Unmasking Pablo's Gertrude: Queer Desire and the Subject of Portraiture

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> Spring was coming and the sittings were coming to an end. All of a sudden one day Picasso painted out the whole head. I can't see you any longer when I look, he said irritably. And so the picture was left like that.[1]

Gertrude Stein's anecdote about the genesis of Picasso's portrait of her (Fig. 1) is the fulcrum for an elaborate narrative of sexual identity, masquerade, and power in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* published in 1933. After sitting for Picasso some eighty times over the course of the autumn and winter of 1905–6, during which time her friendship and artistic dialogue with the young painter have grown in intensity, the sessions abruptly come to an end with an act of erasure, a literal effacement of Gertrude's visage. Gertrude and her brother Leo leave for Fiesole sometime around late March or early April 1906, and Picasso and his lover Fernande Olivier depart for Spain (Barcelona and the village of Gósol) in early June. The very day he returns to Paris, Gertrude tells us, Picasso completes the portrait from memory.[2]

As several commentators have remarked, Gertrude's chronology of events is surely exaggerated.[3] More important than the precise moment when the portrait was completed, however, is the resonance of the phrase, "I can't see you any longer when I look." I think it matters little whether those words were uttered by Picasso, or belong to Gertrude speaking through Picasso. What counts is their significance to the author. In the introduction to her 1938 monograph on Picasso, Stein sets the stage for the historical accomplishments of her hero: "When he was nineteen years old Picasso came to Paris," she writes,

> that was in 1900, into a world of painters who had completely learned everything they could from seeing at what they were looking. From Seurat to Courbet they were all of them looking with their eyes and Seurat's eyes then began to tremble at what his eyes were seeing, he commenced to doubt if in looking he could see.[4]

Musing over the traditional mimetic function of painting, Stein directly implicates Picasso in modernism's historical critique of visuality.

There is a more precise way, however, in which the relation between looking and seeing might be configured within the space of representation: the idea of painting as a trap for what Jacques Lacan calls *le regard* (the gaze), which, in the case of direct portraiture, insinuates itself in the form of a highly complex economy of psychic and social exchanges between the painter and the sitter. For what Stein points to on the underside of mimesis is the idea of representation as a mechanism of revelation and occlusion, a frame for the gaze in the field of the Other. "In our relationship to things as constituted by the path of vision and ordered in the figures of representation," Lacan writes, "something glides, passes, transmits itself from stage to stage, in order always to be in some degree eluded there—it is that which is called the *regard.*"[5] I submit that Picasso's effacement of Gertrude's head and his delayed substitution of a mask are the outward signs of that something that eludes representation yet remains ever present within the structure of the visual field: the complex trajectory of desire. Picasso's inability to recognize Gertrude Stein as an intelligible subject of portraiture may, in this light, be approached as a problem in representation that exceeds the traditional limits of subject-object relations.

Who was this figure Picasso could no longer "see" or, more to the point, refused to "know"? Can we speak of Gertrude Stein as a unitary subject outside the field of representation that is her portrait? Is she an object of visual apprehension for the artist, or is the portrait the index of a scopic encounter within an unstable economy of subject positions occupied by both the artist and the sitter? Gertrude herself seems to have posed these questions in the *Autobiography,* where, as Neil Schmitz has observed, the presence of three portraits can be detected: "the monumental Gertrude who sits heavily in Picasso's celebrated portrait . . . Gertrude's Alice's Gertrude, a cunning self-portrait always framing the significance of Picasso's portrait, and a third, the self-effacing portrait of the *I* who at last seizes Alice's discourse, announces the writer's presence, and cleverly declares our innocence."[6] To be sure, Gertrude Stein conceived of autobiography as an elaborate game of masking, a literary genre in which the self is staged as the site of multiple and conflicting identifications. To use Stein's autobiography as a point of entry to map the effects of Picasso's portrait is, then, to enter the field of the performative subject. In effect, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is Stein's response to the inverted questions of identity Picasso

This essay is the result of a rich exchange of ideas with students at the Institute of Fine Arts on the subject of lesbian and gay representation in the visual arts. To those who participated in my colloquium on Queer Theory in autumn 1994, I express my deepest gratitude. For their comments on this manuscript, I am also indebted to: Marie Aquilino, Patricia Berman, Alice Friedman, Ann Gibson, Margaret Werth, and especially Amelia Jones, whose criticisms and suggestions have helped shape my argument in significant ways. Thanks are also due to Anne M. Lampe and Fereshteh Daftari of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for help in securing photographs.

1. Stein, 57.
2. Ibid.
3. Picasso left Gósol in mid-August 1906. John Richardson (455–56) proposes a date of late August to early September for the completion of the portrait.
4. Gertrude Stein, *Picasso,* Boston, 1959, 1.
5. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis,* trans. Alan Sheridan, New York/London, 1978, 70.
6. Neil Schmitz, "Portrait, Patriarchy, Mythos: The Revenge of Gertrude Stein," *Salmagundi,* no 40, Winter 1978, 69–70.

1 Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Gertrude Stein,* winter 1905–autumn 1906. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Gertrude Stein, 1946 (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

poses in the portrait: "Who is Gertrude Stein? What is she to/of me? Who am I to myself?"

And then there is the matter of firsthand accounts by friends and critics who have painted their own portraits of the author. Here is Fernande Olivier describing Gertrude in 1933: "Masculine in her voice, in her whole bearing."[7] And Carl Van Vechten, Gertrude's close friend and literary agent in America, commenting on her massive physique: "a Rabelaisian woman with a splendid thoughtful face; mind dominating her matter."[8] And Mabel Dodge, reminiscing about her days in Paris:

> Gertrude Stein was prodigious. Pounds and pounds and pounds piled up on her skeleton—not the billowing kind, but massive, heavy fat. She wore some covering of corduroy or velvet and her crinkly hair was brushed back and twisted up high behind her jolly, intelligent face. She intellectualized her fat, and her body seemed to be the large machine that her large nature required to carry it.[9]

And, finally, John Richardson, Picasso's most scrupulous biographer: "She was in some respects a throwback to the self-fertilizing goddesses and dryads of folklore, who are as fearsome and all-knowing as any male deity. Besides being a hieratic earth mother, she was a new species, a kind of androgyne both more feminine and more masculine than the adolescent waifs of 1905. An 'hommesse.' "[10]

It is not entirely clear to me whose testimony is most reliable, as each author writes from a position that carries heavy emotional and ideological baggage—from Fernande's annoyance over the publication of Gertrude's autobiography before her own memoirs had appeared[11] to Richardson's voice of narrative authority as a biographical historian. What, precisely, does Fernande mean by "masculine," and how secure is the term? Is Van Vechten's massive "Rabelaisian woman" a function, perhaps, of the carnivalesque mask about which Mikhail Bakhtin once wrote?[12] How exactly did Gertrude "intellectualize" her physicality, and what does that characterization tell us about the ways in which she negotiated the mind/body relationship in her life and art? And what would Alice have thought about Richardson's characterization of her lover as a self-fertilizing goddess, or for that matter an "hommesse," a she-man suspended somewhere between the androgyne of fin de siècle aesthetes and the congenital inverts of the sexologists?[13] Is this Gertrude's Gertrude, Picasso's Gertrude, or Richardson's Picasso's Gertrude? Would Alice have preferred the term *lesbian?*

I am rehearsing these options to indicate the ways in which Gertrude is both a subject *in* portraiture and the subject *of* portraiture, a physical site of specular identifications and phantasmatic projections. "Yes," Picasso tells Alice in the *Autobiography,* "everybody says that she does not look like it but that does not make any difference, she will. . . ."[14] And when, years later, Gertrude cuts her hair short, Picasso inquires accusatorily: "And my portrait?" only to take comfort in the recognition, "mais, quand même tout y est, all the same it is all there."[15] Finally, there is Gertrude speaking in her own voice in the little monograph on Picasso: "I was and I still am satisfied with my portrait, for me, it is I, and it is the only reproduction of me which is always I, for me."[16] Putting the indexical shifters "I" and "me" to good use, Gertrude at once opens subject positions and plays on identity as the condition of a subject-in-alteration.

With these considerations in mind, let us return to the scene of the drama, Paris in 1905, and set the stage for *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* as a performance of identity in the theater of representation. Pablo is twenty-four years old in 1905, Gertrude seven years his senior. "It happens often in the twenty-ninth year of life," Gertrude writes in an early novel, *Fernhurst,*[17]

> that all the forces that have been engaged through the years of childhood, adolescence and youth in confused and ferocious combat range themselves in ordered ranks . . . until at last we reach . . . the straight and narrow gate-way of maturity and life which was all uproar and confusion narrows down to form and purpose and we exchange a great dim possibility for a small hard reality.[18]

It is Leo, not Gertrude, who discovers the youthful Picasso,[19] but it is Gertrude who claims the artist as her own, with a proprietary attitude that comes with age, experience, and social standing. In the portrait she paints of her relationship with Pablo in the *Autobiography,* Gertrude is simultaneously nurturing older sister, cultivating a precocious but unformed genius; concerned Maecenas who prevails on Etta Cone to buy Picasso's drawings when the artist is in need of money; adviser and confidante, privy to Pablo's "marital" conflicts with Fernande and, later, to his affair with Eva (Marcelle Humbert). In the monograph on Picasso she even suggests that the young artist came of age as a man and realized his genius under her influence:

> The first picture we had of his is, if you like, rose or harlequin, it is The Young Girl With a Basket of Flowers, it

7. Fernande Olivier, *Picasso et ses amis,* Paris, 1933, 101.

8. Carl Van Vechten, "How to Read Gertrude Stein," *Trend,* Aug. 1914, 553–57, reprinted in *Gertrude Stein Remembered,* ed. Linda Simon, Lincoln, Neb./London, 1994, 42–43.

9. Mabel Dodge Luhan, *Intimate Memories,* II, New York, 1935, 324, cited in Catharine R. Stimpson, "The Somagrams of Gertrude Stein," in Abelove, 642–52.

10. Richardson, 407–8.

11. Undated letter from Fernande Olivier to Gertrude Stein, New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Gertrude Stein Archive, Fernande Olivier correspondence.

12. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington, Ind., 1984.

13 On the tendency to pathologize women who pursued nontraditional vocations during the fin de siècle, see Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle,* New York, 1990, particularly chapter 3. Other terms widely employed in France to characterize the New Woman as a threat to the biological order of society included *cerveline* and *garçonnet.*

14. Stein, 12.

15. Ibid., 57.

16. Stein (as in n. 4), 8.

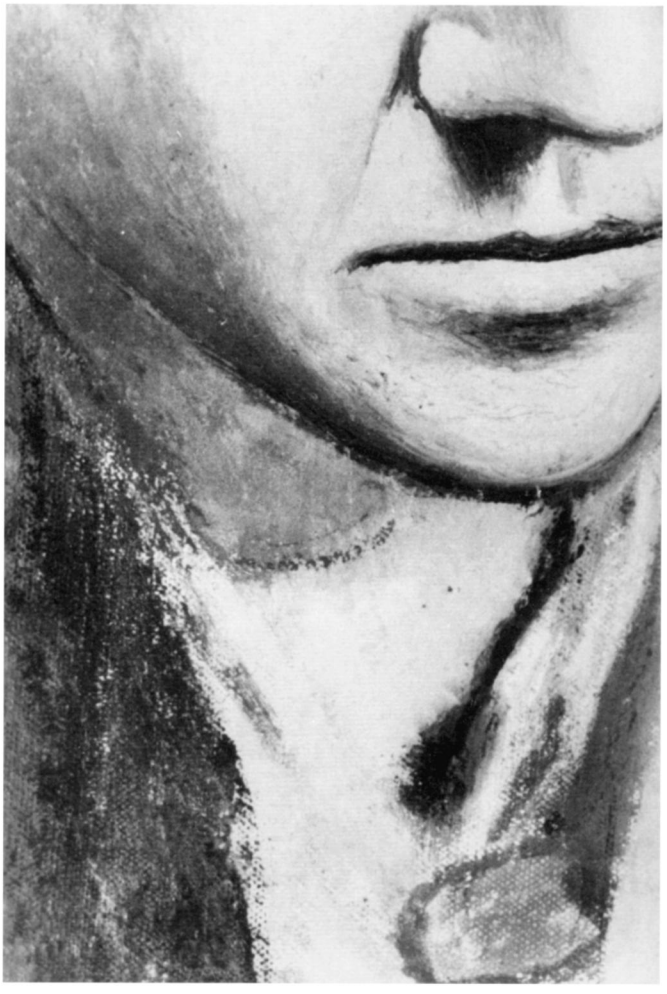
17. According to Leon Katz, Stein probably composed *Fernhurst* in late 1904 or early winter 1905. See his introduction to Gertrude Stein, *Fernhurst, Q.E.D., and Other Early Writings,* New York/London, 1971, xxxvii.

18. Ibid., 29. The passage is also discussed by Catharine R. Stimpson, "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein," *Critical Inquiry,* III, no. 3, Spring 1977, 489–506.

19. Richardson, 397–400, describes the events as follows: Leo Stein comes upon Picasso's *Harlequin's Family with an Ape* of 1905 at Clovis Sagot's shop in Montmartre. He purchases the painting and is shortly thereafter introduced to Picasso at the artist's rue Ravignan studio by Pierre Roché, a mutual friend. Leo subsequently returns to Sagot's with Gertrude and, much to his sister's chagrin, acquires Picasso's *Girl with a Basket of Flowers.* Several days later, Picasso

> was painted at the great moment of the harlequin period, full of grace and delicacy and charm. After that little by little his drawing hardened, his line became firmer, his color more vigorous, naturally he was no longer a boy he was a man, and then in 1905 he painted my portrait.[20]

Picasso, however, sees things from a different perspective. Gertrude insists that neither she nor Picasso can recall the precise circumstances surrounding the decision to execute the portrait,[21] suggesting only that they shared a common experience as expatriate artists in Paris.[22] Yet there is reason to suggest that Picasso offered to paint Gertrude's portrait to insure the favor of his patron, Leo, the "man of the house" at 27, rue de Fleurus. In a letter to Leo from the early summer of 1906, written while Picasso and Fernande were in Gósol, the artist's tone is decidedly formal, as he offers his regards not to Gertrude but, addressing Leo, "to your sister."[23] Whether this suggests a lack of intimacy between Pablo and Gertrude or, more likely, reflects the social education of a young Spanish male, the indirect address points to gendered power relations in Picasso's intercourse with Gertrude in the early months of their friendship.[24] That these relations were acted out during the portrait sessions is not difficult to imagine, yet I want to suggest that they were also implicated in a complex process of psychic transference. As Pablo tried in vain to secure his subject, Gertrude returned his gaze and deflected it inward.[25] What alternative did Picasso have, then, but to stop midstream, to decapitate Gertrude and replace her head with a mask? A mask that is a sign of erasure, a violent effacement whose function is to contain and neutralize a perceived threat. An erasure, in short, that is the site of a wound, one whose trace is still visible in the thin line that extends like a scar around Gertrude's neck (Fig. 2).



2 Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Gertrude Stein,* detail (photo: Emerick). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

In what follows, I want to read this threat as a challenge to normative models of gender and sexual behavior. Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's admonition to gender theorists, I am not arguing that sexual identity can or should be conflated with sexuality, nor am I suggesting, following Judith Butler's cautionary remarks, that one can alter at will sexed identity positions except in the most superficial sense.[26] Nonetheless, Picasso's encounter with Gertrude Stein in the process of painting her portrait involved an elision of these admittedly unstable boundaries, in effect initiating a crisis in his own gendered identity.

To argue my position, I will first consider the painting of a portrait as a performative event between the artist and the sitter, implicating the speaking subject in a complex dialogue with his/her ego ideals and unconscious Other. Jacques Lacan's radical epistemology of perception, as outlined in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* and other texts, will provide the cornerstone for this discussion. I will then consider the ways in which Gertrude Stein experienced her lesbianism and inverted social codes regulating gender and bourgeois (hetero)sexuality by performing an elaborate masquerade in her life and work. In order to clear a space for

and Fernande are invited to dine at the rue de Fleurus. Following this meeting, Picasso offers to paint Gertrude's portrait. For Leo's account of the events and his response to Gertrude's distortions in the *Autobiography,* see his *Appreciation: Painting, Poetry and Prose,* New York, 1947, 168–70, 173–74.

20. Stein (as in n. 4), 7.

21. Stein, 42–43, 45.

22. In her 1938 text on Picasso, Stein writes, "Why did he wish to have a model before him just at this time, this I really do not know, but everything pushed him to it, he was completely emptied of the inspiration of the harlequin period, being Spanish commenced again to be active inside in him and I being an American, and in a kind of a way America and Spain have something in common, perhaps for all these reasons he wished me to pose for him"; Stein (as in n. 4), 7–8.

23. Picasso to Leo Stein, undated letter [summer 1906], New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Gertrude Stein Archive, Picasso correspondence. Picasso appears to have consistently addressed himself to Leo during the summer of 1906 in what can only be described as a gendered discourse. Significantly, on the verso of a letter dated 17 August, it is Fernande who pens a note to Gertrude. The letter is excerpted in the chronology by Judith Cousins for *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism,* exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1989, 341.

24. In contrast, Picasso's letters from the autumn of 1907 are addressed to both Leo *and* Gertrude, and the tone is far less formal; New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Gertrude Stein Archive, Picasso correspondence.

25. I do not intend this comment to be taken literally. Following Lacan, I am defining the gaze in relation to the subject's entry into language as the desiring, divided subject of representation. The question of Picasso's viewing position and the original disposition of Gertrude's face does not substantially affect the terms of the argument that follows.

26. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet,* Berkeley, 1990, 27–35; and Judith Butler, "The Body You Want," interviews by Liz Kotz, *Artforum,* November 1992, 82–89.

3 Paul Cézanne, *Mme Cézanne with a Fan,* 1879–82. Zurich, E. G. Bührle Collection (photo: Emerick)

Gertrude's "performance" of gender and sexuality as critical practices, I will consider recent challenges to the theory of feminine masquerade. Finally, I will read Picasso's disavowal of Gertrude's adoption of a masculine persona as an act of symbolic castration in the dual sense of a psychic and a social process. I will argue that a series of paintings and sketches Picasso executed between the summer of 1906 and the summer of 1907 reveals the artist's anxious confrontation with queer desire and the question of sexual difference, an anxiety that assumes the symbolic form of death imagery in his work. The epicenter of this crisis, which reaches its apotheosis in *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* is located in the Stein portrait, where it is mediated through the device of masking.

In following Lacan to explore the paradigm of symbolic castration, it is not my intention to advance phallocentric theories of sexual difference and the subtext of fetishism that attends them as explanatory models for queer desire. But I do want to maintain the historical specificity of Pablo's encounter with Gertrude, and Gertrude's encounter with Pablo, within the phallic economy of fin de siècle France and the institutional structures that sustained it. For, however much sexed identity positions are phantasmatic ideals, as Lacan himself insisted, their secondary social effects are real. Both Pablo and Gertrude acted within and against these structures. Indeed, my own investment as a queer art historian is to "read" the Stein portrait against the grain of normative constructions of gender and sexuality, and thereby engage a problem that I believe is at the very core of Picasso's formative work and the development of Cubism as he practiced it. Before proceeding, however, we must return to the genesis of the portrait and consider the standard interpretation of Picasso's solution to the problem of the sitter's face.

The Portrait and the Mask

The setting for the portrait sessions is Picasso's studio, the decrepit Bateau Lavoir. Pablo is in the presence of not one but two women: Gertrude and Fernande, the latter of whom reads aloud La Fontaine's fables to amuse the sitter. One woman is Picasso's love object and de facto spouse, a paragon of femininity; the other is his patron's sister. We will return to Fernande later. Occasionally friends and family members visit the studio: Leo, Michael, and Sarah Stein, and their American friend Andrew Green, who pleads with Picasso not to change his initial, more naturalistic conception for the portrait.[27] For the most part, however, Gertrude is in the company of the "Picassos," as she liked to refer to the couple.

The familiar art historical account of the portrait reads like an origin myth of early modernism. For Pierre Daix and John Richardson, Picasso conceives the portrait out of a sense of rivalry with other artists represented in the Steins' collection: Matisse, whose scandalous *Woman with a Hat* Leo acquired at the 1905 Salon d'Automne, and Cézanne, whose portrait of Hortense Fiquet of 1879–82 (Fig. 3) the Steins purchased in late 1904 or early 1905.[28] In Richardson's theory about the "Clash of Titans"—the quintessential origin myth—Picasso "wrestled on canvas with Gertrude as if she were a *sphinx* whose image held the key to the future of his art. . . ."[29] Earlier, he writes (403): "If Picasso's portrait was to hang alongside the two great acquisitions that the Steins had made at the Salon d'Automne, he had to come up with an authoritative image—one that would stand up to the Cézanne and overshadow Matisse's *Woman with a Hat.* Both Cézanne and Matisse had given their wives a fan to hold; however, there would be no feminine accessories for Gertrude." The solution to the problem for both Daix and Richardson is conveniently provided by Ingres, whose work is shown in a retrospective exhibition at the 1905 Salon d'Automne. And so Ingres's *Portrait of Louis-François Bertin* (Fig. 4)—self-assured, monumental, and suitably authoritative—comes into play as Picasso, modernism's Nietzschean hero, challenges the past and heralds the future.

27. James R. Mellow, *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company,* New York, 1974.

28. For a discussion, see Pierre Daix, "Picasso's Time of Decisive Encounters," *Art News,* LXXXII, no. 4, April 1987, 136–41; and idem, "Portraiture in Picasso's Primitivism and Cubism," in *Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation,* exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996, 254–95. On the Steins' acquisition of the Cézanne portrait, see also John Rewald, *Cézanne, the Steins and Their Circle,* New York, 1986, 11; Irene Gordon, "A World beyond the World: The Discovery of Leo Stein," in *Four Americans in Paris: The Collection of Gertrude Stein and Her Friends,* exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970; and Leon Katz, "Matisse, Picasso and Gertrude Stein," in ibid. Gordon (26) dates the purchase to the first half of 1905, whereas Katz (52) places the acquisition in the winter of 1904–5.

29. Richardson, 405; emphasis added.

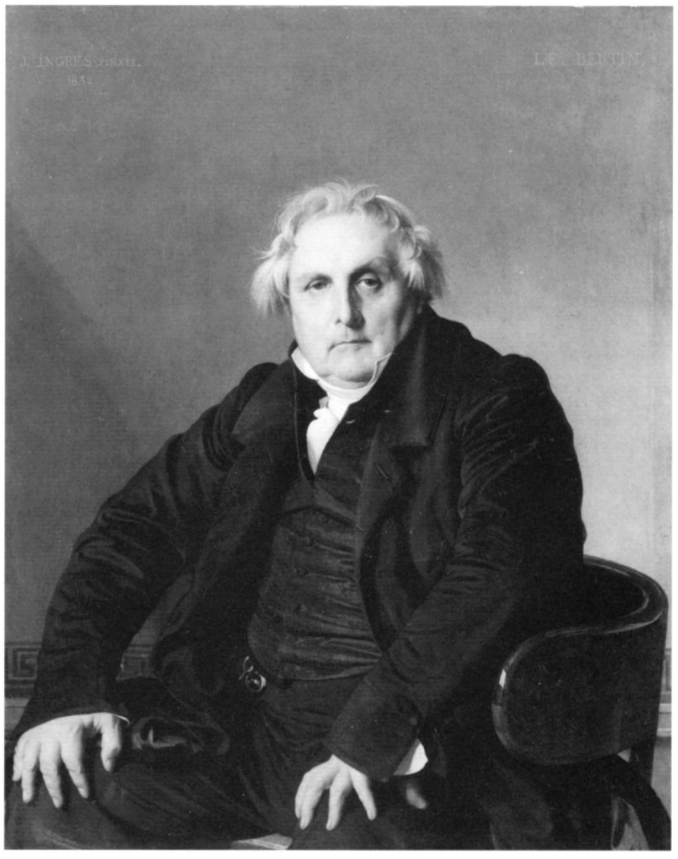
30. John Rewald speculates that Cézanne began the portrait around 1879–80 and reworked his wife's face several years later; Rewald (as in n. 28), 11, 36, 38.

31. For a description of Picasso's studio and the broken chair, see Stein, 22, 46; and Olivier (as in n. 7), 26, 52–54.

I do not mean to suggest that Picasso painted in a vacuum. The portrait of Mme Cézanne seated in a chair, her eyes askew, surely stands behind *Portrait of Gertrude Stein*. But I take issue with Richardson insofar as he largely excludes Gertrude as an active agent in the production of the portrait. In all fairness, Richardson writes (410), "The more overwhelmed Picasso felt by Gertrude's ego, the more difficulty he had in resolving her portrait," but he then defers this reading to the artist's rivalry with Matisse (411): "It is probably no coincidence that Picasso's dissatisfaction with the Stein portrait coincides with his first meeting with Matisse—the only other artist Picasso would ever acknowledge as a rival and ultimately accept as an equal." It was Gertrude and Leo who introduced Picasso to Matisse in March 1906, although they had had opportunities to study each other's work beforehand. But this meeting hardly accounts for the violence of Picasso's subsequent decapitation of the Stein portrait and the ambivalence of the solution he would adopt on his return to Paris from Gósol.

A number of issues are excluded from this discussion of Picasso's formal sources—most notably, the masklike appearance of Mme Cézanne[30] and the significant implications of gender migration in the passage from Monsieur Bertin to Mademoiselle Stein. What is more, the disposition of the sitter in Picasso's and Ingres's portraits is different. Ingres's figure strikes a posture of monumental composure; with its abstract golden background, *Portrait of Louis-François Bertin* has the hieratic presence of a modern icon. In contrast, Gertrude appears to exceed the spatial boundaries of the picture, and her pose is more dynamic; positioned between the planes of two walls that press in upon her ample body, she leans forward on the edge of the rickety chair she occupied in Picasso's studio to balance her weight.[31] To these observations may be added the peculiar disposition of the sitter's relaxed right hand, which hangs limply between her massive thighs, whereas Bertin's hand is firmly planted on his knee. In contrast with the familiar gesture of the Venus Pudica, who in a Freudian reading might be said to cover the site of lack, the position of Gertrude's hand—her writing hand—suggests a certain excess, a prosthetic phallus of sorts that Picasso deflates as if to neutralize the sitter's creative power as an author.[32] It is this Gertrude, this figure of excess under erasure, who is figured in the mask.

As an object and a symbolic structure the mask itself occupies a privileged position in modernist origin myths as the ground on which an elaborate visual tradition has been constructed. It presumably marks Picasso's move from the sentimental neoclassicism of the spring and early summer of 1906 to the archaizing nudes and self-portraits of the following autumn. From here it is but a short stretch to *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* of June–July 1907 and the subsequent development of Cubism. The possibility, as we shall see, that *Les demoiselles* has its roots in an unresolved anxiety concerning the mobility of desire and the instability of sexual identity, an anxiety that informs *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* and Picasso's paintings from the summer of 1906, has never been critically addressed. But first I want to consider the mask, and the complex story of Gertrude's and Pablo's portrait as a *shared* performance.



4 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of Louis-François Bertin,* 1832. Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

The general consensus has been that the incised and irregular features of Gertrude's masklike face derive from fifth–sixth-century Iberian stone carvings from sites in Picasso's native Andalusia, examples of which were on view in the Louvre in the spring of 1906, and perhaps as early as 1905.[33] It is known that sometime around March 1907 Picasso acquired two Iberian sculptures that had been stolen from the Louvre, and that one of these sculptures, a head from Cerro de los Santos (Fig. 5), played a central role in studies for *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*.[34] Recently, the attribution has been questioned by Josep Palau i Fabre, who points to the twelfth-

32. I am indebted to Randy Griffey, a graduate student in art history at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, for drawing my attention to the phallic implications of the hand. Nancy Troy suggested to me in conversation the possible allusion to Gertrude's identity as an author.

33. Richardson, 428, 517. On the history of the Louvre installation, and Picasso's own account of the Iberian influence on *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* see James Johnson Sweeney, "Picasso and Iberian Sculpture," *Art Bulletin,* XXIII, no. 3, 1941, 191–99; and John F. Moffit, "El beso de Brancusi: La exposición de 1906 de escultora ibérica en el Louvre," *Goya,* no. 173, Mar.–Apr. 1983, 296–301.

34. On the circumstances surrounding Picasso's acquisition of the heads, which remained in his possession until 1911, see William Rubin, "The Genesis of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,*" in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon,* ed. William Rubin, Studies in Modern Art, New York, 1994, 129. On the basis of stylistic evidence of drawings contained in Album 3 of studies for *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* Pierre Daix ("L'historial de les *Demoiselles d'Avignon* revisat amb l'ajuda dels àlbums de Picasso," in *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* exh. cat., Museu Picasso, Barcelona, 1988, 501–2 n. 25) convincingly dates both the album and the arrival of the stolen objects in the Bateau Lavoir to March 1907.

5 *Head of a Man,* Iberian, Cerro de los Santos, Spain, 5th–3d century B.C. Musée des Antiquités Nationales, Saint-Germain-en-Laye (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art)

century Virgin of Gósol as a possible source,[35] and by John Richardson, who detects the presence of Ingres's *Tu Marcellus Eris* of 1819 (Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels) in the Stein portrait.[36] But Palau i Fabre's and Richardson's challenges must be read in context as attempts to explain away the nagging problem of the delay in Picasso's formal response to Iberian art; if the Virgin of Gósol stands behind Picasso's archaizing forms in the six-month period *following* his return from Spain in mid-August 1906, then the Iberian influence would become apparent precisely at the moment Picasso acquired the two stolen heads. The problem of the delay disappears.[37]

However, it seems to me that the defining issue is not whether the formal prototype is derived from Iberian or Catalan Romanesque art; rather, the significance of Picasso's delay in completing the portrait in relation to the *function* of the mask is at stake. Pierre Daix in effect dismisses this line of inquiry when he asserts that Picasso was habitually slow to assimilate source materials,[38] and Richardson, commenting on Picasso's initial confrontation with Iberian sculpture in the Louvre, writes, "For the time being Picasso did not see how to harness their primitivism to his work."[39] But the language and categories in both accounts are deeply positivistic, and the psychic dimension of the delay goes unexplored. Might not the Virgin of Gósol have activated Picasso's earlier confrontation with Iberian art? Is it coincidental that Picasso responded to works of art from his native country at this particular moment?

The question, however, does not end here, as non-Spanish visual traditions have also been proposed to account for the form of the mask. For Adam Gopnik, "primitive" (that is, Iberian) art again holds the key, but only insofar as it is grafted onto a formal structure derived from the Western tradition of caricature.[40] In his reading *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* becomes a signpost marking Picasso's move from low to high via Iberian art, a term of mediation, the missing link in an evolutionary schema. As the externally arrested form of one's mental representations, caricature, in Gopnik's view, involves a freezing, an isolation of the mind's internal structure. Yet Gertrude's mask seems to operate in precisely the opposite way, less as the sign of psychological interiority than as an impenetrable shield blocking access to the sitter's mind and body. Here is artist Elizabeth Murray's response to the portrait:

> I don't see it as a caricature . . . I see Picasso really grappling with how to depict this very strange, very strong, very interesting, very smart and very beautiful woman. . . .
>
> And at the same time, Gertrude's brutal. . . . Her face is a mask. Yet I think he really gives her a lot of power. He obviously doesn't find Gertrude sexy. I think it's interesting to see this male painter dealing with this intellectual woman. He's fascinated. Not in her femininity, and in that sense he's not willing to deal with her as a whole person. She's in this lumpy, very asexual dress and almost the only way you know it's a feminine face is the hair. It has this aggressive energy.[41]

The adjectives are illuminating: neither sexy nor feminine, but smart, strong, beautiful, and possessing an aggressive energy. The portrait, then, marks Pablo's recognition of Gertrude's power, but also his refusal to see. For the mask seems to cover something grotesque, even perverse; as a defensive armor, with dark, cavernous openings for eyes, it blocks personal expression and shields the gaze, symbolically speaking, from the blinding site/sight of the Medusa. Yet it would be incorrect to describe Gertrude's appearance in relation to Bakhtin's carnivalesque mask, that "terrible

35. Josep Palau i Fabre, *Picasso: The Early Years, 1881–1907,* Barcelona, 1985, 477.

36. Richardson, 456.

37. To complicate matters, it is specifically the distorted and abstracted form of the ear in the Cerro de los Santos head that Picasso appears to have taken up in preparatory sketches of spring 1907 for *Les demoiselles.* Although I do not dispute this attribution, it should be observed that Stein's right ear in the portrait is also summarily painted. Given Picasso's exceptional visual memory, there is no reason to doubt that the conventions of Iberian art are reflected in works from the summer and autumn of 1906.

38. Daix (as in n. 28), 139.

39. Richardson, 428.

40. "The antimimetic strategies of likeness embedded in the caricature could be integrated into Picasso's finished portraits only after they had been reimagined as primitivism"; Adam Gopnik, "High and Low: Caricature, Primitivism and the Cubist Portrait," *Art Journal,* Winter 1983, 371–76.

41. Michael Kimmelman, "Looking for the Magic in Painting: At the Met with Elizabeth Murray," *New York Times,* Oct. 21, 1984, sec. C, 28.

42. Bakhtin (as in n. 12), 40.

vacuum" with "a nothingness [lurking] behind it."[42] The sitter remains herself—a portrait in the traditional sense—a face *and* its reduction to a hollow mask;[43] the site, in other words, where recognition collapses into nonidentity. Elizabeth Murray aptly describes Pablo's Gertrude as "strange." Might we substitute the adjective "queer"?

Murray's point is well taken, for there is nothing especially "strange" about Picasso's portraits of other Stein family members, Leo and Gertrude's nephew Allan, both of whom sat for Picasso in 1906. There is no tension in these portraits, no ambiguity or apparent signs of struggle and erasure. No resistance, one might say. Again, the voice of a witness, the young writer and radio announcer Bravig Imbs, describes how Gertrude thrived on opposition: "Her capacity for sizing up a person's character in a relatively brief time was of an uncanny precision. . . . She was always much more interested in the painter than in what he was doing and she measured his artistic worth by the *amount of his resistance to her.*"[44]

Portraiture and the Psychoanalytic Subject

Resistance: perhaps that is the best way to describe the contest of wills between Pablo and Gertrude in the act of portrayal, of which *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* is the trace. A portrait is in one sense an *icon* (a sign that denotes by resemblance), and in another sense an *index* of the existential act of portrayal by which the image was produced. As Harry Berger argues, portraiture "creates a referential illusion. What it pretends only to reflect and refer to is in fact something it constitutes. Thus it represents the three-way diachronic transaction between painter, sitter, and observer in a purely fictional field."[45] Against the traditional physiognomic reading of portraits as imprints of the sitter's soul, Berger examines the sitter's agency in constructing a particular self-representation, the act of portrayal involving a performance on the part of the sitter and the painter in which effects of subjectivity are produced through visual conventions and rhetorical strategies that mediate the scopic encounter: verbal descriptions, literary texts, prior representations of the sitter, and so on. This approach would seem to confirm art history's traditional pursuit of formal sources, yet once visual motifs are identified, they are habitually consigned to the prehistory of the portrait, and the sitter's active participation in the construction of his or her image in the act of posing goes unremarked (as does the viewer's own psychic and social investments in the scene of representation).

It is perhaps more instructive, then, to view portraits as performative acts and representations of ego ideals, imagos (mental images) located within a symbolic economy that is mediated by the gaze. The diachronic transaction about which Berger speaks might best be understood as an inter- and intrasubjective discourse that is formalized in representation. Vision, according to Lacan, is not the condition of geometric laws of optics, with a unitary and transcendental subject occupying the apex of the perceptual triangle. The Lacanian subject is a decentered, split, and *desiring* subject, who, on entering the Symbolic order of language (capitalized in order to underscore its inaugural role in the formation of human subjectivity), is alienated from the immediate experience of the Real (broadly defined as the world of objects, events, processes, and experiences). In Lacan's formulation, vision is a function of language and is constituted in relation to the foundational experience of subjectivity as lack-in-being, an experience that is mediated for the subject by metonymic displacements of the lost object of desire.

Thus locating desire within the field of representation, Lacan theorizes that the subject is situated at the crossing of two visual registers—that of the eye and that of the gaze—which he diagrams in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* as two interpenetrating triangles. At the point where the two axes cross, the *image* of traditional optics in the register of the eye is aligned with the *mask* or *screen* in the register of the gaze. In the chiasmic intertwining of the two registers, the speaking subject is shown to be an effect of representation, a "being-seen" in the field of the Other. "What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible," Lacan writes, "is the gaze that is outside."[46] But he also insists that the desiring subject maps her/himself in relation to the *lure* of representation, playing with the mask/screen "as that beyond which there is the gaze," the object of desire that eludes the subject.[47]

At issue in Lacan's radical epistemology of the subject is a four-way transaction among the speaking subject (S or *je*), the subject of identifications (ego or *moi*), the unconscious Other (A) from which the subject is cut off, and objects of identification in the Real, or the subject's ego ideals (other a′) to which the subject directs her/his spoken discourse, and which in turn catalyze the circuit of exchanges. In his *Séminaire II* of May 1955,[48] Lacan presented his map of the human subject in the form of a diagram, the celebrated *Schéma L* (Fig. 6). As he theorized, the specular subject of identification is constantly at war with the social subject in the order of the Real. What is more, the identity of the speaking subject is forever in play, as the *moi* "can only experience itself in relation to external images and to the gaze of others."[49] And since the *moi* is revealed through the speaking *je,* which seeks to conceal it, discourse is never a simple transaction between a subject and an object (other) but is the function of an inter- and

43. Katz (as in n. 28), 59.

44. Bravig Imbs, *Confessions of Another Young Man,* New York, 1936, reprinted in Simon (as in n. 8), 127; emphasis added.

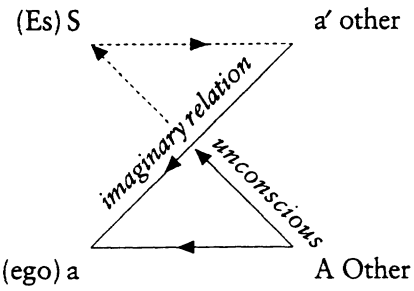
45. As Berger explains, a portrait "is an *indexical icon* in that it purports to denote by resemblance the act of portrayal that produced it. But in spite of what it purports we know that its indexical iconicity is in that respect misleading. For what it indexes is a *normative* act of portrayal rather than the normal or actual process we imagine. In terms of what we assume about the actual painting and posing process, the portrait gives us a selectively abstracted and idealized image of posing. It creates a referential illusion"; Harry Berger, "Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze in Early Modern Portraiture," *Representations,* no. 46, Spring 1994, 87–120.

46. Lacan (as in n. 5), 106.

47. Ibid., 107.

48. *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre II: Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse (1954–55),* text established by Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, 1978. Lacan also published a version of the *Schéma L* in his essay "The Seminar on *The Purloined Letter,*" in *Ecrits,* Paris, 1966.

49. Ragland-Sullivan, 43.



6 Jacques Lacan, *Schéma L* (from Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, Mass./London, 1993, 22)

intrasubjective dialectic. As Ellie Ragland-Sullivan explains:

> In conscious life the *moi* appears as persona, role, or appearance rather than as consciousness or even subjectivity. While adhering to language, the *moi* makes implicit demands for response and recognition, in which statements of opinion and manifestations of knowledge are inverted questions of identity posed to the Other (A) via the other.[50]

Before proceeding to the phenomenological implications of Lacan's theory in relation to *Portrait of Gertrude Stein,* it is important to note that specular relationships, which are formed in the Mirror Stage (structured, in Lacan's *Schéma L,* along the axis of the Imaginary register), are tied to the infant's experience of separation from the mother and are essential to the constitution of the self (ego). This primordial relation of otherness will in turn become the basis for later identifications in adult life, as the human subject negotiates its repressed desire for the (m)Other via substitution. In effect, Lacan conceives the "dialectic of consciousness," to cite Ragland-Sullivan again (93), as "a polar tension between the Other's Desire in us and the tenuous relationship to objects or persons (ideals) who are supposed to satiate Desire." For Lacan, then, perception emanates from the unconscious; it occurs *inside* the subject, not in the object apprehended. "The subject that sees itself as the correlative of the world of objectivity (the *je*)," Ragland-Sullivan continues (94),

> is not the same as the subject that feels itself surprised by *un regard vu* (the *moi*); the latter is the narcissistic subject of being which maintains itself in a function of Desire. . . . Lacan means that the field of conscious perception can be disorganized by another's gaze, when the alien gaze connects with Desire, the prior and more profound perception of self, which the *je* takes great pains to hide from itself. . . ."

I want to propose that this disorganization of perception functioned as an internal dialectic in Pablo's intercourse with Gertrude in the process of painting her portrait. Although Lacan's model is perhaps best applied to the transference between an artist and a sitter along the register of Imaginary identifications, the Symbolic discourse of the speaking subject may effectively unhinge ego ideals (which are never entirely fixed) as they are played out in specular relations. What is more, if indexicality in portraiture is interpreted as the imprint of the gaze in painting, in the sense that portraits are iconic signs that register the effects of psychic transference, desire will always operate in the scene of representation. To return, then, to my initial reading of Gertrude's limp right hand as a detumescent phallus, the question we must now ask is: To what extent did Gertrude's position within the Symbolic order disrupt Picasso's intrasubjective dialectic of self? For the particular "ambivalence" of Pablo's Gertrude is as much a social as a psychic effect, founded, I believe, on the artist's refusal to recognize the lesbian subject. The fact that Stein was not present when Picasso painted in the head suggests the tension underlying his "failure" to reveal the sitter's "essential nature." In this sense, the mask is a palliative device, an elaborate masquerade through which Picasso attempted to maintain the fiction of the pose in the presence of an unruly subject.

Literary Portraits

Stein's active construction of a literary and social persona in large measure set the terms according to which the device of masking was put into effect in the portrait. In the *Autobiography,* Stein performs a brilliant act of ventriloquism, speaking in the third person through Alice,[51] whose devotion metaphorically allows her to escape Picasso's image and to manage her own identity.[52] But in 1905 the mask serves yet another function as Gertrude, on her long walks down La Butte Montmartre to the rue de Fleurus, composes "Melanctha," the second story of her first published novel, *Three Lives.*[53]

"Melanctha" is a literary portrait, less of psychological depth than of the social facade. As numerous authors have noted, it is a racial, gendered, and sexually coded reworking of *Q.E.D.* (*quod erat demonstrandum*), Stein's first autobiographical novel, completed in October 1903 and published posthumously. *Q.E.D.* is the story of Stein's early moral crisis over romantic friendship and sexual intimacy between women, a character study through which the author analyzed her failed relationship with May Bookstaver while a medical student at Johns Hopkins. In the romantic triangle that is described in the novel, Adele, the Stein figure, is ambivalent about her awakening feelings for Helen, the Bookstaver character. On learning the details of Helen's sexual and financial liaison with Mabel, Helen's lover, Adele experiences both intense revulsion and respect, propelling her to embark on a painful voyage of self-discovery. When she finally resolves her conflicts it is too late; Adele loses Helen, "a victim," as Corinne Blackmer writes, "of her internalized propriety, which leaves her a divided and powerless spectator in the drama of human

50. Ibid., 48.

51. For a discussion, see Lynn Z. Bloom, "Gertrude Is Alice Is Everybody: Innovation and Point of View in Gertrude Stein's Autobiographies," *Twentieth Century Literature,* XXIV, no. 1, Spring 1978, 81–93.

52. Schmitz (as in n. 6), 87.

53. Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives* (1909), New York, 1990.

54. Corinne E. Blackmer, "African Masks and the Arts of Passing in Gertrude Stein's 'Melanctha' and Nella Larsen's *Passing*," *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* IV, no 2, Oct 1993, 230–63.

55. As Shari Benstock notes (149), once Stein took up residence in Paris in

passion."[54] Indeed, following the experience of this unhappy affair, Gertrude traveled with Leo to Europe in the summer of 1901, retreating into the comfort of a familiar and safe relationship. By 1903 she had taken up permanent residence with her brother in Paris.[55]

The details are important, for by the autumn of 1907 Gertrude was prepared to enter into a full domestic partnership with Alice Toklas. Much had changed in the intervening six years, and Gertrude's analysis of sexual identity and the predicament of lesbian visibility had become more complex. In "Melanctha," in which Stein transformed the lesbian triangle from *Q.E.D.* into a story of bisexual conflict, ambivalence is recast in social terms as a condition of oppositional racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies. The name of the town in which the narrative unfolds—Bridgepoint—is itself a marker of symbolic thresholds.

At the outset of the story we are introduced to Melanctha Herbert and her friend Rose Johnson (59):

> Rose Johnson was a real black, tall, well built, sullen, stupid, childlike, good looking negress. She laughed when she was happy and grumbled and was sullen with everything that troubled.
>
> Rose Johnson was a real black negress but she had been brought up quite like their own child by white folks.

A few lines down, however (60), Rose's "whiteness" is qualified, as the author insists, "Her white training had only made for habits, not for nature. Rose had the simple, promiscuous unmorality of the black people." As if to emphasize the difference, we are then introduced to the bisexual mulatta Melanctha, whom Stein describes (60) as "a graceful, pale yellow, intelligent, attractive negress. She had not been raised like Rose by white folks but then she had been half made with real white blood."

The narrative shifts back and forth in time from Melanctha's unhappy childhood to her "wanderings" in search of intellectual and carnal knowledge. In the end, Melanctha, a liminal figure who moves in the undefined spaces between communities, succumbs to consumption. Alone on her deathbed, she is "literally consumed," to quote Blackmer, "by 'wandering' through worlds in which she [can]not discover her 'right position.' "[56] Although she perceives the disjunction between socially constructed and essentialist notions of race, gender, and sexuality, she is unable to manipulate those categories to her advantage and thereby achieve clarity of definition as a social subject. In the absence of a language, history, and cultural memory with which to articulate her desire, Melanctha is forced to wear the public mask of silence.[57]

Stein, however, escaped this fate by narrating her unique experience of self. In light of Picasso's difficulty in locating his subject in the process of painting her portrait, Stein's 1906 text suggests that she was a keen observer of human behavior and a shrewd manipulator of social codes. Picasso's inability to "see" Gertrude Stein was as much a function of her resistance to his appropriative gaze as it was of his refusal to recognize her difference.

7 Deborah Kass, *How Do I Look,* 1991. New York, Collection of the artist (photo: courtesy Deborah Kass)

New Women, Bourgeois Marriage, and the Lesbian Subject

> There was something about this portrait and this person that mesmerized me. And I figured it out later, going to the Met and MoMA, that Picasso never painted another woman like that, who looked like that, with that kind of presence, who wasn't a *thing!* He painted a person, and this personness overwhelmed me. I don't know whether it was because Gertrude Stein was an artist or because she was a Jewish woman or because she was a dyke, but I'm convinced that at eight I got a lot of this information subliminally.—Deborah Kass[58]

What is at stake in calling Gertrude Stein a dyke, or a lesbian, or, to use the terminology of the fin de siècle, an invert? How can the languages of lesbian identity and sexuality be historically reconstructed when they are buried beneath masks of silence and layers of cultural amnesia? Artist Deborah Kass insists that the retrieval of the lesbian subject in art and history has broad political ramifications for normative constructions of gender and sexuality in Western culture. In *How Do I Look,* a work of 1991 (Fig. 7), Pablo's Gertrude is surrounded by images that signify the predicament of lesbian visibility: a trace of Gustave Courbet's 1866 *Sleepers,* floating in a field of pink flesh, and Jasper Johns's *The Critic Sees* of 1961. In a postcoital embrace—note the raised leg of the foreground sleeper in Courbet's painting, the broken strand of pearls, and the labial folds of the bed covering gently parted by probing fingers—the lesbian body is imagined as the site of erotic mystification and sexual frisson. Within the conventions governing bourgeois propriety and representations of the nude in the nineteenth century, the lesbian body is elided

1903, she "commenced her expatriation by writing out the story of the unhappy love affair that was, importantly, the reason for her expatriation. The decision again to take up life with her brother represented a regression to the patriarchal fold and suggested as well that Gertrude Stein had nowhere else to go."

56. Blackmer (as in n. 54), 243.
57. Ibid., 243–51, 262–63.
58. Deborah Kass, quoted in Holland Cotter, "Art after Stonewall: 12 Artists Interviewed," *Art in America,* LXXXII, no. 2, June 1994, 57.

with the body of the prostitute or courtesan, a dual site of fascination and proscription familiar to us from Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal.* As for the quotation from Jasper Johns, Kass plays on the contradiction of the critic who sees but refuses to speak, and conversely, the critic who speaks his discourse from a position of blindness. In this way, Kass suggests that the lesbian subject has historically been repressed, denied representation, or inserted into a sexual economy that belongs to an(other).

Kass's layering of visual sources and historical referents in turn underscores the extent to which the project of retrieving a unitary lesbian sensibility through history must itself be opened to a critique of modern categories of sex, gender, and sexuality. In short, we must consider how individual women experienced their sexuality in relation to the discursive and institutional boundaries of these very categories.[59] Stein's life and work are a case in point. There is a passage in the *Autobiography* in which Gertrude remembers how her friend Marion Walker pleaded with her not to abandon her medical studies—"but Gertrude Gertrude remember the cause of women"—to which Stein replies, "you don't know what it is to be bored."[60] When many years later Marion visits Gertrude and Alice at their home outside Paris, Gertrude's Alice writes (83) that they "disagreed as violently about the cause of women as they did then. Not, as Gertrude Stein explained to Marion Walker, that she at all minds the cause of women or any other cause but it does not happen to be her business." The anecdote is illuminating. Gertrude's business was, of course, literature, but the story also invites us to consider Stein's relation to fin de siècle feminism and the political and social discourse of the New Woman. Surely, Gertrude would have eschewed that label,[61] acting out in her relationship with Alice the external conventions of bourgeois marriage that so many women of her generation rejected: Gertrude played "husband" to Alice's "wife," and together they maintained a comfortable and proper household. Yet Stein's social position as an artist and intellectual, and even her romantic involvement with May Bookstaver were formed within the institutional spaces her feminist peers had established for bourgeois women in the last third of the nineteenth century.[62] Boston marriages and romantic friendships were accepted practices within this world of female intimacy and community support, practices that might include platonic as well as sexual love between women.[63]

By the 1890s, however, New Women who openly laid claim to their sexuality and rejected gender norms were increasingly pathologized by scientists. Sexologists perceived the Mannish Lesbian as a special threat to the social order, along with prostitutes and other gender outlaws.[64] For Richard von Krafft-Ebing, the elision of "deviant" sexuality and gender was so totalizing that the demand for economic and social equality by women could be equated with physiological (congenital) inversion—the perverse desires of a man trapped in a woman's body, and vice versa. Havelock Ellis, taking issue with the biological determinism of Krafft-Ebing and César Lombroso, "refined" these categories of perversity, distinguishing the true congenital invert from the woman predisposed to her "predatory" behavior. In his influential treatise, *Sexual Inversion,* he confidently asserted:

> The brusque, energetic movements, the attitude of the arms, the direct speech, the inflexions of the voice, the masculine straightforwardness and sense of honor . . . will all suggest the underlying psychic abnormality to a keen observer. In the habits not only is there frequently a pronounced taste for smoking cigarettes, often found in quite feminine women, but also a decided taste and tolerance for cigars. There is also a dislike and sometimes incapacity for needlework and other domestic occupations, while there is often some capacity for athletics.[65]

Some measure of the pervasiveness of these medico-sexual categories is the extent to which individuals internalized them, assuming assigned positions within a spatial and hierarchical system that, as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg observes, was primarily "concerned with issues of [social] order, structure, and difference."[66] Even with Freud's ground-breaking distinction between sexual aim (that is, active/passive roles) and sexual object choice in his 1905 treatise *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* medical discourse continued to construct new categories of sexual perversion, with the "homosexual" increasingly replacing the "invert" as the subject of medical knowledge.[67]

Gertrude's relationship with Alice was certainly not a romantic friendship, nor a Boston marriage in the classic sense. What is remarkable is how Gertrude's masculine persona exceeded dominant categories of social behavior. If she disagreed with Marion Walker about the "cause of women," it was because fin de siècle feminism had little tolerance for lesbian sexuality. As we have seen, Stein repeatedly questioned normative models of sexual behavior in her

59. On these points, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction,* 1 (1978), New York, 1990; and Sedgwick (as in n. 26).

60. Stein, 82.

61. On Stein's attitudes toward the New Woman, see Stimpson (as in n. 18), 497.

62. On the discourse of the New Woman, see Smith-Rosenberg, 245–96; and Lilian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present,* New York, 1981, 178–89.

63. In her discussion of the New Woman, Smith-Rosenberg, 58–59, cautions against reading genital contact as an extension of romantic friendships: "The essential question is not whether these women had genital contact and can therefore be defined as homosexual or heterosexual. The twentieth-century tendency to view human love and sexuality within a dichotomized universe of deviance and normality, genitality and platonic love, is alien to the emotions and attitudes of the nineteenth century and fundamentally distorts the nature of these women's emotional interaction."

Prior to Smith-Rosenberg, Adrienne Rich ("Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," rev. and reprinted in Abelove, 227–47) used the term "lesbian continuum" to characterize a broad range of woman-identified experiences through history. For other writers, however, Rich's notion of a continuum all but erases lesbian sexuality. Thus, feminist theorist Biddy Martin ("Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]," in Abelove, 274–93) describes Rich's argument as "the ultimate formulation of a particular conception of the relationship between sexuality and politics, explicitly marking off lesbianism as an issue of gender identification and contrasting the interests of gay men and lesbians." Moreover, Martin suggests that the broad-based notion of a lesbian continuum obscures the racial and class differences that define specific homosocial and homosexual experiences

64. For a discussion, see Esther Newton's important essay, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," rev. and reprinted in *Hidden from History Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past,* ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., Harmondsworth, 1989, 281–93. Following Newton, Teresa de Lauretis ("Sexual Indifference and Lesbian

writings, transforming her own sexual identity crisis into a moral dilemma in *Q.E.D.,* her "coming-out" story.[68] Yet however much Stein held a critical mirror to her generation, her life and work did not conform to oppositional, subcultural models of social conduct. This last point is important, for by 1905 there were self-identified lesbian communities in Paris (accepting the ambiguity and range of practices the term *lesbian* implies for this historical moment). These communities mirrored wider divisions in the society along class, racial, political, and ethnic/national lines, from working-class butches and femmes to Edith Wharton's elite salon at 53, rue de Varenne and Natalie Barney's chic staging of a modern Lesbos at 20, rue Jacob.[69]

Stein lived and worked on the margins of this larger lesbian culture, launching her attack on hetero avant-garde masculinity from a strategic position at the center of its operations. As Shari Benstock observes:

> An examination of Stein's use of the adopted masculine identity sheds light not only on the ways in which she lived her lesbianism but on the ways in which she wrote about that experience. A careful analysis of this living/writing experience unsettles expectations about Stein's relation to women writers of the community and her place among the male Modernists. It also upsets conventional notions of the heterosexual woman writer's experience as distinct from that of the homosexual woman, revealing the extent to which Stein's presence threatened attitudes about lesbian behavior among both homosexual and heterosexual women.[70]

To this last observation, I would add homosexual and heterosexual men, however much I want to insist on the instability of those terms. And with this observation, I return to Picasso.

Picasso's image of the lesbian was formed within the gender hierarchies of Spanish society and informed by the ambivalent Symbolist trope of the intermediate sex—the lesbian as vampire and martyr.[71] By the 1880s and 1890s, the "vice" of lesbianism had become a popular theme in literary and visual representations, from Zola's *Nana* to the demimonde depicted by Toulouse-Lautrec, whose work exercised a considerable influence on the young Picasso. Most striking in Picasso's work of about 1900 to 1904 is the association of lesbianism with prostitution, positioned within a heterosexual social matrix.[72] Picasso's "lesbians" (the designation is by no means secure) are either vampiric ladies of the night—lustful, bloodless, even spectral creatures—or they are represented as purely sexual bodies, nonsubjects trapped in a narcissistic relation of proximity.[73] In a drawing of about 1900 (Fig. 8), for example, Picasso imagines two nearly identical women in the aftermath of an erotic encounter; the pussycat presumably alludes to the object of desire. When Picasso's "lesbians" are embodied in a less predatory or overtly carnal manner (Fig. 9), they are curiously passive beings, dispossessed of substance and set adrift in a temporal and spatial flux. Related imagery from the period leaves little doubt that these women are phantasmatic projections of Picasso's desire for mastery.[74]

8 Pablo Picasso, *Two Women with a Cat,* 1900. Private collection (photo: Emerick). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

Representation," in Abelove, 141–58) observes that the discourse of the Mannish Lesbian might be reclaimed by lesbians as the basis for cultural recognition, social visibility, and political empowerment.

65. Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Inversion,* London, 1897, cited in George Chauncey, Jr., "From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality: Medicine and the Changing Conceptualization of Female Deviance," *Salmagundi,* nos. 58–59, Fall 1982–Winter 1983, 114–46.

66. Smith-Rosenberg, 285–86.

67. Ibid., 122–23, 143–44.

68. In an illuminating passage in *Q.E.D.* Adele muses, "Well, I hope some day to find a morality that can stand the wear and tear of real desire to take the place of the nice one that I have lost. . . ."; Stein (as in n. 17), 96.

69. Benstock, 37–70, 268–307.

70. Ibid., 19.

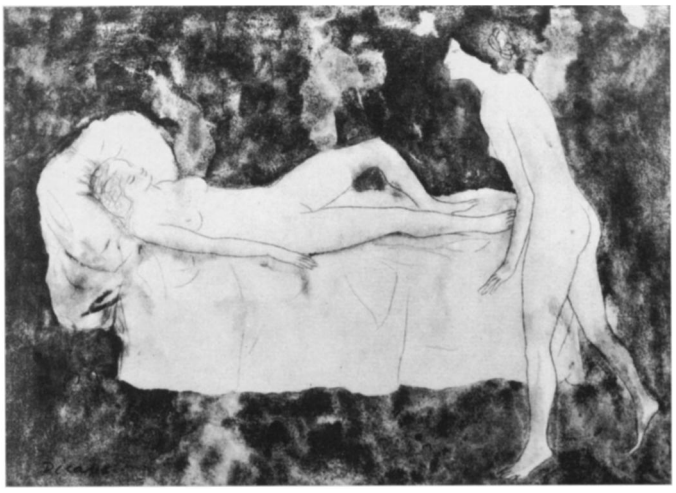
71. For a discussion, see Faderman (as in n. 62), 254–94; Showalter (as in n. 13), 169–87; and Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture,* New York/Oxford, 1986, 119–59.

72. In fin de siècle Spain, for example, links between prostitution and homosexuality were clearly established in the medical literature, as in a study of social degeneration by P. C. Bernaldo de Quirós and J. M. Llanas Aguilaniedo, *La mala vida en Madrid, Estudio psico-sociológico con dibujos y fotografías del natural,* Madrid, 1901. The publication date of the study coincides with Picasso's sojourn in Madrid.

For a consideration of Picasso's ambivalent attitudes toward prostitution, see Michael Leja, " 'Le Vieux Marcheur' and 'les Deux Risques': Picasso, Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Maternity, 1899–1907," *Art History,* VIII, no. 1, March 1985, 66–80. The discussion is again taken up by David Lomas, "A Canon of Deformity: *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* and Physical Anthropology," *Art History,* XVI, no. 3, 1993, 424–46.

73. On 19th-century imagery relating to lesbian narcissism, see Dijkstra (as in n. 71), 146–59.

74. On the theme of the sleeping nude, see Leo Steinberg's classic essay "Picasso's Sleepwatchers," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art,* New York, 1972, 93–114.



9 Pablo Picasso, *The Two Friends,* autumn 1904. Private collection (photo: Emerick). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

Gertrude Stein was none of these women. Reconfiguring gender and sexual boundaries in her life and work, Gertrude's performance marked what Teresa de Lauretis has termed the "space-offs," or blind spots within hegemonic discourses, "a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable."[75] There is an illuminating passage in the *Autobiography* in which Gertrude's Alice tells the reader:

> Before I decided to write this book [about] my twenty-five years with Gertrude Stein, I had often said that I would write, The wives of geniuses I have sat with. I have sat with so many. I have sat with wives who were not wives, of geniuses who were real geniuses. I have sat with real wives of geniuses who were not real geniuses. I have sat with wives of geniuses, of near geniuses, of would be geniuses, in short I have sat very often and very long with many wives and wives of many geniuses.[76]

Although Gertrude and Alice assumed the socially mandated positions of "husband" and "wife" in their marriage, neither can be said to have acted out these roles in the normative sense.[77] This observation extends to Stein's refusal to identify an essential female or lesbian subject in her poetry and prose, for which she adopted a coded language to celebrate her intimate relationship with Alice in all its erotic specificity.[78] In reconfiguring dominant social relations without insisting on the idea of an essential sexual "difference," Stein has appeared to many as a contradictory figure. In the *Autobiography,* for example, Stein liberally replaces the personal pronoun "she" with her full name, identifying her position as a subject outside gendered discourse, but not, significantly, outside the patriarchal order of the family.[79] Picasso himself seems to have recognized Gertrude's ability to reproduce *and* invert subject positions within the sex-gender system, addressing a missive of March 31, 1911, "à Mademoiselle Gertrude Stein/homme de lettres" ("To Miss Gertrude Stein, man of letters").[80]

It is important to ask, then, whether Stein's relation to the power-knowledge apparati of gender and bourgeois (hetero) sexuality was mimetic or was based on a potentially destabilizing practice of mimicry. In other words, we must distinguish between Stein's replication of gendered positions within the wider culture (in a notebook she once wrote, "Pablo & Matisse have a maleness that belongs to genius. Moi aussi, perhaps"[81]) and the immediate social consequences of her actions in calling into question the very categories that frame them. After all, how conventional was a lesbian marriage in 1907?

The question of gender performativity in relation to sexual orientation is at issue here. In *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler argues that symbolic positions like "man" and "woman," "male" and "female" are sites of approximation that can never be fully occupied. Butler insists that the very formation of subjects presupposes that we assume the mark of gender within the social body. Through acts of imitation and repetition, gender norms are reproduced, made to signify and resignify. To the extent, then, that gender is constituted performatively within and/or against the grain of preexisting structures of symbolization—gender as "a kind of psychic norm and cultural practice"—Butler suggests that "it will always elude a fixed definition."[82] Gender is inherently unstable.

It strikes me that Butler's theory provides a critical framework within which Stein's relation to heterosexual norms and gender codes may be viewed as contested practices. Speaking of butch/femme identities, for example, Butler insists that they "are not just 'bad copies' of straight coupledom." As she explains, "Butch and femme identities are not just mimetic or representational in some simple sense; they can be replayed or redeployed precisely to produce a set of meanings that the structures they appear to be copying would preclude."[83]

75. Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction,* Bloomington, Ind./Indianapolis, 1987, 25–26.

76. Stein, 14.

77. Catharine Stimpson argues otherwise: "despite her sexual preferences, Stein never ceased to believe in bourgeois heterosexuality: its decencies, norms, and families. This had at least two consequences. First, Stein equated the mind, especially that of the genius, with masculinity. She was a frequent Tory about who should labor in laboratories. Next, she equated sexuality with heterosexuality. Necessarily, such an ideology tore at her ambitions and sexual desires. *She was at odds with her own compulsions for work and for love*"; Stimpson, "Gertrude Stein and the Transposition of Gender," in *The Poetics of Gender,* ed. Nancy K. Miller, New York, 1986, 4; emphasis added. I would argue, however, that to equate Stein's behavior with replicating the institutions of bourgeois heterosexuality as a transparent social text is to miss the inherent irony (in de Lauretis's sense of the "space-off") of a queer response to the heterosexual matrix. Stein's erotic poetry in particular hardly suggests that she was ambivalent about her art and desire.

78. For an illuminating discussion, see Benstock, 186–81; Stimpson (as in n. 77); Stimpson (as in n. 9), 642–52; and Marianne DeKoven, *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein's Experimental Writing,* Madison, Wis., 1983.

79. On the significance of naming in relation to sexual identity and kinship, see Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* New York/London, 1993, 72. For a radical theory of gender and language, see Monique Wittig, "The Mark of Gender," in *The Poetics of Gender,* ed. Nancy K. Miller, New York, 1986, 63–73.

80. New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Gertrude Stein Archive, Picasso correspondence.

81. Gertrude Stein, *Gertrude Stein on Picasso,* ed. Edward Burns, New York,

Indeed, this idea of mimesis as an *excess* that produces its own slippage in gender performance immediately undercuts the fantasy of a stable identity. Gertrude's performance, I want to argue, was in this sense a strategic form of mimicry, first with Leo and Pablo, and then in her coupling with Alice. Stein's autobiographical writings of the period—*Q.E.D., Fernhurst,* and "Melanctha"—leave no doubt that she staged the secondary (social) effects of gender and sexuality both as a life praxis and a literary theme.

Modernism's M(Other)

As a lesbian author and the object of Picasso's artistic gaze, Gertrude Stein occupies a privileged position in the history of early modernist art and literature. Her complex relation to hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality gives us pause to consider the ways in which she shaped modernism's center from the outside. To map this process, it is useful to turn from the biographical and historical record to the field of contemporary art and cultural criticism.

In the French Collection, an elaborate series of painted and pieced quilts, Faith Ringgold tells the story of "an African American woman named Willia Marie Simone who went to Paris in 1920 at the age of 16 to become an artist." Willia Marie is Ringgold's alter ego, the voice through which she recounts her experiences as a female artist of color coming of age in the 1960s. Ringgold's Willia Marie performs a narrative function similar to Gertrude's Alice, just as the artist's elaborate analysis of intersecting discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality suggests ways in which hegemonic social and cultural structures might productively be challenged.

In *Dinner at Gertrude Stein's* of 1994 (Fig. 10), Ringgold constructs a literary narrative that serves to deconstruct the elaborate fiction of the represented image. "Dear Aunt Melissa," the story begins in the first text panel, "Last night I had dinner at Gertrude Stein's." A shift in rhetoric that appropriates Gertrude's literary voice follows, and the narrative continues in the second panel:

> There were 10 of us at Gertrude Stein's. Six were being men and four were being women. One of the four women being Gertrude another one being Alice. Both living and being women, though one [Gertrude] smokes a cigar, and has a wife being Alice. Alice was always living and working for Gertrude and cooking and typing "the daily miracle" which is being what Gertrude calls her daily unedited manuscript.

Here, the use of the gerund "being" opens the text to a critical reading in which the notion of an immutable, essential identity is held up to the idea of a performative self. Gender, race, and social roles, Ringgold suggests, are sites of approximation between the experiences of and demands on "being," and the social effects of performing or refusing to perform those demands. From a position ostensibly on the outside Willia Marie interrogates modernism's inside in her letter to Aunt Melissa, just as Gertrude described her unique experience of difference in her diaristic writing.

In an earlier quilt, Ringgold specifically analyzed the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and even language have acted as boundary markers in the definition of early modernism. Although Ringgold's contemporary critique of modernism's exclusions should not be conflated with the matrix of forces we now call the historic avant-garde, which Gertrude had a hand in shaping, viewing Gertrude's modernism through Ringgold's eyes points to the presence of different voices at the very core of that project. Thus, in *Picasso's Studio* of 1991 (Fig. 11), the narrator's voice informs us: "Picasso's first cubist painting was called barbaric, *la mort,* the death of art! But that didn't stop him. In fact, it started *le mouvement moderne d'art.* The European artists took a look at us and changed the way they saw themselves." Here, the African body occupies a strategic position as an object of the disciplinary gaze of colonial authority (the phallic mastery implied by Picasso's raised paintbrush reinforces this idea) and as the site of contest within the West's colonial Imaginary.[84] In a more recent quilt, *Le Café des Artistes* of 1994, Ringgold is explicit about the ambivalence of the demand for difference within assimilation, as the voice of the dominant culture instructs Willia Marie, "You should learn French cooking. It will help you to blend your *couleurs.*" "No she is a natural with *couleur.* Very primitive," another voice answers.

Picasso's equation of blackness with otherness will not, however, be Willia Marie's burden. If the West habitually consigns the colonial subject to one of two positions—that of the essential "primitive," childlike and instinctual, or that of the mimic (wo)man, the "almost white/not quite" who is an ellipsis in representation[85]—Ringgold retrieves a material history of cultural fragmentation and dislocated identities in order to enact a political critique. Following Ringgold's lead, then, we must retrieve Gertrude in all her historical specificity and contradictory practices and explore what Elizabeth Fifer has aptly called her "interior theater," the "tension between how she is seen and how she sees"[86]—which would necessarily include a critique of her position as modernism's (m)Other. Fifer views this tension as the sustaining force of Gertrude's

1970, 97.

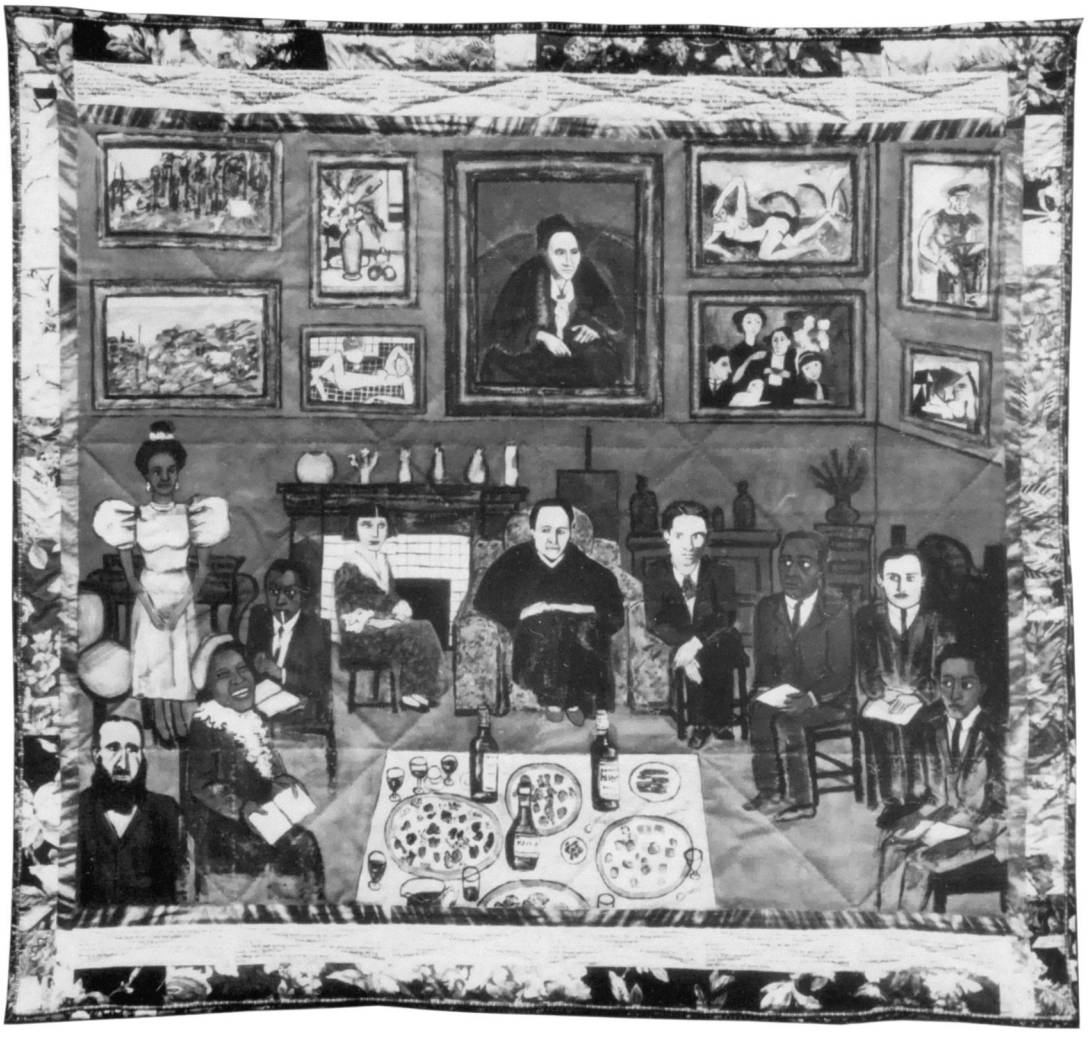
82. Butler (as in n. 26).

83. Ibid., 87. In an important essay published in 1988–89, Sue-Ellen Case discussed the extent to which an essentialist feminist criticism has often erased the historical, class, and political specificity of butch-femme practices: "Here, the sirens of sublation may be found in the critical maneuvers of heterosexual feminist critics who metaphorize butch-femme roles, transvestites and campy dressers into a 'subject who masquerades,' as they put it, or is 'carnivalesque' or even, as some are so bold to say, who 'cross-dresses.' Even when these borrowings are nested in more benign contexts . . . they evacuate the historical, butch-femme couples' sense of masquerade and cross-dressing the way a cigar-store Indian evacuates the historical dress and behavior of the Native American"; Sue-Ellen Case, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," in Abelove, 294–306.

84. For a discussion of Ringgold's quilt in relation to the discursive boundaries of modernism, see Ann Gibson, "The Avant-Garde," in *Critical Terms for Art History,* ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, Chicago, 1996.

85 The quote is taken from Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October,* no. 28, Summer 1984, 125–33. See also the same author's influential essay "The Other Question—The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," *Screen,* XXIV, no. 6, Nov.–Dec. 1983, 18–36. For an illuminating discussion of Bhabha's theory of colonial mimicry, see David Richards, *Masks of Difference: Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art,* New York, 1994, 227–41.

86. Elizabeth Fifer, "Is Flesh Advisable: The Interior Theater of Gertrude Stein," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* IV, no. 3, Spring 1979, 472–83.



10 Faith Ringgold, *Dinner at Gertrude Stein's* (from the French Collection series, part 2), 1994. Collection of the artist (photo: courtesy Faith Ringgold)

erotic poetry, but I think the metaphor can be extended to her elaborate masquerade at the material site of the body.

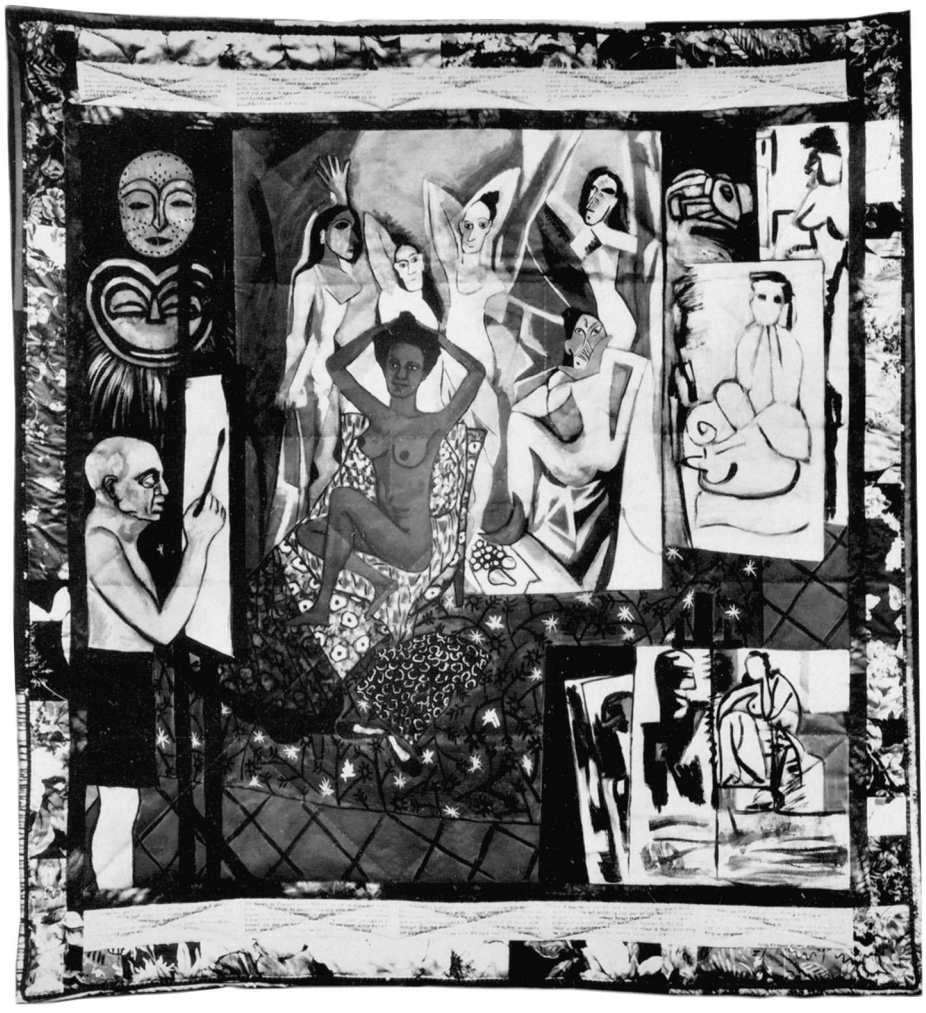
In the *Autobiography,* Alice describes the costume Gertrude wore on a trip to Spain prior to the publication of *Tender Buttons* in 1914: a brown corduroy suit (a skirt, jacket, and blouse), sandals, and a straw cap. "It is more or less this costume without the cap and the cane," she states, "that Picasso has painted in his portrait of her."[87] "More or less," Alice says, but the difference is important. According to Fernande Olivier, both Gertrude and Leo had taken to wearing brown corduroy, with sandals "à la Raymond Duncan," Isadora's brother.[88] I have never seen photographs of Leo dressed in this manner, but more important, Alice's description is inaccurate. In Picasso's portrait Gertrude is clearly wearing a white blouse beneath a flowing brown robe that is joined by a brooch. Her costume is markedly different from the skirt/jacket ensembles that she had earlier worn, as seen in photographs taken about 1901 (Fig. 12) and 1905 (Fig. 13). These costumes, which conform to Victorian dress codes, construct the female body as a site of containment. The robe, in contrast, is extravagantly theatrical, the sign of a figure that is all surface; a figure, to borrow Lacan's celebrated phrase, that has no "itself behind."

I do not want to belabor these points except to suggest that Gertrude's costume is a function of her gender performance. This is not to argue that her flowing, monklike robe signifies androgyny or some preontological essence beyond gender. Rather, it is a sign of gender and social mobility: at once a soft, voluptuous fabric that is gently parted to expose the contours of Gertrude's bosom, and a heavy curtain blocking access to the flesh that lies beneath; an article of private, domestic apparel worn in the more public space of the artist's studio

87. Stein, 116.

88. Fernande Olivier writes, "The two of them were dressed in brown corduroy and wore sandals by Raymond Duncan, with whom they were friends"; Olivier (as in n. 7), 101. The description is included in the section of the book that corresponds to the years 1907–10.

89. Balzac is known to have written his greatest novels in the early morning hours, dressed only in a bathrobe. Auguste Rodin's conception of the author's costume in his celebrated *Monument to Balzac* of 1898 may well have provided



11 Faith Ringgold, *Picasso's Studio* (from the French Collection series, part 1), 1991. Collection of the artist (photo: courtesy Faith Ringgold)

and put on display in the social space of portraiture. Above all, Gertrude's costume is an elaborate conceit, a clever restaging of Balzac's unorthodox attire,[89] which she wore to perform her status both as an avant-garde author and a skillful manipulator of social codes. Indeed Gertrude's dress challenged conventions of feminine masquerade as much as it established its distance from vestimental practices adopted by upper-class women of the Paris lesbian community: from Natalie Barney's paeans to classical goddesses in her backyard "Temple à l'Amitié" to masked balls and drag balls.[90] Claiming the full privileges of artistic license, Gertrude, as Elizabeth Murray recognized, lived a radically different femininity.

Gertrude's Masquerade

To the extent that Gertrude staged the secondary effects of gender in relation to the discursive field of feminine masquerade, reconfiguring its boundaries in the act, some discussion of "Womanliness as a Masquerade,"[91] the title of a 1929 essay by psychoanalyst Joan Riviere, is in order. Riviere presents the case of a successful professional woman who, in a reaction-formation to the threat of retribution from her male colleagues for assuming a *masculine* identity and usurping their (phallic) authority, dissimulates her "theft" through feminine masquerade. But, as Stephen Heath observes, it is really the question of *feminine* identity that is at the center of Riviere's paper. In a much quoted passage, Riviere writes:

> Womanliness . . . could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he had not stolen the goods. The reader may

the immediate model for Gertrude's dress.

90. Benstock, 93–94, 268–307; and Case (as in n. 83). For an excellent discussion of transvestite practices, see also Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety*, New York/London, 1992.

91. Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, X, 1929, reprinted in Victor Burgin et al., *Formations of Fantasy*, London/New York, 1986, 35–44.

12 *Gertrude Stein,* ca. 1901, photograph. Collection Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (photo: Beinecke Library)

13 *Gertrude Stein,* ca. 1905, photograph. Collection Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (photo: Beinecke Library)

> now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the "Masquerade." My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.[92]

In Riviere's theory, femininity is the dissimulation of a fundamental masculinity; it is a term of absence marked by that which it is not, the veil that re-presents lack (nonidentity) by covering it over.

Lacan takes up these issues in his 1958 essay "The Signification of the Phallus," in which he describes the experience of lack-in-being that attends the splitting of the subject in language and its submission to the paternal metaphor.[93] The interdiction of the *no/m-du-père* initiates an order of exchange that breaks the deindividuated mother/child dyad; the child must now assume its gendered identity as a "sexed partial being" in relation to "having" the phallus (the ideal male position) or "being" the phallus (the ideal female position), the lost object of a desire for unity that can never be satisified. Significantly, Lacan theorizes that "masculine" and "feminine" positions are phantasmatic sites that can be occupied by either sex. As Judith Butler observes, in Lacan's theory " 'being' the Phallus is always a 'being for' a masculine subject who seeks to reconfirm and augment his identity through the recognition of that 'being for.' "[94] And because gender is fundamentally unstable, to the extent that it is formed through acts of repetition, the positions of "having" and "being" remain approximate. Indeed Lacan points to a corresponding concept of male display, which he refers to as *parade*—all of those signs, like clothing, social position, and behavior that serve to shore up phallic authority. For Lacan, then, possession of the phallus is illusory—one only *appears* to "have" or to "be" the phallus—yet it is also clear that for both Riviere and Lacan femininity as a *social* construction is

92. Stephen Heath, "Joan Riviere and the Masquerade," in ibid., 45–61.

93. Jacques Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus," in *Ecrits: A Selection,* trans. Alan Sheridan, New York/London, 1977, 280–91.

94. Butler, 45. The author continues, "In a strong sense, Lacan disputes the notion that *men* signify the meaning of *women* or that *women* signify the meaning of *men.* The division and exchange between this 'being' and 'having' the Phallus is established by the Symbolic, the paternal law. Part of the comedic dimension of this failed model of reciprocity, of course, is that both masculine and feminine positions are signified, the signifier belonging to the Symbolic that can never be assumed in more than token form by either position."

95. Mary Ann Doane writes, "Masquerade is not as recuperable as (male) transvestism precisely because it constitutes an acknowledgment that it is femininity itself which is constructed as mask—as the decorative layer which conceals a non-identity"; Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism,* ed. Patricia Erens, Bloomington, Ind., 1990, 48. In a recent revision of her 1982 essay, Doane observes that "there remain significant difficulties and drawbacks in the concept of masquerade. Because its first appearance in psychoanalytic texts specifies it as a reaction-formation designed to counter the possession of masculinity, it makes femininity dependent upon masculinity for its very definition. Thus, although it may not secure a feminine 'essence,' it does presuppose a system and a logic dictated by a masculine position, once again subordinating femininity"; Doane, "Masquerade Reconsidered: Further Thoughts on the Female Spectator," in *Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis,* New York/London, 1991, 38.

96. For a critical challenge to this argument, see Butler, 47.

97. "Femininity," Butler writes (53), "becomes a mask that dominates/resolves a masculine identification, for a masculine identification would, within the presumed heterosexual matrix of desire, produce a desire for a female object, the Phallus; hence, the donning of femininity as mask may reveal a refusal of a female homosexuality and, at the same time, the hyperbolic incorporation of that female Other who is refused—an odd form of preserving and protecting that love within the circle of the melancholic and negative narcissism that results from the psychic inculcation of compulsory heterosexuality."

98. Ibid., 52.

99. Case (as in n. 83), 300.

inscribed within a presumed masculine libido[95] (from which some writers have inferred that masquerade is the process through which a prior feminine desire is denied).[96]

In this light, it is important to consider the heterosexual matrix within which Riviere and Lacan operate. Riviere's patient wears the mask of femininity both to dissimulate her "masculine" identity and to deny the presumption of "lesbian" desire. But the latter is merely inferred from the former, as gender and sexuality are conveniently elided.[97] In this construction, the lesbian, as Butler observes, "is . . . signified as an asexual position, as indeed, a position that refuses sexuality"[98] inasmuch as compulsory heterosexuality performed as masquerade consigns lesbian desire to a position of invisibility.

What happens, however, if the masquerade fails to perform this dissimulating function, if, as Sue-Ellen Case writes of lesbian butch-femme roles, one "play[s] *on* the phallic economy rather than *to* it"?[99] Challenging what she calls Lacan's "heterosexist structuralism," Judith Butler provocatively suggests:

> Inasmuch as the phallus signifies, it is also always in the process of being signified and resignified. In this sense, it is not the incipient moment or origin of a signifying chain, as Lacan would insist, but part of a reiterable signifying practice and, hence, open to resignification: signifying in ways and in places that exceed its proper structural place within the Lacanian symbolic and contest the necessity of the place. If the phallus is a privileged signifier, it gains that privilege through being reiterated. And if the cultural construction of sexuality compells a repetition of that signifier, there is nevertheless in the very force of repetition, understood as resignification or recirculation, the possibility of deprivileging that signifier.[100]

It is useful here to make another distinction between the phallus as the foundational signifier of lack through which the subject enters the Symbolic order of language, and the secondary effects of Oedipalization through which biological sex and gender are elided and the subject is shaped as a social being. That is to say, as the agent of loss and differentiation from the (m)Other, the Lacanian phallus creates a gap or division that constitutes the subject as an ontological effect; sexed-identity positions are subsequently invested and reinvested with social and political meanings in relation to ideologies of the masculine and the feminine. The possibility that Butler holds out for reworking the sex/gender matrix is not based on voluntarism—the idea that one can willfully change one's sexual identity—but, rather, on the recognition that sexual identity, inscribed on the body as a social text, is an iterative production.[101]

In relation to the social production of gender, then, Sue-Ellen Case's notion of "play" would have to be conceived as both a political and a psychic activity. At the political level its objectives would be twofold: 1) to reinscribe social myths and normalizing structures that overdetermine the signification of the phallus; and 2) to map the ways in which the phallus is actually deployed within different sexual regimes.[102] The implications of this process might in turn be extended to open the relatively uncharted terrain of lesbian masquerade and female fetishism to further scrutiny.[103] As Emily Apter suggests in a different context, the theory of feminine masquerade as a surrogate masculinity might be corrected by "sartorial female fetishism, which supplants the notion of femininity as empty content or infinitely layered veil, to replace it with a theory of materialized social construction."[104] Lesbian masquerade, however, would require no such correction. If it can be theorized at all I think one would have to conceive of it as an inherently subversive practice—a challenge to the phallocratic order from that which it refuses to represent fully, rather than an act of compensation for transgressing its laws.

Fetishism and the Anxiety of Loss

Gertrude Stein's elaborate masquerade in her life and work represented just such a challenge, an abrogation and/or usurpation of patriarchal authority that Picasso had to disavow in order to complete her portrait. The term *disavowal* has a special meaning here in relation to the castration complex and the anxiety of loss. Castration, I want to argue, is the subtext of Picasso's portrait, figured in the form of the mask-as-fetish. For the masquerade and fetishism both depend on the terms of phallic surrogation in order to mediate the threat of symbolic castration.[105] But if the fetish, in the standard Freudian interpretation, is a stand-in for something

100. Butler (as in n. 79), 89.

101. Or, as Ragland-Sullivan argues (301), "femininity elaborates a philosophy of gender insufficiency, in which the ideal ego itself identifies with secondary Castration and thereby supports a masculinity (superego) conceiving of itself as complete sufficiency. From this perspective, masculinity is as big a ruse as femininity, both constituting the terms of an ever-widening flight from the trauma of primary Castration. In consequence, the bulk of a given social order is peopled by players wearing sexual masks, who act out their fundamental fears and resultant antagonisms around issues of 'my mammocracy' versus 'your phallocracy.' "

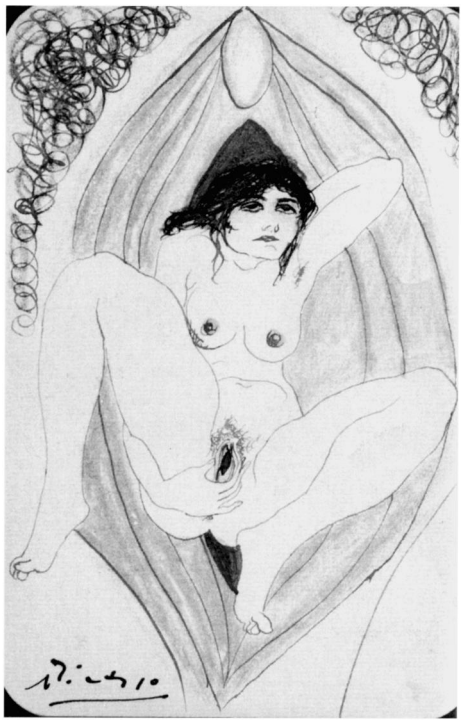
102. On this point, Judith Butler's observations are useful: "Although a number of theorists have suggested that lesbian sexuality is outside the economy of phallogocentrism, that position has been critically countered by the notion that lesbian sexuality is *as* constructed as any other form of sexuality within contemporary sexual regimes. Of interest here is not whether the phallus persists in lesbian sexuality as a structuring principle, but *how* it persists, how it is constructed, and what happens to the 'privileged' status of that signifier within this form of constructed exchange. I am not arguing that lesbian sexuality is only or even primarily structured by the phallus, or even that such an impossible monolith as 'lesbian sexuality' exists. But I do want to suggest that the phallus constitutes an ambivalent site of identification and desire that is significantly different from the scene of normative heterosexuality to which it is related"; Butler (as in n. 79), 85.

103. A number of recent studies have attempted to address these questions: Marjorie Garber, "Fetish Envy," *October*, no. 54, Fall 1990, 45–56; Elisabeth A. Frost, "Fetishism and Parody in Stein's *Tender Buttons*," in *Sexual Artifice: Persons, Images, Politics*, ed. Ann Kibbey, Kayann Short, and Abouali Farmanfarmian, special issue of *Genders*, no. 19, Fall 1994, 64–94; and Elizabeth Grosz, "Lesbian Fetishism?" in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, ed. Emily Apter and William Pietz, Ithaca, N.Y./London, 1993, 101–15.

104. Emily Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France*, Ithaca, N.Y./London, 1991, 98. For a discussion of feminine masquerade in relation to the destabilizing guises of the carnivalesque body, see Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis, Milwaukee, 1986, 213–29.

105. Apter (as in n. 104), 65.

14 Pablo Picasso, *Phallic Domination,* 1903. Private collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



15 Pablo Picasso, *Vaginal Environment,* 1903. Private collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

16 Pablo Picasso, *Bois de Gósol,* 1906. Paris, Musée Picasso (photo: Emerick). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

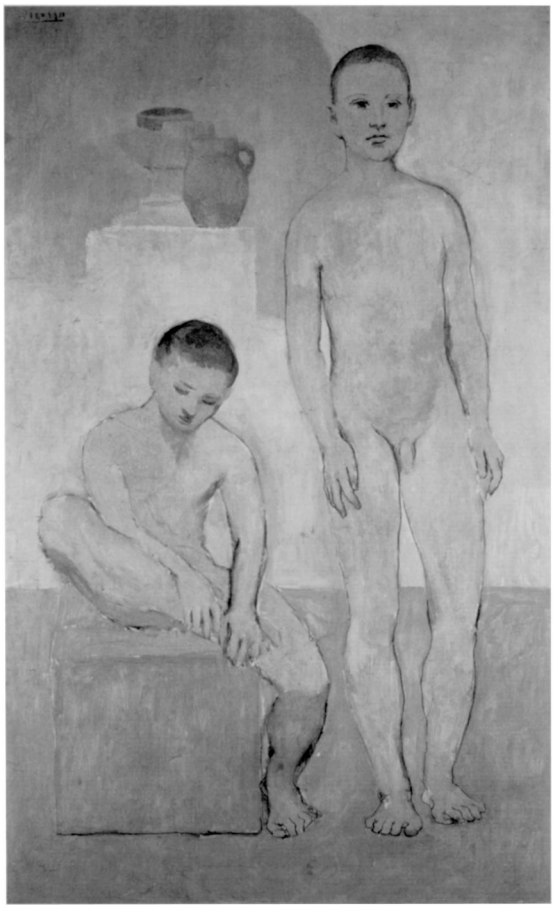
that was not there in the first place—the phantasmatic maternal phallus—figuring the *male* child's recognition (of lack) and disavowal (of the threat of castration) through metonymic displacements, Lacan's emphasis on symbolic castration as the "psychic impact of loss, difference, and individuation"[106] for both sexes locates fetishism in relation to the constitution of subject positions rather than in relation to an imagined threat of physical emasculation.[107] Here it is useful to make a further distinction between primary and secondary castration, in which "Imaginary and Symbolic efforts," as Ragland-Sullivan suggests, function to "explain a Real effect."[108] That is to say, secondary castration is a condition of socialization within the phallic economy. In this scenario fetishism reveals its status as a cultural production, which, in identifying woman with lack, affirms the social order and maintains gender inequality.

Picasso, it should be noted, repeatedly imagined woman as the phallic mother and/or the site of lack. A drawing of 1903, identified in the literature by the title *Phallic Domination* (Fig. 14), leaves little doubt about the signification of the phallus as the mediating term of sexual division for the young artist. That this image is specifically tied to a fantasy of primary castration is suggested by another drawing in the same series in which the corollary of the phallic woman is described in graphic detail as the site of envagination and engulfment (Fig. 15).[109] This construction persists well into the preparatory studies for *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* and, closer in time to *Portrait of Gertrude Stein,* in the so-called *Bois de Gósol* (Fig. 16) of the summer of 1906, in which Picasso transforms Fernande Olivier into a kind of fetish for the lost maternal object. Clearly, all of these representations are based on cultural conventions and should not be viewed as transparent windows to Picasso's inner, psychic self. To the extent, however, that the artist deploys the fetish in order to secure normative definitions of gender and sexual identity in and through his work, his practice constitutes both a symbolic response and an act of social control.

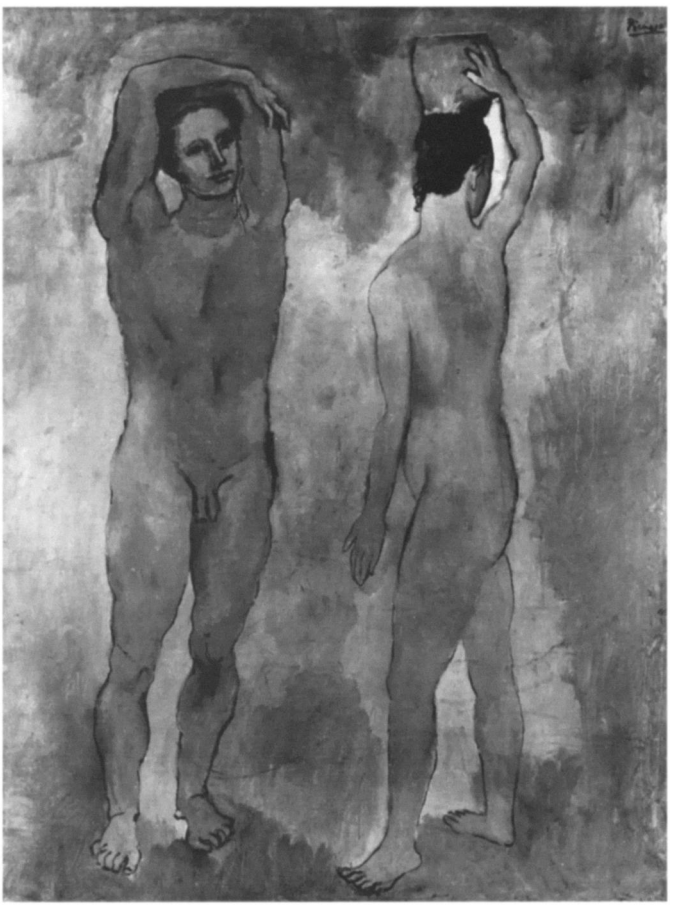
106. Ragland-Sullivan, 55.

107. For an extended discussion of sexual division in Freud's and Lacan's accounts, see Parveen Adams, "Representation and Sexuality," in *The Woman in Question: M/f,* ed. Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie, Cambridge, Mass., 1990, 233–51.

108. Ragland-Sullivan, 297.



17 Pablo Picasso, *Two Youths,* summer 1906. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection (photo: National Gallery). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



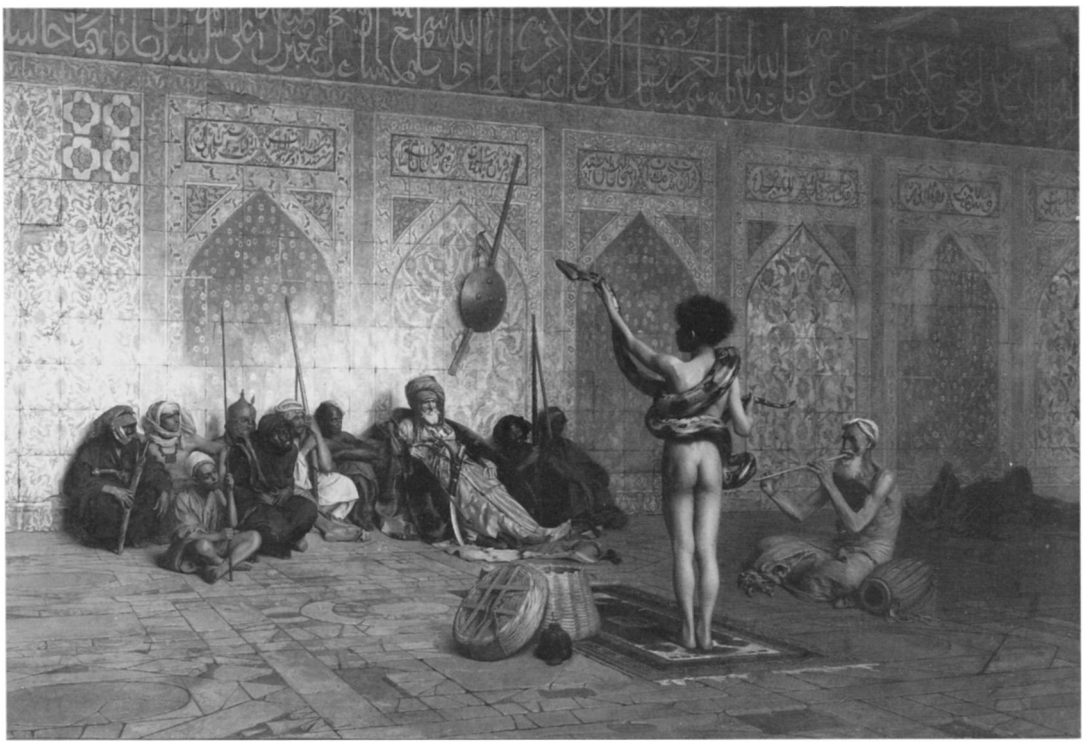
18 Pablo Picasso, *Standing Youths,* summer 1906. Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie, Collection Walter-Guillaume (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

Gertrude's mask, in contrast, appears to fall outside the definitional boundaries of fetishism. As we have seen, when Gertrude cropped her hair, a gesture through which she displaced the sign of phallic surrogation (hair-as-fetish), Picasso was dismayed, only to reassure himself about the status of "his" portrait: "mais, quand même tout y est—all the same, it is all there." All there, that is, in the form of the mask, a device that speaks less of fetishism than it does of containment. For Pablo's mask and Gertrude's masquerade were not commensurate. As Gertrude laid claim to the theater of representation, playing *on* the phallic economy, Pablo attempted to conceal the threat to his own gendered identity that her "theft" of the logos signified. To have met Gertrude's gaze would have meant to know his subject on her own terms, not as the phallic mother or the site of lack.

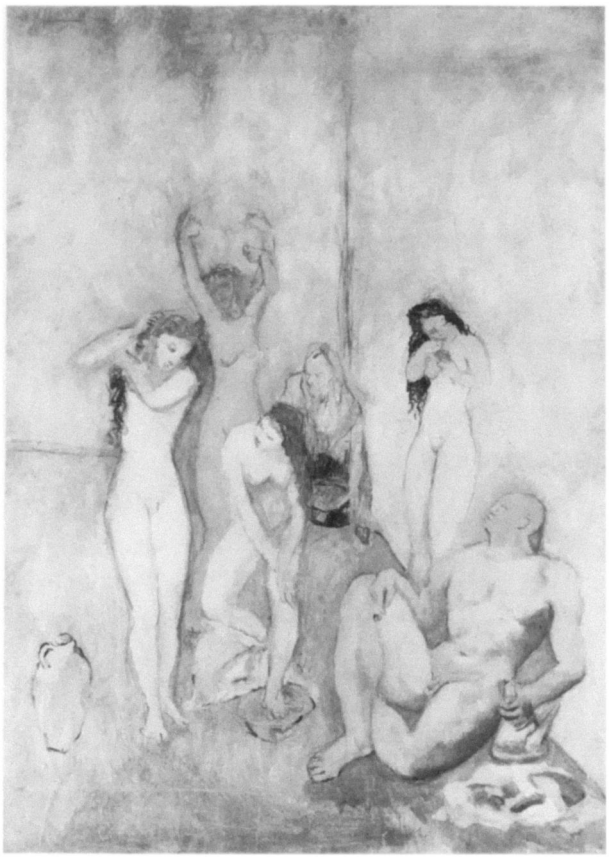
Picasso's delay in completing the portrait is central to this reading. As I have outlined above, the prevailing wisdom concerning Picasso's delayed formal response to Iberian sculpture (however contested) is that he was habitually slow to assimilate source materials. But on what level are we to theorize that delayed process of assimilation: as the effect of an organic development of form, or as a psychically mediated response, a reaction-formation of sorts? Picasso, I submit, was able to "use" the Iberian material as a means to cover the gaps that had been exposed in his own experience of gender and sexuality *only after he had maintained an objectifying distance from his subject.* That he responded to cultural material from his native country at this time suggests that he sought to regain his footing, metaphorically speaking, on familiar ground.

Before Picasso arrived at this solution, in the absence of his model and in the presence of his beautiful young mistress, he repeatedly staged the drama of sexual division in ways that point to the instability of the phallic signifier. It is revealing, for example, that ephebic, prepubescent boys make a strong showing in paintings of the Gósol period (Figs. 17, 18). What impresses me in these images is less the presence of homo-

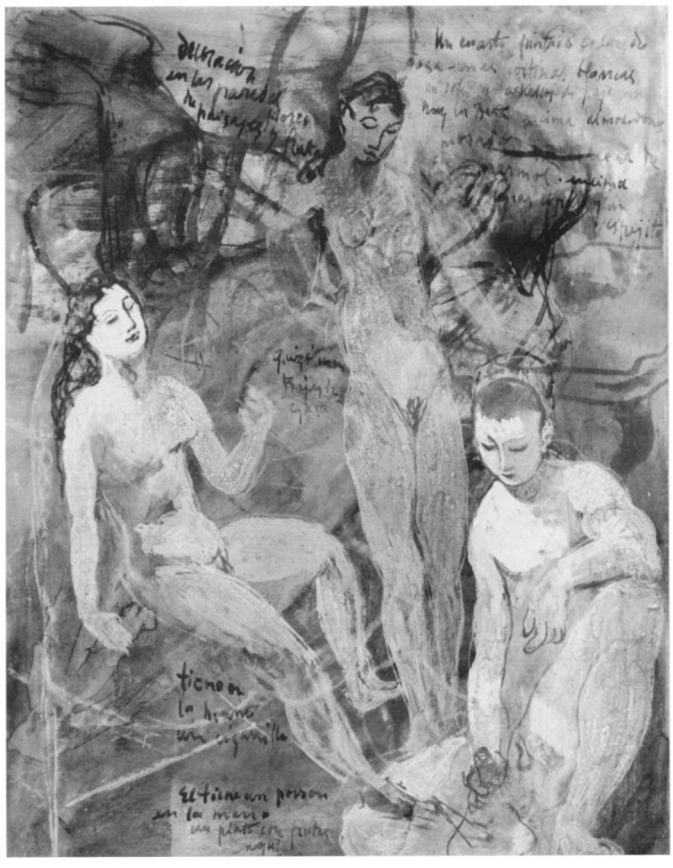
109. *Phallic Domination* belongs to a series of erotic drawings Picasso sketched on the back of trade cards for the yarn and stocking shop his friends Sebastià and Carles Junyer Vidal had inherited from their uncle (Richardson, 281). The youthful Picasso surely delighted in using a family business card as the ground for his pornographic drawings, inasmuch as his gesture represents a transgression of parental (patriarchal) authority.



19 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Snake Charmer,* 1881–82. Williamstown, Mass., Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (photo: Clark Institute)



20 Pablo Picasso, *The Harem,* summer 1906. Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



21 Pablo Picasso, *Three Nudes,* summer 1906. New York, The Alex Hillman Family Foundation (photo: Hillman Foundation). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

erotic content in Picasso's early work[110]—and I think these paintings signify differently than the artist's highly sexualized representations of lesbian prostitutes—than the ways in which homosocial relations *between* men are structural components of the heteropatriarchy.[111] The fact that these images represent prepubescent boys in the process of acceding to manhood is significant, for they can be read as liminal figures who perform the complex movement between biological sex and gender. Note, for example, the way in which the seated boy's right hand conceals his genitals (Fig. 17), thus marking the penis as the ground of symbolization for the phallus, a culturally overdetermined pose whose somewhat different implications we have already addressed in *Portrait of Gertrude Stein.* And in Picasso's painting of two standing youths (Fig. 18), the undecidable sex of the figure to the right[112] can be said to mirror the ambivalent *parade* of the left-hand figure. A historical example is illuminating. In Jean-Léon Gérôme's *The Snake Charmer* of 1881–82 (Fig. 19), the ephebic boy with his back turned to the viewer is less the site of homoerotic desire than he is a figure for the mobility of desire itself. Performing the rituals of an idealized masculinity under siege, Gérôme's figure, no less than Picasso's, is a cipher for the fundamental instability of gender.

These observations can in turn be extended to paintings of the Gósol period in which both male *and* female subjects are present. In *The Harem* (Fig. 20), in which Picasso liberally quotes from Ingres's *Turkish Bath* (Musée du Louvre), biological sex and gendered identity are again elided. A massive yet somewhat inchoate male figure, who occupies the position of Ingres's voluptuous odalisque, leans back in the presence of five women—four of which are portraits of Fernande. As he watches them perform an elaborate *toilette,* he grasps a phallic *porrón,* which, like the sausage in the still life beside him, far outstrips his own deflated member in size and authority. Indeed, the sign of *de*tumescence is inscribed in the line that extends from the figure's groin to his lower abdomen, a symbolic trace, perhaps, of the figure's lost sexual prowess. Finally, in *Three Nudes* (Fig. 21) Picasso stages the anxiety of sexual division itself as a narrative scene in which a woman (Fernande?) holds a cigarette[113] and a kneeling youth once again grasps a rigid *porrón.* John Richardson proposes that the scene is set in a brothel, inasmuch as Picasso's notations refer to women wearing gauze dresses and smoking.[114] In this respect, it would appear that Picasso associates sexual initiation itself with danger by alluding to the primal scene through the youth's compensatory gesture, a theme he would restage the following spring in an early sketch for *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (Kunstmuseum, Basel).

The Shadow of Death

If the works Picasso executed in Gósol are thematically and iconographically related to the *Les demoiselles,* they are first and foremost signposts marking his efforts to resolve *Portrait of Gertrude Stein.*[115] A more specific connection between the Stein portrait and *Les demoiselles* obtains in the artist's staging of a certain thanatotic content in each painting through the device of masking. If death work is understood to be the process of the unbinding of the ego, rather than a conscious anxiety of death in itself,[116] the mask in *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* would serve the symbolic function of protecting Picasso from an imaginary loss of self. A defensive armor, the mask symbolically shielded Picasso from the gaze and covered the site of nonidentity that had been opened in the portrait sessions. The visual evidence from Gósol and from works executed in the months following Picasso's completion of the portrait supports this interpretation.

It is generally accepted that Picasso developed the device of masking in connection with a series of portraits and caricatures of Josep Fontdevila (Fig. 22), the ninety-year-old innkeeper at Gósol. Although the stylized features of the mask make other early appearances, in portraits of Fernande and of peasant women executed toward the end of Picasso's stay in the village, a drawing of a "death mask" for Fontdevila (Fig. 23) probably provided the model for these works[117] and, by extension, for *Portrait of Gertrude Stein.*[118]

Picasso took an immediate liking to the old man, delighting

110. See, for example, Hans Christoph von Tavel's discussion in "L'home i la dona a l'obra de Picasso el 1905 i el 1906," in *Picasso, 1905–06,* exh. cat., Museu Picasso, Barcelona, 1992, 89–95.

111. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire,* New York, 1985. For an illuminating discussion of the crisis of masculinity in relation to representations of ephebic youths in French painting of the late 18th–early 19th centuries, see Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Male Trouble," in *Constructing Masculinity,* ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, New York/London, 1995, 69–76.

112. Palau i Fabre (as in n. 35), 447, identifies this figure as female, although he admits that the figure "looks slightly androgynous."

113. On scientific studies linking smoking with gender deviance in the fin de siècle see Patricia G. Berman, "Edvard Munch's *Self-Portrait with Cigarette:* Smoking and the Bohemian Persona," *Art Bulletin,* LXXV, no. 4, 1993, 627–46.

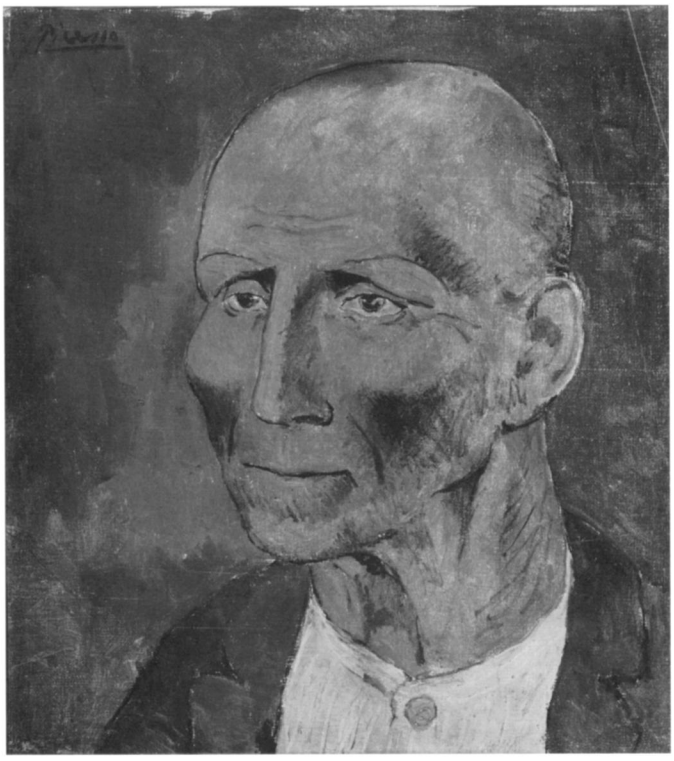
114. Richardson, 448.

115. A further indication of Picasso's preoccupation with *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* is provided by a study beneath the gouache ground of *Three Nudes.* To my knowledge, only one author has noted the presence of this study. In a recent catalogue entry (in *Manet to Matisse: The Hillman Family Collection,* ed. Emily Braun, New York, 1994, 128), Pepe Karmel observes that the sheet of Ingres paper on which the work is painted "was originally used for a full-length drawing of a boy, similar to the boy seated on a box . . . in *Two Youths.*" He also takes note of a "pencil drawing of a seated girl in an armchair" on the verso of the sheet, possibly a study after Ingres's *Portrait of Mme Devaucay* (Musée Condé, Chantilly). Closer inspection, however, reveals the presence of a single image, in addition to several studies of feet and legs. The "drawing" in question, inverted on the recto of the sheet, was in fact executed on the verso in an oil-based medium, which over time seeped through the paper, leaving its imprint. When the image is reversed and inverted to correspond to its original orientation, one is able to detect a seated figure of unknown sex, wearing what appears to be an open robe, leaning slightly forward with its legs crossed and its left and right hands resting on its left knee and right thigh, respectively. More than Ingres's *Mme Devaucay,* the pose recalls the seated boy in *Two Youths* and Stein's uneasy posture in *Portrait of Gertrude Stein.* Although the physical evidence does not support a precise identification—the sketch may have been conceived as an independent composition—one may at least posit that a relationship obtains between the two paintings in question and the thanatotic content of *Three Nudes* I am grateful to Margaret Holben Ellis for bringing the drawing beneath *Three Nudes* to my attention, and for her insights concerning Picasso's technique.

116. For a discussion, see J.-B. Pontalis, "On Death-Work," in *Psychoanalysis, Creativity and Literature: A French-American Inquiry,* ed. Alan Roland, New York, 1978; and Ragland-Sullivan, 71–72.

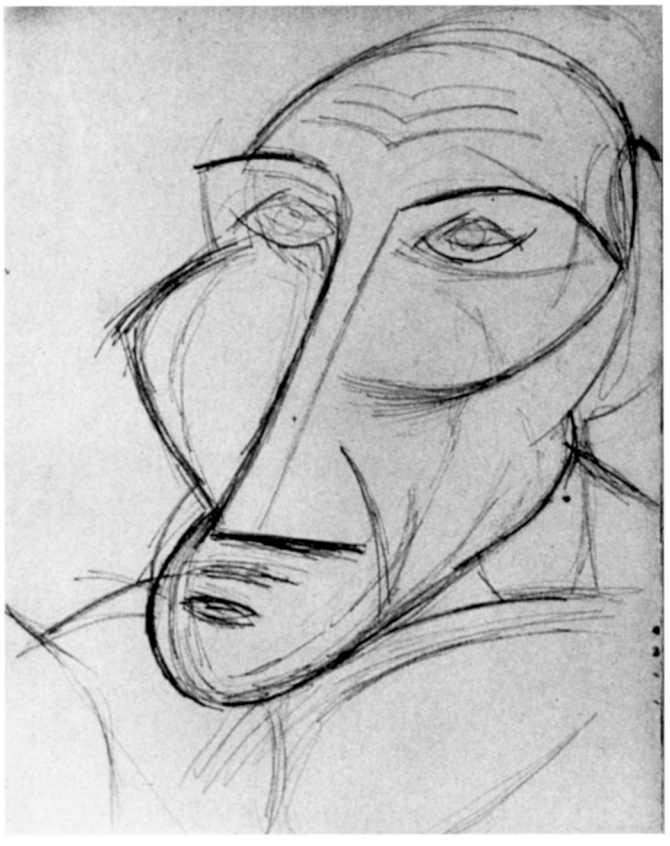
117. William Rubin, "Reflections on Picasso and Portraiture," in *Picasso and Portraiture* (as in n. 28), 28.

118 Palau i Fabre (as in n. 35), 469.



22 Pablo Picasso, *Head of Josep Fontdevila,* summer 1906. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Florene M. Schoenborn, 1992 (photo: Metropolitan Museum). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

23 Pablo Picasso, *"Death Mask" of Josep Fontdevila,* summer 1906. Paris, Musée Picasso (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



24 Pablo Picasso, *Study of Josep Fontdevila,* winter 1906–spring 1907. Paris, Musée Picasso (photo: Emerick). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

in stories of his exploits as a smuggler in earlier days.[119] But the status of that identification in relation to Fontdevila's authority as a patriarch and his proximity to death requires further elaboration. Noting Fontdevila's reemergence some months later in an album containing preparatory sketches for *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (Fig. 24), where the mask reaches its apotheosis in Picasso's early work, Pierre Daix retrospectively positions the Gósol sketches as a "testing ground" for Picasso's "primitivism," an intermediate stage pointing to his first tentative responses to Iberian art.[120] The argument closes a hermeneutic circle that begins with an originary moment—the discovery of Iberian sculpture—and moves on to incorporate the second group of sketches of Fontdevila, the transmogrification of gender in drawings and paintings that quote from the exaggerated form of the ear in the Iberian object, and the final "realization" of Picasso's primitivism in the two "African" masks of *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* (Fig. 25).

The full implications of this process, however, are never addressed; most important, why it is that Fontdevila's mask should have provided a topographical model for the crouching *demoiselle* in Picasso's great painting of 1907? Having raised this question, it is important to take note of an anatomical displacement that occurred in later studies for the painting. I am referring to that peculiar visual pun Picasso explored in several sketches for *Les demoiselles* in which the head of a woman supported by a hand can also be read as a torso, with the breasts and vagina displacing the eyes and mouth (Fig. 26). There is no question about this identification, as another sketch positions the masked face of the crouching *demoiselle* directly in front of the abdomen of the masked figure behind her, an arrangement that is only slightly modified in the final painting.

In an important article on *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* Yve-Alain Bois turned to the question of sexual undecidability in the preparatory sketches for the painting, arguing that the thematic content of the picture hinges on "the primordial question of sexual difference."[121] Specifically, Bois identified the masks as sites of "apotropaic savagery," reading the painting through Freud's essay on the head of the Medusa, whose key points he summarized:

> the notion that the Medusa's head is the female sex organ—the sight of which arouses castration anxiety in the young male; the image of castration itself (decapitation-castration); and castration denial, on the one hand by a multiplication of penises (her hair consists of snakes) and, on the other, by its power to turn the spectator to stone, in other words, into an erect, albeit dead, phallus.[122]

In this light, the composite image of the face/torso that would become the crouching *demoiselle* can be read as an allegory of Medusa's petrifying gaze in relation to the sight/site of the female genitals, access to which is visually and physically blocked by the mask. In a provocative move, Bois then proposed that the entire spatial structure of *Les demoiselles*—its enunciatory address to the spectator—might in fact be described as a visualization of the Medusa myth, thematizing the (male) spectator's petrification and challenging his position as the transcendental subject of vision. For Bois, the Medusa-effect-as-metaphor serves to refigure the petrification of the gaze in representation.

With all its attendant associations of fear, paralysis, sterility, and death, petrification strikes me as a particularly apt term to describe Gertrude's frozen countenance and the psychic effect of overdetermination of Pablo's mask.[123] That Picasso's strategies of masking evolved in relation to a series of portraits of a ninety-year-old peasant from Gósol is telling, as it is precisely the figure of Josep Fontdevila to whom Picasso would return in a haunting self-portrait of July 1972 (Fig. 27), executed eight months before his own death at the age of ninety-two.[124] The broad implications of this thanatotic content can be inferred from two drawings closer in time to the Stein portrait. In a 1907 portrait of the writer André Salmon (Fig. 28), Picasso represents his friend as a "feminized" intellectual, book in hand, displaying a compensatory pipe. In a related sketch for a wood sculpture of the writer (Fig. 29), Picasso appears to conflate the image of Salmon with that of Josep Fontdevila, implicating Salmon's gesture as a defensive reaction to an imminent threat. Fontdevila, however, requires no such props; the risk of symbolically losing what Salmon's clasped hands occlude, of slipping into the undifferentiated state of gendered nonidentity, is already figured in the face-*cum*-death mask. That Picasso specifically linked the portraits of Salmon and Fontdevila with the sexual drama enacted in *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* is in turn suggested by a photograph of the artist's studio from the spring of 1908 (Fig. 30) in which *Les demoiselles,* located along the right edge of the visual field, takes its place on the back wall beside a study for the sculpture of Salmon and a portrait of Josep Fontdevila from the spring of 1907.

If, however, Picasso's use of the mask in these works is largely *prescriptive,* in the sense that he elides the primary and

119. Fernande Olivier described Fontdevila as "a fearsome old man of a strange and savage beauty"; Olivier (as in n. 7), 116.

120. Daix (as in n. 34), 530.

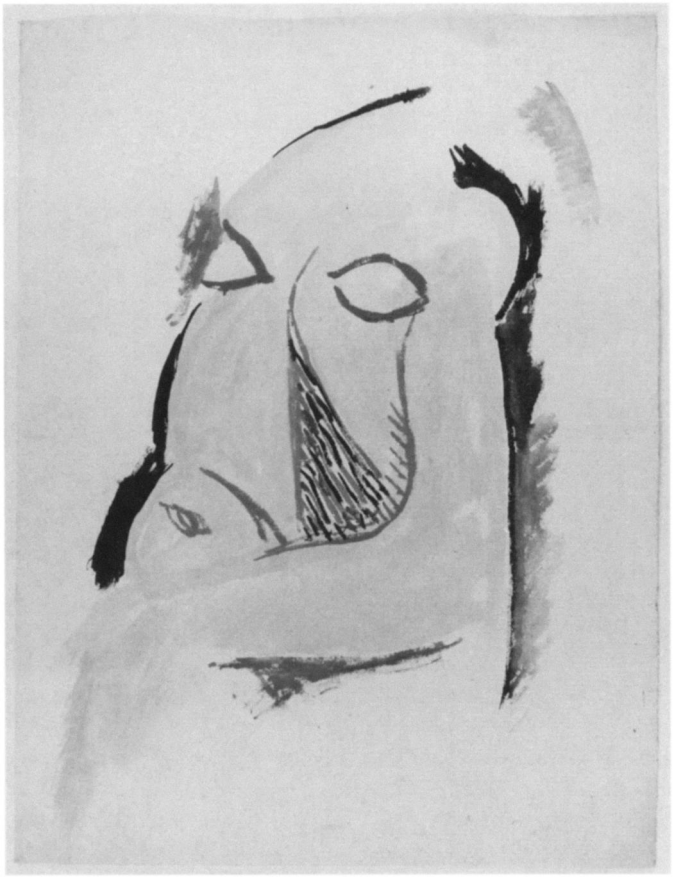
121. Yve-Alain Bois, "Painting as Trauma," *Art in America,* LXXVI, no. 6, June 1988, 130–40, 172–73.

122. Ibid., 137. Rubin (as in n. 34), 115, observes that in an unpublished radio lecture of 1970, John M. Nash first identified the squatting *demoiselle* as Medusa, although he did not develop his argument.

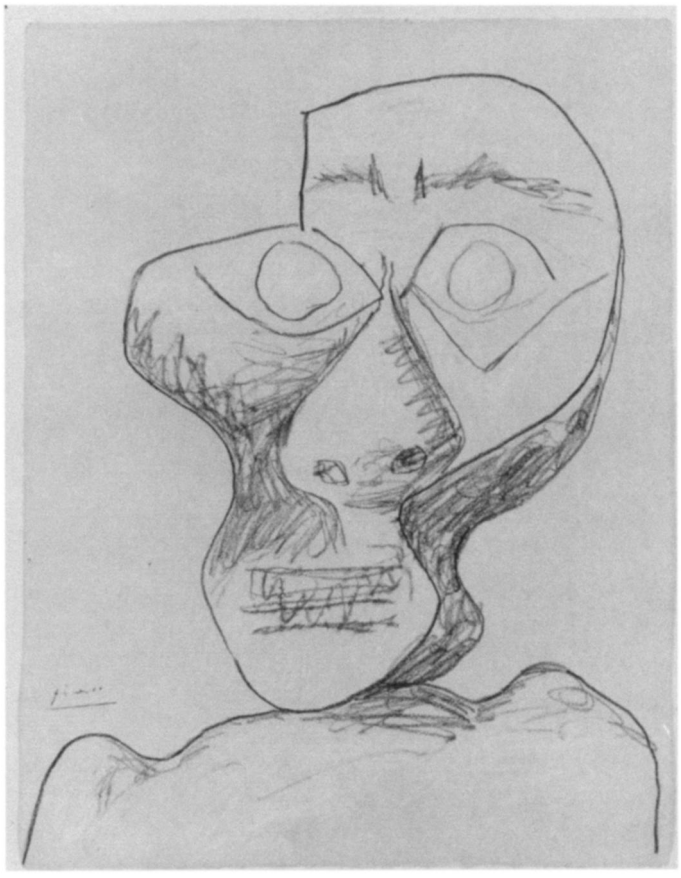
123. Although the existence of a visual "source" for the Medusa theme does not bear directly on a psychoanalytic reading of *Portrait of Gertrude Stein,* it is possible that Picasso saw a relief carving of Medusa's head among the collection of Iberian objects he studied at the Louvre in the winter–spring of 1905–6. The relief carving, probably a decorative fragment from an altar or building, was unearthed in Osuna in the course of excavations undertaken by Pierre Paris in 1903. It is, however, not clear when the relief entered the collection of the Louvre. Following an agreement signed between Francisco Franco and the Vichy government, the museum's Iberian objects were returned to Spain, and they are currently housed in the Museo Nacional Arqueológico in Madrid. The Iberian Medusa is reproduced by Moffit (as in n. 33), 298, and is discussed in Antonio García y Bellido, *La Dama de Elche y el conjunto de piezas arqueológicas reingresadas en España en 1941,* Madrid, 1943, cat. no. 22.

124. To my knowledge, Richardson (438–39) was the first author to remark on the resemblance of this self-portrait to a 1907 drawing, *Head of Josep Fontdevila,* currently in the Menil Collection, Houston. Richardson did not, however, pursue the thanatotic content of the skull-like configuration of Fontdevila in relation to the drama of sexual division.

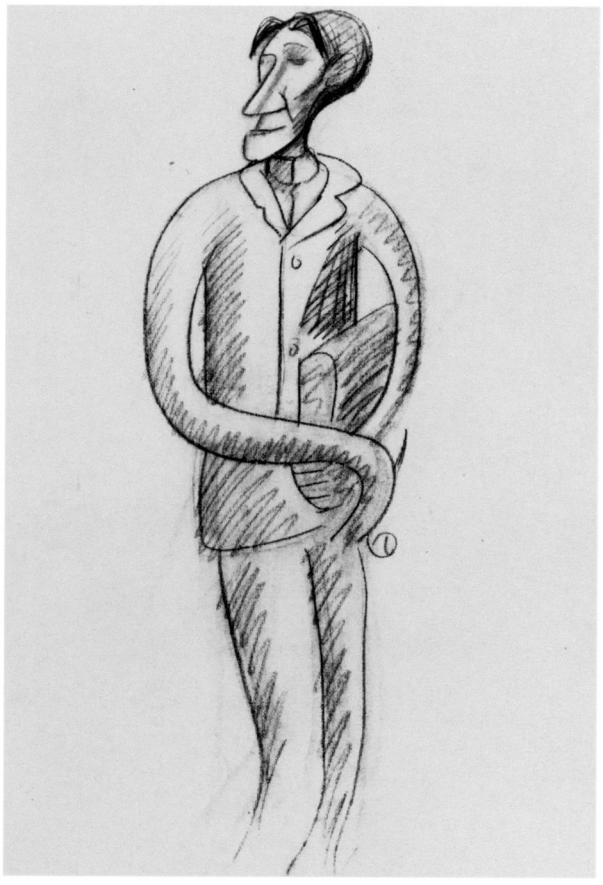
25 Pablo Picasso, *Les demoiselles d'Avignon,* June–July 1907. New York, The Museum of Modern Art (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art).



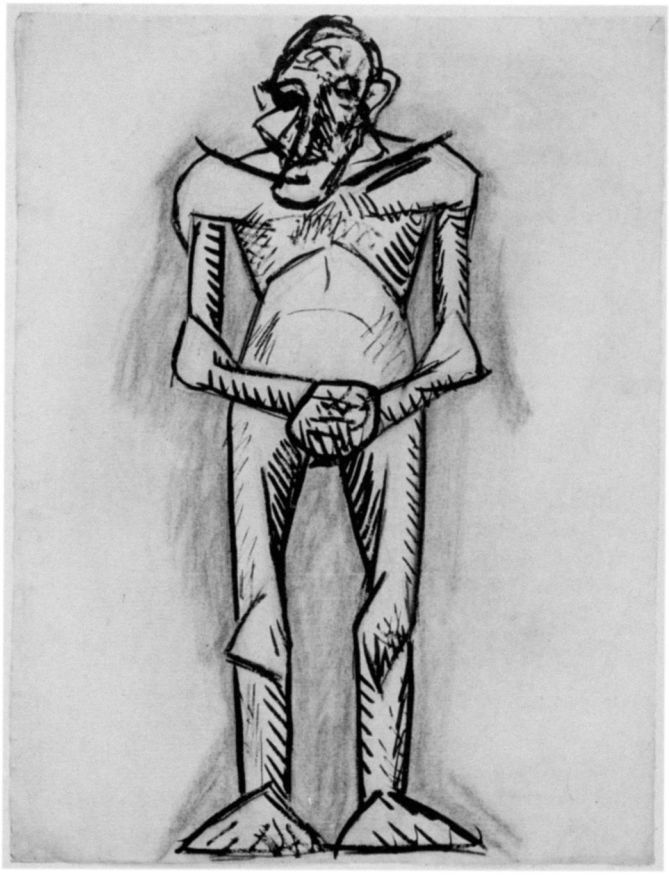
26 Pablo Picasso, *Study for Head of the Crouching Demoiselle,* June–July 1907. Paris, Musée Picasso (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



27 Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait,* July 1972. Private collection. Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



28 Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of André Salmon,* 1907. Paris, Private collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



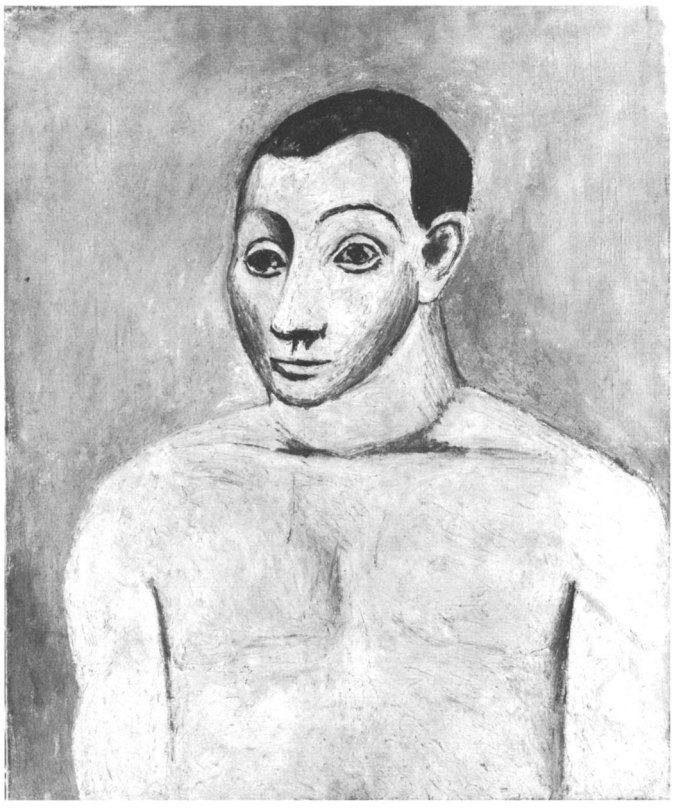
29 Pablo Picasso, *Study for a Wooden Sculpture of André Salmon,* 1907. Private collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

secondary effects of sexual division according to the normative terms of hetero-masculinity (penis=phallus), Gertrude's mask serves a *proscriptive* function at the site of a symbolic trespass. It marks the artist's anxious apprehension of Gertrude's appropriation and redeployment of the terms of signification, a symbolic theft that partakes of "death work" for Picasso. In effect, Gertrude's refusal to occupy the position of lack mobilized a complex fantasy of castration for Picasso; the mask signifies at once his conflicted desire for the lost maternal object through specular identification with a queer woman and his anxious apprehension that the very terms governing sexual identity and normative heterosexuality are unstable and subject to revision. The mask, then, is an elaborate charade, a site of dissimulation that can never make good on what it promises. In his attempt to shield himself from Gertrude's penetrating gaze, Picasso in effect acknowledges the complex trajectory of his own desire and the fantasy of a unitary subject of sex, gender, and sexuality.

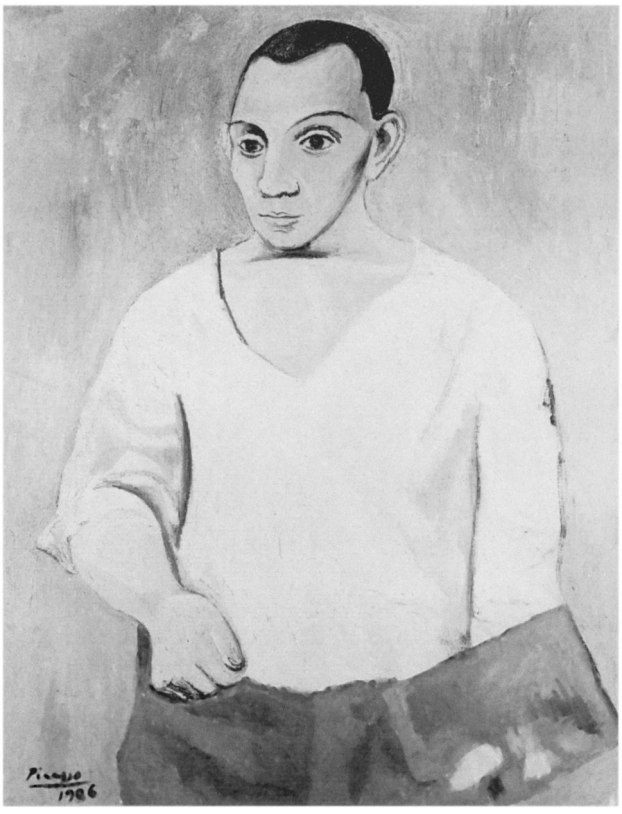
The fact that Picasso struggled with his own self-image on completing *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* provides some measure of the depth of that acknowledgment. In a number of self-portraits from the autumn of 1906 (Fig. 31) the artist fashioned himself as a beautiful boy, and I think it is not exaggerated to read these images as extensions of the ephebic youths Picasso had painted in Gósol.[125] But the defining moment of gender instability, it seems to me, comes with Picasso's celebrated *Self-Portrait with a Palette* of 1906 (Fig. 32). The difficulty Picasso had in resolving this painting, for which he produced a large number of preparatory studies, points to a crisis in his own gendered identity, as does the form of the head-as-mask, which is awkwardly joined to the body just above the collarbone, the site of Gertrude's "scar." The phallic projection of the artist's thumb and its visual rhyme with the colors on the palette suggest the familiar notion of painting as mastery, and also, I think, the idea of self-portraiture as an activity in which the psychic and social effects of gender and sexuality are staged. However much Picasso repeatedly attempted to secure a normative ideal of masculinity in his art, his identification with Gertrude Stein in 1906 underscores the failure of that project.

125. Although these paintings are often identified in the literature with the generic titles *Portrait of a Boy* or *Bust of a Man,* they are clearly related to the artist's *Self-Portrait with a Palette* from the autumn of 1906 (Fig. 32). Kirk Varnedoe, who describes these works as self-portraits, notes, "while they share certain features with Picasso . . . these bull-necked drones and fresh youths typically have the kind of generic 'personality' one finds in archaic Greek *kouroi,* and there is a high level of generalization in their features"; Varnedoe, "Picasso's Self-Portraits," in *Picasso and Portraiture* (as in n. 28), 132.

30 Pablo Picasso, photograph of studio at the Bateau Lavoir, 13, rue Ravignan, Paris, spring 1908. Private collection (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



31 Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait,* autumn 1906. Paris, Musée Picasso (photo: courtesy Museum of Modern Art). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York



32 Pablo Picasso, *Self-Portrait with a Palette,* autumn 1906. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection (photo: Philadelphia Museum). Copyright 1997 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society, New York

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous speaks of "woman's *seizing* the occasion to *speak,* hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based *on her suppression.* To write and thus to forge for herself the anti-logos weapon. To become *at will* the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process."[126] We do not have to accept Cixous's notion of *écriture féminine* (writing from the body) in order to understand her exasperation with a psychoanalytic theory that locates sexual division in relation to a masculine libido. "Castration?" asks Cixous, "Let others toy with it. What's a desire originating from a lack?"[127] As I have tried to theorize from within that same discourse, however, the signification of the phallus can be opened to a range of meanings and practices that are also radically destabilizing.

This is the challenge Gertrude Stein presented to Picasso, and which *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* presents to us today. It is fitting, therefore, to close where we began, with Alice's offhand remark, "and so the picture was left like that." The picture, that is, of a woman Picasso refused to know because her femininity exceeded definitional boundaries. But he surely recognized her power, for in the end, like Cixous's Medusa, it is Gertrude who laughs her head off.

126. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology,* ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtiron, New York, 1981, 245–65.

127. Ibid., 262.

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