoiselles so stylistically contradictory had Picasso proposed these differences as illustrational by titling the painting “Women With and Without Masks.” The image would have then profited to some extent from a kind of visual logic we accept in certain Ensors — yet the assimilative task of the eye in purely plastic terms would have been no different. Picasso’s Analytic Cubism re-established, to be sure, a more conventional kind of unity. But this obtained in the context of a dialogue that brought into play the classicizing influence of Braque. Steinberg is quite right in seeing Picasso’s invention of collage in 1912 as a reassertion of the artist’s insight that “divergent modes of representation can cohabitate” (sic). That this principle is operative in the Demoiselles is of the greatest importance in the present discussion precisely because such stylistic diversity — although within narrower limits — is also a central theme in Bread and Fruiting, where, once again, differences in style come to replace narrative values in a deepening expression of a constant content.

Picasso’s modifications of Family of Saltimbanques and Les Demoiselles d’Avignon can be easily accepted as having been directed toward a more profound and sophisticated rendering of those projects’ original intent; however, the change we witness in Bread and Fruiting hardly appears comparable, given Picasso’s substitution of a seemingly unrelated subject. Can we, after all, characterize the still life that ultimately informed the Basil canvas as a more subtle version of the Harlequin’s banquet that it displaced? Paradoxically, I think we can. But in order to follow my reasoning, we must explore yet another aspect of Family of Saltimbanques and the Demoiselles: their autobiographical references.

Picasso has long been considered one of the most diaristic of artists. “I paint,” he is quoted as saying, “the way some people write their autobiography.” But only with the publication of considerable material on Picasso’s private life during the last two decades have we begun to realize how direct and specific the private references in his paintings really are. They often constitute a distinct and consistent substratum of meaning distinguishable from, but interwoven with, the manifest subject matter. The larger, the more evolved a picture, the more multilayered its iconography is likely to be.

A number of observers, beginning as long as thirty years ago, noticed resemblances and symbolic features relating the cast of Family of Saltimbanques (Fig. 20) to members of Picasso’s social circle — to the extent that by 1971 Theodore Reff could further the “Identifications” sufficiently to correlate the whole group of figures with those whom Picasso’s mistress Fernande Olivier called “la bande à Picasso.”** William Lieberman began the process in 1952 when he recognized the Harlequin at the left as a somewhat idealized self-portrait of Picasso; six years later Roland Penrose gave evidence for a reading of the fat jester to the Harlequin’s right as a symbolic portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire.** Reff not only provided further evidence to support these hypotheses but convincingly associated the two young saltimbanques in the middle ground respectively with the critic and poet André Salmon and with Max Jacob, Picasso’s one-time roommate and then closest friend; admitting some reservations, he also proposed that the woman in the right foreground might stand for Fernande. The identification of the cast of this imaginary group portrait was completed in 1977 when Ron Johnson identified the little girl holding Harlequin’s hand soldiers in the foreground as surreal fantasies, while the dice they play with and the drum on which they play their game are more realistic, in a Synthetic Cubist manner. This variety is echoed in the contrast of the three-dimensionality of the “kibitzer”’s head and the modeled surface of the vinegar-soaked sponge with the flatness of many of the other figures and objects. A more common kind of stylistic multiplicity can be seen in pictures such as Backs with Beads of 1932. Here the balloon-like figure is both modeled in high relief and fantastical as against the unmodeled surfaces and relative realism of the cubes and the flag in the background.

** Gaston’s Ta Moute, 1942, Kunsthausmuseum, Basel, is a case in point. Here, the hieratic formulations of Egyptian art (applied to the women on the bench) are employed in a scene that is otherwise essentially impressionist in its “slice-of-life” casualness. In Egyptian art, the “memory image” conventions are plasticly consistent with the rest of the style; in the Gauguin, however, the flat (unreal) figures cast shadows that attest to a more tactile reality than they possess and that give the sense of a particular moment in time (in the contrary, the very aim of the Egyptian formulation was “timelessness”). In Ta Moute each hieratic figure is juxtaposed with the more naturallyistically portrayed natives carrying a fish in the background and with the Impressionist-inspired right foreground figure that is radically cut, as in a Degas, by the frame. These plastic inconsistencies suggest that Gauguin did not sufficiently weigh the implications for his own stylistic unity of the profound stylistic differences between his Post-Impressionism and the Egyptian, Persian, Cambodian, Oceanic, and other non-Western works that he adapted or cited here and there in his art. For Gauguin “the primitive” comprehended a wide range of styles (far more archaic than tribal), which he treated interchangeably.

** A classic example is the Crucifixion of 1930. Here, in the context of a surrealist conception of the scene, we find a range from the realistically painted centurion to the personage hammering in a nail, who seems to be hallucinatory conceived as made of nails himself. The Roman

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"F. Gilot and C. Lake (as in note 40), 123. The word “autobiography” used here by Mlle. Gilot is not quite the proper one as it suggests that the painter recreates his life in retrospect. Considering the time elapsed between Picasso’s remark and Gilot’s recounting of it to Carleton Lake, it is perhaps permissible to think that her recollections are not completely accurate and that Picasso — who was very precise in his choice of words — could rather that he painted the way other people wrote their “diaries.”

** Carmona (as in note 43), 62, note 85.


as an orphan Picasso and Fernande had briefly adopted.  

Picasso himself gave the clue to the fact that actual individuals were associated with the figures of the Demoiselles when he recalled to Kahnweiler the jokes that he and his friends had made to the effect that certain of the filles in the picture represented, among others, Fernande Olivier and Marie Laurençin.  

And even if he had not confirmed it verbally to this writer, we might easily have identified the medical student of the original conception as Picasso himself on the basis of the close resemblance of studies for the student’s head (Zervos xxi, 45) and a self-portrait of the same moment (Mallory Coll., Santa Barbara; not in Zervos). Moreover, there is much to suggest that the sailor of the first state of the Demoiselles was associated with Max Jacob, who had described himself as a “marin pendant cinq ans ...” in a fictitious autobiographical sketch intended to be printed as part of the introduction to Saint-Maurice. Indeed, at the very moment Picasso was elaborating the Demoiselles he represented Jacob in a sailor’s shirt in a portrait that was probably intended as a study for the sailor in the projected painting.

Extended consideration of Bread and Fruitdish has convinced me that, like Family of Saltimbanques and the Demoiselles, it contained from the start a hidden autobiographical drama - rendered even more elusive, but also more poignant, by the painting’s metamorphosis in subject. In the shift from narrative bouquet to “iconic” still life that marks Bread and Fruitdish as one of Picasso’s first giant steps toward Cubism as a mental set, the artist did not abandon his original autobiographic references, but recast them in terms of style rather than commedia dell’arte allegory. And he dropped clues to this all along the way.

First let us consider that a subject such as Carnaval au bistrot - a group of people at a table - is extremely rare in Picasso’s work. With a single partial exception, there exists only one such image in his entire oeuvre prior to autumn 1908, a 1902 study for a poster. Significantly, it shows the painter in the company of artist and poet friends at a table in El Quatre Gats café (Fig. 8). This unique scene, intended to be realized in large format, had the same celebratory and memorial character that would later inform Carnaval au bistrot, also intended from the start to be a monumental work. The mood in the latter, however, is much less casual, and the breaking of the bread is given, as we observed earlier, an almost sacred character. We know whom Picasso represented at Els Quatre Gats. He knew, and we can decipher (at least as regards the figures at the table), whom he had in mind at the “bistrot,” which was actually, as will be seen, Picasso’s studio.

Most easily identified is Picasso himself, sitting at the center of the table dressed as Harlequin. Harlequin was not simply a favorite personage of Picasso’s; he has long been recognized as Picasso’s persona, his alter-ego, as is confirmed by his celebrated 1905 self-portrait in Harlequin’s motley (Fig. 30). There is no need here to provide further proof of the Harlequin/Picasso correlation, for which the reader may consult Reff’s superb studies of this theme. The woman with whom Picasso rubs shoulders in Carnaval au bistrot, and toward whom he inclines his head, may be identified through this pairing as Fernande. The relationship of this couple - merged in the second-state gouache within a binding pyramidal silhouette - constitutes a subordinate theme within the symbolic iconography.

The other figures at the table in Carnaval au bistrot reveal themselves less readily but no less securely. The man to the right of Harlequin/Picasso was intended from the start to be contemplative, and in the drawings (Figs. 9, 13) he is shown clearly resting his head upon his hand, his other arm bent horizontal at the elbow in a posture Cézanne amateurs will recognize as almost a mirror image of the man staring at several oranges in Cézanne’s Luncheon on the Grass (Fig. 16). That Picasso’s “Contemplator” was intended to represent Cézanne himself is confirmed in the second state (Fig. 14), where he is given a Kronstadt hat (somewhat elongated by the Cubist stylization). This is a type of hat Cézanne imaged frequently and, indeed, wore himself in some of his self-portraits (Fig. 31). There can be no doubt as to the meaning here, for while Picasso was underway on this project, probably between

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66 This is the gouache, Zervos no. 9. I am indebted to T. Reff (letter of May 22, 1950) for this observation as well as for the reference from Max Jacob’s biographical sketch, which occurs in a letter to Kahnweiler of 1916 (M. Jacob, Correspondance, ed. F. Garniez, 1, Paris, 1952, 54). Neither in my first conversation with Picasso touching the Demoiselles, which preceded publication of Steinberg’s article, nor in my later one, did he suggest anything related to the sailor, though he did (in the second) confirm the guess that he was the medical student. My earlier view— as reported by Steinberg— was that both figures represented aspects of Picasso’s makeup. This does not really contradict the identification of the sailor, an another level, as Jacob, any more than the identification of the man in the Kronstadt hat (see text below) as both Cézanne and Braque is contradictory.

67 The partial exception is the so-called Wedding of Pierrette, Zervos 212, dated 1904 in both Zervos and in Daix and Boudaille (Picasso: The Blue and Rose Periods, trans. P. Pool, New York, 1967, 247, xi. 22), but surely of spring 1905. This picture is actually an anecdotal scene in a cabinet. The figures are not concentrated compositionally or focused upon psychologically, as in Carnaval au bistrot, nor are they seated at a single table.

the execution of the watercolor and the gouache, Braque purchased a Kronstadt hat as an act of homage to Cézanne; Picasso was tremendously excited and took the hat to his studio where he featured it in a still life since widely known as "Cézanne's Hat" (Fig. 26). The latter picture contains drapery similar to that of Bread and Fruitdish, as well as some pieces of fruit, and it was no doubt painted during the elaboration of the larger project.

There are, of course, still other allusions to Cézanne in Carnaval au bistrot, among them the posture of the servant with the bowl of fruit, which was adapted from a comparable figure in Cézanne's L'Après-midi à Naples (Venturi 224); Picasso had borrowed that same figure seven years earlier when he conflated the Cézanne with Manet's Olympia in a celebrated caricature. Moreover, while images of four to six figures sitting and standing around a table are, as noted, almost non-existent in Picasso's prior work, the Barnes Collection (Fig. 7) and Metropolitan Museum versions of Cézanne's Cardplayers provide precisely such a prototype. Unlike typical card-playing scenes from the seventeenth century onward, Cézanne's versions are silent, static images of immense seriousness and gravity — and in this too they anticipate the peculiar character of Carnaval au bistrot. The outside format of the Barnes version may in itself have contributed to Picasso's plan for the intended large banquet picture. Picasso had seen the huge Barnes Cardplayers a year earlier in the Cézanne memorial retrospective, and was no doubt struck by Cézanne's audacity in making the legs under the table so monumental as to seem perspectively detached from their respective figures; he incorporated this autonomous "architectural" treatment of the legs in Carnaval au bistrot, and the association adds something to the significance (and perhaps logic) of his having retained their forms even after he had converted his canvas into a still life.

That the secret identity of Gilles, on the left in Carnaval au bistrot, is Henri Rousseau should hardly come as a surprise in a late 1908 work by Picasso that represents an artist's banquet. Certainly the theme of the image was suggested by the banquet in honor of Rousseau that Picasso held in his studio in November of that year, at most weeks and perhaps just days before he began work on Carnaval au bistrot. The very table pictured in Carnaval would have been put to use for the Rousseau banquet, as it is a simplified version of the round drop-leaf table visible in a hitherto unpublished photograph of Picasso's studio in 1908 (Fig. 24). That event was, to be sure, a convivial, somewhat riotous one. Carnaval au bistrot is more its by-product than its representation. Picasso converted the celebration of the Douanier into a quasi-sacred allegory of communion between artists, in which he breaks bread seated between his two major nineteenth-century avatars — precisely the two painters on whom he was drawing most in his work of the moment.

The logic of Gilles as a "stand-in" for Rousseau begins with their commonality as sad entertainers, sad clowns. Rousseau was, to be sure, a somewhat inadvertent clown, whose singing and violin-playing at his "soirées familiales et artistiques" and at Picasso's banquet were occasionally the butt of laughter — as was his super-serious, grave, and stately demeanor. Nor did his painting escape such derision, even among some of Picasso's friends. Yet Picasso was deeply moved by the unrelenting seriousness and the sense of sacred mission of the Douanier as regards not only his own work but that of all artists. At the Rousseau banquet, the Douanier was elevated like a king or saint above the level of the other guests, seated as he was on a chair mounted on a packing box, which Fernande described as "a kind of throne." Imagine him there in all his gravity and formality — he sat unflinchingly, "stoic-silent." Fernande tells us, despite the tallow that dripped onto his forehead from a hanging lantern — and we see why Picasso remembered him "comme un personnage byzantin." When the lantern later caught fire, Fernande recalls, "On persuada Rousseau que c'était l'apothéose finale...."

Given what Picasso recognized as Rousseau's almost saintly purity of character, his simplicity and generosity — quite apart from the Douanier's "religious" attitude toward painting — what better choice could the artist have made than to embody him as Gilles, especially as Gilles' round hat could be made, as Watteau had already shown (Fig. 28), to imply a halo. Moreover, in so doing, Picasso was adapting a figure whose hat could be identified in its roundness with that worn by Rousseau himself. Picasso was always fascinated with hats as symbols of identity; photographs of him clowning with them abound. How could he not have been impressed by the round felt artist's hat which Rousseau regularly wore? The Douanier's self-image was inseparable from that old-fashioned hat. Wearing it was his way of asserting the nobility and tradition of his profession. He wore it in his self-portrait (National Gallery, Prague) and in his official photograph as artiste-peintre (Fig. 29), in which it reads like a surrogate halo. Picasso knew this photograph well, for it the drop-leaf raised and contains the same drapery as Bread and Fruitdish. Like "Cézanne's Hat" (Fig. 26), it must be associated with the period during which Carnaval au Bistrot was conceived. Although the table's legs are simplified in Bread and Fruitdish, its baluster pattern (already somewhat simplified in Leaves on a Table) is echoed in the support of the compote. As Picasso tended to work on a number of canvases at the same time, it is impossible wholly to clarify their order; but it seems clear that the very small Leaves on a Table was completed before Bread and Fruitdish.

78 That the hat in the second-state gouache appears more elongated than in "Cézanne's Hat" is understandable in the framework of the general elongation of forms that characterizes the shift from first to second state. Its round top and arched brim distinguish it nevertheless from the haut-de-forme, or top hat.
79 Zervos VI, 343.
80 This is the photograph discussed in Appendix VIII. The table legs with their baluster forms are more realistically represented in another still life of the period, Leaves on a Table (Zervos II, 125, fig. 27), which shows the drop-leaf raised and contains the same drapery as Bread and Fruitdish. Like "Cézanne's Hat" (Fig. 26), it must be associated with the period during which Carnaval au Bistrot was conceived. Although the table's legs are simplified in Bread and Fruitdish, its baluster pattern (already somewhat simplified in Leaves on a Table) is echoed in the support of the compote. As Picasso tended to work on a number of canvases at the same time, it is impossible wholly to clarify their order; but it seems clear that the very small Leaves on a Table was completed before Bread and Fruitdish.
81 F. Olivier, Picasso et ses amis, Paris, 1933, 78.
hung, framed like a painting, on the wall of Rousseau's little studio. Thus, the symbolism of all three male figures in the mutations of Carnaval au bistrot emerges as ultimately proverbial: "The Hat Makes the Man."

What became of all this as the project proceeded? It is evident that the internal pressures pushing Picasso toward a Cubist type of painting were more important than his desire for an image with legible narrative or symbolic content. Already in the second-state gouache, the "iconizing" of Carnaval au bistrot involved more than just a change in format and reduction in the number of figures; the new straight-edged forms were more abstract and more identifiably Cubist than anything in the first-state watercolors. In the gouache, therefore, the pairing of Harlequin with the "Contemplator" may read alternatively as an image of the friendship of Picasso and Braque at the beginning of their joint venture into Cubism.

Readings of the "Contemplator" as both Cézanne and Braque are hardly mutually exclusive, especially as the structural sense of Cézanne's art came to Picasso's awareness during those months very much through the mediation of Braque's work.

We have only to look at the final still life to see how perfectly Picasso came to "sell" the original story of Carnaval au bistrot by means of style itself. The left side of Bread and Fruitdish (where the Doanier, as Gilles, had sat in Carnaval) is executed in a Rousseau-like manner unique in Picasso's painting; the right side (where Cézanne, as "Contemplator," had been seated) is comparably Cézannescque. But both stylistic tendencies are subsumed in a painting that is integrally Picasso's.

Finally, of course, the polarity of substyles in Bread and Fruitdish alludes to divergencies and contradictions in human feeling that transcend the references to Rousseau's almost glazed surface closely resembling that of Rousseau suggests his desire to focus this arcane clue with the greatest precision possible, even though the game he was playing was essentially a private one.
and Cézanne reflected in them. The tension between concreteness and sensation, between closed and open systems, between conception and perception, and between certitude and doubt that these references embody, fuels the interior drama of Picasso himself as he confronts the problems and possibilities of what is becoming Cubism.

By the same token, this polarity of substyles enhances the contrast — on the level of meaning as well as morphology — in the juxtaposition of the loaves of bread with the compotier and fruit, thus further illuminating the secondary theme of Carnaval au bistrot, the pairing of Picasso and Fernande. Inasmuch as loaves as well as compotiers and fruit were common studio props throughout the winter 1908-09, Picasso's substitution of these handy objects for parts of his figures was certainly more a question of depersonalizing his forms than reaching for esoteric symbols. It is difficult, nevertheless, not to see in the final image a typically Picassoid witticism in the confrontation of the hard and "phallic" pains longs (not unlike Harlequin's baton in form) with the circular bowl of sumptuous fruit that displaced the image of Fernande. Hence, the very stylistic dualism that expresses the primary theme, which celebrated Picasso's life as an artist, simultaneously echoes the more private motif of the Picasso/Fernande relationship. Lest one doubt the sexual witticism implied here, it suffices to consider the more overt proposal in the contemporaneous Loaves on a Table (Fig. 27), where a pain long and a couronne (a round loaf

26 Pablo Picasso, Still Life with Hat (Cézanne's Hat), Paris, early 1900s, oil on canvas 23 7/8 x 28 1/4" (60 x 72 cm). Private collection (courtesy Galerie Beyeler, Basel).


meaning) ➔ baguette. (Letter to W. B. of October 13, 1982.) This "syllogism" breaks down, to be sure, if for no other reason than the bread in Picasso's picture are pains longs, baguettes being a relatively recent addition to the "pantry" of French baking. But a sexual association of some sort is clearly there — and is entirely in character for Picasso.
Jean-Antoine Watteau, Gilles, ca. 1719, oil on canvas, 67/8 × 417/8" (184.5 × 149.5 cm). Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: Musées Nationaux).

Detail of photograph of Henri Rousseau in his rue Petit atelier, ca. 1907 (Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York).

Fernando Picasso, self-portrait as Harlequin, detail from At the Lapin Agile, Paris, 1905, oil on canvas, 39 × 39 1/2" (99 × 100.5 cm). Manhattan, New York, Collection Mrs. Charles S. Pryor (courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York).

Paul Cézanne, Self-Portrait in a Kronstadt Hat, ca. 1883-85, oil on canvas, 16 3/4 × 12 3/4" (41 × 34 cm). Stavros S. Niarchos Collection (photo: A.C. Cooper Ltd.).
with a hole in the middle) are paired in isolation on the same drop-leaf table.

To be sure, the "phallic" loaves in Bread and Fruitish displaced segments of the "Contemplator" more than of Harlequin/Picasso during the transmigration of the picture's forms. But to demand a Cartesian logic from level to level in Picasso's work is to misjudge the nature of his invention. While Picasso always begins with a nuclear idea, the multiple, interlocking levels of meaning of his more ambitious pictures are more the fruit of associations developed during the course of improvisation than the result of planning - and are consequently not without contradictions. The process is quite different from the iconographic programming common to older art. Picasso is only entirely aware of what he is doing when he has done it (and on occasion, perhaps, not even then). That there is some grinding of the gears from level to level bothers him not at all. Indeed, such "messiness" - the counterpart of the erratic factors I called the "jokers" in the aesthetic deck - is precisely the guarantor of the "lifelessness" of Picasso's art. Together, they endow his pictures with a disruptive and challenging energy and an impression of open-endedness that we never find in the more rigorously consistent and hermetic systems of Braque's or Gris's Cubism.

Of course, the multiplication of ideas and associations that enriches Picasso's imagery is always subject to decisions of a plastic order - all the more at this moment, when he is forging with Braque the basis of Cubism. Yet Bread and Fruitish suggests that no matter how much Picasso was moving toward Cubist detachment and concern for structural and speculative issues - as his displacement of the artists' banquet with a "neutral" still life demonstrates - his subjects were still imbued, however elliptically, with a poetic content that tapped the sentiments and particulars of his most intimate life and thought.

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Appendix I

The Chronology of the Demoiselles

On the basis of material that has come to light in the last several years, it is clear that the earliest studies for the ensemble of the Demoiselles - as opposed to individual figures that may possibly belong to a previous botella project (Zervos vii, 188) - date only from March 1907, following Picasso's acquisition early that month of two ancient Iberian stone heads that had been stolen, unknown to him, from the Louvre. Forms suggested by these sculptures inflected what would be the final phase of Picasso's "Iberian" style, which had gotten under way the previous summer in Cézanne. Studies for the first preparatory state of the Demoiselles were summarized late in March in the seven-figure Basel Museum pencil and pastel drawing (Fig. 21)

Appendix II

The Chronology of Three Women and Bread and Fruitish

The first sketches for Three Women date from the spring of 1908 and the large canvas now in the Hermitage was completed in its first, "African" version prior to Picasso's departure for La Rue des Bois in late summer of that year (see this author's "Cézanne,", in note 9, 151-202). Sometime in the late fall, under the impact of Braque's Cubist landscapes, painted at L'Estaque that summer and shown at Kahnweiler's in November, Picasso began an extended series of revisions of Three Women, which led to a repainting of the entire canvas in an early Cubist style.

The date of 1908 that has been traditionally given to the definitive form of Three Women can only imply that this repainting was completed by the end of the year - which, I am now certain, was not the case. Zervos's dating of "Winter 1908," given him by Picasso, is understood by most students of his work to mean a more restricted period than the painter himself
understood by this designation. Daix, who discussed Zervos's nomenclature with Picasso, noted (letter to me of November 2, 1976) that "winter" for Picasso extended to at least mid-February. Hence, Picasso's nomenclature is consistent with my present conviction that he continued to work for at least a month or two into 1909 before completing the Leningrad canvas in its present form. This view is further supported by the "1908-09" date given the picture in Kahnweiler's archives.

Carnaval au Bistrot (Fig. 5), the point of departure for Bread and Fruitdish, was executed late in 1908 — no earlier than late November — as a study for a large picture. We cannot be sure that the studies for the second state of Carnaval (Figs. 10, 11) and the laying in of that image on the large canvas now in Basel took place before the year's end, though this seems probable. However, the transformation of that image into Bread and Fruitdish almost surely dates from early 1909. There is no way of knowing whether Bread and Fruitdish or Three Women was completed first, though the distinction would be, in any case, a matter of weeks rather than months. The important point is that the Cubist revisions of Three Women and of Carnaval took place contemporaneously, in the period between late November 1908 and February 1909.

**Appendix III**

**Braque, Cézanne, and Cubism**

The importance for Picasso's development in autumn 1908 of Braque's L'Estaque landscapes of the summer of that year — the very first Cubist pictures — was explored in detail in my "Cézannisme" (passim), and restated somewhat more summarily but with considerable additional material in "Pablo and Georges and Leo and Bill" (Art in America, March-April 1979, 128-147) as a reply to an attack upon the original thesis by Leo Steinberg in his "Resisting Cézanne: Picasso's Three Women," Part II: "The Polenical Part," Art in America (March-April 1979, 114-127).

By 1907, Braque had become obsessed with Cézanne's painting, and his single-minded involvement with it led him — through a process of reduction, extrapolation, and, above all, conceptualization (as opposed to direct confrontation of the motif) — to formulate at L'Estaque the basic syntax and structural framework of early Analytic Cubism. Until autumn 1908, Picasso's interest in Cézanne was comparatively less focused, tending to be sporadic and fragmentary in nature; it was reflected in his occasional use of discontinuous contouring, flattened ellipses, and high horizon lines, and in his adaptation of certain figure-types, postures, and gestures from Cézanne's Bathers in particular.

Braque's reading of Cézanne was, on the contrary, integral, and entirely structural. It took the form of a bas-relief simulacrum for the representation of solid forms in a shallow space, and a linking of continuous forms in the pictorial configuration — regardless of their illusioned position in space — through passage. Picasso first saw Braque's L'Estaque paintings — which gave Cubism its name — on his return from La Rue des Bois toward late October 1908. He evidently took one back to his studio to study it; Matisse saw it in Picasso's studio that fall ("Pablo and Georges," 144), probably before but possibly following the exhibition of the entire group of Braques at Kahnweiler's in November.

Braque's pictures led Picasso to a new, more profound, more holistic and consistent understanding of Cézanne's art, and it was this new perspective that would remain a constant influence during the evolution of Analytic Cubism. As Picasso was looking both at Cézanne and at the new Braques throughout the months in which he repainted Three Women and transformed Carnaval au Bistrot into Bread and Fruitdish, it is impossible to distinguish during that period between the influences of Picasso's new reading of Cézanne and the direct effect of the L'Estaque Braques that had engendered that reading.

**Appendix IV**

**Quoting Picasso**

Picasso described to me the Douanier's insistent dignity and self-conscious formality (except when inebriated) as something one might take for a petit-bourgeois trait, although Picasso chose to interpret it as stemming from Rousseau's sense of the high honor of participating in the profession of "artiste-peintre." In my notes on Picasso's description of Rousseau's demeanor, the phrase "comme un personnage byzantin" is in French, indicating that it was a fragment of the conversation I recalled verbatim; for the most part my notes were written in English to indicate that they were paraphrases of Picasso's remarks, aimed at simply capturing the gist. The notes were set down at night upon my return from Picasso's villa or, at the latest, the following morning. On rare occasions, I was able to record an entire sentence that struck me as particularly extraordinary. With such exceptions, I have preferred, in the interests of art-historical accuracy, to use only paraphrases.

The reader should be reminded that virtually all of what passes for Picasso's own words in books recounting his "conversations" (e.g., those by Kahnweiler, Hélène Parmelin, Brassaï, Françoise Gilot, André Malraux, and others) are, in fact, reconstructions by the authors. Except for what must have been rare felicitous recollections, all these writers are putting words in Picasso's mouth when presenting his observations in the form of direct statements (although with the exception of Parmelin, they do not spell this out for the reader).

Picasso never to my knowledge brooked note-taking or the presence of recording devices; even less did he stand for being interviewed (he particularly disliked "art-historical" interrogation). Virtually the only mode of discourse with him was casual and spontaneous. In such conversation, Picasso readily spoke of the work and personalities of other artists, but much less frequently of his own work — certainly as regards individual objects. On some occasions, however, especially when we looked together at his older pictures, stacked in a second-floor studio, or at the mass of sculptures in the huge basement, it was possible by indirection to get him talking about matters iconographic (stylistic observations were much harder to elicit), and even to slip in a direct art-historical question without irritating him.
Appendix V

The Demoiselles and Cubism

None of the earliest references to the Demoiselles characterizes it as Cubist; nor did Kahnweiler so qualify it in his first text on the picture in "Der Kubismus" (Die Weissen Blatter [Zurich-Leipzig], September 1916, 212-14). By 1920, he had apparently changed his mind, for in his Weg zum Kubismus (Munich, 1920, 18) he described the picture as the "beginning of Cubism"; in 1933, he identified "the birth of Cubism" specifically with Picasso's second period of work on the Demoiselles (in his own commentary on a conversation with Picasso of December 2, 1933, first published as "Huit entretiens avec Picasso" [in Le Point [Souillac], October 1952, 24]; and in 1940 he singled out the right-hand part as "the beginning of Cubism" (Juan Gris: Sa Vie, son oeuvre, ses écrits, Paris, 1946, 145).

The nomination of the Demoiselles as the starting point of Cubism was further reinforced by Barr. In Picasso: 40 Years of His Art (exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1939, 61), he characterized the Demoiselles as "the masterpiece of Picasso's Negro Period," but added that it "may also be called the first Cubist picture" (although he qualified its Cubism as "rudimentary"). In Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art (New York, 1946, 56), he dropped "the masterpiece of Picasso's Negro Period" but repeated that the Demoiselles "may be called the first Cubist picture." In Masters of Modern Art (New York, 1954, 82), Barr set the Demoiselles into a symmetrical relationship with the Three Musicians, Cubism being envisaged as beginning with the former and culminating with the latter.

The combined authority of Kahnweiler and Barr sufficed for the Demoiselles to be considered the first Cubist painting in most popular and scholarly accounts — although a small number of early authors, among them Gertrude Stein, André Level, Victor Chastre, and Christian Zervos had always (more correctly) considered Picasso's Cubism as having begun in the winter 1908-09 or at Horta the following summer. By the 1960's, some art historians were voicing doubts about or formally rejecting the received thesis, which today seems clearly untenable. The earliest and most succinct of the latter refutations was that of Golding:

The Demoiselles d'Avignon is not, as has been so often said, the first cubist painting. None of the fundamental qualities of Cubism are found in it. Detachment and intellectual control, objectivity combined with intimacy, an interest in establishing a balance between representation and an abstract pictorial structure — all these features are noticeably absent in the Demoiselles. Cubism was an art of realism, and, so far as it was concerned with reinterpreting the external world in a detached, objective way, a classical art. The impression made by the Demoiselles, on the other hand, is one of violence and unrest. Indeed, the savagery of the two figures at the right-hand side (which is accentuated by the lack of expression in the other faces) would justify its classification as one of the most remarkable products of twentieth-century expressionism. But it is incontestable that the painting marks a turning point in the career of Picasso, and, furthermore, perhaps the most important single turning point in the evolution of twentieth-century art so far. ("The Demoiselles d'Avignon," Burlington Magazine, c, 1958, 154-63.)

Appendix VI

The Left-hand Figure in the Demoiselles

Except Barr and Golding, commentators on the Demoiselles have not explored the stylistic differences that separate the head of the woman on the left from those of the "Iberian" pair in the center. Kahnweiler, for example, distinguished only the "right-hand side" of the painting from the rest. Barr seems, curiously, to have found the figuration of the central figures "more startling" than that of the courtsean on the left (Fifty Years [as in App. V], 54).

Although the left-hand demoiselle's head shares many of the "Iberian" characteristics of those of the two central women, its more summary and more geometrical contouring, more sculptural modeling, and dark color render it more masklike and, as Golding ("The 'Demoiselles'" [as in App. V]) has observed, the head and neck seem clearly detached, both stylistically and in hue from the body. Whereas the upper parts of the two figures in the center show no signs of repainting, the neck, head, hair, left hand, and parts of the body of the left-hand demoiselle were unquestionably reworked after Picasso had completed the painting in its original, "Iberian" form. It is possible that this was done at the same time he repainted the two demoiselles on the right, but I believe that it took place at a somewhat earlier moment — and that there were thus two periods of repainting, the visit to the Trocadero probably falling between them (see Appendix VII). Two reprises seem to be suggested — although somewhat confusingly — in André Salmon's account (in La Jeune Peinture française, Paris, 1912, 42-46), the only really significant early account by an eyewitness to the painting's progress. (Udhe's and Stein's comments are less revealing, and Kahnweiler met Picasso only after the work was finished.)

Golding ("The 'Demoiselles'") could conceivably be correct in associating the left-hand maiden's head with African influence, although the Don mask with which he illustrates his thesis is of a people whose art did not enter commerce or the TROCADERO museum until after the execution of the Demoiselles. (The interior regions of the Ivory Coast where the Dan lived were only "pacified" in 1908-1914, in the face of fierce resistance.) I find the head in question more a conflation of Iberian and Gauguinesque influences (the latter, of course, subsuming Gauguin's marginal tropes on Polynesian art), and there is also the possibility (less likely) that it reflects Oceanic art directly. As Ron Johnson has argued ("Primitivism in the Early Sculpture of Picasso," Arts Magazine, June 1975, 64-68), Picasso's work had been influenced in diverse ways by Gauguin since the beginning of the century, when he saw paintings and sculptures in the studio of his friend Paco Durio. In 1902, Charles Morice gave him a copy of Noa-Noa (he utilized its free spaces for sketching purposes), and in 1906 he saw the large Gauguin retrospective of the Salon d'Automne. Gauguin's The Spirit of the Dead Watching, which Picasso probably knew only in lithographic form (its elements are also present in Noa-Noa) contains a half-idol, half-human Tupapua — a female ancestor spirit — which is situated on the extreme left and is represented in absolute right profile, but with a fronton eye. These characteristics are shared by Picasso's left-hand demoiselle. Although the face of the latter is more masklike and more "Iberian," the Gauguin figure, with its conflation o
archaic influences, seems to me as close to the Picasso as any African or Oceanic mask. Indeed, there are no masks that, viewed in profile, show frontal eyes, this is a pictorial convention (though it was occasionally adapted to three-dimensional Polynesian Tikis) and it is fundamental to Egyptian painting and to other forms of archaic art from which Gauguin borrowed ideas. On the poetic and psychological plane, The Spirit of the Dead Watching is even more relevant to the Demoiselles. It shows a troubled young girl at the age of sexual awakening reclining on a bed (Gauguin described this figure as “slightly indelicate,” and she is not unrelated to the heroine of his loss-of-innocence paraphrase, Nevermore). Her “fear” or “dread” (Gauguin’s words) is related to the imagined Tutan, hence to death. The combination of Eros and Thanatos in Gauguin’s picture is especially apt to the exploration of the identical polarity which I find at the heart of the Demoiselles.

Appendix VII

Picasso’s Equivocations with Respect to Art Nègre

In 1942, Zervos reported Picasso as saying that the “revelation” at the Trocadéro followed his reworking of the two right-hand figures of the Demoiselles. Iberian art, Zervos insisted, was the sole influence on the Demoiselles. He characterized the talk about “African statues and fetishes” as “erroneous” (in, pp. 449 and 10). Yet Picasso was reported to have been influenced by art nègre in the Demoiselles by writers who knew him at the time of its execution, such as Salmon, Uhde, and Stein. And in 1937 he himself specifically mentioned the Demoiselles in the course of a conversation with André Malraux about art nègre (Tête d’obsidienne, as in note 50, 17-19) in which he insisted (as he did with me) that his first real interest in “fetishes” and masks had more to do with magic and rites of exorcism than with plastic properties.

By World War II, Picasso began regularly to insist that he had not been influenced by art nègre in the Demoiselles, indeed that he had not even seen any at the time he painted it. This view was regularly repeated by Kahnweiler and defended by Dax (“Il n’y a pas ‘d’art nègre’ dans Les Demoiselles d’Avignon,” Gazette des beaux-arts, xxxvi, 1970, 247-270). Dax, however, has since revised his views.

While Picasso’s World War II denial was certainly true as regards the picture in its first complete (“Iberian”) form, few scholars have accepted his assertion in regard to the repainted figures on the right, and I have shown that whether or not the Tocadéro visit postdated their execution, Picasso had already seen at least a limited number of primitive sculptures in artists’ studios for over six months. As Golding (“The ‘Demoiselles’” [as in App. VI], 161) delicately put it: “It is perhaps permissible to think that [Picasso’s] recollections are not completely accurate.”

Why this seeming perverseness on Picasso’s part in later life regarding the relation of art nègre to the Demoiselles, especially after he had spoken of it to Malraux? Dax told this author that Picasso had been angered by titles such as Negro Dancer (cited by Barr in 40 Years [as in App. VII], given to 1907 paintings, but more because they created the impression that the artist had actually represented an African, or had worked directly from a particular

African sculpture, than because they implied an elliptic contribution of art nègre. I am convinced that Picasso had simply become sick and tired of hearing the Demoiselles “explained” — and thus pigeon-holed, so to say — as art nègre. Not only did this habit of reference diminish the “Picasso part,” inasmuch as the hints of African or Oceanic art in the right-hand figures were developed both in form and color far beyond the character and for appearance of such objects, especially those he could have seen. But it also obscured the assimilation in that same picture of a variety of other sources, among them El Greco, Cézanne, Gauguin, and, of course, Iberian sculpture. These observations would apply as well to the whole of the “African” period of 1907-08. Already in 1920 Picasso’s testiness on this score was evident in what was recorded as his curt reply — Connaiss pas — to a journalistic inquiry into modern artists’ views on art nègre (“Opinions sur l’Art Nègre,” Action, April 1920, 25). Florent Fels, who was then director and editor of Action, subsequently published a selection of artists’ remarks from Monet to Vlamink in a book entitled Propos d’artistes (Paris, 1925), which records Picasso explaining to Fels the gist of his response to that inquiry: “Je ne vois pas ce qui me dérange. Vous avez répondu moi en une précédente enquête. ‘L’art nègre, connaiss pas.’ C’est qu’il m’est devenu trop familier. Les statues africaines qui traînent un peu partout chez moi, c’est plus des termes que des exemples” (p. 143, italics mine).

Picasso’s denials with respect to art nègre may perhaps best be understood by reference to his definition of art itself: “It is the way that helps us understand the truth.” And the truth was that although Picasso loved these objects, looked at them, and occasionally absorbed ideas from them, they bore witness (terminus) more than they served as models (exemples) for his enterprise. Like the Japanese prints that interested Manet and Degas, primitive objects did not redirect the history of modern painting so much as reinforce and sanction developments already underway. Once they were elected to vanguard taste, of course, their tale became reciprocal.

Appendix VIII

Picasso’s First Tribal Objects

The famous photograph of Picasso in his studio toward the end of 1906, first published by Celette Burgess (“The Wild Men of Paris,” Architectural Record, xxvii, 1910, 407), shows two New Caledonian sculptures hanging on the wall; these have survived and are now in the collection of the Musée Picasso, Paris. (The date of Burgess’s interviews with Parisian artists, generally considered to be fall of winter 1908-09, was first proposed by E. F. Fry, “Cubism 1907-1908: An Early Eyewitness Account” in The Art Bulletin, xlviii, 1966, 70 and note 8.)

On the occasion of Burgess’s visit, the photographer he hired took a second photograph, from a different angle (Fig. 24); it is our fullest documentation of Picasso’s early art nègre acquisitions. (For this photograph, here published for the first time, I am indebted to Dr. Stanley Jettrow who acquired it in the course of his research on Burgess from the latter’s heirs. He also made the photograph available to others, among them Reff, who showed it in his lecture, “Cubism and 19th-Century Art,” Harvard University, February 22, 1983.) In this more comprehensive
photograph of the two, we see not only the New Caledonian pieces, but two African sculptures, on a round drop-leaf table. The larger piece, somewhat Yoruba in appearance but actually Mayombe (then the French Congo), is a colonial object, made for export; its multi-tiered form peopled with little figures (some clearly European) set within coiling snakes on an elephant socle is normally found as an ornamental support for a ceremonial hand drum. (For such an object, see R. S. Wassing, African Art: Its Background and Traditions, trans. D. Imber, New York, 1968, 46.) A somewhat similar construction, again as a drum support, had been in the collection of the Musée d’Ethnographie of the Trocadéro since 1900 and may have influenced Picasso’s purchase of his own object. To the right of the Mayombe construction is a Bapunu (Gabon) harp, crested by a small female figure tapping a drum held in her lap. Neither of these sculptures was seen in Picasso’s studio in later years, but knowing the artist’s reluctance to part with objects, I guessed I might turn them up. Indeed, I found both pieces among the so-called objets de tiers (studio claptrap) in the lots of two of the heirs. Both had been broken, either in Picasso’s closets, or as a result of mishandling after his death. A number of the figures had fallen from the Mayombe construction, but I was able to reconstruct it by means of the photographs; the harp had suffered more, and the little figure on the top has been lost. The harp, with its lozenge decorative pattern (Harlequin’s symbol), was, no doubt, a quite handsome object, prior to being damaged; the touristy Mayombe construction probably appealed to Picasso for its almost circus-like whimsy.

Kahnweiler recounts having seen a Marquesan Tiki in Picasso’s studio in 1907 (Juan Gris [as in App. V], 155–56, n. 1); he visited there for the first time in early summer after the completion of Les Demoiselles. Picasso’s Tiki, together with the four sculptures already mentioned, constitute the inventory of what we can be sure Picasso possessed prior to the end of 1908, although he probably already had some other sculptures. The Tiki is almost surely the one that was first reproduced as his in 1922 (La Renaissance de l’art français et des industries de luxe, Paris, 1922, 280). Regrettably, no inventory of Picasso’s art nègre was made at the dispersal of his estate. Based on what I was able to see of these objects in his studios, and later in the collections of his heirs, they numbered around one hundred — far many more African objects than Oceanic ones and, with five or six exceptions, mediocre or worse in quality.

In 1908, when Picasso’s new and radical work was finding few buyers, he probably could not have regularly competed for the finest primitive objects, which were already beginning to rise in price. Nor would he have wanted to, for as he remarked to me, he was never a “collector” of art objects of any period — although he accumulated a large number. Beyond a basic affinity he felt for primitive works as paralleling his own explorations, his interest lay in what he might “cannibalize” from them — sometimes an aspect of figuration, but more often an underlying conceptual principle. Both are as accessible, he observed, in the mediocre example as in the fine one, or for that matter, as Picasso also noted, in the fakes. Most of Picasso’s early art nègre was purchased at the flea market, some from Heyman and Brummer; with one exception (the Tiki), his handful of fine pieces was acquired only after the First World War, usually when dealers such as Louis Catté or Paul Guillaume proposed them as trades.

Virtually all the primitive objects at the flea market or at other Paris brocanteurs or antiquaires in the first years of the century came from French possessions or spheres of influence, as is the case with Picasso’s New Caledonian, Congolese, and Gabonese objects. Not surprisingly, J. B. Donne’s analysis of those primitive works known by him to be in Paris artists’ collections prior to 1920 showed virtually all of them to have come from French territories (“African Art and Paris Studios 1905–20,” as in note 57).

Appendix IX

Masks Associated with the Demoiselles

Barr reproduced the Museum of Modern Art’s Etoumbi mask, comparing it with the head of the upper of the two right-hand demoiselles (Fifty Years [as in App. V], 257). The provenance of the mask was provided by Charles Ratton, from whose gallery he purchased it in 1939 for the Museum’s study collection. Although identified since the fifties as Mahongwe, it was confirmed as Etoumbi in origin by Leon Sirota in a recent study of this work for the Museum Collection. Barr did not realize, however, that this mask is one of only three known to exist (one of which bears even less resemblance to the demoiselle in question), and he was unaware that these masks arrived in Europe only after 1929. The highly abstract Basonge (Zaire) “Kifwebe” masks — those with bold distortions and large, projecting noses and mouths — have been cited as a source for the head of the lower right-hand demoiselle by (among others) Warren Robbins, Senior Scholar and Founding Director Emeritus of the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., in lectures at the National Gallery (“Picasso, Cubism and African Art,” Feb. 28, 1982) and elsewhere. But apart from the fact that “Kifwebe” masks — like most primitive material — are symmetrical, it is impossible that Picasso could have seen one as early as 1907. Even today, the Musée de l’Homme possesses only one such mask, which did not enter its collection until 1967. Moreover, Charles Ratton, the doyen of Paris dealers, told this author that the first Basonge “Kifwebe” mask he ever saw was in the very late 1920’s was the one subsequently shown in 1935 in the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition “African Negro Art.” Material from the then Belgian Congo, Ratton observed, especially from the interior areas, where the Basonge live, remained extremely rare on the Parisian markets until after the Second World War; the fact that numerous foreigners were employed in the Congo Free State accounts for the occasional work from that area turning up in France. Even in Belgium, which in 1908 had taken over the Free State — heretofore virtually the private property of Leopold II — Basonge “Kifwebe” masks were rare early in the century. The first to enter Le Musée Royal dr l’Afrique Centrale at Tervuren — which has the largest holding of “Kifwebe” masks — arrived only in 1911, although it could have been in Belgium in private hands for some years before.

Appendix VI has already indicated the inaccessibility of the Dan mask proposed by Golding. The same problem exists for the New Guinea mask discussed by Ron Johnson (“Picasso: ‘Demoiselles d’Avignon’ and the Theatre of the Absurd,” Art Magazine, October 1980, 105–06, 113, note 24). Johnson cites this tortoise-shell mask from the Torres Strait, which was Picasso’s collection, in connection with the right-hand figure of the Demoiselles to support his broader thesis that the picture is “indebted to the Oceanic region” rather than Africa “through Gauguin’s lingering influence and the primitivism of Jarry. Although he is certainly correct that the spirit of Jarry (among others) is to be found in the complex texture of Picasso’s pictur...
and that Gauguin’s influence is surely present at the very least in the left-hand demoiselle, as I have suggested above (Appendix VI), Picasso’s Torres Strait mask is known to have been acquired by him only in the early 1920’s; nor could he have seen one at the Musée de l’Homme, which has never owned such a mask. Moreover, this colorless type of mask bears little resemblance to either of the right-hand demoiselles. In any event, Picasso started buying primitive art only after completing the Demoiselles.

The one type of African object cited by Barr (Fifty Years, 60, 259) and Golding (“The ‘Demoiselles’” [as in App. VI]) that Picasso did see in 1907 was not a mask but a Bakota reliquary figure. These were in fact visible and available in Paris for some time before 1900, but they first became of interest to artists only in 1906-07. That these and other types of primitive sculpture visible for years in Paris were “discovered” only then depended primarily on the fact that vanguard painting was itself rapidly moving from a representation of reality based on perception to a reconstructed through conceptual signs. Beyond this elective affinity, the African and Oceanic objects embodied a “myth of the primitive,” which could be used by the Fauves and Cubists as a countercultural weapon against the values of bourgeois society in general and the etiolated sensibility of the Symbolists, their immediate predecessors, in particular.

Appendix XI

The Supposed Unfinishedness of the Demoiselles

That the Demoiselles was never completed has been an article of faith for historians of my generation. The “fact” seemed universally known and accepted. In his classic text on the picture, Golding, for example, asserted that “[Picasso] himself considered it unfinished” — and felt no need to cite an authority (“The ‘Demoiselles’” [as in App. VI], 156). In the first of two exchanges I had with Picasso on the Demoiselles, I tried to get him to talk about why he left it unfinished, bridging from a discussion of the Girl with a Mandolin (Fanny Tellier), which Picasso himself had spoken of abandoning unfinished after a problem with his model (see Picasso in the Collection [as in App. X], 66, 205, n. 1). To my surprise, Picasso simply did not accept the idea that the Demoiselles was unfinished. Whatever he said to me — it began with something on the order of “C’est pas du tout ça” — left me very confused, and it was clear that he did not want to be pressed. Indeed, this and other remarks he made about the Demoiselles were so contrary to the received ideas that in writing the catalogue on the Museum’s Picassos shortly afterward, I felt incapable of dealing with the picture — and in this single case chose simply to reprint the text from Barr’s Fifty Years (as in App. V).

Not long after my conversation with Picasso about the Demoiselles, I shared some of the material I had gotten with Leo Steinberg, then at work on “The Philosophical Brothel” (he used it, duly credited). But I said nothing to him about Picasso’s reaction to questions concerning the picture’s unfinished state. I was therefore quite astonished by Steinberg’s powers of insight when his article appeared and showed him strongly implying — by the force of the internal logic of the picture alone — that Picasso did not “abandon” it. At that point, a number of things began to fall into place, leading eventually to the interpretation of the picture given in the main text of this article.

How and when did the assumption of the painting’s unfinishedness develop? The only intimates of Picasso during the making of the picture to write about it were André Salmon, whose “Histoire anecdotique du Cubisme” in La Jeune Peinture française (Paris, 1912, 41-61) devotes a few crucial pages (the first references in print) to the Demoiselles, Wilhelm Uhde, who mentions it in two paragraphs of Von Bismarck bis Picasso (Zurich, 1938, 142-144), and Gertrude Stein, in Picasso (Paris, 1938, 64-65, 68). None of these texts says anything about the
picture being unfinished. To such early eyewitness accounts, one might add the testimony of Axel Salto, who saw the picture in Picasso's studio in the spring of 1916 and published an account of his visit in the Danish art and literary journal Klingen in November of the following year; he too makes no reference to the Demoiselles being unfinished. (Salto's "Visiting Picasso in Paris" has been translated from the Danish and published in A Picasso Anthology: Documents, Criticism, Reminiscences, ed. M. McCully, London, 1981, 125-26.)

It was only in 1920 that Kahnweiler, who had met Picasso after work on the Demoiselles had ceased, first proposed that the picture must have been "unfinished." In Der Weg zum Kubismus (p. 17), published at that time, Kahnweiler does not state that Picasso considered the Demoiselles unfinished, but simply that the picture "unvollendet blieb." "Unvollendet ist es zu nennen . . .," he continues, "weil es im Geiste der Werke des Jahres 1906 begonnen [sic], in einem Teile die Bestrebungen des Jahres 1907 enthalten, und so kein geschlossenes Ganzes aus ihm geworden ist." ("the picture) remained unfinished. It must be called unfinished ... because it was begun in the spirit of the 1906 works [sic], and in one part contains the stirrings of 1907, so that it never became a unified whole.")

Now, it has never been observed that the preliminary, 1916 version of this text published in Die Weissen Blätter (Zürich-Leipzig, 212) as "Der Kubismus" does not contain these words. The sentence begins the same way: "Anfangs 1907 begann er ein seltsames, grosses Gemälde mit Frauen, Vorhängen und Früchten — and there it stops. ("In the beginning of 1907, he [Picasso] started a strange, large painting with women, drapery and fruit.") If Kahnweiler considered the picture "unvollendet" in 1916, he obviously didn't consider this salient fact worth mentioning. In 1920, however, he changes the period at the end of the sentence to a comma and tacks on the words "das unvollendet blieb." The third-person form of the next sentence, "Unvollendet ist es zu nennen . . ." (added in its entirety in 1920), makes it clear that the notion of unfinishedness—through-lack-of-unity is Kahnweiler's, not Picasso's. In Kahnweiler's next published reference to the Demoiselles, an account of a conversation with Picasso of December 2, 1933 ("Huit entretiens" [as in App. V], 24), there is no reference to unfinishedness. But after World War II, Kahnweiler began saying to scholars and interviewers not only that the Demoiselles was unfinished, but that Picasso had considered it unfinished. Reinhold Hohl pointed out to me what is probably Kahnweiler's first public statement of this: "[Picasso] damals [Les Demoiselles] fur unvollendet hielt" (from a lecture by Kahnweiler on October 23, 1947, at the University of Freiburg, reprinted in part in Jardot and Martin, eds., Die Meister der französischen Malerei der Gegenwart, Baden-Baden, 1948, 11.) Later Kahnweiler repeated the assertion in "Picasso et le cubisme" (introduction to Picasso, exh. cat., Lyons, Musée de Lyon, 1953) and again two years after that in "Cubism: The Creative Years" (Art News Annual, xxiv, 1955, 111).

As to why Picasso did not take public exception to this aspect of Kahnweiler's thinking about the Demoiselles, I must assume that either he was not aware of it (which was probably the case) or, if he was, that he couldn't be bothered to correct it. Picasso was afflicted, happily for him, with an acute case of je m'enfouisnisme as regards what critics wrote about his work. With several notable exceptions resulting largely from pressure by friends (e.g., the fake Papini interview, the Demoiselles/art nègre question, and the Stalin portrait), he never bothered publicly to question what was written about his work. It was clear to me from our conversations that he had not read Kahnweiler's Confessions esthétiques; indeed, he was largely ignorant of and unconcerned with what we would call the Picasso literature. He might read a few snatches of such texts, but mostly he just looked at the reproductions. In my notes from conversations with him, he says (the following is paraphrased): If I bothered with what people wrote about my work I wouldn't have time for anything else.

Kahnweiler had returned to Paris from his wartime exile in February 1920, and no doubt had numerous conversations with Salmon, who was a close friend. It appears hardly accidental to me that the latter, shortly afterward, himself proposed, for the first time, that the Demoiselles was unfinished (A. Salmon, "Picasso" [dated May 1920], in L'Esprit Nouveau, 1, No. 1, [October 1920], 63-64), although his more extended reference to the picture published eight years earlier contained no such assertion. In the same 1920 text, Salmon also for the first time characterized the Demoiselles as "Cubist," again a turnabout from his earlier position. Since, as we have seen, Kahnweiler had not called the picture Cubist in the first version of Weg zum Kubismus ("Kubismus") in 1916, but broached this new idea along with that of the picture's unfinishedness only in the definitive 1920 version, it becomes hard to avoid the conclusion that both ideas originated in the interim in an interdependent manner. The anti-classical melange of styles in the Demoiselles was rationalized by its "unfinishedness," hence making possible its annexation as "the first Cubist painting." In thus reinterpreting Picasso's painting, both Salmon and Kahnweiler were responding to a widespread new conservatism — later characterized (by Cocteau) as "le rappel à l'ordre" — that followed the First World War. Picasso's neo-classicism and Severini's reinterpretation of Cubism as a strictly classical art (Du Cubisme au classicisme [Esthétique du compas et du nombre], pref. Dr. R. Allendy, Paris, 1921), were symptomatic of a mood that had led Kahnweiler to conclude that Juan Gris, "the most classic of the Cubists," represented the fulfillment of the style.

It is, of course, necessary when reflecting on the question of the supposed unfinishedness of the Demoiselles to remember that under the influence of Cézanne, the Fauves and Cubists who came of age in the period 1905-09 had opted for a new, "organic," inner-directed conception of finish, in which work on a painting ceased when the expressive aims of the painter were satisfied by the configuration before him. This point not only varied from picture to picture but (on occasion) within a single picture, and did not conform to any a priori image of the completed work, such as existed as an operating principle (at least implicitly) in all pre-modern styles. As I have discussed elsewhere ("Cézannisme," 188-191, 200-01), the change began with Cézanne. By the 1880's, he was treating the unpainted gessoed surface of the canvas as a "living," functioning element in the composition — much as the good modern watercolorist or draftsman often thinks of the white paper — as something to be covered only if it can be "improved" upon. In this, Cézanne differed from the Impressionists and other Post-Impressionists who carried their surfaces to a continuous and usually predictable level of finish — within the terms of their styles.

The repainting of the Demoiselles represented a radical step forward in directions established by Cézanne (finish) and Gauguin (mixture of styles). Certainly, Picasso arrived at this intuitively, one might say almost unconsciously, when he took up the canvas again, because the Iberian version did not sufficiently conform to his expressive intent. Golding, whose views have changed significantly since his 1958 article, put it this way when I queried him recently: 'I suspect that if [Picasso] was
asked at the time whether the picture was finished, he might have said, 'Yes, for me,' or equally well, 'Yes, I think so,' or 'Yes, at least for the time being.' ... Quite obviously, if Picasso had been dissatisfied with the appearance of the painting, he would not have left it as it is. I imagine he realized that he had intuitively produced something totally extraordinary with which he felt he must come to terms" (letter to me of May 7, 1982; italics mine).

1 Picasso, Night Fishing at Antibes, 1939. New York, Museum of Modern Art

Picasso's Night Fishing at Antibes: A Meditation on Death

Mark Rosenthal

Alfred Barr wrote of Picasso's Night Fishing at Antibes, 1939 (Fig. 1), "Both in composition and mood this nocturne seems altogether exceptional in Picasso's art." Although unusual qualities abound in the picture, and also mark the circumstances of its creation, it is, in fact, firmly located in the matrix of the artist's concerns. Once the overriding contexts of the painting are shown, unrecognized meanings and sources can be identified. Most crucial is the theme of ritual death underlying the anecdote of fishing. This theme has a richly perceptible history in the art of Picasso, but has not been the subject of exhaustive examination. My study focuses on one manifestation of this general concern in his work.

Night Fishing is unusual starting with the story of its creation. Picasso was staying at Antibes, in the vacated apartment of Man Ray, during the summer of 1939. The months were marked by the death of his friend and dealer Ambroise Vollard and by increasing political tensions in Europe. While on a walk with Dora Maar and Jacqueline, Lamb Breton one night in early August, Picasso saw it...