

PICASSO'S *Les Femmes d'Alger*

Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* has long been recognized as one of the most significant paintings of the twentieth century. This volume brings together essays from a variety of methodological and topical perspectives. John Golding introduces the critical history of the *Femmes*. Yve-Alain Bois finds in the painting the presence of trauma and opens the way to a psychoanalytical exploration. Tamar Garb asks what it could mean to women, focusing on Gertrude Stein as one of the painting's first spectators. Patricia Leighton and David Lomas explore the conjunction of prostitution and African themes from different postcolonial perspectives. Christopher Green asks what the confrontation of the European and the non-European could signify and whether this Picasso work can still be meaningfully linked to the grand narrative of modernist history. Through these various analyses, the contributors explore the power and significance of *Les Femmes d'Alger*, situating the work within twentieth-century art history as a whole and debates over primitivism, sexuality, and stylistic change.

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Les Demoiselles d'Avignon

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An Introduction to *Les Femmes d'Alger*

THE ARTIST, THE WORK, AND THE SPECTATOR

As an artist, Pablo Picasso was well prepared for fame. There was always a spotlight on him. His stage might have been small and without glamour to begin with, but he was always aware that he had an audience. Even in the late 1890s, as an apprentice modernist in Barcelona, he was recognised to be a prodigious talent. He first showed in Paris at the age of nineteen, when he was selected for the official exhibition of Spanish art at the Universal Exhibition of 1900. Within a year, two of the new galleries showing young 'independent' painting in Paris, Berthe Weill's and Ambroise Vollard's, were buying from him. In May 1901 Vollard gave Picasso a show all to himself, a rare accolade. Between 1901 and 1904, he kept aloof from commercial success, painting underclass poverty from the vantage point of bohemian poverty mostly in Spain, but after he settled finally in Paris in April 1904, a circle of collectors and dealers keen to buy from him formed quickly enough. By 1906, among them was the American writer Gertrude Stein, whose portrait he completed that autumn (Fig. 15). Her support and that of her brothers and sister-in-law (Leo, Michael, and Sarah) gave him a position comparable to that of the older Henri Matisse, acknowledged leader of the 'Fauves', for they had been among the first buyers of Matisse's 'Fauve' work in 1905. Though still only in his mid-twenties, it was, therefore, as an emerging modernist leader – at least for a select few – that Picasso started work early in 1907 on the huge, almost square painting that would become known as *Les Femmes d'Alger*¹ (Fig. 1).

By 1914, Picasso was as famous a modernist leader as Matisse, the acknowledged inventor of another major -ism, 'cubism'. It took a further twenty-five years for the *Demoiselles* to begin to emerge as one of the most important paintings not only in his oeuvre but in the early history of modernism altogether. And yet, even while he was at work on the canvas, before the summer of 1907, talk of it had reached not only Vollard, but the young German dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, newly launched in Paris, who would become Picasso's dealer, and Félix Fénéon, manager of the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, who would become Matisse's. It may not have been exhibited at that time, but many came to see it in Picasso's Montmartre studio, artists and writers besides dealers and collectors, friends like the poet André Salmon and the painters André Derain and Georges Braque, visitors like the English painter Augustus John. As Picasso himself had, the *Demoiselles* made an impact before it became famous, and, for its small but influential audience, that impact was so great because it was so dramatically different from anything Picasso himself or any other artist working in Paris had so far painted.

There was much about the *Demoiselles* that was not different. Picasso had painted prostitutes before, and brothel subjects were a late-nineteenth-century genre. He had also taken on the theme of sexuality and danger before. His major painting of 1903, *Life*, uses allegory to do the job. And he had used expressive colour and formal distortion before too. What differentiated this picture was the way its distortions challenged the most basic assumptions about the pictorial depiction of figures and of space, and the sheer immediacy of its confrontation with so brazen a subject. The force of those differences was enhanced by the openness with which it alluded to painting from the European past: to post-Renaissance figure painting from Titian and El Greco to Ingres. It was enhanced too by the equal openness with which the picture alluded to a non-European present, what then were called the 'primitive' cultures of Africa and Oceania. The *Demoiselles* simultaneously invoked and demolished the canon celebrated in the great museums where Picasso had trained his eye, the Prado in Madrid and the Louvre in Paris.

In the mythology of modernist and postmodern art history, the status of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* as a painting that marks a dramatic break from the past and a new twentieth century beginning is now unquestioned. Its immediacy, the directness with which the stares of each individual prostitute invite the spectator in, underlines its role in one of the central developments of art in the twentieth century: the empowering of the spectator. We, the work's spectators, are made the centre of attention.



FIGURE 1. Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*, June/July 1907. Oil on canvas, 243.9 x 233.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. (Photo © 1998 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.)

The work becomes not so much Picasso's statement as a challenge to us to respond and, by responding, to give it meaning. In modernism altogether, art (not merely visual art alone) has been reoriented, placing the onus on the relationship not between the artist and the work of art, but rather between the work and the spectator. Despite this crucial shift, and the role of the *Demoiselles* in marking it, writing about the picture has been as much devoted to constructing a narrative of its conception and to exploring its relationship with Picasso's biography, as to the analysis of the kind of experience it offers. Picasso and the way he produced the painting can

still be made to seem more central than we – the spectator – and the way we might experience it.

THE MAKING OF *LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON*

In its beginnings *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* did not so immediately challenge the spectator, and the story of its conception and development in drawings, oil sketches, and on the canvas itself maps a long drawn-out transition from obsessive composing in self-contained frameworks, to the making of an image that is only in the end opened out to its spectators.

The main reason for the intensity with which the conception and the making of the picture has been studied is the completeness of its documentation. The sheer quantity of material related to it first became clear in 1988 with the major exhibition centred on the *Demoiselles* organised by the Musée Picasso in Paris, and shown there and in Barcelona.² The two-volume catalogue of this exhibition reproduced every known sketch or study then considered to be related to the work.³

Included were drawings from sixteen sketchbooks placed in sequence as they appear in the books along with ideas for other pictures and unrelated studies; there were also dozens of other studies and related works on canvas and wood as well as paper. Besides this mass of material, there was evidence in the form of radiographs and infrared photographs of an oil study on canvas beneath an otherwise only loosely related painting of 1907 (*Woman with a Large Ear*).⁴ Much of this material could be seen in the exhibition.

Given the fundamental importance of this event in 1988, it seems right that the next two chapters in this book (by Golding and by Bois) should first have been published as reviews of the show: they represent early attempts to come to terms with the exponential growth in knowledge about the *Demoiselles* that it generated. In their immediacy, those responses make it possible actually to place the *Demoiselles* in a visual setting, surrounded, as it was, by clusters of images directly related to it, from Picasso's own sketches to major masterpieces like Ingres's *The Turkish Bath*. The work of Hélène Seckel, Judith Cousins, Brigitte Léal, Pierre Daix, and William Rubin in preparing and writing the catalogue of the 1988 exhibition has made it possible also to place the picture in a clear narrative telling the story of its making.⁵ Obviously that story has to be simplified for an introduction like this, but such a narrative is the necessary preliminary to any discussion of the picture's meanings – of how its most influential spectators have interpreted it.

Picasso spent the autumn of 1906 and the winter of 1906–7 in Paris; he was working with styles and ideas he had explored during the summer of 1906, which he had spent with his partner, Fernande Olivier, in the remote Pyrenean village of Gósol in Catalonia. He was especially concerned with a reductively sculptural set of procedures for constructing the head he had adapted from ancient Iberian relief carvings excavated at Osuna in southern Spain then recently on show in the Louvre.⁶ This new masklike treatment of the head, seen famously in his *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* (Fig. 15), engendered a newly massive treatment of torsos and limbs in, for example, *Two Nudes* (Fig. 7). What seems to be the first ensemble study for the *Demoiselles* appears in a sketchbook dominated by figure drawings in this primitivising 'Iberian' manner (Fig. 11); it includes sketches related to *Two Nudes*.⁷ Probably jotted down late in 1906 or very early in 1907, the study presents a seven-figure composition in a horizontal format that Picasso was to develop compulsively in a series of sketchbook and loose-leaf drawings (including the much more definitive drawing heightened with pastel in Basel – Fig. 9), in a tiny oil study on wood, a lost oil study on canvas, and an oil study on canvas, discovered after the 1988 exhibition, concealed under a 1907 still life, *Jars with Lemon*.⁸ The idea seems to have engaged him through to March 1907, and led to many studies of the individual figures, sometimes seen from different viewpoints, as well as of the ensemble (Figs. 12, 24, and 28).

In the seven-figure studies, five female nudes appear with two clothed male figures. Picasso later identified the clothed figure entering from the left and pulling back the curtain as a medical student and the clothed figure seated in the centre as a sailor.⁹ Other sketchbook drawings show the 'medical student' with a skull (Fig. 8); in the 'first' study and the Basel drawing with pastel he carries a book. Beside the sailor, in the middle ground is a table on which is a Catalan *porón* (a drinking vessel) and a sliced melon; in the foreground of the Basel drawing is a table with a vase of flowers on it. The poses of four of the figures relate closely to their equivalents in the five-figure *Demoiselles* as it was painted: the medical student enters and raises his hand much as the nude entering from the left would; the central nude stands with her arms raised much as would the central 'demoiselle'; and the two 'demoiselles' on the right – one entering between curtains from behind, the other crouched with her legs apart to show her sex to the sailor – are posed much as they would be. In the lost oil sketch the croucher looks out at the spectator, but in the other seven-figure studies, both she and the nude entering above her seem to look across towards the medical student, who in turn seems not to look outwards at the spectator, so that the drama is to some extent contained

within the curtained theatrical space. These are gazes and movements that suggest encounters between the figures: actions and interactions involving the medical student and the sailor, onto which the spectator looks.

Probably around May 1907, Picasso produced a group of sketchbook and loose-leaf ensemble studies in which he cut the number of figures to six, still within a horizontal format (Fig. 12). There remained here enough intimation of the transverse interaction between figures to suggest their own self-contained drama, but, besides the exclusion of the nude originally behind the medical student, two crucial changes occurred: first, in some of the sketches, the medical student was transformed into a female curtain-raiser and stripped, becoming another nude 'démouille'; second, the chair in which one of the 'démouilles' had been seated was removed, and she was placed rather ambiguously, half sitting, half reclining, in an indeterminate space beneath an arched fold in the curtain. These six-figure studies retain the sailor with the table beside him (and sometimes the melon), who is now so crammed in among the nudes that in some cases the 'seated démouille' seems to sit on his knee. It is with the sailor's removal and that of his melon-laden table that the five-figure ensemble of the *Démouilles* in its large-scale painted form emerges, and it does so all at once in the oil study concealed beneath *Woman with a Large Ear* and in a quickly but confidently worked watercolour in Philadelphia (Fig. 10). These are usually dated May–June and June 1907. The Philadelphia watercolour is held together by flat linear rhythms, as had been most of the ensemble studies, and it is far from sculptural, but the styling of the figures remains Iberian. There may still be a transverse exchange of glances between the curtain puller on the left and the nude entering from the right, but the head of the croucher has now been swivelled unequivocally round so that her gaze can meet the spectator's like those of the two central 'démouilles'. This is less obviously so in the concealed oil study, but something else of great significance to the move from a self-contained narrative to a direct confrontation between painting and spectator has happened here: the original horizontal format (a narrative format) has given way to the squarish format of the large canvas (a format Rubin has associated with the iconic).¹⁰

Picasso seems to have made his final moves in conceiving and making the painting in June–July 1907. They involved sketchbook and loose-leaf drawings and an oil study of the head of the croucher, but most importantly were made on the canvas itself, which was almost certainly painted in two campaigns.¹¹ X-rays show that Picasso first painted the work in the

flattened Iberian style of the Philadelphia watercolour, leaving the two central 'démouilles' thus. He then returned to the canvas (perhaps as much as four or five weeks later) and repainted the curtain-raiser on the left and the nude entering on the right with the croucher in front of her. This overpainting involved the heads above all, which were given an altogether different aspect, utterly unlike the oval Iberian heads of the two central nudes with their calm almond eyes. The curtain-raiser on the left was given a lidless full-face eye that looks more outwards than across, in a way that has been compared with 'Tupupau', the female ancestor spirit in Paul Gauguin's Tahitian painting of 1892, *The Spirit of the Dead Watching*, as well as with Egyptian precedents.¹² Both the nude entering on the right and the croucher now have wedge-shaped noses of snoutish ugliness, flanked by thick green hatched lines that cut across stridently contrasting reds and reddish browns. The head of the croucher has been swivelled round full face above her back and haunches, which remain facing inwards so that the head appears almost severed from the shoulders. Her nose too is twisted back to cut blade-like into her cheek as it turns towards us, a change made after brutally incisive studies of this head alone (Fig. 13). Her eyes are out of alignment and stare fixedly. Despite Picasso's later denials of any influence from 'Art nègre' in the *Démouilles*, the changes to the heads of the nudes on the right are now agreed to relate to immensely powerful but generalised recent memories of West African and Oceanic sculpture in the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris (Figs. 5 and 17), which it is assumed he first visited just before he launched into his final campaign on the canvas.¹³ The immediacy of the confrontation between painting and spectator produced by his five-figure ensemble with their outgoing orientation in their almost square format was immeasurably increased by the brutal directness of the Africanized style he gave the two heads on the right.

As postscript to this account of the making of the painting, it is worth adding that the stylistic contradictions introduced by Picasso's second campaign on the canvas – especially the confrontation between the two Iberian central nudes and the two Africanized nudes on the right – has led to arguments about its status as a finished painting that will always remain unresolved.¹⁴ Whether he regarded it as finished or not, he was happy to show it to visitors from the autumn of 1907; it was a 'complete' enough statement for him to encourage responses. When the picture was first publicly exhibited, however, which was not until 1916, it was only in rather restricted circumstances. It would not be until it was shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1939 that it would begin to acquire

the gigantic public reputation it now possesses internationally.¹⁵ If titles are taken to complete pictures, it is significant that the painting's title – *Les Femmes d'Alger* – was not attached by Picasso himself but by one of the first to write about the picture, his friend André Salmon, who attached it on the occasion of its first showing in 1916. Picasso disliked the coy prudishness of Salmon's title; he is said himself routinely to have referred to the picture simply as '*mon bordel*' (my brothel).¹⁶

READING THE PICTURE

Four of the *Femmes d'Alger*'s most important commentators are conspicuous by their absence from this selection of essays: Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Leo Steinberg, and William Rubin. My introduction to the major differences between readings of the painting takes special account, therefore, of their contributions. A central concern is the question raised at the outset: the relationship between the artist, the work, and the spectator.

Broadly, the first serious historical assessments – Kahnweiler's in 1920 and Barr's in 1939 – constructed a passionately engaged Picasso who was ultimately concerned with finding new solutions to the problem of representing space and solid in two dimensions, solutions that shifted the emphasis from *what* was depicted to the *how* of depiction, to the making of pictorialized figures and spaces.¹⁷ Biography was not centrally important to understanding the achievement of this artist in the *Femmes*; what was important were, on the one hand, the *artistic* stimuli that inspired him, hence Barr's stress on the influence of Cézanne, El Greco, and African sculpture from the Ivory Coast and the French Congo (emphatically thought of as 'art'), and, on the other hand, the ways in which the development and painting of the composition led to the flattening of space, the reductive emblematisation of figures, and their radical distortion by the (partial) shifting of viewpoints (most telling of all, the extraordinary dislocation of the frontal staring head from the rearview shoulders of the croucher).

This pictorially innovative Picasso operating most essentially in the aesthetic sphere was the Picasso of the *Femmes* that was far more comprehensively put together by John Golding, first of all in his article on the painting of 1958 (to the influences of El Greco, Cézanne, and 'Africa', Golding added importantly those of Derain and Iberian sculpture).¹⁸ And it is in Golding's article along with his still fundamental 1959 study of cubism that the spectator suggested by Kahnweiler's and Barr's *Femmes*

les Femmes d'Alger emerges most clearly.¹⁹ He or she is implicitly there in the reader for whom Golding writes: this spectator is not explicitly gendered, is to be reflective as well as artistically sophisticated, and to seek not simply to experience the picture visually but to analyse particular ways of viewing it in response to its pictorial innovations. For Golding in the late 1950s as much as for Barr and Kahnweiler, the key question was the *Femmes*'s relationship with cubism. Kahnweiler calls it 'the beginning of cubism'; Golding sees it as in no sense a cubist picture, but as a work that opens the way to cubism by adumbrating certain of the pictorial practices we call cubist, above all the compression and flattening of space and the use of multiple viewpoints. The picture produced by this intuitive yet reflective Picasso is essentially to be viewed as opening up new possibilities. It remains a moot point whether the *Femmes d'Alger* can be approached as eloquent in its own right and as especially significant because of its developmental relationship with cubism. In this book, Yve-Alain Bois plays down the connection; John Golding and I continue to see it as important.

The first to demand that the work be detached from evolutionary narratives of cubism was Leo Steinberg. His two-part article first published in *Art News* in 1972, and republished in revised form in *October* in 1988, literally reinvented the *Femmes* as the painting of a different Picasso that invited a different kind of spectatorship.²⁰ Steinberg asserted that for fifty years 'we have been training our eyes to ricochet off the *Femmes* toward cubism'. 'A more focused approach', he wrote, 'may habituate us to seeing Picasso's "naked problems" once again as nude women'.

Before Steinberg's essay, the *Femmes d'Alger* was the birthplace of cubism, the marker of an epocal shift from content to form in modern painting; after Steinberg's essay, it has become the marker of an epocal shift to a new kind of engagement with sexuality, one whose immediacy was unprecedented in the history of painting. The Picasso behind such a picture is a man whose biography might be as important as his artistic influences; psychoanalysis might be as important to grasping such a picture's meanings as practical criticism. And, even more so than in the earlier writing of Barr or Golding, those meanings are to be found in the spectator as much as in Picasso, for the spectator constructed by Steinberg's essay is not merely an implied reader looking in reflectively from outside, but the one introduced at the beginning of this Introduction, the spectator as the ultimate maker of meaning – in a sense, the picture's own centre of attention.

'No modern painting engages you', Steinberg writes, 'with such brutal

immediacy. . . . The unity of the picture, famous for its internal disruptions, resides above all in the startled consciousness of a viewer who sees himself seen'. If, he argues, those disruptions are resolved, they are only resolved by the engagement of the spectator, and this is made possible by the very separateness of the five figures with each of whom the spectator can engage. Instead of those transverse interrelations between figures that keep the drama within a unified narrative space in the seven- and six-figure studies, we have five figures, argues Steinberg, in their own separate spaces, and hence five outwardly projected relationships, which invite the spectator in. And just as the nudes turn back into prostitutes on hire to male clients, Steinberg's spectator is transformed from a reflective analyst into a sexual being, explicitly male. Where Barr had seen the shift from the few seven- and six-figure ensemble studies he knew to the five-figure painting as a move from an allegorical to a more immediately pictorial mode, Steinberg saw that shift as a move from the more detached representation of a sexual theme to one that urgently demanded a direct sexual involvement from the spectator.

It was Barr who discovered that Picasso originally gave the male figures in the early studies identities as a medical student and a sailor, and that the medical student carried a skull in some variants; for him, this identified the initial idea as an allegory of vice and virtue, which was effaced by the removal of both the student and the sailor. For Steinberg, the medical student represented the reflective observer and the sailor the participant, and their removal finally gave the painting over to participation: the participation of the spectator.

Far from being a probing analyst, Steinberg's spectator takes the place of the prostitute's client – the surrogate of the sailor – and the prowlike table that thrusts into the brothel from the spectator's space partakes of his phallic, penetrative energy. Figurative distortion and spatial condensation give the picture, not proto-cubist interest, but a vehemence that produces in the engaged spectator, he claims, an experience of total immersion, what he calls 'the orgasmic immersion' of 'Dionysian release'.

Since Steinberg's article appeared in 1972, writing on the *Demoiselles* has been transformed – the picture has been resexualized and the nature of its spectators has become centrally important. The essays selected for this book are all (including John Golding's) post-Steinberg pieces. At the same time, all of them, except perhaps Golding's, are indebted to and yet stand against what has been a (perhaps *the*) major presence in post-Steinberg writing, the contribution of William Rubin. Rubin's research on Picasso and the *Demoiselles* is fundamental to much that is found here, but the biographical cast he has given his interpretations is not. His

achievement has been to build a wonderfully rich immediate context for the understanding of the painting in relation to Picasso, and a great deal of the material he has adduced is, in fact, relevant to an understanding of the painting in relation not only to Picasso but to its other spectators, both current and of the period before 1914. It is for this reason that, despite often profound methodological differences, Rubin's research is referenced so frequently in the pieces that follow, which tend to privilege, not the autobiographical in the picture, but its relationship with its spectators. This is mostly so too of other important recent pieces that focus on or take in the *Demoiselles*, but which are not included in this book. The contributions of Anna Chave, Hal Foster, David Fraser-Jenkins, Ron Johnson, and Michael Leja should all be mentioned; details of them are given in the bibliography.²¹ John Richardson's treatment of the painting has, of course, been in the context of a biography.

A destabilized male Picasso is an important factor in both Yve-Alain Bois's and Tamar Garb's pieces, but Bois uses psychoanalytic theory to bring out the work's potential impact on all engaged spectators,²² and Garb explores its relationship with one particular spectator, Gertrude Stein, in order to focus the unresolved problem of gender in its viewing as well as its making (what kind of a relationship can women have with a resexualized *Demoiselles* so explicitly aimed at male viewers?).²³ Picasso's psychic condition is far less a factor in Leighton's and Lomas's essays. They are concerned much more exclusively with the social, political, and ideological conditions for the making of meaning in the period, most essentially as those conditions inflect the conjunction of prostitution and 'Africa' found in the 'demoiselles'.²⁴ My own essay, written like Garb's specially for this book, follows on from Leighton's and Lomas's, and attempts to find a way of bringing together a discussion of its 'primitivizing' and sexual themes with a discussion of how it could be connected with cubism.²⁵ I have tried to remember Kahnweiler, Barr, and Golding (whose inclusion in this selection reinforces the continuing importance of his perspective) as well as to respond to Steinberg and after; and I have tried to do so without falling back on compromise. One thing will always be clear about the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*: it excludes utterly all compromise.

NOTES

- 1 The bohemian image of the young Picasso was most effectively disseminated early on by Fernande Olivier, his partner from 1904 to 1912. See Fernande Olivier, *Picasso et ses amis* (Paris, 1933), translated by Jane Miller as *Picasso and His Friends* (London, 1964). New light was thrown on his early career as a career, and especially on his relations with dealers and collectors, in Michael C. Fitzgerald, *Mak-*

ing *Modernism. Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Modernism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1995).

2 Paris: Musée Picasso, 26 January–18 April 1988; Barcelona: Museu Picasso, 10 May–14 July 1988.

3 Hélène Seckel (ed.), *Les Dames d'Avignon*. Exhibition catalogue, 2 vols. (Paris: Musée Picasso, 1988).

4 *Woman with a Large Ear (Buste)*, spring 1907. Oil on canvas, 60.5 × 59.2 cm. (Paris: Musée Picasso, MP 17).

5 Hélène Seckel and Judith Cousins provided an extensively researched chronology of the history of the painting, reports of it, reactions to it, its movements, and its early historiography. Brigitte Léal catalogued the sketchbooks and the studies comprehensively. Pierre Daux published an analysis of the picture's development in the light of the sketchbooks. William Rubin published an extensive analysis of the picture's genesis (in Picasso's experience and his psyche as well as in his drawings, etc.). Rubin's and Seckel and Cousins's texts were republished in English in revised form in William Rubin, Judith Cousins, and Hélène Seckel, *Les Dames d'Avignon. Studies in Modern Art 3* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994).

6 These carved stone reliefs are now in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid; they are dated between the sixth and third century B.C. They were shown in the Musée du Louvre in 1905–6.

7 This is dubbed 'carnet 2' in Seckel (1988), as in note 5.

8 The picture in question is *Jars with Lemon*, Paris, summer 1907. Oil on canvas, 55 × 46 cm. Collection Dr. Herbert Batliner, Vaduz, Liechtenstein. The discovery of the oil study beneath it is published in Hélène Seckel, 'Une Étude pour *Les Dames d'Avignon*', *Poésie*, no. 60 (Paris, 1992), 121–5.

9 The identifications are reported in Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1939).

10 William Rubin, 'From Narrative to Iconic' in Picasso: *The Buried Allegory in Bread and Fruitful on a Table and the Role of Les Dames d'Avignon*, *The Art Bulletin* 65, no. 4 (December 1983), 615–49.

11 Kahnweiler reported two campaigns of work on the painting. See Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus* (Munich, 1920). The X-ray evidence bears this report out.

12 This connection was first pointed out by Rubin in Rubin (1983), as in note 10, Appendix IX, 647.

13 It is Rubin who has most exhaustively researched the topic and argued the probability that Picasso visited the Musée d'Ethnographie at this moment; he speaks of an 'epiphany', a conjunction of factors that allowed Picasso to respond to the force of tribal sculpture in that setting. See especially, William Rubin, 'Picasso', in Rubin (ed.), *'Primitivism' in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, exhibition catalogue, vol. 1 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

14 The first to state that the picture was left unfinished was Kahnweiler. He links the stylistic contradictions in the work to this contention. Golding followed Kahnweiler's analysis in the late 1950s. Rubin, however, has argued especially forcefully that the work should be considered finished. See Kahnweiler (1920), as in note 11; John Golding, *Cubism: A History and an Analysis, 1907–1914* (London, 1959); and Rubin (1983), as in note 10, Appendix XI.

15 Its first showing was as no. 129 'Les Dames d'Avignon' at an exhibition organised by André Salmon, 'L'Art Moderne en France', the Salon d'Antin, 26, avenue d'Antin, Paris, 16–31 July 1916. Its first New York showing was in the exhibition 'Art of Our Time' at the Museum of Modern Art, 10 May–30 September 1939.

16 The best referenced discussion of the title is in Rubin et al. (1994), as in note 5, 17–19. It is Golding who recalls that Picasso often referred to the picture as '*mon bordel*'. See p. 17, below.

17 See Kahnweiler (1920), as in note 11; and Barr (1939), as in note 9.

18 John Golding, 'The Dames d'Avignon', *The Burlington Magazine* 100, no. 662 (London, May 1958), 155–63. Golding's reference was to André Derain's *Baigneuses*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 132 × 195 cm. New York: Museum of Modern Art. He brought together also both the relief sculpture excavated at Osuna (see note 6) and the two heads excavated at Cerro de los Santos (Fig. 6). It was Christian Zervos who, prompted by the artist, first introduced the 'Iberian influence' into the Picasso literature. He did so in his introduction to the second volume of his oeuvre catalogue, published by Cahiers d'art in 1942.

19 Golding (1959), as in note 14.

20 Leo Steinberg, 'The Philosophical Brothel', *Art News* 71, nos. 5 and 6 (New York, September and October 1972), 22–9 and 38–47. Translated into French in Seckel (1988), as in note 3. Revised in *October*, no. 44 (New York and Cambridge, Mass., spring 1988). As Rubin points out, quite independently of Steinberg, John Nash of the University of Essex in the U.K. developed a very comparable approach to the *Dames*, which was given form earlier than Steinberg's article but without his knowledge, in a broadcast talk on B.B.C. Radio 3, on Wednesday 24 June 1970, titled 'Pygmalion and Medusa'. Rubin cites an elaborated typescript of this talk in Rubin et al. (1994), as in note 5, 31.

21 Special mention should be made of David Fraser-Jenkins's contribution, which seems to have gone unnoticed. Fraser-Jenkins has analysed the *Dames* in new and suggestive ways in relation to Cézanne's late *Bathers*, making an especially interesting link with a photograph taken by Emile Bernard of Cézanne seated in front of the Barnes Collection *Large Bathers*. See David Fraser-Jenkins, 'Baigneuses and Dames', *Bathers' in Cézanne, Picasso and Matisse*, *Apollo* (London, March 1997), 39–44.

22 Bois's essay is a revised version of a piece first published in 1988. See Yve-Alain Bois, 'Painting as Trauma', *Art in America* 76, no. 6 (June 1988), 130–40, 172–3.

23 Carb's essay has been specially written for this book. Its concern with the female spectator has been anticipated by Anna Chave, whose 1994 treatment of the topic is highly personalized and far less concerned with the painting in its historical moment. See Anna C. Chave, 'New Encounters with *Les Dames d'Avignon*: Gender, Race, and the Origins of Cubism', *The Art Bulletin* (December 1994), 596–611.

24 Leighton's essay is a revised version of a piece first published in 1990, Lomas's of a piece first published in 1993. See Patricia Leighton, 'The White Peril and L'Art Nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism', *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 4 (December 1990), 609–30; and David Lomas, 'A Canon of Deformity: *Les Dames d'Avignon* and Physical Anthropology', *Art History* 16, no. 3 (Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, Mass., September 1993), 424–46. The first to have explored historically the theme of prostitution as it is taken up by Picasso in the *Dames* was

Michael Leja. See Michael Leja, "Le Vieux Marcheur" and "Les Deux Risques": Picasso, Prostitution, Venereal Disease, and Maternity, 1899-1907, *Art History* 8, no. 1 (March 1985), 66-81.

²⁵ Another study exploring the relationship between the *Demoiselles* and Picasso's development between 1907 and 1910 should be mentioned. This is Neil Cox, *La Morale des lignes: Picasso 1907-10: Modernist Reception, the Subversion of Content, and the Lesson of Caricature*, thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. (University of Essex, 1991). Cox comes to highly suggestive conclusions as he traces Picasso's move away from an obsessive engagement with his own sexuality to aesthetic idealism.

2 JOHN GOLDING

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon and the Exhibition of 1988

It is now more than forty years since I first wrote at some length on *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, with the growing awareness that there could never be a definitive interpretation of this most remarkable of paintings.¹ The *Demoiselles* is one of those rare works of art that can look completely different to the same pair of eyes on each successive encounter. Individual art historians of my own generation who have written about the work more than once have done so from completely different perspectives. Younger critics, influenced by or trained in new art historical methods, have brought new insights to bear on the picture. Successive generations will continue to do so. This chapter was originally written as a review of the exhibition built up around this single painting that was shown in Barcelona and Paris in 1988. It attempts to give a brief history of the painting and of its critical fortunes.²

When the Museum of Modern Art mounted its huge Picasso exhibition in New York in 1980, it obtained the full support of the Picasso museums in Paris and Barcelona on condition that the great work, in a sense the cornerstone of New York's collection, might be allowed to cross the Atlantic once more. The New York exhibition was a triumph – the greatest Picasso exhibition there has ever been or will be, even though the late work was inadequately represented. Many of the works assembled will never be reunited: *Guernica*, for example, was afterwards restored to Spain, according to the artist's ultimate wish, and is now after an interval when it was shown in a dependency of the Prado under grotesque conditions, reigning supreme in the Reina Sofia, Madrid's own new museum of