The Philosophical Brothel, Part 1

In the first comprehensive analysis of the development of Picasso's Demoiselles d'Avignon and through a fresh examination of its forms, clues are found to the meaning and ultimate unity of a seminal masterpiece

The picture (fig. 1) was five years old when Picasso's poet friend, André Salmon, mistook it for nearly abstract; its team of prostitutes seemed to him "almost entirely freed from humanity . . . Naked problems, white signs on a blackboard."[1] But at that early date, who could foresee where the picture was heading? Or predict that its 26-year-old creator would live to defy seven decades of abstract art?

Kahnweiler's apology for the picture followed soon after. Though he found it unachieved and lacking unity, he recognized it as a desperate titanic struggle with every formal problem of painting at once and hailed its right section as "the beginning of Cubism."[2]

During the next 50 years the trend of criticism became irreversible: the *Demoiselles* was a triumph of form over content; to see the work with intelligence was to see it resolved into abstract energies.[3]

The reluctance to probe other levels seemed justified by what was known of the work's genesis. The first phase of the *Demoiselles* project was to have included two men: a sailor seated at a central table and a man entering the scene from the left with a skull in his hand—apparently a symbolic evocation of death. "Picasso originally conceived the picture as a kind of *memento mori*," wrote Alfred Barr, but, he continued, in the end, "all implications of a moralistic contrast between virtue (the man with the skull) and vice (the man surrounded by food and women) have been eliminated in favor of a purely formal figure composition, which as it develops becomes more and more dehumanized and abstract."[4]

The evidence for the presence of the skull in the early phase seemed incontrovertible, having come from the artist himself.[5] Barr therefore concluded—and his view became canonic for the next 30 years—that the picture had at first been intended "as an allegory or charade on the wages of sin."[6]

There were two remarkable consequences. First: since the mortality emblem dropped out as the work progressed, the *Demoiselles d'Avignon* —"the most important single turning point in the evolution of 20th-century art so far" (Golding)[7]—came to be seen as the paradigm of all modern art, the movement away from "significance" towards self-referential abstraction. Even the violence of the depicted scene was understood as an emancipation of formal energies, energies no longer constrained by inhibiting content.

Second: Picasso's numerous drawings for the *Demoiselles* were as good as ignored. If the painting was his release from a misguided allegorical purpose, then the drawings presumably recorded no more than a false start; they could have no bearing on that premonition of Cubist structure which made the picture historic.

As the criteria of criticism hardened and set, so the questionnaire addressed to the work was gradually formalized. The questions discussed, and obediently answered, concerned the chronology of the painting, its debt to Cézanne, its incorporation of Iberian and African influences—above all, its leap towards Cubism. It was the work's destination and its points of departure that had to be ascertained: like a traveler at a stopover, the picture was only asked to define itself in terms of wherefrom and whereto.

But the picture at 65 deserves a new set of questions; for instance:

Those five figures in it—did they have to be whores? Could the proto-Cubist effects in the right half of the picture—the breakdown of mass and the equalizing of solids and voids—have been accomplished as well with a team of card players? If the essential idea derived from Cézanne's compositions of bathers, why the retreat from the healthful outdoors into a *maison close*?

Why is the pictorial space still revealed like a spectacle and enveloped in curtains—so much Baroque staging in a picture whose modernist orientation ought to be to the flat picture plane?

Those African masks at the right: are they here because this was the picture Picasso happened to be working on when Negro art came his way, so that he incorporated the novel stimulus regardless of its irrelevance to a Barcelona brothel interior?

Are the anatomies of these women, in their radical transformation from 1906 to 1907, a matter of changing taste, or of substituting the abstract expressiveness of sharp angles for anatomical curves; or are these morphological changes metaphors for states of human existence?

Since no other painting (*Las Meninas* excepted) addresses the spectator with comparable intensity, how does this intensity of address accord with the abstract purposes normally ascribed to the *Demoiselles*?

Is the stylistic shift that bisects the painting into disparate halves a byproduct of Picasso's impetuous evolution, or do these discrepant styles realize a pervasive idea?

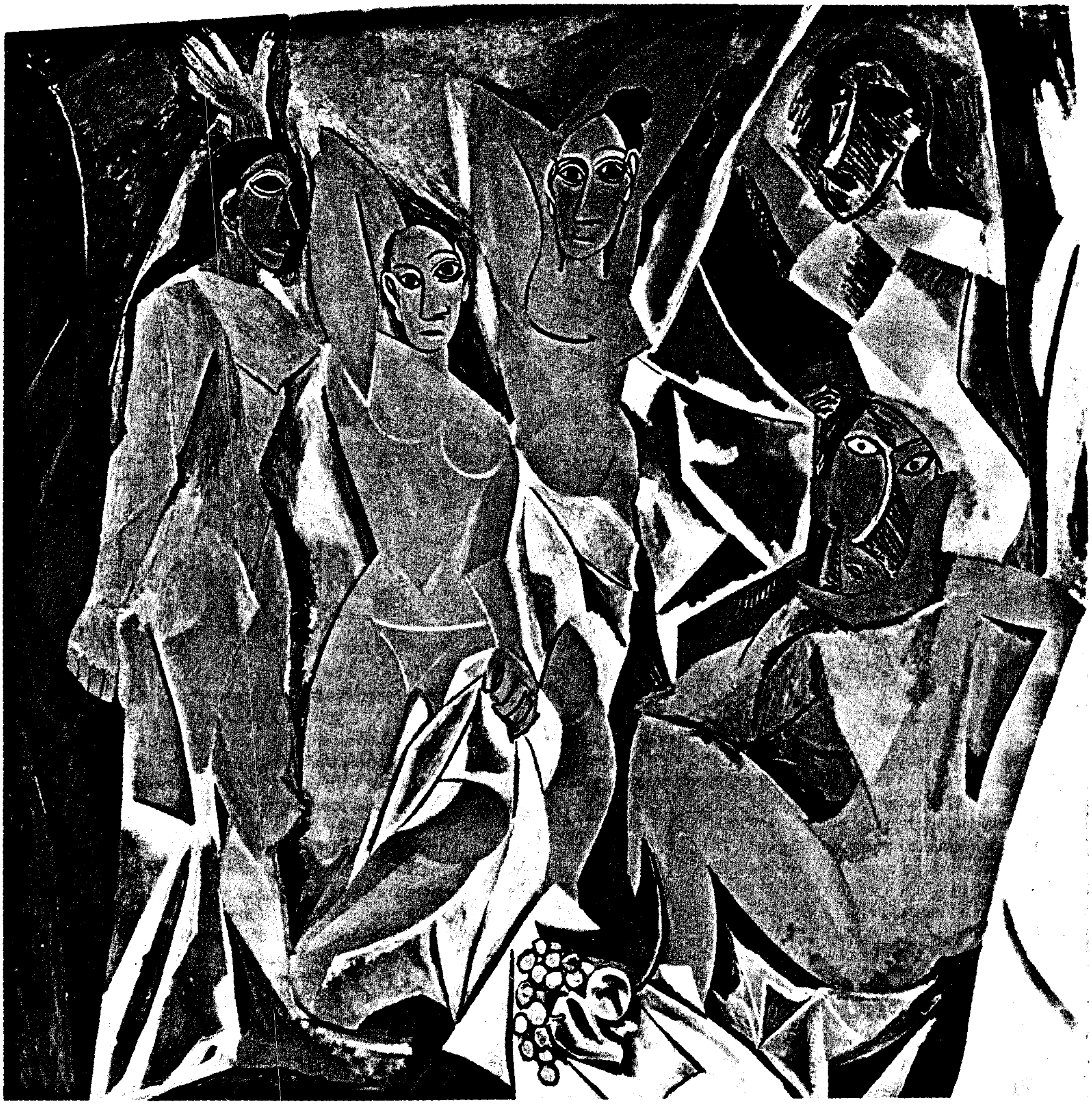
Did this "first truly twentieth-century painting" (E. Fry) really begin as a half-hearted reiteration of the familiar preachment that "the wages of sin is death"—a contrast between vice, symbolized by the enjoyment of food and women, and virtue, by a contemplation of death?

Is it true that in this "first Cubist painting" the artist has "turned away from subjective expression" (Sabartés), unconcerned with subject or content of any sort?

Finally, what of the many drawings that relate to the work? Not counting the drawings for individual figures, or details of figures, the full composition studies alone number no less than 19. Three were first published by Barr in 1939 (figs. 4, 5, 13). These, plus another thirteen (seven of which are here reproduced as figs. 2, 7-12), appeared in Volume II of the Zervos *Catalogue* in 1942; two more (fig. 6) appeared in the supplementary Volume VI, 1954.[8] Another, just come to light, is published here for the first time (fig. 3). Do these 19 drawings reveal an intelligible development, and will their study throw light on the content of Picasso's thought while the *Demoiselles* was taking shape in his mind?*

I believe that the drawings have much to show. And I am convinced that the picture contains far more even in its formal aspect than the words "first Cubist painting" allow. Indeed, the chief weakness of an exclusively formal analysis is its inadequacy to its own ends. Such analysis, by suppressing too much, ends up not seeing enough. For it seems to me that whatever Picasso's initial idea had been, he

Author: Leo Steinberg's collected essays on 20th-century art will be published by Oxford, under the title *Other Criteria*, next month. The second part of this essay will appear in our October number.



1 Picasso: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907,
96 inches high. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

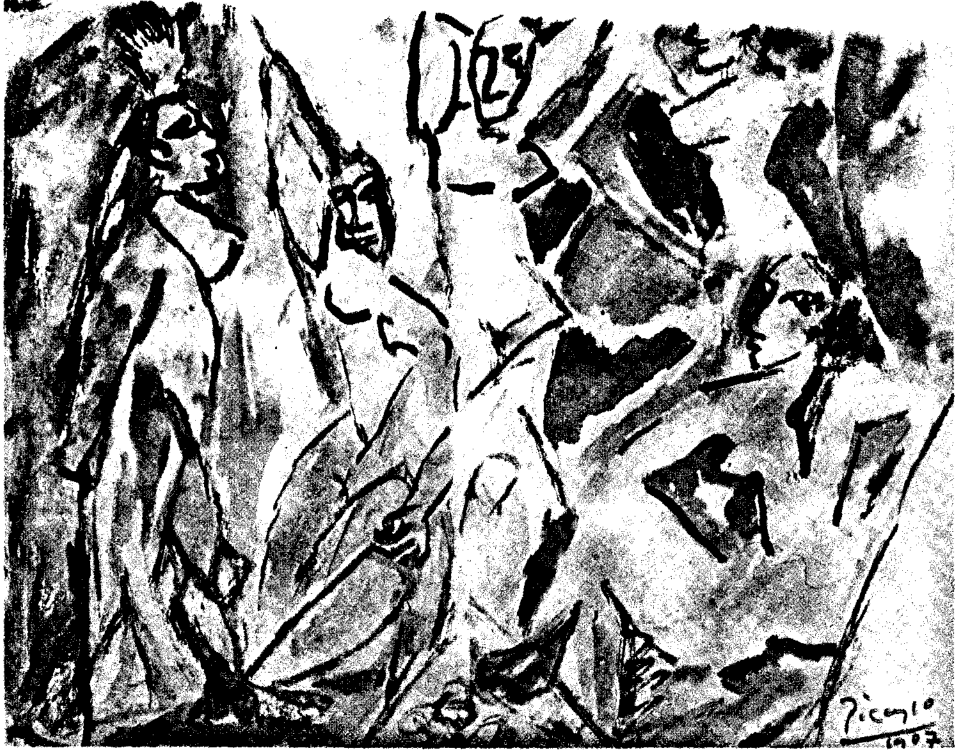
not abandon it, but discovered more potent means for its realization.

No modern painting engages you with such brutal immediacy. Of the five figures depicted, one holds back a curtain to make you see; one intrudes from the rear; the remaining three stare you down. The unity of the picture, famous for its internal stylistic disruptions, resides above all in the startled consciousness of a viewer who sees himself seen.

To judge the distance the project has traveled since its inception, consider the early, hitherto unknown composition study (fig. 3): seven figures disposed in a deep curtained interior. The subject, set in a brothel parlor, is a dramatic entrance—the advent of a man. But the arrangement displays the most conventionally Baroque grouping Picasso ever devised, not only in the topography of its floor plan, but in its unity is a theatrical situation. Picasso knew such narrative paintings from his early days at the Prado. Juan de Pareja's *Calling of St. Matthew* ig. 3A; here reproduced in reverse) is a good prototype: a magisterial gure entering from one side commands sudden attention; then a secondary focus in a man seated behind a table at center, and a backview serving as repoussoir at the other end; and the rest of the cast grouped in depth before curtained openings in the rear. What puts the Picasso design so squarely within this Italianate Baroque tradition is the dramatic rendering of the scene—a half-dozen figures in one composite reflex to a sudden signal. His actors, like Juan de Pareja's, are caught up in their own time, place and action; the viewer looks in from without, but he is not there.

In the *Demoiselles* painting this rule of traditional narrative art yields to an anti-narrative counter-principle: neighboring figures share neither a common space nor a common action, do not communicate or interact, but relate singly, directly, to the spectator. A determined dissociation of each from each is the means of throwing responsibility for the unity of the action upon the viewer's subjective response. The event, the epiphany, the sudden entrance, is still the theme—but rotated through 90 degrees towards a viewer conceived as the picture's opposite pole.

The rapid swing between these alternative modes is not surprising



13 Picasso: Study for the *Demoiselles*, watercolor, $6^{15}/_{16}$ inches high (Z.II, 21). Philadelphia Museum, Gallatin Collection.

for 1907, nor unique to Picasso. A juxtaposition of these alternatives was in fact up for debate. Five years earlier, the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl described the very absence of psychic cohesion between depicted persons as evidence of a distinct stylistic will.[9] He was speaking of the traditional Dutch group portrait (fig. 3B)—the primitive kind, before Rembrandt's dramatic naturalism restored it to the main European tradition. And his profound analysis of this native genre—the most original expression of the Dutch genius, he called it—was a courageous bid to enfranchise a mode of painting which, judged by Italian compositional standards, had always seemed inept and provincial. Riegl showed that Dutch art, even in its 15th-century religious narratives, suppressed the dramatic encounter which expresses a will, the coordination of action and responsive reaction which acknowledges the unifying force of an event. Instead of graduated active and passive participation, Dutch art strove, on the contrary, to project in each figure a state of maximum attentiveness, i.e., a state of mind which dispelled the distinction between active and passive. The negation of psychic rapport between actors, their mutual autonomy and spirited dissociation even from their own doings—and their incapacity for joint participation in a unified space—all these "negative" factors tightened the positive hold of each single figure on the responsive viewer; the unity of the picture was, as Riegl put it, not objective-internal, but externalized in the beholder's subjective experience.

Riegl's pioneering regard for this naïve Northern genre is comparable to Picasso's early admiration for Iberian and Negro art. And the historian's definition of its intrinsic value, formulated in apposition to the narrative mode, parallels Picasso's shift from that early study (fig. 3) to the *Demoiselles* painting. Not that Picasso had, or needed to have, any direct knowledge of Riegl's work, or of the obscure Dutch pictures discussed. But he did know the supreme realization of this Northern intuition—that Spanish masterwork which the Prado in large letters of brass proclaims to be the "*obra culminante de la pintura universal*" —Velázquez' *Las Meninas.* Like Picasso 300 years later, Velázquez had oriented himself both to the Mediterranean and the Northern tradition. Heir to Titian and Veronese, he could yet bring off a work which presents itself not as internally organized, but as a summons to the integrative consciousness of the spectator. The nine, ten, or twelve characters in *Las Meninas* seem uncomposed and dispersed, unified only insofar as they jointly subtend the beholder's eye. And the lack of immediate rapport between them guarantees their common dependence on his embracing vision.

In the *Demoiselles,* as in *Las Meninas,* no two figures maintain the kind of rapport that excludes us; and the three central figures address the observer with unsparing directness. Neither active nor passive, they are simply alerted, responding to an alerting attentiveness on our side. The shift is away from narrative and objective action to an experience centered in the beholder,

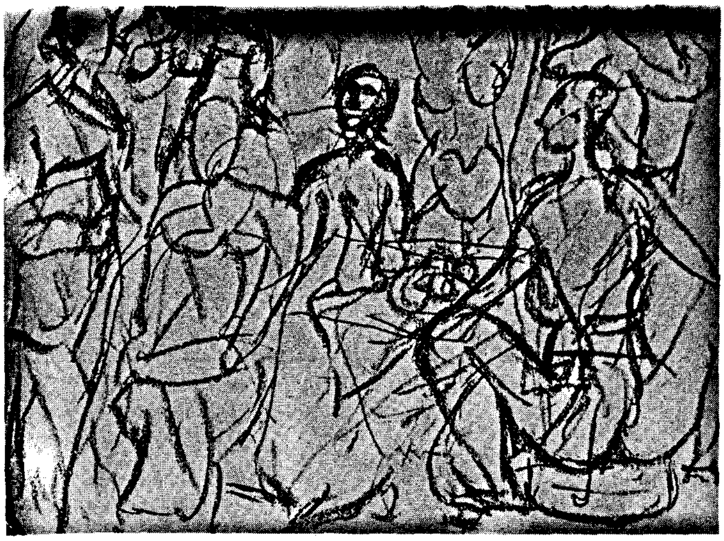
The work, then, is not a self-existent abstraction, since the solicited viewer is a constituent factor. And no analysis of the *Demoiselles* as a contained pictorial structure faces up to the work in its fullness. The picture is a tidal wave of female aggression; one either experiences the *Demoiselles* as an onslaught, or shuts it off.

But the assault on the viewer is only half of the action, for the viewer, as the painting conceives him on this side of the picture plane, repays in kind.

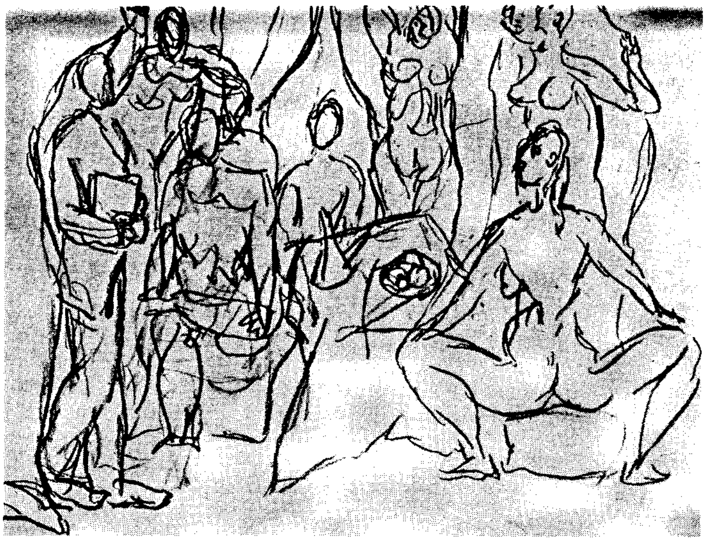
The picture impales itself on a sharp point. It is speared below by a docked tabletop, an acute corner overlaid by a fruit cluster on a white cloth. The table links two discontinuous systems; space this side of the picture couples with the depicted scene. Anybody can see that the ladies are having company. We are implied as the visiting clientele, seated within arm's reach of the fruit—accommodated and reacted to. It's like the difference between eavesdropping on a group too busy to notice, or walking in like the man they've been waiting for. Our presence rounds out the party, and the tipped tabletop plays fulcrum to a seesaw: the picture rises before us because we hold our end down.

The best commentary on a Picasso is another Picasso. The artist tends to repeat and anticipate his inventions, so that the most enigmatic of them usually turn up in simpler contexts. Thus a pen and ink sketch, clearly related to the *Demoiselles,* "explains" the kind of interspatial connection proposed in the painting (fig. 14). It shows four sailors in a tight cabaret watching two entertainers. The men are seen from the back, close-up and half-length. And you can develop the staging of the *Demoiselles*—of its center portion—by imagining a movie camera zooming in.

Evidence for Picasso's persistent interest in such continuities is common in earlier works, such as the small canvas of 1901 in Chicago, called *On the Upper Deck* (fig. 15). Since most of its depicted field is taken up by the bow of a vessel seen from amidships, we, the spectators, become fellow travelers on the same deck.[10] It is characteristic of Picasso



2 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
3 $^{15}/_{16}$ inches high (Z.II, 643).



3 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
7 $^{11}/_{16}$ inches high (unpublished).

in all his phases that he invents situations of utmost proximity so as to keep the leap from point of perception to thing perceived close and physical.

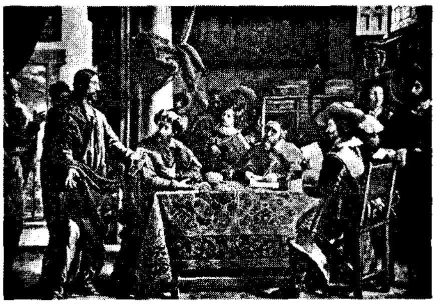
Like the *Demoiselles*, the *Upper Deck* picture is speared from below, the center rail entering like a leveled lance.[11] The very subject is a connection—a passage from out here inward into the body of the representation. And the theme of the deck renders the tilt of the ground surface ambiguous. We are watching an infield diamond rise up like a pyramid. The depicted plane, high over water, is a vertical horizontal. Simultaneously level and up, it heaves like a pitching boat. . .Half a century later Picasso paints his own shadow as it enters a room to fall on a woman—another uncanny simultaneity of horizontal and vertical (fig. 16). And in the *Demoiselles*, the same paradox of erected depth is maintained by the raised edge of the table. Of all the ways Picasso invented to insinuate the physical availability of the image, this visual metaphor of penetration is the most erotic.[12]

The table was not there from the start. Earliest among the knowncomposition studies for the *Demoiselles* is a small crayon sketch, dense with adjustments (fig. 2). It is the first of four drawings that record the seven-figure phase of the composition. The floor plan, due to the low relief character of the design, is still indeterminate; so is the surface fill—the scale of several figures is heightened to load the foreground; there is no front table as yet.

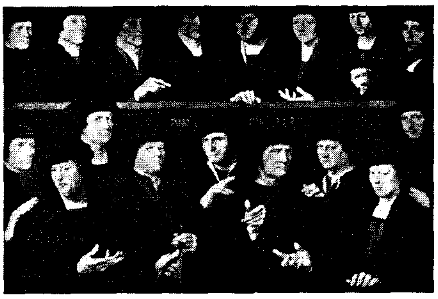
In fig. 3 (which I propose to put second), all locations are clarified; the central group is recessed, space sweeps inward on a diagonal from left to right, and the magnified scale of the curtained setting is fixed. The result is what I have called a standard Baroque composition, and we may well ask why the artist at this advanced point of his career took such a backward step. The answer may lie in the clearing of space at the bottom. Here, over the threshold, the artist traces a faint segment curve, the ghost of the table to come. He is introducing an orthogonal axis, the kind of direct attack on the picture space which needs a confrontation of depth to operate on.

In the next drawing (fig. 4, now in the Basel Museum), that faint curve solidifies as the rim of a table, the balance of which overflows into our space. Then, as if to reverse the table's direction, its shape is revised (fig. 5)—it becomes angular, suggesting the tip of a larger form reaching in from out here.[13] For the first time, its flowering crest connects forcibly with an implied body in real space—a fact acknowledged by the curious squatter whose head turns around in salute.

Three further changes in the table are due, all designed to accelerate its penetration: its upended corner sharpens to an acute point (figs. 6ff.); the full-bodied flower vase of fig. 4—it is sketched on the back of fig. 32—slims down to a cylinder and moves aside to let the tabletip show; finally, in the painted version (preceded only by the Philadelphia watercolor, fig. 13), the inward thrust of the table is both picked up and restored to the picture plane by the toss of a horned melon slice.



3a Juan de Pareja: *Calling of St. Matthew*, 1641.
(reproduced in reverse).
Madrid, Prado.

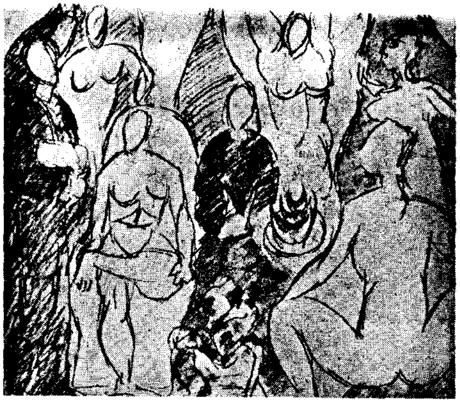


3b Dirck Jacobsz: *The Riflemen's Company*, **1529**.
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

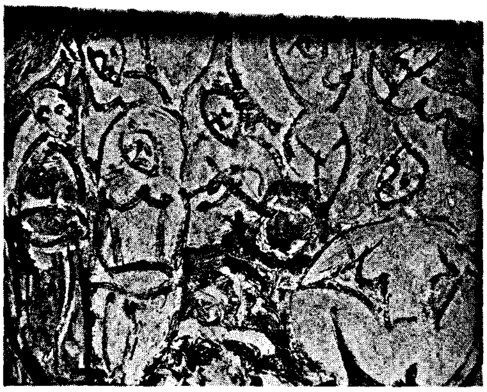
But the literal inclination of the intruding table remains in force. More than that; it sends parallels across half the picture—beginning at the upper left.

It used to puzzle me to find the hand at the curtain so disconnected. The imminence of Cubism, with its routine fragmentations, has nothing to do with it, since the hand's isolation was already fixed in the first composition drawings (figs. 2, 4, cf. also 13). As a feature preserved through successsive studies and reaffirmed in the painting, the breakaway of that hand ought to have some specific function. And so it does. Its abrupt appearance over the curtain figure with no apparent mediation of arm, makes sense if the hem of the curtain to which the hand is referred is understood as flowing inward, away from the picture plane. Assume that Picasso here wants an oblique recession, justified by an implied outstretched arm raised at 30 degrees. The disconnectedness of the hand then becomes emblematic of maximum distance.

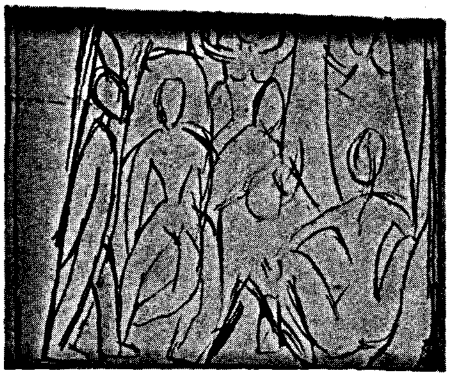
Again, other Picasso works confirm that he does not necessarily think of such left-hand curtains as flats. Compare, for instance, the 1918 drawing of a curtained interior (fig. 17); or the pompous little picture of a wench in a *deshabillé* grasping a checkered curtain (fig. 18)—clearly related to the corresponding figure in the *Demoiselles*.[14] In the latter, as in all studies for it, the curtain falls at the forestage; it rises from the figure's right foot towards the far reaching left hand deep in space.



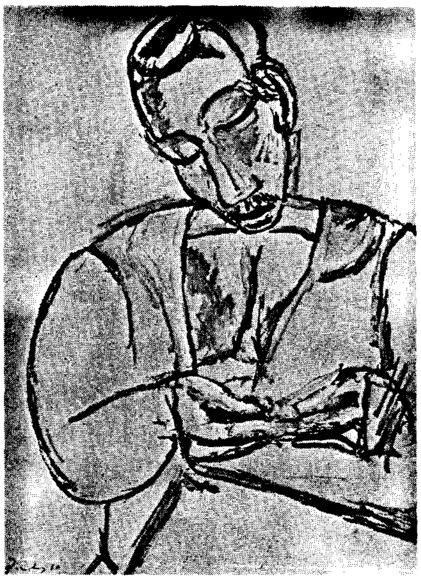
4 Study for the *Demoiselles*, crayon, pastel, 18½ inches high (Z.II, 19). Basel, Museum.



5 Study for the *Demoiselles*, 7 11/16 inches high (Z.II, 20).



6 Study for the *Demoiselles*, 3⅜ inches high (Z.VI, 980).



5a Picasso: *Sailor Rolling a Cigarette* (Study for the *Demoiselles)*, 24⅝ inches high (Z.11, 7).

The aim is to express the recession of these upper reaches, not through linear or aerial perspective, not by way of color or physical clues such as overlaps, but through the suasion of gesture, the omission of arm between head and hand—a space jump offered only to our anatomic intuition. The effect is twofold: the internal space contracts on a tent-like interior; and the left spandrel of the design confirms the tilting plane of the table. Both lower center and upper left tip and tilt in precarious unison.

But there's more. Midway between curtain and table the nude with the pinnacle elbow assumes a similar tilt. Her underslung feet, tucked out of sight, are not those of a figure sitting, standing or leaping. In the first four drawings (figs. 2-5) she does indeed sit bolt upright in a high-backed chair, her shins arranged post-and-lintel, as on the ancient Spinario.[15] But in the 12 subsequent studies her chair dissolves and she sinks back, disposing herself at last like an odalisque. She ends up recumbent—what the French call a *gisante*— but seen in bird's-eye perspective. Her action then reverses that of the curtain: not a given vertical bent into a foreshortened arch, but a recessional figure upended, an upstanding orthogonal. Yet both elements, curtain and figure, articulate the picture plane with the same rigid ambivalence. And both, through the suggestiveness of posture and gesture alone, parallel the ambivalent plane of the table.

Once again, the *gisante's* character is best understood from parallel cases. The posture is that of the sleeper in the 1918 *Beach Scene at Dinard* (fig. 19); or that of the lounger in the *Nudes* pastel of 1920 (fig. 20). With one flexed leg crossing the other and one arm overhead, such figures rehearse a canonic recumbency pose.

The idea of verticalizing supine figures has precedents. Think of Michelangelo's drawing of *Tityos*, the punished giant laid low and chained to a rock; on the reverse of the sheet turned 90 degrees, the artist traced the figure again—as a Christ resurrected.[16] Even Michelangelo's swooning *Slave* at the Louvre becomes an unstable image, for his attitude of dream, rapture, or willing death—which haunted Picasso during the *Demoiselles* period—is vertical only in material actuality, not in its psychic surrender.

In 1932 Picasso himself produced a series of drawings in which an imagined *gisante* becomes upright in manifestation. The drawings show Marie-Thérèse at an easel—his mistress-model engendering her own image. But the sleeping form slumped under her feet appears perpendicular on her canvas (fig. 21).[17] And in the very year of the *Demoiselles*, the notion of the reclining nude in vertical presentation must have been under discussion, for it occurs in a Matisse ceramic of 1907 (fig. 22).[18]

But Picasso's interest in those years is not—like Matisse's, or Marie-Thérèse's, or Michelangelo's—a *gisante* shifted through 90 degrees on the plane, like the hand on a clockface moving from nine to noon. Bent on more radical leverage, Picasso embodies the straining of a receding orthogonal back to the surface—as he does in the small oil panel of 1908, *Femme nue couchée et personnages* (fig. 23).[19]

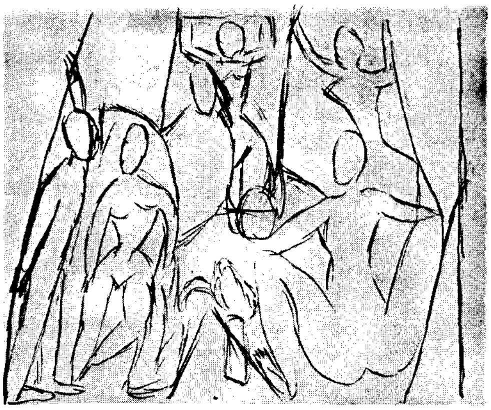
The central theme is a reclining nude in footling delivery, yet almost perpendicular on the picture plane. To dramatize the discordance, Picasso flanks her with three upright figures so that her presumptive verticality jars against their more rational kind. Unforeshortened, she remains as if insulated in her own rocking space capsule...adjacency without conjunction. And her head-on projection, that still claims undiminished scope in the field, makes the beholder work harder; one has to push mental levers to keep an erected *gisante* lying down.

And then the great lifesize *Dryad* of 1908 (fig. 24). It is not sufficient to keep reassuring ourselves that this awesome engine, stalking us in her jungle, "represents a movement into analytical Cubism"; she meant more than that to Picasso.

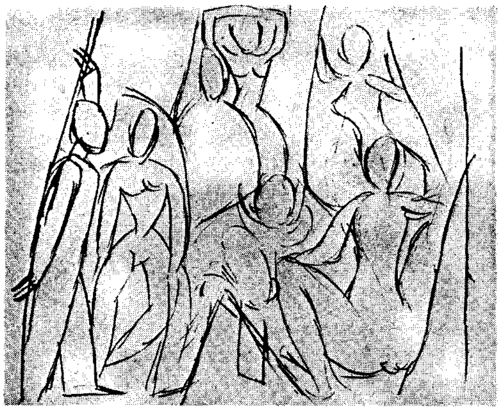
Part of her meaning is explained by a certain "Personnage féminin" (Zervos) from the end of 1905 (fig. 25). A trifling drawing—pornographic and faintly frightening at the same time—a fantasy of the cloven sex as an open arch, keystone in place, inscribed "S'il vous plaît." Posture and gesture signify invitation, solicitation—here as in the *Dryad*. But that's only half of it, for the *Dryad* painting spells an ominous change of mood from left to right, from welcome to threat. One hand still invites, but the left arm, turned down, plies its fist like a bludgeon. So menacing is the approach of this figure, so disquieting the ambivalence of its offering, that I think it no blasphemy to recall the analogous shift from grace to damnation on the hands of a Last Judgment Christ.[20]

It's a different kind of shock to learn from the preparatory drawing (fig. 26) that the *Dryad* was conceived, and fully elaborated, as a harlot slouching with parted knees in a tall chair. The painting then is a precise transposition, even to the lines of the armchair reinterpreted as vegetation...brothel reverting to jungle. And the elevation towards the spectator of what is still a recumbent pose becomes a revelation of power.

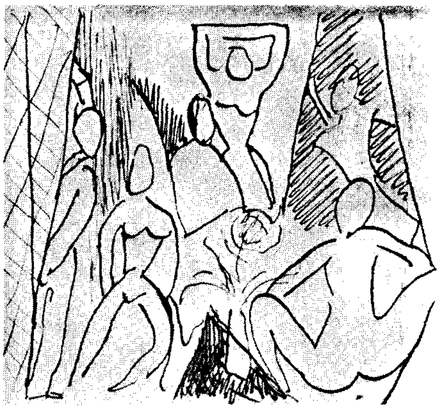
The rampant *gisante* in the *Demoiselles* carries a similar erotic charge. In the drawings (especially figs. 9 and 11), she lies back, sexually unfurled.



7 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
4¼ inches high (Z.II, 632).



8 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
4¼ inches high (Z.11, 633).



9 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
4¼ inches high (Z.II, 637)

une horizontale, as the Parisians called their cocottes, posed like the woman in the 1905 picture called *Nudes Entwined* (fig. 27). Facing her clientele, she becomes the frontal counterpart of the shameless Squatter at right. But her *élan* and the suddenness of her apparition —in the late drawings, but most of all in the painting—derive from the secret charge of her original pose, a pose of relaxed extension such as is possible only in floating, flying or lying down, where no exertion is spent on maintaining stability. Relieved of all gravitational pull, she arrives like a projectile.

Does it work? Does the figure in the painting still come across as recumbent? There are two possible answers. The fact that its recumbency has so long gone unobserved might be taken as proof of failure. On the other hand, the failure may be a lapse of ours, and a short-lived one at that. We tend to perceive as we are programmed. For the past 30 years we have been training our eyes to ricochet off the *Demoiselles* towards Cubism. A more focused approach may habituate us to seeing Picasso's "naked problems" as human figures again. And then that particular figure will begin to register on the picture plane like a Murphy bed hitting a wall, and the painter's intention will have become a success.[21]

Much of the disquiet in the left half of the picture represents Picasso's rage against the solid drop of the canvas. What he wants is a restless beat. The inflow of the curtain is steadied by its supporter. Her rigid profile abuts on a rampant *gisante*, who twins with a pillar nude, who in turn surmounts the entrant field of the table. Our vision heaves in and out. A variable pressure, like the pitching of a boat in high seas, or a similitude of sexual energy.

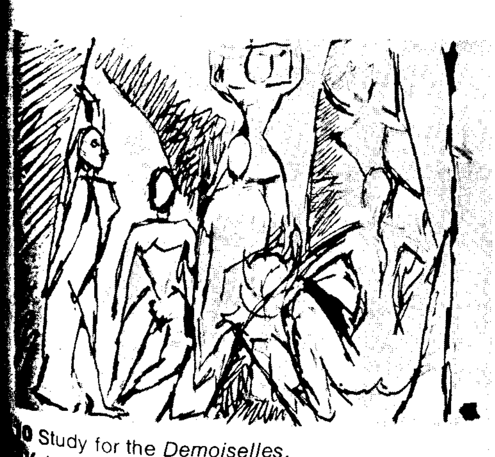
Permissive similes. The plain effect of the erected *gisante* in her tight quarter is to ensure her spatial autonomy in a narrow scheme of disjunctions. And the drawings prove that this disjunctiveness is no side effect but a program which the painting brings to fruition.

In fig. 2, which we place earliest, all seven figures congregate in a shared space. But already in the two drawings following, the four recessed figures—three women and the man at the table—are silhouetted by backdrop partitions used as framing devices. The remaining three are more cunningly set apart: the man at left by marginal placement and function; the Squatter at right by her unique orientation (of which more below); the sitter, bell-jarred in a high chair. It is as if, even at these early stages, Picasso sought to encapsulate his characters in space pens susceptible of insulation. In the painting, finally, the separation of figure from figure is consummated. There are no spatial connectives. The wedged interspaces become fields of magnetic repulsion, or simply congeal. But the famous solidified intervals in the *Demoiselles* are part-parcel of the larger conception; they confirm the autonomies already claimed for the figures. And the wonder of the final work is the coherence impressed upon elements loaded with maximum idiosyncracy.

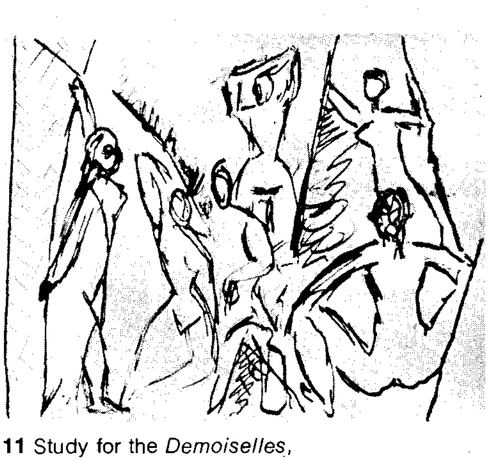
At the center of his *Demoiselles* composition Picasso originally stationed a sailor. In the three earliest drawings (figs. 2-4) he abides meekly behind his table, the object before him recognizable as a *porrón*. The shape of the *porrón*—a Spanish drinking vessel designed for pouring wine down one's throat—is characterized by an erect spout, and it had recently begun to intrigue Picasso. Staying at Gosol in the Spanish Pyrenees during the summer-fall season of the previous year, he painted it into three still lifes.[22] But he also used it tellingly in two figure compositions of 1906. In the first of these, called *Harem* (fig. 28), the male figure is surely not meant as a eunuch, since eunuchs do not sit around nude. He lolls like a proud possessor and conveys his velleity by the penchant of his *porrón*.

The *porrón* as sexual surrogate recurs in another Picasso project of that same Gosol season—a gouache known as *Three Nudes* (fig.29). It is an elaborate study for a large picture with notations on it in Picasso's hand. The project never materialized, perhaps because Picasso could not, at this fertile moment, work fast enough to keep pace with his imagination; the idea for the *Three Nudes* may have been overtaken by the *Demoiselles* project already broached in his mind.

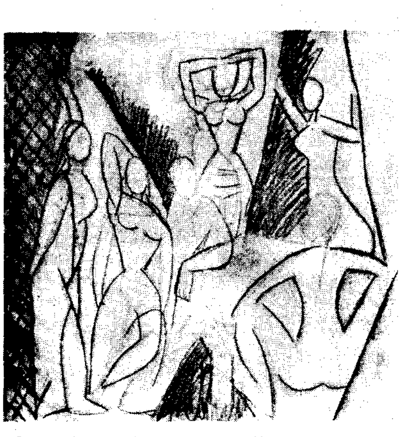
The gouache shows one standing nude, her right hand retracted in the narcissistic gesture last used in Picasso's *Two Women* (fig. 34).



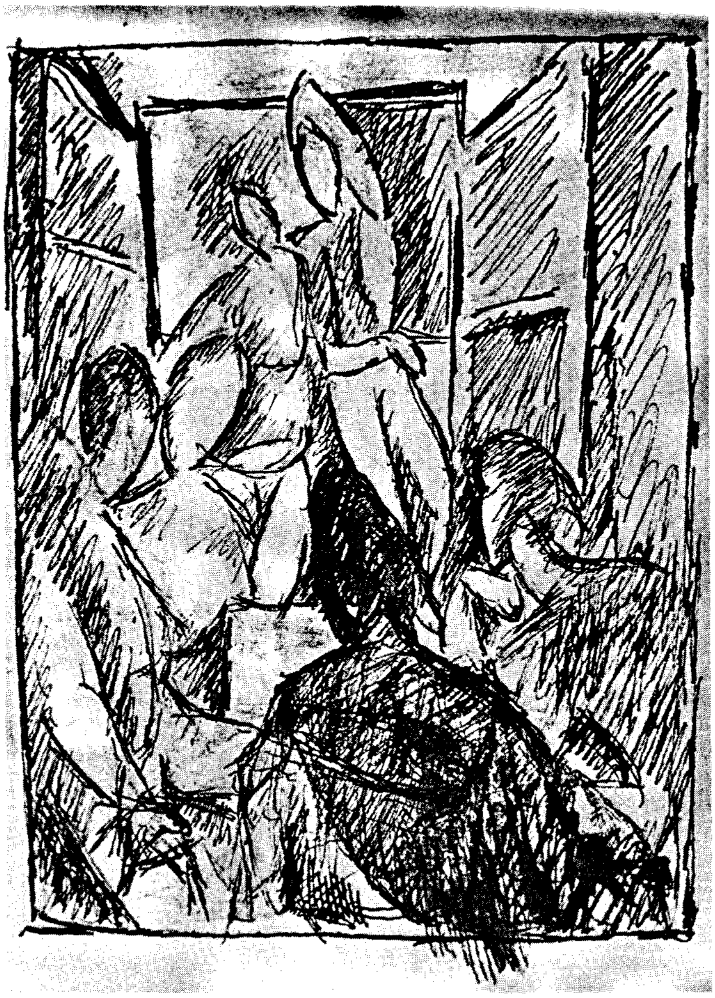
0 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
¼ inches high (Z.II, 642)



11 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
4¼ inches high (Z.II, 641).



12 Study for the *Demoiselles*,
18 15/16 inches high (Z.II, 644).



14 Picasso: Study, 1907, 7⅞ inches high (Z.II, 629).

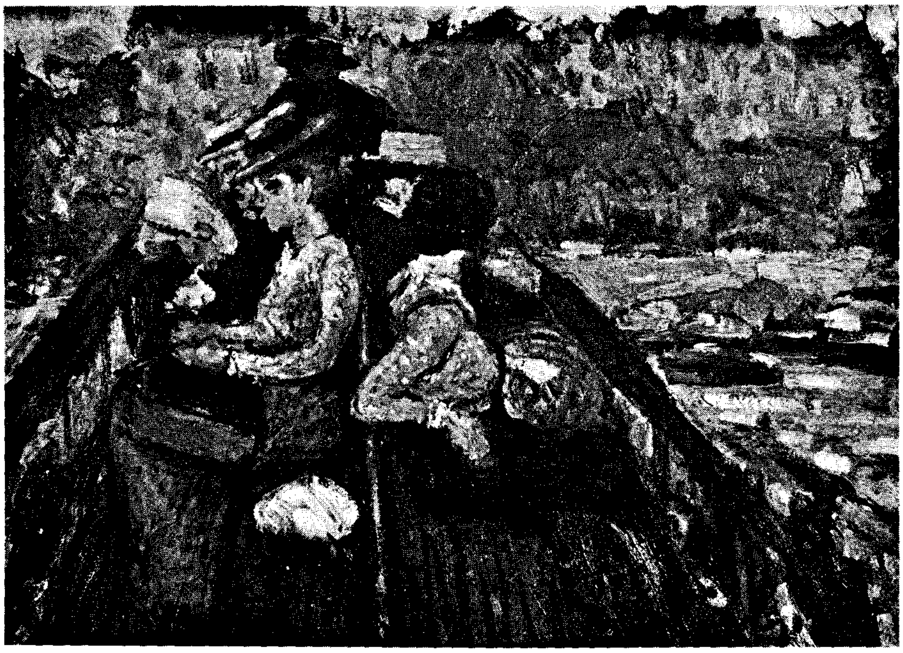
Another nude sits leaning back lazily on the edge of a bed, smoking a cigarette. Both women gaze sympathetically at the youth at their feet, a delicate lad, kneeling with penis erect. *"El tiene un porrón,"* says Picasso's note, and the visual rhyming of spout and phallus is of a publicity unknown in Picasso's finished works of the period.

The unmistakable phallism of the *porrón* in two works just preceding the *Demoiselles* fixes its meaning in the early *Demoiselles* studies. It occupies the vital center of the design: on the table; in front of the sailor; his attribute.[23]

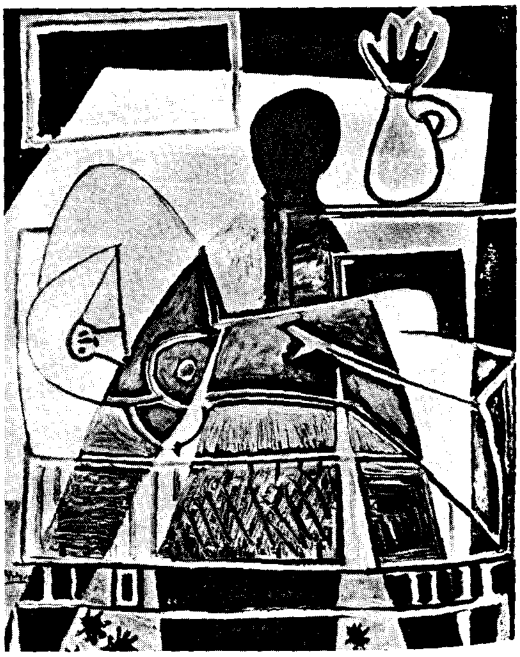
For the rest, the sailor remains enigmatic. In the earliest study (fig. 2) he shares everyone's interest in the newcomer, though his round-shouldered pose with both arms drooped under the table, seems strangely demure. He is the man inside, yet within this band of five mannish whores, his one distinction (maintained through figs. 3 and 4) is an effeminate personality. Conventional sexual character traits seem reversed. In the fourth drawing (fig. 5) he retreats further, rolling himself a cigarette; and two surviving studies for his head and half figure (fig. 5A; cf. also Z.II, 6) show him as mild and shy, with a soft down on his upper lip . . .inadequate as a personification of vice; more likely a timid candidate for sexual initiation.

In the next thirteen drawings he remains a shadowy presence; Picasso gives him no thought. Finally in figs. 11 and 12—the very drawings in which the *gisante* raises a sleepy elbow—the seated sailor assumes an articulate pose, resting his arm on the table. Immediately after, in the Philadelphia watercolor (fig.13), he disappears.[24]

There can be no doubt that the sailor was meaningful to Picasso, but the meaning eludes, the more so as his figure drops out. An interpretation would have to proceed from the contrast Picasso drew between the two men in the picture—one well inside, of effeminate temperament, inundated by womankind; the other half in and half out, halting at the divider, volatile in his transformation and identity-glides, his unstable attributes and final sex change.

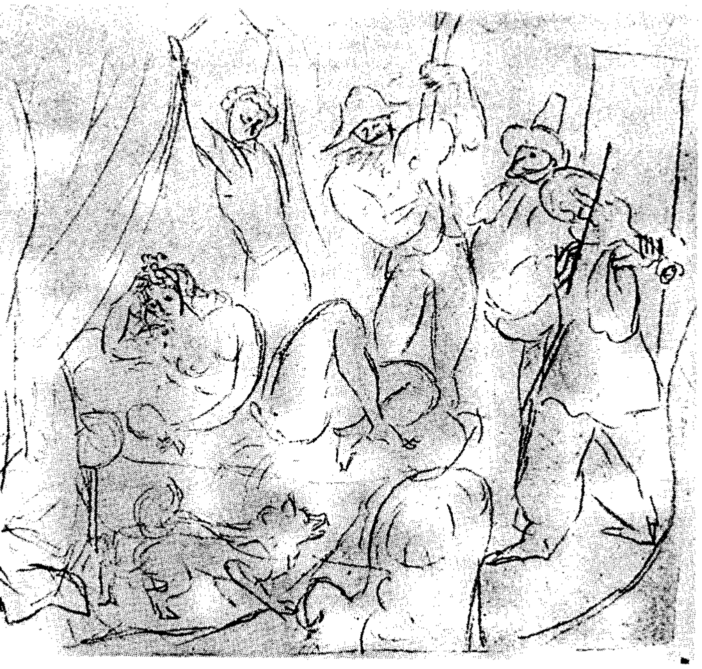


15 Picasso: *On the Upper Deck*, Paris, 1901, 19⅜ inches high. The Art Institute of Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis L. Coburn Collection.

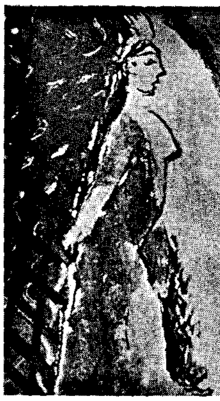


16 Picasso: *The Artist's Bedroom*, 1953, 51 3/16 inches high (Z.XVI, 99).

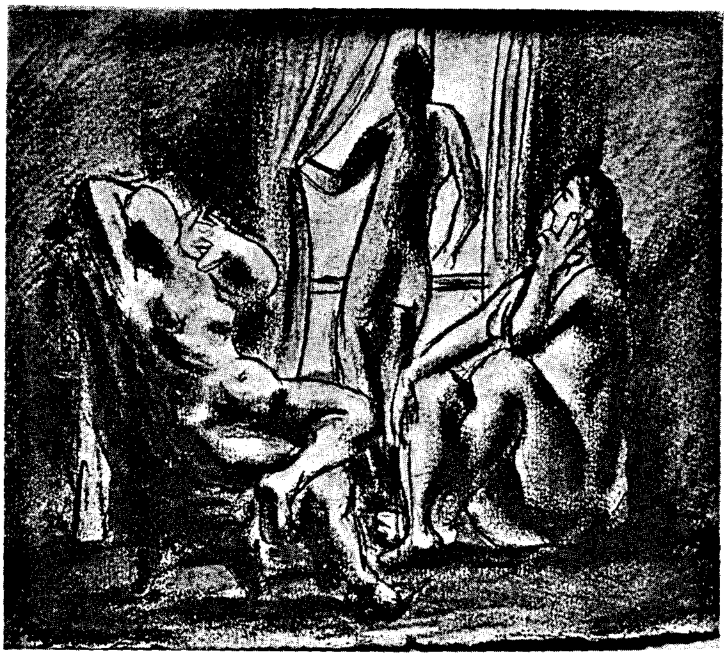
*I wish to thank Mlle. Mila Gagarine of the Editions Cahiers d'Art, Paris, and William S. Rubin for their generosity in allowing me to reproduce hitherto unpublished studies for the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*. One of these appears in the present portion of the article as fig. 3. The remainder, figs. 30 to 34, will appear in the October issue where the circumstances surrounding their re-emergence are described and more fully acknowledged in note 30. The numbering of notes and illustrations is continuous through both parts.



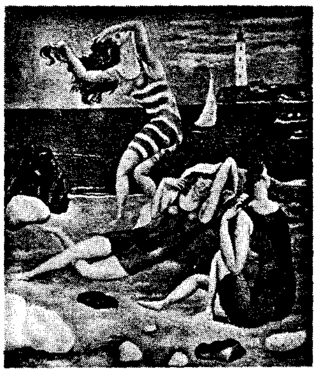
Picasso: *Reclining Nude with Har-*
uin and Pierrot, drawing, 1918,
/16 inches high (Z.III, 196).



Picasso: *Profile of a Nude Woman,* Paris,
)6, 10¼ inches high (Z.I, 350).
rnes Foudation, Merion, Pa.



20 Picasso: *Nudes,* Paris, 1920, pastel,
crayon, 8¼ inches high (Z.III, 444).



19 Picasso: *Beach Scene at Dinard,*
Biarritz, 1918 (Z.III, 237).

dré Salmon, *La Jeune peinture française,* Paris 1912, p.3: "For the first time icasso's work the expression of the faces is neither tragic nor passionate. se are masks almost entirely freed from humanity. Yet these people are not s, nor are they Titans or heroes; not even allegorical or symbolic figures. ont des problèmes nus , des chiffres blancs au tableau-noir."

niel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus,* written in 1915, published in ich, 1920; reprinted, Stuttgart, 1958, pp. 26-27; English ed., *The Rise of Cubism,* York, George Wittenborn, 1949, pp. 6-7. The text runs as follows: "Early 07 Picasso began a strange large painting depicting women, fruit and drapery, h he left unfinished . . . .Begun in the spirit of the works of 1906, it contains ne section the endeavors of 1907 and thus never constitutes a unified le . . . .In the foreground, however, alien to the style of the rest of the painting, ar a crouching figure and a bowl of fruit . . . .This is the beginning of Cubism, irst upsurge, a desperate titanic clash with all of the problems at once. These lems were the basic tasks of painting: to represent three dimensions and on a flat surface, and to comprehend them in the unity of that surface . . . .No ant 'composition' but uncompromising, organically articulated structure. In ion, there was the problem of color, and finally, the most difficult of all, f the amalgamation, the reconciliation of the whole. Rashly, Picasso attacked e problems at once."

wing are characteristic examples: "The *Demoiselles d'Avignon* is the master- of Picasso's Negro Period, but it may also be called the first cubist picture, e breaking up of natural forms, whether figures, still life or drapery, into i-abstract all-over pattern of tilting shifting planes is already cubism; . . .The *iselles* is a transitional picture, a laboratory or, better, a battlefield of trial periment; but it is also a work of formidable, dynamic power unsurpassed opean art of its time" (Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso: Forty Years of his Art,* ork, 1939, p. 60. The paragraph reappears in Barr, *Picasso: Fifty Years Art,* New York 1946, p. 56. These two works will be cited henceforth as *orty Years* and Barr, *Fifty Years* respectively.) Though the author is sensitive sheer expressionist violence and barbaric intensity" of the work, he makes mpt to reconcile this aspect of Picasso's invention with its historic impor- s "the first cubist picture."

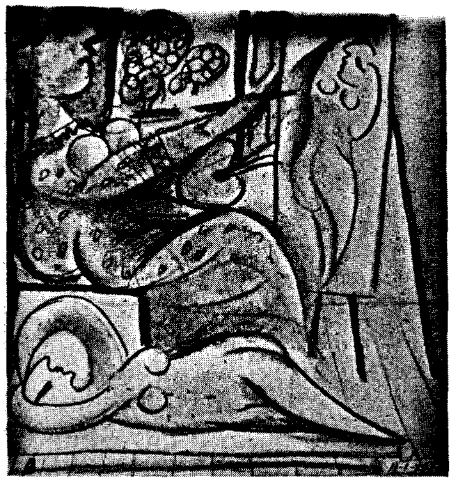
lm Boeck and Jaime Sabartés *(Picasso,* New York/Amsterdam, 1952, p. troduce the *Demoiselles* as follows: "In the course of 1906 Picasso turned nd more resolutely away from subjective expression and . . .concentrated ctive, formal problems. He thus shares in the general artistic current of ears . . ." Like the Fauves, Picasso "subordinated subject matter to form conceived as an end in itself . . .The history of the composition . . .illustrates the process by which form asserts its supremacy over subject matter." The authors refer only to one of the preliminary studies, our fig. 4. The rest of the discussion concerns the sources of the work in Cézanne, El Greco, Iberian and Negro sculpture and its anticipation of Cubism.

John Golding ("The Demoiselles d'Avignon," *Burlington Magazine, C (1958), pp.155-63):*
"In the last analysis . . . .the *Demoiselles* is related more closely to Cézanne's canvases of bathing women than to his earlier, less structural figure pieces. Indeed it would have been quite natural if, when Picasso became more interested in the purely pictorial problems involved in composing and unifying a picture the size of the *Demoiselles,* he had begun to look with greater concentration at Cézanne's later figure work . . ."

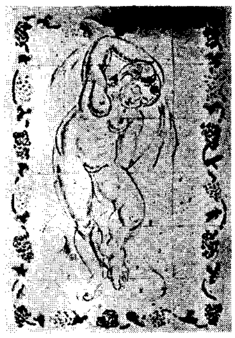
Robert Rosenblum *(Cubism and Twentieth-Century Art,* New York 1960, p. 25 henceforth cited as Rosenblum, *Cubism*), succeeds in evoking the work's "barbaric, dissonant power," its "magical force," and "mysterious psychological intensity"; after which he concludes: "The radical quality of *Les Demoiselles* lies, above all, in its threat to the integrity of mass as distinct from space. In the three nudes at the left, the arcs and planes that dissect the anatomies begin to shatter the traditional sense of bulk; and in the later figures at the right, this fragmentation of mass is even more explicit. The nudes' contours now merge ambiguously with the icy-blue planes beside them, . . .it is exactly this new freedom in the exploration of mass and void, line and plane, color and value—independent from representational ends—that makes *Les Demoiselles* so crucial for the still more radical liberties of the mature years of Cubism."

Edward Fry *(Cubism,* New York 1966, pp. 13-14): "[Picasso's] departures from classical figure style [in the *Demoiselles*] . . .mark the beginning of a new attitude toward the expressive potentialities of the human figure. Based not on gesture and physiognomy but on the complete freedom to re-order the human image, this new approach was to lead to the evocation of previously unexpressed states of mind, . . .The treatment of space is, however, by far the most significant aspect of *Les Demoiselles,* especially in view of the predominant role of spatial problems in the subsequent development of cubism. The challenge facing Picasso was the creation of a new system of indicating three-dimensional relationships that would no longer be dependent on the convention of illusionistic, one point perspective."

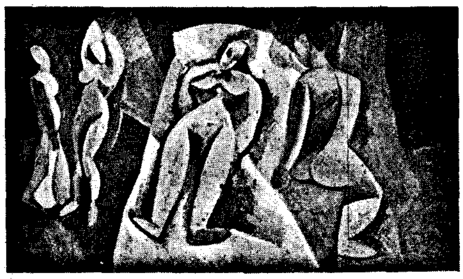
Douglas Cooper *(The Cubist Epoch,* Exhibition Catalogue, Los Angeles and New York, 1970, pp. 22-23): "It is not easy to appreciate or judge the angular and aggressive *Demoiselles* as a work of art today because it was abandoned



21 Picasso: *La Pose nue* drawing, 1933.



22 Matisse: *Dancer*, 1907, ceramic, 22⅞ inches high, Nice-Cimiez, Musée Matisse.



23 Picasso: *Reclining Nude with Figures*, Paris, 1908, 14⅛ inches high (Z.II, 688).

as a transitional and often re-worked canvas, with many stylistic contradictions unresolved....Thus the *Demoiselles* is best regarded as a major event in the history of modern painting, where Picasso posed many of the problems and revealed many of the ideas which were to preoccupy him for the next three years. In short, it is an invaluable lexicon for the early phase of Cubism." Cooper adds that the repainting of three of the heads under the impact of Negro sculpture "led him to inject an element of fierceness into an otherwise emotionally detached composition."

And most recently, Jean Leymarie (*Picasso: Métamorphoses et unité*, Geneva, 1971, p. 29): "The *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, whose heroic genesis and legendary fate are familiar, reversed the direction of modern art by throwing the center of gravity upon the picture itself and its creative tension. All earlier illustrative or sentimental values are dissolved and converted into plastic energy."

[4] Barr, *Fifty Years*, p. 57.

[5] Barr, *Forty Years*, p.60 and *Fifty Years*, p. 57. Picasso's statement appears to be made in conversation with Kahnweiler in December, 1933, published by the latter in "Huit Entretiens," *Le Point*, October, 1952, p. 24. (See now *Picasso on Art, A Selection of Views*, ed. Dore Ashton, New York 1972, Chapter X; hereafter cited as Ashton; *Picasso on Art.)* "...According to my original idea, there were supposed to be men in it,...There was a student holding a skull. A seaman also. The women were eating, hence the basket of fruits which I left in the painting. Then, I changed it and it became what it is now...." The gist of Picasso's statement must have been known before its late publication in 1952. Barr does not recall whether he heard it from Picasso directly, but his *Forty Years* catalogue states in the caption for our fig. 4: "The figure at the left, Picasso says (1939), is a man with a skull in his hand entering a scene of carnal pleasure." Concerning the skull in this drawing, see Part II of my text. (October).

[6] Barr, *Fifty Years*, p. 57; *ibid., Masters of Modern Art*, New York 1954, p. 68.

[7] John Golding, "The Demoiselles d'Avignon," *op. cit.*, p. 163.

[8] The three composition studies first published by Barr in *Forty Years* p. 60 (1939), reappear in the author's *Fifty Years*, p. 56 (1946), in William Rubin's *Picasso in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art*, Exhibition Catalogue, New York 1972, p. 196, and in Volume II, Part 1, of the Zervos *Catalogue*, 1942, Nos. 19-21. (Christian Zervos, *Picasso, Oeuvre Catalogue*, Editions Cahiers d'Art, Paris, 1932ff. Hereafter cited as Z. followed by volume and figure number.) Of the thirteen composition studies published in Z. II, Part 2, 1942, only one has been briefly cited in the literature (by G. Bandmann, see note 21 below).

[9] Alois Riegl, *Das Holländische Gruppenporträt*, Vienna 1931, first published in the *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses in Wien*, Vol. 23, Vienna 1902.

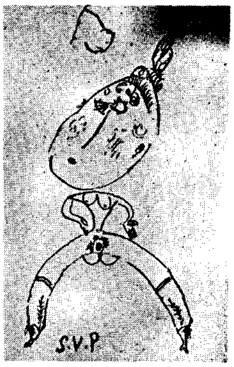
[10] For the present argument it is immaterial whether our "upper deck" is that of a river boat or a horse-drawn double-decker omnibus crossing a bridge. Picasso's reported remark on the subject is cited in Pierre Daix and Georges Boudaille, *Picasso, The Blue and Rose Periods*, Greenwich, Conn., 1967, p. 182. (Hereafter cited as D-B, followed by catalogue reference, e.g. V, 61 for the *Upper Deck.)*

[11] To appreciate the boldness of Picasso's spatial conception in the *Upper Deck* I suggest comparing George Caleb Bingham's treatment of a similar subject in his *Raftsmen Playing Cards*, ca. 1847, City Art Museum of St. Louis (Mo.).

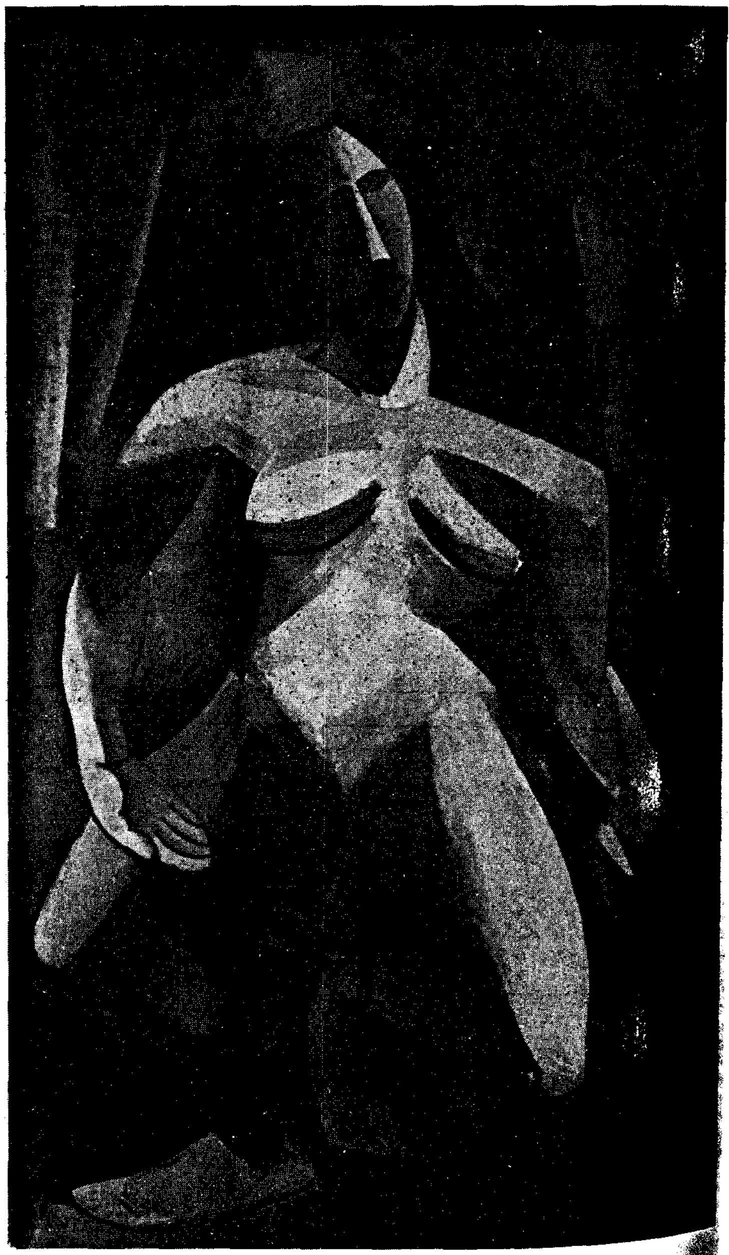
a book held open between parted thighs; or the 1910 *Dressing Table* (same collection) with the key stuck in the keyhole at lower center; or the collage *Au Bon Marché* of ca. 1913 (Z.II.378; Michael Newbury Collection, Chicago), where Rosenblum first observed the sexual pun in the words TROU ICI at bottom center. More than a boyish joke, such a motif betrays an organic conception of the picture and an erotic relation to it.

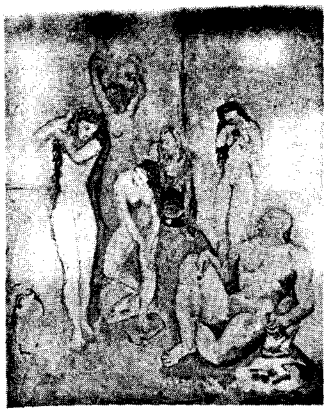
[13] As the form of the table becomes the subject of a separate thought, it suggests a separate painting: the still life called *Vase of Flowers* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Cf. Rubin *Picasso, op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

25 Picasso: *Personnage féminin*, 1905, 8¼ inches high (Z.XXII, 296).

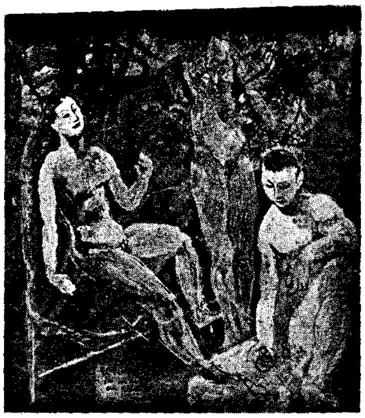


24 Picasso: the *Dryad*, 1908, 72 7/8 inches high. Leningrad, Hermitage.





28 Picasso: *The Harem*, Gosol, 1906, 60¾ inches high (Z.I, 321). Cleveland Museum.



29 Picasso: *Three Nudes*, Gosol, 1906, 24⅞ inches high (Z.I, 340). The Alex Hillman Corporation, N.Y.

[14] Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pa. (Z. I, 350; D-B XVI.33); most closely related to our figs. 11 and 12.

[15] An unladylike pose which Picasso invests with almost Pharaonic solemnity. For related studies see Z. II, 647; the unused two-figure group Z. II, 650; and D-B., D.XVI.20, a pastel and charcoal sketch for the oil, Z. II, 651.

[16] A.E. Popham and Johannes Wilde, *The Italian Drawings of the XV and XVI Centuries in the Collection . . . at Windsor Castle,* London 1949, Cat. 429. Cf. also Michelangelo's study for a rising Lazarus conceived as an uprighting of the Adam in the Sistine *Creation* fresco; reprod. in Johannes Wilde, *Italian Drawings . . . in the British Museum. Michelangelo and his Studio,* London 1953, Cat. 16.

[17] Not in Zervos. The theme of the drawing, with its psychoanalytic suggestion of externalizing a private fantasy, is sustained through a dozen similar studies, Z. VIII, 76-85.

[18] Cf. Albert E. Elsen, *The Sculpture of Henri Matisse,* New York 1971, p. 103. The ceramic is in the Musée Matisse, Nice-Cimiez.

[19] Z.II, 688; the deliberateness of the arrangement is evident from the preparatory charcoal study, Z.II, 689.

[20] Concerning *La Grande Dryade* of 1908 in the Hermitage, Leningrad: The change from an upturned right hand to a left hand turned down, i.e. from acceptance to repudiation, is traditional (Giotto, Gaddi, etc.), and is subtly modified in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,* to which Picasso refers in three separate statements quoted in Ashton, *Picasso on Art,* Chapters IV and XI.

On the sexual significance which Picasso assigns to the interchange of right and left feet—in the *Dryad* and numerous other works—see L. Steinberg, *Other Criteria,* New York 1972, p.147f. The animalism of his jungle women of the 1907-08 period becomes explicit in a remarkable oil study, Z.II,39, where a nude woman's left leg turns into the hind leg of a quadruped with a hock on the reverse side of the knee. Her lower body is half satyress.

For the traditional formalist interpretation of the *Dryad,* see Rosenblum, *Cubism,* pp. 28-29: "*La Grande dryade* continues something of the constructive fantasies of the nudes of 1906 and 1907, but it also offers a new sense of order and rational exploration that replaces the more impulsive approach of the earlier works. The figure now seems to be studied in a manner that, for Picasso, is relatively dispassionate, for the artist here quietly examines the elementary building blocks of three-dimensional form . . . ."

Also Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Picasso and Man,* Exhibition Catalogue, Toronto-Montreal, 1964, p. 62: "(Sculpturally conceived) the planes of (the great *Dryad)* are clear and bold, but this three-dimensional quality is also related to the forceful movement of her body and of our eyes around that body . . . .Picasso simplified er face from a mask, suggestive of African works, to a shape without any associaons. The *Dryad* represents a movement into analytical cubism in its colors and e emphasis upon form; she is also one step further in that direction in the xpansive, complicated movement she provides for our eyes."

An attempt to acknowledge the work in its evocative ambiguity is Charles Sterng's: "The *Dryad* appears fittingly among the trees of a dense and dark wood. she seated? Is she about to leap? She is nothing but the embodiment of converg-g energies, and, before learning that she is divine, we know that she is indestructie, that she is as fierce as the wild beasts whose faculty of sudden relaxation also hers" (*The Hermitage,* New York 1958, p. 194).

he figure's reclining posture has in fact been observed at least once before Günther Bandmann's *Picasso: Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, Stuttgart 1965, p. "Diese Gestalt könnte auch als Liegefigur in Aufsicht vorstellbar sein" (This ure is also imaginable as reclining and seen from above).

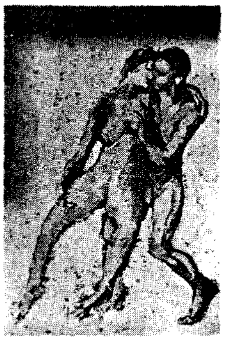
here are amusing anticipations of Picasso's effect in Mannerist art, e.g., Joseph intz (1564-1609), *Amor and Psyche* (Galerie Peter Griebert, Munich; reprod. he *Burlington Magazine,* CXIV, June 1972, p.lxvii). Also relevant are those modern up photos that produce more or less upright images by taking a bird's-eye w of a reclining model, such as Marilyn Monroe.

casso's still lifes with *porrón* are: Z.1,342 (Phillips Collection, Washington, .); Z.I, 343 (Leningrad, Hermitage); and Z. XXII, 458 (cf. also, Z. XVII,322, a wing of 1957). The vessel also occurs in two Matisse still lifes of 1904-05 (Barr, tisse. *His Art and His Public,* New York 1951, pp. 314-15, there erroneously

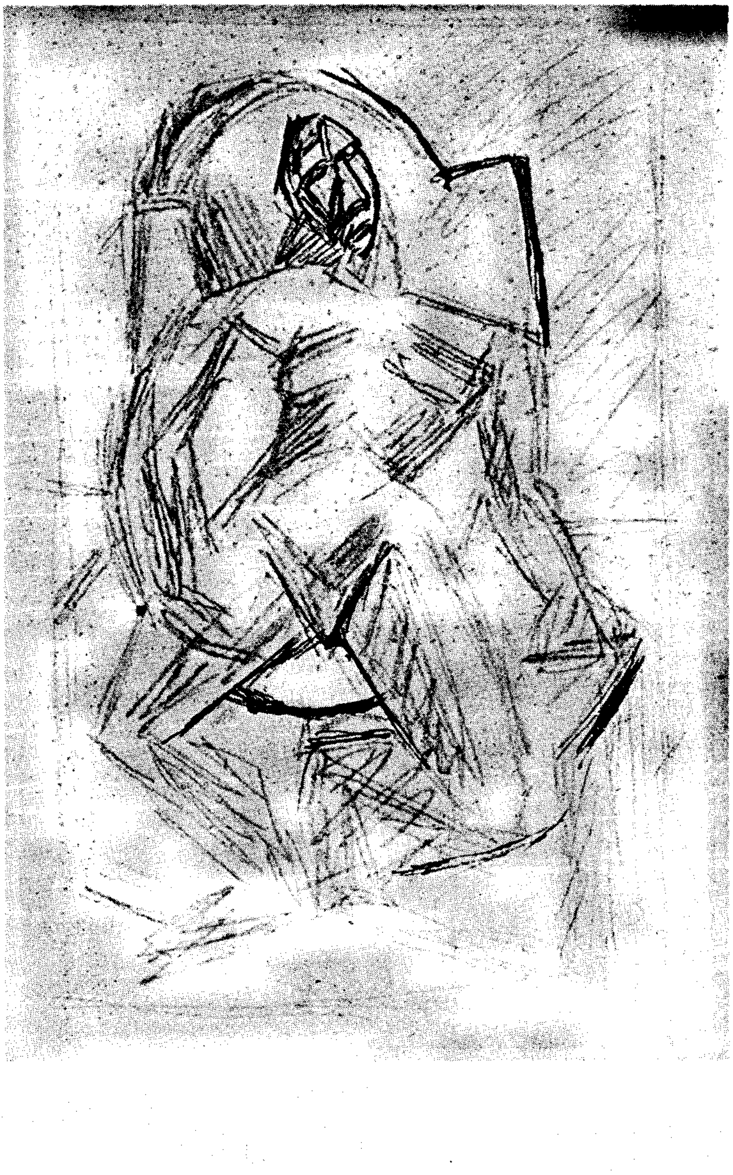
James Gillray's lampoon *Ci-devant Occupations*" (1805; reproduced in E.Lucie-Smith, *Eroticsm in Western Art*, New York, 1972, fig. 111), where two famous ladies are shown dancing nude before the fat statesman Barras, while young Napoleon at the far right draws a curtain aside to look in. On the table in front of Barras stands a bottle charged with the same surrogate function as Picasso's *porrón*. No wonder that Picasso dropped the motif. The aggressive toss of the horny melon in the definitive version is a subtler device.

[24] In figs. 11 and 12, the sailor at table and the recumbent nude take on a marked resemblance to an established pattern—Picasso himself watching a girl asleep as in the watercolor of 1904, called *Contemplation* (Collection Mrs. Bertram Smith, New York; reprod. in Rubin, *Picasso, op cit.,* p. 31). The resemblance suggests that Picasso allowed, or discovered, a fleeting self-identification with the sailor's figure—whereupon he removed him entirely. Picasso reappears as a sailor in a drawing of 1915 by de Chirico; he is seated with four friends at table, his jacket unbuttoned, his shirtless chest tattooed with an anchor (see Roland Penrose, *Portrait of Picasso,* 2nd ed., New York, 1971, p. 45).

27 Picasso: *Nudes Entwined*, Paris, 1905, 10 15/16 inches high (Z.I, 228).

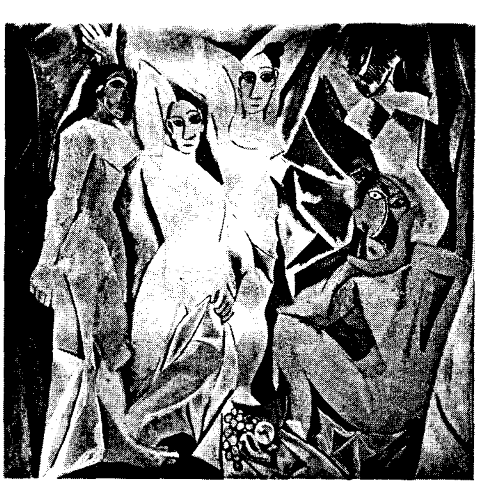


26 Picasso: Study for the *Dryad,* 7⅞ inches high (Z.II, 661).



The Philosophical Brothel

BY LEO STEINBERG



1 Picasso: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907, 96 inches high.
Museum of Modern Art, New York.

PART 2*

Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* project began as a grouping of seven figures that included two men—a sailor seated within, and a mystery man at the left clutching a curtain.

In 1939, when Barr published his great exhibition catalogue, *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art,* all conclusions as to the character of the curtain figure had to be drawn from four pieces of evidence —three available drawings (figs. 4, 5, 47)** and one reported remark of the master: that the man, meant as a student, had at first carried a skull.[25] On this evidence Barr based his subsequent statements that Picasso originally "conceived the picture as a kind of *memento mori*, allegory or charade"; but he felt bound to add that the painter, whose passions were never those of a puritan, must have approached the theme "with no very fervid moral intent." And again, "obviously Picasso was interested in other than homiletic problems."[26]

But this left an anomalous situation. Would Picasso have embarked on one of his grandest projects with a lukewarm uninterest in its subject and a morality contrary to his feelings? For though he may link sex with danger, Picasso does not link it with sin. Nor is it like him to deploy grapes, apples and melons as symbols of pernicious indulgence. Picassso likes eating and he mistrusts people who don't.

Troubled by these anomalies — I must at this point refer to personal history—I looked again at the known drawings. Not one of them showed a death's head, not even that oft-reproduced Basel sheet (fig. 4), in which a whole generation of Barr's readers have claimed to see it—though in this drawing the large rectangular object on the man's arm is neither shaped, nor scaled, nor held like a skull.[27] It was then that I began to restudy the genesis of the work—without reference to any *memento mori* idea, or to that dubious skull on which it was founded, but for which no hard evidence had yet come forth. In a public lecture at the Metropolitan Museum (in March, 1972), I proposed to proceed with no further regard to any initial death theme, unless hitherto unpublished drawings appeared.

The approach was at least fertile. It brought information from Mila Gagarine, successor to the late Christian Zervos in the continuing Picasso *Catalogue,* that a number of unknown drawings for the *Demoiselles* had just come to light, including several that referred to the man with the skull—"*il s'agit bien d'un crâne.*" They were to be published in a forthcoming supplementary volume during 1973.[28] At the same time, William Rubin of the Museum of Modern Art, with whom I had discussed the matter, found occasion to mention the disputed skull to Picasso himself during a visit early last April. The upshot was unexpectedly rich. Whoever has been unable to see a skull in the Basel drawing (fig. 4), is now officially vindicated, for the drawing hails from a stage when the emblem had been long discarded. And the presence of the skull at an earlier stage need no longer be taken on faith. On the other hand, the *memento mori* interpretation remains as doubtful as ever. Questioned by Rubin, Picasso confirmed that the original conception of *Les Demoiselles* had indeed included the skull motif and then produced an unpublished sketchbook (24.5x19.5 cm) containing four pages of studies directly related to the curtain figure—whom he identified as a "medical student" (figs. 30-34).

A medical student? Rubin comments as follows: "Since in discussing the Student, Picasso made a special point of identifying him as a *medical* student, the skull may be considered a casual medical-school, i.e. 'professional,' prop....His being a medical student obviates any necessity to read the picture allegorically as does Barr (the skull being an anecdotal prop), but by no means eliminates the possibility that the picture also functions on this level."[29]

But suppose we press further. Why a medical student rather than a student of say, engineering, law or philosophy? Had Picasso wished to evoke the idea of a contemplation of death, he could have given the skull to any man, everyman. Why to a medical student dressed in a business suit? Does that uniform make him an anti-hero, like Joyce's Buck Mulligan—clinical and irreverent before the forces of life? Think of the interns in *Ulysses*—Medical Dick and Medical Davy—who also land in the stews.

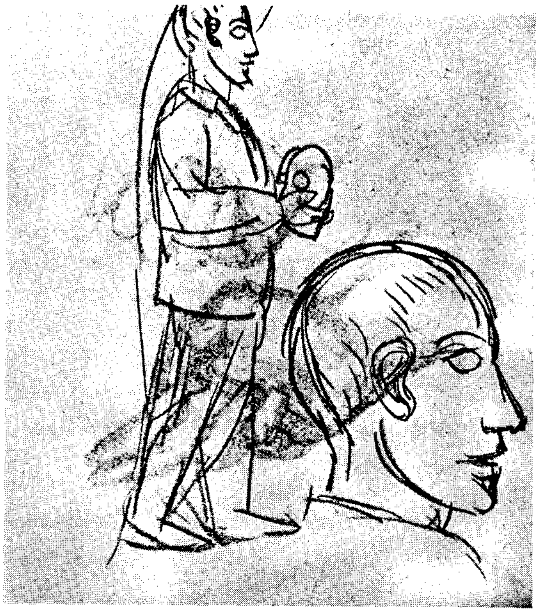
And why the skull as his symbol? It is not even an efficient ma of its bearer's profession, since it could as easily designate a gra digger, or a life-drawing instructor. And contrariwise, is not a medi man more securely defined by such insignia as Aesculapian sta urine bottle, scalpel or stethoscope? We are still left in need of o answer to two distinct questions: why choose a medical student a why make his symbol a skull?

Perhaps because a medical student is the one member of hum society who can, and who does, look at a skull with thoughts ot than thoughts of death—i.e., looks at it as an object of scienti enquiry. It is surely significant that this particular skull is interchan second drawing shows the man burdened with both book ull (fig. 34), and thereafter with a book only (figs. 2-4), suggests ese attributes served as symbols of knowledge, and of a par- brand of knowledge—non-participatory and theoretical. They the deadening approach of analysis. Hence the death's head hand of the student—as against the sailor's ithyphallic life l. For while the naïve sailor behind his Bacchic *porrón* is in ck of it, his counterpart, the knowing man at the curtain, es the outsider. Not a personifier of pious death consciousness, s R. de la Souchère has suggested) a man condemned by g into sin, into that house of woman which goes down to ambers of death, but the opposite—a man apart, self-exiled ance on studious dissection; condemned for not entering. In ntext of Picasso's *Demoiselles* studies, as a man placed in in the plane of the curtain, the student stands for an attitude. er looks at the nudes in his path; despite the summary character drawings, Picasso always succeeds in turning his head up, nce away. He is the non-participant, the excluded one in the e game of inclusion.

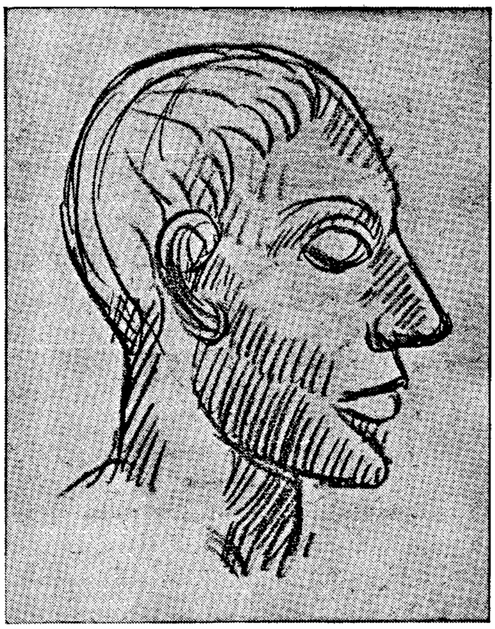
e we must have an allegorical starting point, I suggest that *moiselles* project began, not as a charade on the wages of t as an allegory of the involved and the uninvolved in confronta- ith the indestructible claims of sex. For Picasso, 70 years ago, ot listening to Church fathers, but hearing the voice of the opher who had written: "Christianity gave Eros poison to drink: not die of it but degenerated—into a vice."[30]

aking to Kahnweiler in December, 1933, Picasso referred to kes he and his friends used to make about the women in the *selles* painting, identifying one of them as Picasso's girlfriend, nde, another as Marie Laurencin, a third as the grandmother poet friend Max Jacob — "all in a brothel in Avignon!"[31] Since le characters did not survive the initial studies, not even mock s for them have come down; but it would be in character for so to have had specific persons in mind. Rubin discerns Picas- wn features in the youth with the skull in fig. 30; and he proposes d both men in fig. 3 as partial self-portraits, aspects of Picasso's ature.[32] This is surely a strong possibility. On the other hand, bolic role for the curtain figure as the sexual "outsider" may llowed it to coalesce with successive identifications. Not only the figure quickly grow tall and lean (figs. 34, 2, 3, and 4), belie the artist's own physical type; in fig. 5, the last to include ll cast of seven, the man at the curtain becomes bald and ctly older, claiming resemblance to Max Jacob (figs. 35-38) ognomic clues are of course always inadequate, but it remains gestive alternative to link the variable male in the original cast *Demoiselles* with the sexual personality of the poet—a ped- morally drawn to, but repelled by, the love of woman, fluc- g between contrition and what he called his *"amours d'enfer."* casso's former roommate, literary mentor and most intimate of those years, he must have caused the artist to ponder that rious housing of sexuality which is a man's body; and to brood e difference between possessing, or being possessed by, sex.[33]

man at the curtain passes through rapid changes of personality gins, skull in hand and left arm disconnected, as a stocky youth lose-cropped hair (fig. 30); his precise profile interests Picasso h to repeat and enlarge upon (fig. 31). The skull-holding gesture is studied in two further drawings (figs. 32, 33).[34] Immediately ards, in the same sketchbook, the figure becomes long and

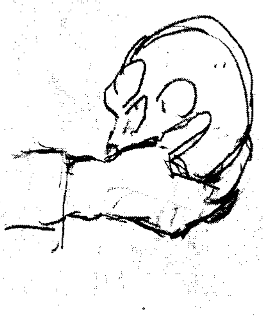


30 Study for the *Demoiselles*, 9⅝ inches high (unpublished).

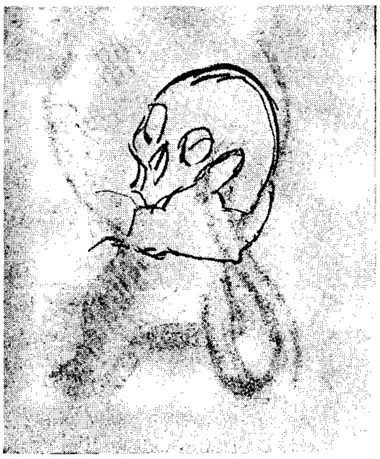


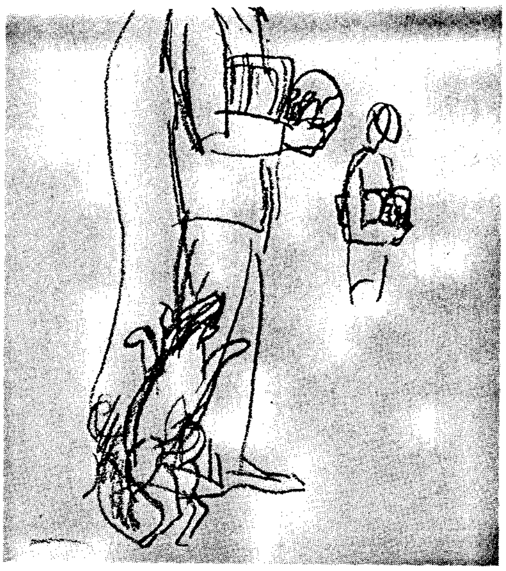
31 Study for the *Demoiselles*, 9⅝ inches high (unpublished).

32 Study for the *Demoiselles*, 9⅝ inches high (unpublished).

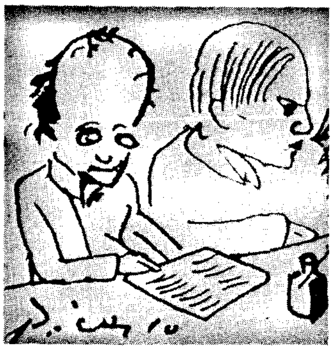


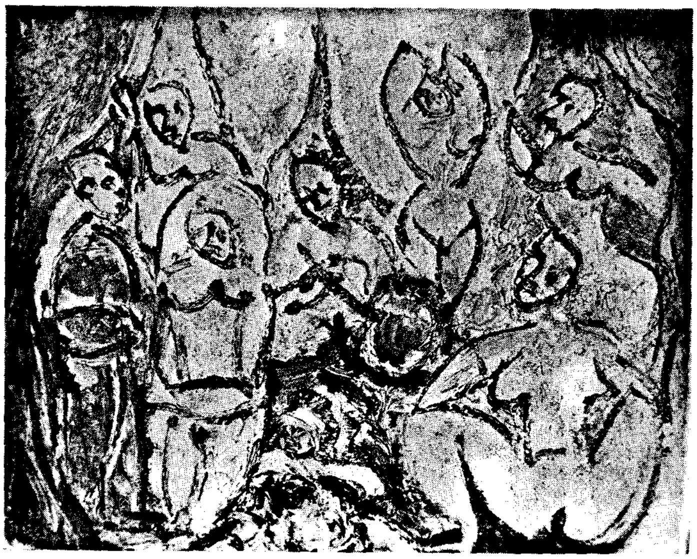
33 Study for the *Demoiselles*, 9⅝ inches high (unpublished).





34 Picasso: Study for the *Demoiselles*, 9⅝ inches high (unpublished).





Top left (**36**): Photo of Max Jacob, (detail), Montmartre ca. 1907.
Right (**37**): Picasso's 1905 drawing (detail) of himself with Jacob.
Center (**35**): Study for the *Demoiselles*, 7 11/16 inches high (Z.II, 20).
Bottom (**38**): Photo of Jacob, H.P. Roché, and Picasso, 1915 (detail).

[illegible] a book (or portfolio?) under his arm joins the death's head as though this second attribute were needed to sustain the significance of the first. In three further drawings (figs. 2-4), the man's character remains constant, but paper replaces the skull—until at last all attributes disappear.

Rid of symbolic props in the last full-cast study (fig. 35), the short, balding, ex-medical student with the plump features of Max Jacob seizes the curtain with both his hands. In the drawings that follow (figs. 6-9), he grasps it with increasing determination and his body leans forward as though inclined to drag the curtain along—as though he had the power, or the intention, to foreclose the act. Finally (figs 10-12), the figure undergoes a sex change and petrifies. The face mask she wears in the painting protects a secret history.

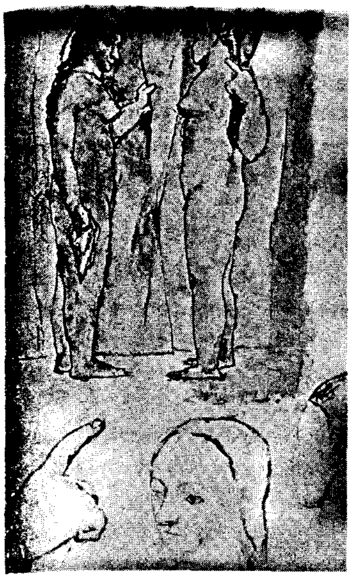
But her marginal relationship to the rest of the cast remains intact; she differs from the nudes on stage in being gowned. Yet she belongs, and is like the picture itself, being unveiled by her garment as the picture is by its curtain. Her *déshabillé* introduces the theme of exposure. She is the overture, the true curtain raiser. The character that invested her figure from the beginning still clings; she remains non-participant and go-between, not part of the revelation but one who reveals. And the crucial change in her role consists in this, that the brothel inmates, instead of reacting to her dramatic entrance, are through her made to react to us.

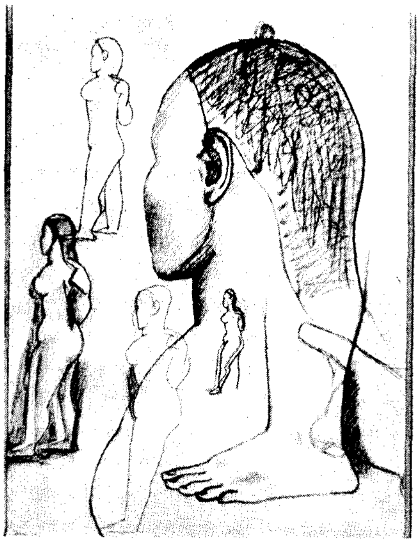
What then has happened to the original drama—the polarity of external knowledge and initiation? As the action turns through 90 degrees to confront the viewer, the picture ceases to be the representation of an adventure enjoyed by one or two men and becomes instead an experience of ours, an experience, that is, of the painting. The change seems drastic; from an allegory of man meeting woman, to the adventure of a collision with art. As if the whole theme had been shunted from the subject of sex to that of painting itself—which is, in a sense, what has always been said, that the picture has become "significant" as painting only. Whatever the original subject had been—wages of sin or detachment versus engagement—it seems superseded when the whole confrontation proceeds between the contained work of art over there and its observer outside.

But, I think, the picture says otherwise. It declares that if you wholly accept and undergo the esthetic experience, if you let it engulf and "frighten" you—as Gertrude Stein says Alice B. Toklas was frightened—then you become an insider. It is in the contagion of art that the types of knowledge, the external and the engaged, are fused, and the distinction between outsider and insider falls away.

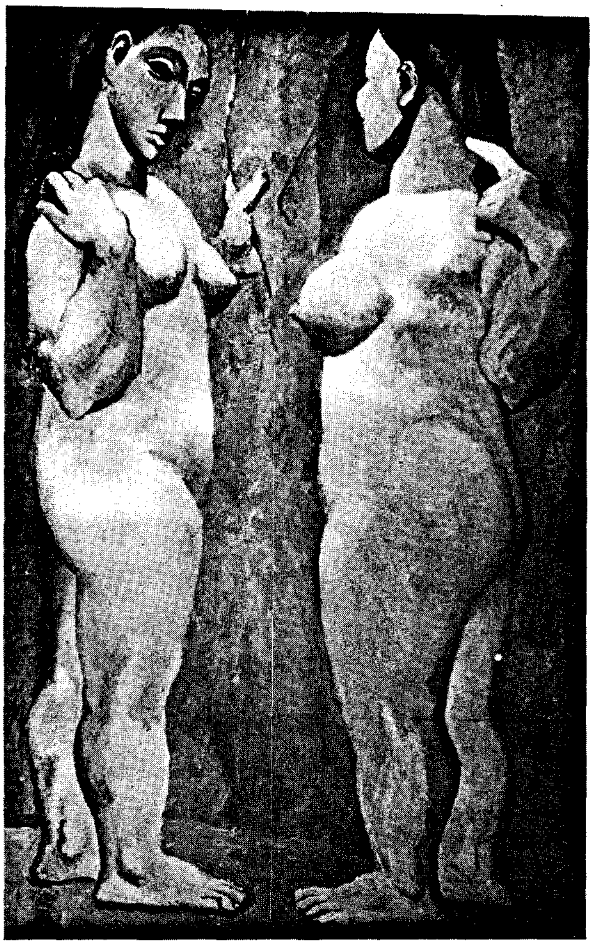
Not every picture is capable of such overriding contagion. Few works of art impose the kind of esthetic experience which the young Nietzsche called "a confrontation with stark reality." And this, surely, is why Picasso strove to make his creation a piece of "wild naked nature with the bold face of truth." He wanted the orgiastic immersio[illegible] and the Dionysian release.[35]

Once more one realizes the importance to Picasso of dissociat[illegible] those five figures from one another. Despite the congested groupi[illegible] there is no communication between them, no conceivable transit[illegible] across the narrows that hold them apart. The disjunctions are [illegible] of the mechanism; each figure at its own terminus connects indivi[illegible]ally with the viewer, much as our five fingers connect with the [illegible] And the appeal, appropriately enough, is to the most primitive i[illegible]tion, to that ground of earliest consciousness wherein all perce[illegible] beings relate separately to the perceiving self. The child's slow rec[illegible]nition that there exists, say, between mother and father, a m[illegible] intimacy from which his own self is excluded, constitutes a s[illegible] of enculturation, an achieved intellectual detachment that allows [illegible] to register external interrelations. Picasso's *Demoiselles*, pi[illegible]

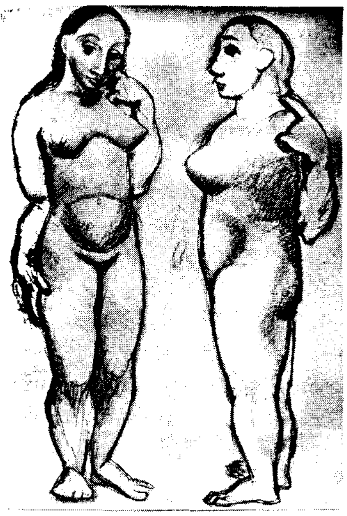




42 Study for *Two Women,* Paris, autumn 1906, 24 inches high (Z.XXII, 467). Boston Museum.



39*Two Women,* Paris, autumn 1906, 59⅝ inches high.
Museum of Modern Art, New York.



40 *Two Nudes,* 1906, 24½ inches high (Z.I, 365). Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Lester F. Avnet.

this cultured crust, alerts a regressive impulse and activates the most instinctual mode of confronting experience.

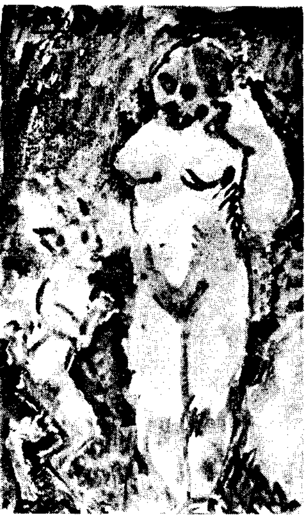
There is, after all, a pervasive spirit that runs through the work, a oneness of theme and structure and a spirit of insolent summons to the beholder. Hence the insistence on vectors that define the orthogonal axis—inward from the spectator's station, by way of the penetrant table, past the masked curtain raiser who unveils an event of overwhelming proximity: the sudden exposure of crowded whores startled by our intrusion and returning our gaze. Without the mutual dependency of aroused viewer and pictorial structure there is no picture. The whole picture, form and subject together, strives against educated detachment.

Why is the blue curtain in the upper right always parted, and why the inquisitive *demoiselle* peering in? Picasso never questioned the finality of the motif and carried it almost unchanged through 19 studies. Of course, it's a spacemaking device; given the compressed staging of the *Demoiselles*, it opens the backdrop just as the spilling tablespread opens the front. But why so much extraterritoriality in this "first Cubist picture?"

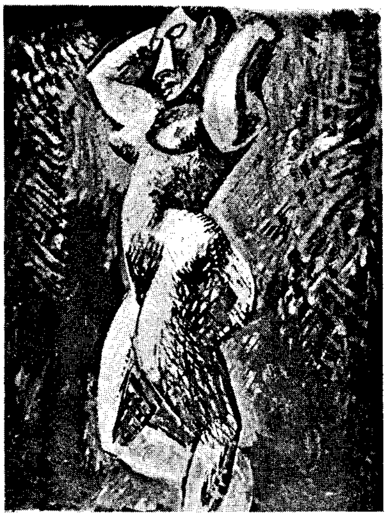
Or put it this way: What secret reserves of space does that jungle-nosed nude, looking in from backstage, leave behind? One possible answer lies in a comparison of the *Demoiselles* with the last major work that precedes it in Picasso's oeuvre—the *Two Women* (fig. 39), produced, after innumerable preparatory studies, in Paris in the late fall of 1906.

The contrast between the two pictures is absolute. The *Demoiselles* is all actuality, a clash of the sexes and a reciprocal shock—the women, themselves the quarry, stare at their game. The penetrant table, bridgehead of the masculine presence, turns the depicted space into common ground, the site of shameless exposure to shameless eyes. In the *Two Women* (fig. 39), all is privacy and anticipation; absorbed in each other, the women stand in an anteroom—a place, a condition rather, of woman alone. Since these two works are so nearly consecutive—the many studies for them, including postscripts to the *Two Women*, almost shading off into each other[36]—it may be well to reconceive them in sequence.

Begin with the changed body image. In the *Two Women* they stand like ensouled monuments, like trunks of trees. They are shells intact, their humanity sealed in exteriors of solid fusion. As sculptured monoliths, they suggest material never yet cracked or bent. As creatures of growth, they appear ripe and unbreached. As physiological types, they seem unadapted and unaccustomed to motion, with flesh that has never submitted to pressure. Bodies, then, of primal virginity, designed only to enclose their own substance, retained on the sheltered side of the curtain, antecedent to the strains of experience. And



43 Picasso: *The Faun,* 1906, 8 inches high. Collection of Rita K. Hillman, New York.



44 Picasso: *Nude Woman in Profile,* Paris, summer 1907, 11 $^{13}/_{16}$ inches high (Z.II, 39).

then the eager anatomies of the *Demoiselles* become Picasso's opposite metaphor—bodies manipulable and articulated for play.

It is worth recalling that the earliest of Picasso's many images of two women in an intimate meeting is the *Two Sisters* of 1902 (Leningrad; Z.I, 163), the subject of which Picasso explained in a letter to Max Jacob. It represented, he wrote, the meeting of a nun and a prostitute in the hospital of St.-Lazare.[37] The extremes of woman's physical life joined in a single arch: the body unused and the body abused—and the whole comprehended again in the succession from the *Two Women* to the *Demoiselles.*

Consider the contrast of gesture in the two pictures. Picasso's painting of the *Two Women* ends a period of preöccupation with woman as a closed body, restricted to self-sealing attitudes—folded hands, arms crossed, limbs locked together, and elbows that cleave to the trunk (fig. 40). Then, in the *Demoiselles*—all elbows out! Let the reader repeat the experiment to experience the full psychic effect of released elbows.

Two Women is a mysterious picture: a pair of young massy females on either side of a breach. One of them is poised to go through—but not the one on the left: in a gesture of self-absorption, one hand recoils to her shoulder, the other hand grasping the curtain as if to show it or draw it aside. This farther hand introduces our "disconnection" motif, an earlier example of that space jump by way of understated foreshortened gesture which Picasso renders more recondite in the *Demoiselles.* But the whole figure is a *tour de force* of depicted depth in compression—from her right wrist, through the bulk of her shoulders, to the distant grasp on a screening curtain. And beyond that, some ulterior world to be broached. By whom? She eyes the other—*I, I or you.*

The woman at right is half lost to us, facing away. Her lost profile is addressed to the cleft in the curtain; likewise the stony index of her raised hand. Several of the studies for the *Two Women* show Picasso thinking a pointing hand (figs. 41-42; cf. also Z.VI, 822). In the painting, the arm retracted as far as it goes and the elbow pressed close to the waist indicate that the pointing hand is suspended distantly from neck and shoulder and the large, lighted finger poised in mid-air. Such a gesture, like that of the Sistine Isaiah, speaks of inly awareness or self-recognition. The whole picture is inner directed, a strange prelude to the extrovert plot of the *Demoiselles.*

In keeping, too, is the close congruence of the two women. The near-identity of their lower limbs suggests duplication. To Alfred Barr, who admired the picture before anyone else, the two figures seemed to stand for one woman: like a self and its mirror image in self-discovery. There is a beautiful parallelism in the two rising hands, the self-searching hand that falls back on its shoulder, and the other whose finger is cocked in the direction to go. But this question, whether one woman or two, is not designed for a literal answer. It is a classical Spanish notion that a person discovers himself in intercourse with another, that a meeting of persons is a reciprocal mirroring.[38] But the image the other wins from you is your surrendered part; it is possessed by the other. The self separates from itself to retrieve itself in reciprocity and mutual consciousness. The picture then—if it is indeed of one woman—is of a person on the threshold of an encounter, about to pass through the curtain that shields the unmated self.

At least three surviving sketches for the pointing partner in the *Two Women* externalize her premonitions: she is beset by two devilish little satyrs (Z. VI, 803), or flanked by a satyr and cupid (Z. VI, 805). In a fine watercolor (fig. 43) she stands alone, but alone with a goat-footed faun traipsing up. What connection is there between the gift of the satyr and the finger addressed to the mind?

Whether the *Two Women* represents one twofold person or companions with complementary roles, face and finger of the woman at right direct themselves to the place where a curtain is about to divide. And is there no sequel? We know that Picasso wonders about the averted back of what he sees, and that his oeuvre exhibits inversions of viewpoints from back to front in infinite ways. I propose that his next decision constitutes what the movies call a jump cut. As if his next picture must inevitably behold that same curtain from the reverse side. The next picture is the *Demoiselles d'Avignon,* formerly christened "the Philosophical Brothel," familiarly revolutionary by every stylistic measure; but surely the psychic energy which powered that revolution flowed from the artist's total humanity; from his meditation on woman no less than his struggle with art. For both the *Two Women* and the *Demoiselles* are about the human condition, about that perpetual moment in which self-knowledge comes in sexual confrontation.

The "wherefrom" of the incoming *demoiselle* becomes answerable: she has left the state antecedent, the state of woman alone. What lies behind is as solidly female as the domain in front of the picture is male, the depicted space upon which she intrudes being the common ground. But such an answer has little face value, since we are not actually seeing consecutive frames of a filmstrip. The nosey bawd peering in as if from the mouth of a cave is not the "same" character as the outward-bound one in the *Two Women.* More important to Picasso than a sustained identity is precisely the transformation of character implicit in the two states—from unbreached simplicity to keen-edged articulation. Yet certain features shared by both figures suggest a residual constancy. The breast of square shape—apparent in the Philadelphia watercolor even before being canonized in the *Demoiselles* painting—is anticipated as a left breast in the *Two Women.* And the three-quarter backview of the earlier picture is reversed in the three-quarter face of the jungle-nosed *demoiselle.* In fact, one suspects that the latter's whole figure is conceived as a forced conjunction of divergent three-quarter views. The one-breasted chest, which describes the body turning away (as in the *Two Women*) is counterpointed by the hither turn of the head.

Her dissonant visage, like that of the squatter below, accords wit the theme of the *Demoiselles* painting, if not with its style. Mos of the composition studies—those small ones that represent the si

ure phase (figs. 6-12)—show faceless figures. But there is a radical
ference between the faces that appeared early (in figs. 2-4, 35)
d those in the Philadelphia watercolor (fig. 47). Picasso's concep-
n has quickened in tempo and violence, and now a fiercer physiog-
mic vocabulary paces the theme. The shift is away from conven-
nal Western types. In the watercolor—which must date from the
ring of 1907, just before the painting itself was undertaken—the
men already suggest a primitive life lived in the subsoil of civiliza-
n.

t has been shown that two-fifths of the painting is due to a later
mpaign, datable to the end of the summer of 1907, and that the
hanced ferocity of the two right-hand whores followed Picasso's
posure to African art.[39] But there was clearly good reason why
artist was willing to channel the new influence into this particular
rk. Even before the revision of the right side of the painting under
impact of Negro art, Picasso wanted his doxies depersonalized
d barbaric. In the end, his reason for making them savage was
same as his reason at the beginning for making them whores.
ey were to personify sheer sexual energy as the image of a life
rce. If Picasso in 1907 felt, as Joyce did, that "female coyness
d male idealism were counterparts, [that] the sugaring of love and
urtship was a part of the general self-deception and refusal to
cognize reality . . . .,"[40] then he would, in this picture, project sexual-
divested of all accretions of culture—without appeal to privacy,
nderness, gallantry, or that appreciation of beauty which presup-
ses detachment and distance. His women's faces were to be orgias-
; masks of impersonal passion with no interference of personality.
e the original chorus of satyrs whom Nietzsche saw giving birth
Greek tragedy, Picasso's strumpets were to be "nature beings
o dwell behind all civilization and preserve their identity through
ery change of generations and historical movement."[41] And the
similation of African forms was but the final step in the continuing
alization of an idea—the trauma of sexual encounter experienced
an animalistic clash, a stripping away even of personal love—again,
rlor reverting to jungle; again, Nietzsche's "wild naked nature with
bold face of truth."

A small gouache from the *Demoiselles* period reveals more of Picas-
's thought about woman as the image of animal destiny (fig. 44):
ungle dweller of slumbrous vitality walking alone, listening to the
rge of the body as her left leg metamorphoses into the hind leg
a quadruped, with a hock on the reverse side of the knee; as
ough the goat leg of the faun who approached the reflective nude
fig. 43 had invaded her being to reduce her anatomy to naked
th.

icasso in 1907 had grown too modern in spirit to let his vision
"wild naked nature" be other than a regression. No idyllic primeval
te, celebration of unsoiled innocence, like Matisse's *Joie de vivre*
the previous year. To wear the face of truth, Picasso's return to
ure in the *Demoiselles* must be ironic—not to Arcadia, but to
city stews. Hence the hothouse effect, the effect of a caged jungle
ose graceless inmates, both frightened and frightening, sublime
comical at the same time, start up like jerked puppets. That squat-
at right—was there ever a trollop more like a jumping jack?

ithin the life of the city, even the reversion to nature becomes
of a show; the brothel a circus spectacle, and five plucked per-
ners—Matisse interpreted them as a hoax—to invite ridicule and
oke ribaldry (incitement to ribaldry being the certainest way to
age the spectator). Picasso himself and his friends made them
of broad humor; every one of those sluts got a name. Seeing
n for the first time, the critic Félix Fénéon advised the young
ter to go into caricature—"not so stupid," Picasso remarked in retrospect. And most later observers, at one time or another, have come down on the funny side of the *Demoiselles*—one of them "opened out like a suckling pig," wrote Roland Penrose; "five of the least seductive female nudes in the history of art," according to Alfred Barr.[42] Did Picasso expect us to take the work seriously—all of the time?

We probably need to see them as comical to survive them at all. How, otherwise, relate to a vision of five bedeviled viragos whose sexual offering, visually inescapable, is decivilizing, disfiguring, and demoniacal?

The two at the right are key figures, both of them with disordered anatomies and ambiguous orientations. The incoming figure had been arriving upstage through 19 composition drawings, and Picasso knew very well that the three-quarter angle in which he was casting her was fraught with consequence. Unlike a strict profile or an *en face*, which tend to lie flush on the picture plane, the transitional three-quarter aspect implies spatial depth—either towards the rear, as in the *Two Women*, or hitherward on a diagonal. Thus the oblique intrusion of the upstage *demoiselle* threatens to redefine the entire space of the picture as a continuum. Her nose is aimed at the curtain raiser as through a transparent, traversible medium. To insulate her, as he must, from all connective ambience, Picasso makes his most fateful decisions. The crouching figure below, precisely because she is the most neighborly in point of space, is removed to the utmost stylistic distance. At the risk of scandalizing logic and art—to say nothing of abashing his friends—he will negate the fixity of focused vision, the vacancy of empty space, and the coherence of style. Three momentous decisions, or intuitions, which we trace in the last two composition studies and in the final phase of the painting.

The last of the drawings to include the sailor in a six-figure group is a large, accurate composition study in charcoal (fig. 45). It lays down the main tonal divisions and outlines the figures as blank shapes in the field, suggesting that Picasso is no longer staging actors in space, but approaching the thought of his canvas. But that he is not sacrificing spatiality to decorative values of flatness is proved by the drawing on the reverse of the sheet.

On the back of fig. 45 appears a large, carefully structured design of a *Standing Nude* (fig. 46; Picasso enlarged the sheet at top and bottom). Its single breast is an important sign. Were the body presented as a conventional side view, such a breast contour would be acceptable as the profilation of a familiar silhouette. But on a thorax that is not in strict profile, the single breast implies—as it did in the *Two Women*, and as in the two *demoiselles* on the right—that the body inhabits a depth of space which holds another breast in the offing. The lone breast becomes the thoracic version of the *profil perdu*—a signal that Picasso is not thinking flat. And indeed, the *Standing Nude* is a space pun, his earliest figure in two-way orientation.[43]

Is the lady facing or backing away? Are we seeing her front or her back with turned head looking over her shoulder? Faint traces in the zone of the pelvis may once have spelled rump, but Picasso has let them fade out; their precise reference would have dispelled ambiguity. Contours of waist, thorax and breast yield no specific clue; nor does the cylindrical neck, or the flat falling arm. The head, of course, can be read both ways—either thrown backward or as a three-quarter front view. This leaves only the lifted hand which, as an open palm with extended thumb, would stand unequivocally for the right hand of a figure seen from the rear. And this is precisely why the thumb is removed by a slash continuous from elbow to index. The rest of the hand is no problem, since the emphatic crossstroke at the roots of the four fingers defines the back of the hand as readily as the palm. Thus every part of the figure ends up at the same ambivalence level.

Inside its bounded planes the drawing is flat. But it recreates the idea of "body," of something denser than silhouette, through the sustained front/back ambiguity. Not a body in the sense of spatial displacement, but the embodiment of a two-way visibility, a form impressed between antipodal points of sight. Visual duplicity in the interest of symbolic concretion—a principle which Picasso will pursue for the rest of his life—is here laid down for the first time. And it is vastly significant for the history of his art that this figure was drawn on the back of a study for the *Demoiselles d'Avignon.*

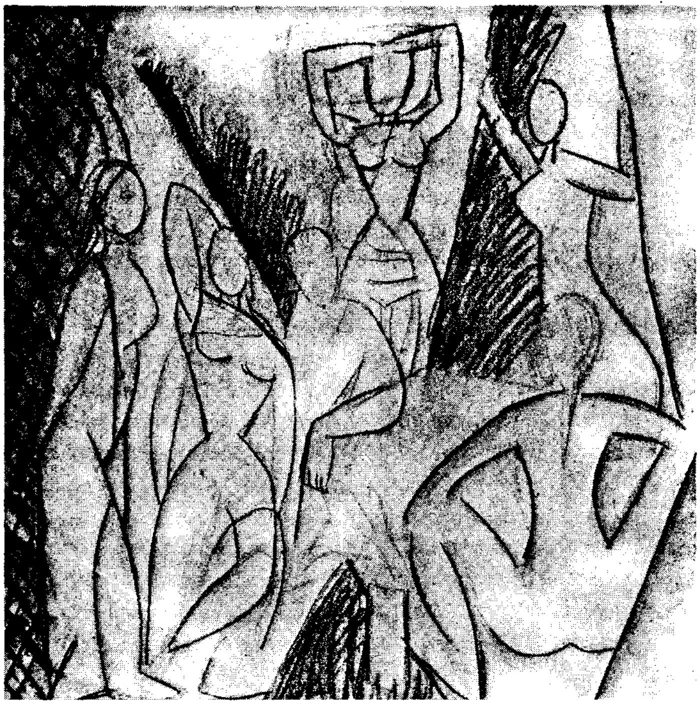
Return now to the squatter's blank silhouette in fig. 45. The pigtail which would have established an explicit backview is not picked up by the system of reinforced contours. Hands and feet are suppressed; overlaps are ruled out, so that her flattened impress orients itself simultaneously inward and outward.

Looking back, one observes that Picasso had been courting this prodigy for some time. His early oil study (fig. 35) had already smoothed the squatter like a butterfly to a pane. Arms cut away at the elbows, one leg cropped by a curtain, both breasts everted, and the head wrenched around—the figure appears somewhat ambiguously dorsal and frontal. And a hint of the same obsession returns in fig. 9 (and in Z.II, 638, not reproduced). But Picasso seems also to resist the idea; it may have seemed too contrived and too cleverly punning, like those riddle drawings for children that read two ways—rabbit or duck; or those diagrams that depend on tricks of omission.[44] In the Philadelphia watercolor (fig. 47) the device is abandoned; the squatter becomes once again a backview with defining pigtail, and her acknowledgement of the spectator is conveyed by the anatomically sound turn of a head.

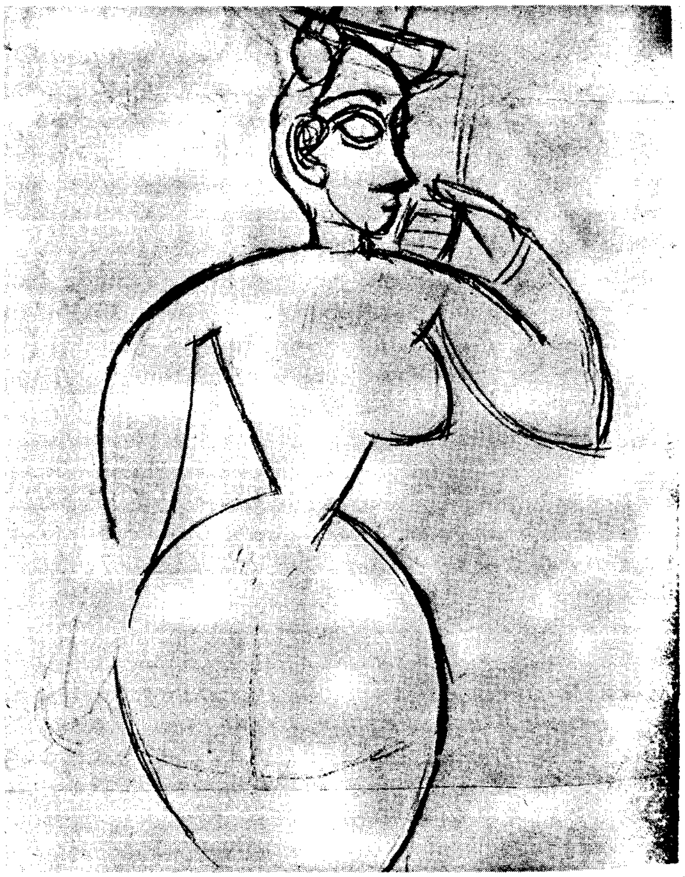
But in the painting the two-way orientation returns with a vengeance. Frontality—a warped facemask cupped in a huge boomerang hand—settles without logic of anatomic coherence upon a back; half of an arm akimbo is absorbed by a climbing thigh, and what's left may as well be right—recto as well as verso. Picasso discovers that abruptness of gesture can be expressed by suppressing transitions—no neck, for instance, between head and shoulders. His squatter becomes a focus of concentrated disorientation, like something too close to see. Gradually, as the studies reveal, Picasso edges her straightforward backview towards contradiction.[45] Frontal and dorsal aspect—the latter full-splayed and spreadeagled—arrive in simultaneity. And the suddenness of the inversion more than makes up for abstraction and flattening. It gives her pink flesh an aggressive immediacy, brought nearer still by the impudence of her pose and the proximity of an implicated observer who knows every side of her.

The Philadelphia watercolor (fig. 47) is the only known study for the *Demoiselles* in its definitive five-figure state. The sailor and his table-to-lean-on have been removed, allowing Picasso to pair the two central nudes. One of them, the caryatid, long treated as a distant, archaic effigy, is brought down to stage center, her sex at the intersection of all coordinates, her crownpost position aligned with the thrust of the table. There is a new determination to clench dispersed elements without relaxing their mutual repulsion.

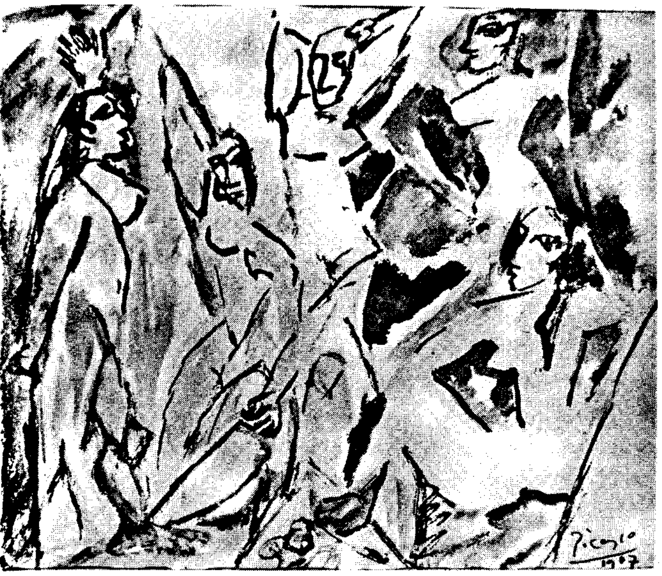
But the outstanding event in this final drawing is the positive charge given to the interspaces at right. The vacant surround fills and hardens, and the inspissation of intervals converts the two right-hand figures into negative shapes reserved on a dark ground.



45 Study for the *Demoiselles,* 18 15/16 inches high (Z.II, 644).
46 *Standing Nude,* Paris, 1907, 25⅝ inches high (Z.II, 685).



Much has been written about the eruption of these solidified voids in the painting. Ever since Kahnweiler, they have been seen as a stylistic break with the rest of the work, a shift in intention. Their prophetic energy seemed to Kahnweiler to offset the sacrifice of internal unity. Robert Rosenblum, too, felt that the painting embodied a headlong change of style from left to right, a change come, as it were, in the heat of action, within the painting itself. "[Its] very inconsistency is an integral part of *Les Demoiselles.* The irrepressible energy behind its creation demanded a vocabulary of change and impulse rather than of measured statement in a style already articulated. The breathless tempo of this pregnant historical moment



Study for the *Demoiselles,* watercolor, 6$^{15}/_{16}$ inches high
II, 21). Philadelphia Museum, Gallatin Collection.

tually obligated its first masterpiece to carry within itself the very ocess of artistic evolution....''[46]

Can it be that the noble enthusiasm of this description, dated st before 1960, echoes the cry of American Action Painting? For appears that the "radical quality" of the *Demoiselles,* the reversal the charges of figure and ground, "the threat to the integrity of ass as distinct from space," was already envisaged in the iladelphia watercolor. It was part of a program, part of the eruption fect planned for the picture. Already here, that open curtain in e upper right—previously rendered by two canted lines—condenses to cold boulders of color that turn the space intervals into mass.

And there is good reason why these curtain floes gelled exactly ere, where the scene is intruded on with a momentum sufficient reconvert the whole setting into a single space. Think the blue rtain away, and that savage entrance will dissipate all of Picasso's refully plotted disjunctions. But if those five clustered nudes are remain discontinuous, the artist must quarantine the intruder and ild the gap between her and the rest into an insurmountable barrier. is this imperative that the Philadelphia drawing obeys. And in the inting, what had once been a tame background curtain behind interval of airspace, becomes an outcropping of glacial blues at transmit neither dramatic motion, nor body heat, nor lines of ght.

The painting maintains a relentless consistency in isolating each gure, and the viewer is called on to keep switching between divergent ctorial modes. Reading from left to right, the curtain raiser defines er flat shape like an incision—a sunken relief with its ground emoved. The viewer sees nothing but side, a profile traced on the rim that separates him from the stage. It has been observed that ne cannot quite tell whether the leg she shows is the right or the ft; it is indeed one leg standing for both, as though to forestall ny hint of another member behind. And the angularity of her limbs in keeping: the leather-cut arm; the broadside from shoulder to ast as if stretched between tenterhooks; and the left hand, culated like somebody else's—not issuing from a substantial body, up in another stratum across an abrupt space jump.

o intelligible continuity relates the curtain raiser to the *gisante* o lifts off against her own shreds of recession—halations of private ce which she shares with nobody else. She and her elbowing ghbor seem to present a common front—both of them footless and levitating, kindred in dress, flesh and feature, and both plainly facing. But one figure's frontality calls for looking down from above, the other for looking up. Their spatial orientations, mutually unreconciled, depend upon our intellection of their respective positions.

At the right sits the squatter, flattest in drawing, but of multiple aspects. Offering both front and back—as though to be experienced in time or from an embracing position—she imputes an alarming intimacy to the spectator.

And at last the intruding savage, deeply recessed, trapped in the cleft of a curtain whose collapsing pleats simulate an impenetrable solidification of space— the famous birthplace of Cubism.

But Cubist pictures are remarkable for stylistic coherence, whereas the program of the *Demoiselles* is an accelerating mutation of pictorial means in a narrowing field. What Picasso attempts in this work throws shadows across vast reaches of 20th-century art. He challenges far more than traditional focused perspective—which after Cézanne, Gauguin, and the Fauves, had long lost its hold on advancing art. Far more is at stake than Cartesian space conceived as a geometry of infinite homogeneous extension—a philosophic projection whose psychic detachment reflects neither the way we see nor the way we dream nor the way we move. Picasso's ultimate challenge is to the notion that the coherence of the art work demands a stylistic consistency among the things represented; that one style must obtain in every part of the canvas, whether to correspond with the supposed unity of an instant visual experience or to maintain constancy in transformation. In both these alternatives, the persistent style registers as an objective rule, preformed like the grammar of language. The viewer follows a system from which he expects a predictable regularity. And the shock of the *Demoiselles* resides largely in the frustration of this expectation. In Picasso's farewell to stylistic consistency, the means of rendering and the modes of experiencing become subjectified—open choices, the acts of a personal will. Those three rocking orthogonals—curtain top, lying nude, leveled table— will not come flush with the picture plane. The straight curtain raiser and the *gisante* in bird's-eye perspective—a legitimate upright followed by a usurper—they are two images as distinct as two pictures; and the two-way squatter in the lower right is a disturbed diagram. Neighboring objects diverge willfully into discrepant styles; styles become subjects to paint. Only in the mind of the perceiver and nowhere else is their unity recreated.

One realizes from how deep a conviction spring such perverse statements as this: "When you draw a head [Picasso said sometime in the 1950s] you must draw like that head...Take a tree. At the foot of the tree there is a goat, and beside the goat is a little girl tending the goat. Well, you need a different drawing for each. The goat is round, the little girl is square, and the tree is a tree. And yet people draw all three in the same way. That is what is false. Each should be drawn in a completely different way.''[47]

Or this anecdote from the Bateau-Lavoir days, i.e., the *Demoiselles* period. Time: 2 A.M. Place: outside Max Jacob's window where the oil lamp, as usual, is still alight.

Picasso: Hey, Max, what are you doing?
Jacob: I'm searching for a style.
Picasso (going off): There's no such thing.[48]

Collage was the first major outgrowth of Picasso's intuition that divergent modes of representation can cohabitate, like diverse fruit in a still life. But the idea of collating unreconciled elements in one scene recurs continually in his art; its ultimate premises are explored half a century later in a series of paintings which have yet to receive serious attention—Picasso's variations on *Las Meninas*, begun in 1957 (Barcelona, Picasso Museum), wherein each painted personage metope in which to be its own picture. In the *Meninas* series (as in the final canvas of the *Algerian Women*, 1955) these dichotomies are clearly deliberate.

In the *Demoiselles*, where stylistic inconsistency makes its first monumental appearance, the phenomenon has been attributed to haste, to the incomplete state of the picture, or the uncontrollable surge of Picasso's creative momentum. But we now have two potent reasons to regard the apparent lack of coherence as equally purposeful in the earlier work. One of these has been discussed in detail: we have seen that the inconsistencies in the *Demoiselles* are not merely late interferences, but programed throughout; the striated masks at the right may be more discordant, but are not more damaging to received notions of pictorial unity than that kite of a hand in the upper left, or those incongruous eye levels at center.

The second reason seems equally obvious: Picasso's insults to continuity are too knowingly neutralized to be the consequence of a runaway evolution. Color is used consistently as a conjunctive agent. It binds together whatever his stylistic shifts pull apart. Homologous pinks of flesh pervade the entire field. And a crescendo of blues expanding towards the right is counterpointed by diminishing browns and ochres.

Equally binding are those streamers of line that lace all contours together. A diagonal discharged from the squatter's knee homes in on a target hand at the curtain—the trajectory passing through the loincloth of the pillar nude, and the *gisante's* listing shoulders. Linear structure is organic throughout, like a nervous system. Even the upsweep of the squatter's nose breaks through the peak of her head to produce further contours.

But the will to unity in the *Demoiselles* encompasses more than color and line. It acts as a compressive force on the whole composition. It determines the format and every spatial allotment within it.

The composition began as an oblong, as befits a multifigured narrative scene (figs. 2ff). But through the 19 known composition studies the artist periodically applies lateral pressure to contain his ebullient personnel. The one option he keeps available until the end is the frame's elasticity. As he keeps rehearsing the scene, the picture shrinks and dilates, narrows down to a square (as in figs. 6 and 45), but expands again to a rectangle in the Philadelphia study where the cast is reduced to five (fig. 47). That was the last stage before beginning to paint. It was then that Picasso ordered his huge 8-foot canvas, prepared, we are told, "with unusual care....The smooth type of canvas that he liked to paint on would not have been strong enough for so large a surface. He therefore had a fine canvas mounted on a stronger material as a reinforcement and had a stretcher made to his specified unconventional dimensions."[49] These dimensions—slightly higher than wide—represent a final contraction, so that in the painting, as in no preceding study, each figure is crowded and each interval squeezed.

As might be expected, the forces acting against the expanse of the field are personified in the actions depicted—the pulling across of the curtain in figs. 6-8 and the dramatic entrance from the side opposite. But the sidelong compression coincides with a compression of depth. In the orthogonal axis, the two central figures advance against the inroads of the outer curtain and table. The famous shallowing of the pictorial space is but half the action. Picasso is a multidimensional thinker, and it is every spatial dimension that comes under stress. In the painting, the five figures, though conceptually freed from each other, become a conglomerate unity, cohere like tensed fingers, and the whole collapsing interior stage of the picture closes in like a fist.

what it is that is being flattened. Its spatial cues may be given in contradiction, but they are given; they are both deployed and collapsed. And the violence of the picture resides in the conflict between crush and expansion maintained by its material and spatial sequences. That famous near-Cubist space at the right is a conflated recessional sequence. It takes off between a white flat and a lifted still life at center; it proceeds to a roadblock nude squatted down on an ottoman; halts at the sudden chill of blue draperies falling; and ascends again to the figure upstage emerging from a cavernous hollow. No terms taken from other art—whether from antecedent paintings or from Picasso's own subsequent Cubism—describe the drama of so much depth under stress. This is an interior space in compression, like the inside of pleated bellows, like the feel of an inhabited pocket, a contracting sheath heated by the massed human presence.

The space of the *Demoiselles* is a space peculiar to Picasso's imagination. Not a visual continuum, but an interior apprehended on the model of touch and stretch, a nest known by palpation, or by reaching and rolling, by extending one's self within it. Though presented symbolically to the mere sense of sight, Picasso's space insinuates total initiation, like entering a disordered bed.

Gertrude Stein has a telling Picasso story.[50] She was showing him a first photograph of an American skyscraper, and the young Spaniard, who evidently did not yet know about elevators, produced what Gertrude calls "a characteristic reaction." Where others would have been impressed by the sheer height of the thing from the ground up, Picasso's comment eroticizes the American engineering feat into a situation that entails the exertion of climbing, the impatience of waiting, and the denouement of an intimate quarrel. "Good God," he said, "imagine the pangs of jealousy a lover would have while his beloved came up all those flights of stairs to his top-story studio." Even the skyscraper is felt from within to become a sexual witness.

The *Demoiselles d'Avignon* seems to me to have one insistent theme to which everything in the picture lends force: the naked brothel interior, the male complicity in an orgy of female exposure, the direct axial address, the spasmodic action, the explosive release in a constricted space, and the reciprocity of engulfment and penetration. The picture is both enveloping and transfixed; it sorties and overwhelms and impales itself. And it ought to be seen as it was painted—hung low in a narrow room, so that it spills over into it, tupped by the entrant wedge of the table. In one sense the whole picture is a sexual metaphor, and Picasso will have used all his art to articulate a sexual meaning.

But it is also the opposite, a forced union of dream image and actuality. The picture is about the image in its otherness locked in with the real world. And like those mystics of old who used sexual metaphor to express ultimate union with the divine, so Picasso will have used sexuality to make visible the immediacy of communion with art. Explosive form and erotic content become reciprocal metaphors for each other.

Decades later, having passed 80, Picasso gives the secret away (fig. 48) and makes the action of painting coincident with the making of love.

*Part I of this article appeared in the September Art News. The numbering of illustrations and footnotes is continuous through both parts.

**Through an unfortunate accident, fig. 4, Part I, was severely cropped on all sides, so that its important foreground, discussed on p. 23, does not show. Cf. the reproduction in William Rubin's *Picasso in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art*, New York, 1972, p. 196, fig. 24.

His Life and Work, New York 1958, p. 127) calls him "a sailor"; others (Leymarie, R. de la Souchère, etc.) "a student."

[26] Barr, *Fifty Years*, p. 57, and *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 68.

[27] To identify those suggestible authors who have seen a death's head in fig. 4 would serve no purpose; their name is legion.

[28] For the present first publication of six of these drawings we are indebted to three parties: to Picasso who, after 65 years of negligence or perversity, remembered or consented to let them out; to my gracious correspondent, Mlle. Gagarine; and to my colleague, William S. Rubin, who obtained the photographs from Mlle. Gagarine and in an act of exemplary generosity, turned them over to me. Some of Mr. Rubin's thoughts on these drawings, which, before learning that the present article was nearing completion, he had planned to publish himself, are acknowledged below.

[29] Communication to author, June 1, 1972.

[30] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 168. On Nietzsche's relevance, cf. note 35.

[31] Picasso's conversation with Kahnweiler (cited in note 5 above) begins: "*Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, how this title irritates me. Salmon invented it. You know very well that the original title from the beginning had been *The Brothel of Avignon*. But do you know why? Because Avignon has always been a name I knew very well and is a part of my life. I lived not two steps away from the Calle d'Avignon where I used to buy my paper and my watercolors and also, as you know, the grandmother of Max came originally from Avignon. We used to make a lot of fun of this painting; one of the women in it was Max's grandmother, another one Fernande, and another one Marie Laurencin, and all of them in a brothel in Avignon."

[32] Quoting from Rubin's communication of June 1, 1972: "The earliest sketch for the Student (fig. 30) shows a short stocky man of Picasso's build and hair style. The proportions of this figure change immediately afterward (fig.34). His costume, a well-tailored suit, remains more or less characteristic throughout; it identifies an upper middle-class personage who is set against the casually-dressed (as we see later) lower-class sailor. This contrast is emphasized by the fact that while the Student is standing in profile at the margin of the field, the sailor is seated, frontal and central. Picasso is here implicitly contrasting and weighing the life of the senses (the sailor is surrounded by flesh, food and drink) and the mind (the book held by the Student), poles between which his own work will oscillate...The sailor...represents Picasso's instinctive, sensuous side, as established during childhood (sailor suit, surrounded by women in the home), while the Student represents Picasso's mind and intelligence (book and skull)...At the same time, the skull is a studio prop of the artist (Picasso says he had a skull at the time, and it appears not long afterward in the Hermitage still life of his studio). Thus the medical student may be assimilated to that side of Picasso whose 'science' will anatomize the visual world."

[33] For the personality of Max Jacob, see especially Robert Guiette, "**Vie de Max Jacob,**" *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, July 1, 1934, No. 250 (based on interviews with the poet); and LeRoy C. Breunig, "Max Jacob et Picasso," *Mercure de France*, Dec., 1957, pp. 581-96.

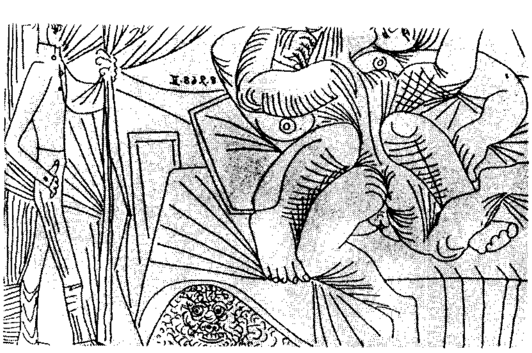
In Guiette's "life," the poet tells of his first love affair with a woman—one of the two moments in his life which he would relive if he could (the other being a vision of Christ six years later, which led to his conversion and ultimate retreat to a monastery). The affair with Mme. Germaine Pfeipfer, the 18-year-old wife of a drunkard, began when Max was 25—"*mais, je crois, 15 pour la raison et pour le coeur.*" Many years after their separation, "in 1907 or 1908," he saw his first love again, and found her grotesque. Not so the two friends who were with him, Picasso and Braque; they pronounced her "*très belle.*"

Picasso's imaginative susceptibility to the sexual character of his intimate friends is confirmed in a recent article by Josep Palau y Fabre, ("1900: a Friend of His Youth," in *Homage to Pablo Picasso*, ed., G. di San Lazzaro, New York, 1971, pp. 3-12). The author discusses another of Picasso's early companions, the melancholy writer-painter Casagemas, who killed himself over a woman in a Paris café on Feb. 17, 1901. For some months previously, "Casagemas' behaviour mystified his friends more and more. One day, they were just going into a brothel in the rue de Londres, when Casagemas slipped away explaining that he was suffering from intestinal trouble." Two years after the suicide, when Picasso was again occupying the Barcelona studio which he had formerly shared with his dead friend, he painted *La Vie* (1903; Cleveland Museum of Art). In the painting, the figure of Casagemas replaces the Adam-Picasso of the preliminary sketches. Palau concludes: "As Picasso, he is completely nude. Casagemas in the painting wears an odd sort of slip. The ambiguity of this slip is significant...The slip states and, at the same time, hides the truth behind the drama, a truth that Picasso never wished to reveal. But we know from the post-mortem of Casagemas that he was impotent."

[34] The repetition of the skull-holding motif on two pages of the unpublished sketch-book is interesting. In both drawings the inner line of the index finger coincides with the cranium. In the second drawing this double-functioning is extended to the thumb whose outline is adjusted to coincide with the skull's cheekbone. The single descriptive contour which seams two contiguous forms is a general principle of Picasso's draughtsmanship.

On the back of our fig. 31 are several unpublished studies for the central nude. Fig. 32 is the reverse of our fig. 34. The reverse of fig. 33 is Picasso's study for the flower vase in the foreground of the Basel drawing, fig. 4. A more elaborate study for this vase, hitherto unrecognized and misdated, is reproduced in Z.VI, 807.

[35] The Nietzschean quotations are from the *Birth of Tragedy* (1871), a work avidly read by the artists and poets of Barcelona and Paris at the turn of the century. Picasso's early connection with the spirit of Nietzsche is discussed in Phoebe Pool's "Sources and Background of Picasso's Art 1900-06," *Burlington Magazine*, 1959, p. 180. I wish to thank Mr. Mark Rosenthal of the University of Iowa, Graduate Department of Art, for his eloquent nsistence on the Picasso-Nietzsche relationship.



48 Picasso: *Suite 347, No. 317*
etching, Sept. 8, 1968/II.

[36] See especially Z. I, 349 (D-B. XVI, 32) and Z XXII, 641 (D-B. XVI, 20), a postscript to the *Two Women* projecting a four-figure group in a setting of curtains. An interesting transitional thought is embodied in a conté drawing of 1906 (Z. VI, 814), where a nude figure, shaped like one of the *Two Women*, approaches like the incoming *demoiselle*, from behind a curtain in three-quarter front view.

[37] "Je veux faire un tableau de ce dessin que je t'envoie *(Les Deux Soeurs)*. C'est un tableau que je fais d'une putain de St.-Lazare et d'une soeur." Letter to Max Jacob, Barcelona, 1902. See Jaime Sabartés, *Picasso Documents Iconographiques*, Geneva, 1954, No. 70.

[38] See, for instance, the opening chapter of Baltasar Gracián's, allegorical novel *El Criticón* (1651-1657). The shipwrecked Critilo, who personifies the critical intelligence, reaches a desert island where he meets the lone Andrenio, "the human one," who has never before seen a fellow man and who personifies man's instinctual side. Asked who he is, Andrenio offers this remarkable answer: "Yo, dijo, ni sé quién soy, ni quién me ha dado el ser, ni para qué me le dio: qué de veces, y sin voces, me lo pregunté a mí mismo, tan necio como curioso, pues si el preguntar comienza en el ignorar, mal pudiera yo responderme. Argüíame tal vez, para ver si empeñado me excedería a mi mismo. Duplicábame, aún no bien singular, por ver si apartado de mi ignorancia podría dar alcance a mis deseos. Tú, Critilo, me preguntas quién yo soy, y yo deseo saberlo de ti. Tú eres el primer hombre que hasta hoy he visto, y en ti me hallo retratado más al vivo que en los mudos cristales de una fuente, que muchas veces mi curiosidad solicitaba y mi ignorancia aplaudía."

[39] See the discussion of the chronology in Golding, *Cubism*, pp. 52-55.

[40] Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, New York 1972, p. 16, referring to Joyce's "The Holy Office" of 1904.

[41] *Birth of Tragedy*, Section VII.

[42] For the jokes Picasso and his friends used to make about the *Demoiselles*, see note 31. For the Fénéon incident, see Ashton, *Picasso on Art*, Chapter VII (Portraits). The last two quotations are from Penrose, *op. cit.*, p. 125 and Barr, *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 68.

[43] The word "earliest" is always a risk when discussing Picasso. His beginnings are like the beginnings of myth. As soon as one identifies a novel theme and starts searching for its earliest occurrence, the impression arises that there is never a starting point; nothing ever happens for the first time. In my own recent study of Picasso's lifelong obsession with the problem of simultaneous front-and-back representation ("The Algerian Women and Picasso at Large," in *Other Criteria*, New York 1972), I cited the 1907 *Standing Nude* (fig. 46) as the first systematic instance of this preoccupation; but I pointed to earlier drawings of 1904-05, where figures appear successively recto and verso, as evidence of an earlier concern with the problem. I would now cite even earlier evidence in a sheet of nude studes, dated 1902 (D-B., D. VII, 5). The third figure from the left is a female back view but with arms and head ambiguously outlined for a possible frontal view.

[44] Cf. E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, New York 1959, figs. 2 and 201.

[45] It is a misunderstanding of Picasso's intention to rationalize his deliberate **befuddlements** into an analytical exposition of three-dimensional form—e.g: "in the squatting *'demoiselle'* Picasso had dislocated and distended the various parts of the body in an attempt to explain it as fully as possible, without the limitations of viewing it from a single, stationary position" (Golding, *Cubism*, p. 62).

[46] Rosenblum, *Cubism*, p. 25.

[47] Quoted in Hélène Parmelin, *Picasso: Women*, Paris/Amsterdam 1964, p. 135.

[48] See LeRoy C. Breunig, "Max Jacob et Picasso," *Mercure de France*, December 1957, p. 595.

[49] Quotation from Roland Penrose, *Picasso, His Life and Work*, New York 1958, p. 124. The information goes back to Leo Stein, who (according to Barr, *Masters of Modern Art*, p. 68) "...remembers visiting Picasso's studio that fall and finding there a huge canvas which, before he had painted a stroke, the artist had had expensively lined as if it were already a classic work."

In Barr's text the words "that fall" refer to 1906, which must be a memory lapse on Leo Stein's part. Picasso insists that he did not embark on the painting of the *Demoiselles* until the following spring. It would be strange for him to produce a score of preliminary composition studies of which not one corresponded to the dimensions of the canvas already stretched.

[50] Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), ed. New York, Vintage Books, 1960, p.50.