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False Gods: Authority and Picasso's Early Work

ARTICLES ISSUE #1

BY CHARLES PALERMO

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In his *Literary Interest: The Limits of Anti-Formalism*, Steven Knapp discusses some revisionist biblical criticism. This materialist criticism uses social history to recover contexts for biblical history, and does so specifically for the purpose of casting doubt on canonical biblical texts. The substance of the accounts is not my interest here, nor are the aims of their revisions. What I am concerned to trace is a problem Knapp finds in them generally. The problem is: if you question the sacred texts in light of historical circumstances, why do they still matter to you? "The answer," as Knapp puts it,

seems to lie in a peculiar combination of two kinds of relation between the present and the past: a combination of, on one hand, the relation of *analogy* and, on the other hand, sheer historical continuity. Specifically, the present authority of Israel's or of the Church's actual social origins is presumed to derive from the intersection of two relations: first, the perceived analogy between ancient and modern social struggles; second, the influence, however remote, that the ancient struggles have exerted on the struggles in which participants in the tradition are, or should be, presently engaged.¹

In short, we care about canonical texts, despite the social historical revisions, either because they offer analogies to our struggles today, or because they serve as explanations of how we came to be what we are (116). Or rather, because we conflate or in some other confused way combine the two. Knapp spots confusion in this combination of reasons because, as he points out, if the analogies between our struggles and those of biblical times compel us, it is not because the accounts of biblical times on which they're built are historically true, but because the biblical narratives offer analogies that speak to our values. Whether the narratives are true is irrelevant if the analogies are compelling. Analogies to fictional stories would be just as useful for illustrating our values to us. On

the other hand, the historical continuity isn't really authoritative for us, either, since, should biblical history offer an analogy that would teach us lessons that aren't already underwritten by our values, we will not take that history as exemplary, much less as authoritative, for us now (116-17). "Hence," he goes on to conclude, "the pressure to focus on historical phenomena whose *combination* of symbolic resonance and explanatory uniqueness will make these two benefits seem mutually dependent" (117). But the problem persists even when we seem to find this combination, because:

the locus of authority is always in the present; we use, for promoting and reinforcing ethical and political dispositions, only those elements of the past that correspond to our sense of what presently compels us. (117)

We should recognize that our interest in the past has nothing to do with establishing authority for ourselves. History can't tell us what to do.

The same goes for literary works. Following Fredric Jameson, Knapp describes "the division of critical attention between continuity and analogy, between the mere reconstruction of historical sequences and the use of past texts to stand for present values," or, in Jameson's own terms "'antiquarianism and modernizing 'relevance' or 'projection.'"²

Historical accounts of artworks may underwrite interpretations, but they aren't what makes a work of art compelling for us here and now. Our values do that. Perhaps we feel ourselves unmoved by works of art informed by values we don't share. And maybe that's as it should be. Surely we don't want to claim that we embrace misreadings or that we accept as authoritative certain imperatives we find in historically remote texts even though they, say, endorse slavery or demand the subjugation of women. The problem Knapp outlines may be troubling, but the alternative is worse.

Perhaps this seems like a challenge for theologians or biblical historians. But, as anyone familiar with the history of literary criticism knows, biblical criticism's problems are literary criticism's problems. We might rephrase the problem this way: You are a member of one of two methodological camps, whether you think of it that way or not. You may believe that the meaning of a work of art is fully determined in its context of production, so to speak, by its author's intentions or by the expectations of the work's original audience, or you may believe that at least some part of a work's meaning evolves over time, or even that it is produced in the present, in its various encounters with beholders. The unity of the

sides and the distinction between these points of view are unstable. I mean, those who believe that an author's intentions are the meaning of a work do not truly agree with those who believe that interpretation means recovering the original context of a work's production.³ Those who see meaning as a product of historical context do not exactly disagree with those who believe the meaning of a work of art evolves. But to the extent they think they disagree, they are not (already) members of the same camp.

Whatever general implications we may or may not want to see in the opposition between what I will call the historicist position and what I will call the presentist position, there is nevertheless the fact of a difference. You cannot feel yourself to be a member of both sides without giving up your claim to a consistent method.

That is where the problem begins, though. If meaning is fixed in the past—let us say, for example, if Courbet's *The Burial at Ornans* is really about the politics of mid-nineteenth-century rural France—why on Earth would I care about it now? All of those people and their competing interests are long gone. We have our own problems now. So the painting has no implications for me. You may be another kind of historicist: you may believe that, since the picture was painted by a long-dead artist and in response to local circumstances the fullness of which is lost to us forever, we can never truly know its meaning. In that case, the painting cannot have any implications for me, nor could it even if I found some compelling reason to interest myself in the lives of Courbet's neighbors. The historicist route leaves us no reason to care about an old painting.

On the other hand, if a painting's meaning is produced in my encounter with it, in the here-and-now, then (whatever the merits of my interpretation of it) it only really interests me insofar as my interpretation of it addresses my current concerns. Or, which may be another way of saying the same thing, I'm only interested in it if I can put it in terms of my own values. Which is to say, I only really care about whether it can be made to underwrite my values.

(Perhaps that means I admire the picture because it supplies a good pedigree for my democratic values. Perhaps one might endorse it for its rough handling of brutish rural clergy and other unworthy authority figures. Anyway, it's important to you because it affirms your ideas, not because it is irrelevant to them or because it challenges them.) And there's nothing to say that my interests are the same as yours; my values yours. If your values are different from mine, you will interpret the picture differently, so that it engages your concerns. And, if I am of the presentist camp, I'll concede that that is as it should be, which means that, although I

may respond to the picture, my response will be merely my own, so much my own, in fact, that I will have no reason to recommend it to you. Still more to the point, one may say that, insofar as you see the production of meaning as taking place in the present, you have abandoned the historical work of art altogether—you are no longer talking about it or its meaning at all.⁴

Either way, then,—whether you travel the historicist or the presentist route—it is far from clear how the *Burial* could have implications for us. It may have a meaning or it may have a lot of them, but no consequences for us, no authority. Yet—terrible irony—it was meant to. (It was also meant to overcome or evade our awareness that it was painted in order to elicit a reaction, but that is another matter. But the two aspirations are not separate, as I hope the following argument will suggest.)

Does this mean that paintings are like newspapers, which one reads because of their relevance to events of the day and then discards? Or, worse yet, like newspapers that one uses to light a fire because, after all, whatever the intentions of their authors, they are still pieces of paper that can be put to any purpose they can be imagined to suit? Does it mean, in short, that all works of art are failures?

Perhaps you think this dilemma is a little artificial. After all, we do respond to works of art, even very old ones, and there is something coherent about our responses to them. That is perfectly true, but it is also important that our methodological positions (I think all methodological positions can be placed in one of the categories I mentioned above) do not obviously make any room for works of art to compel meaningful responses from us. That is to say, I think our methodological reflections are hollow unless they can also be part of our reflection on the way works do or do not have authority for us.

In what follows, I shall work out the response to this problem—the problem of authority—of a handful of artists and writers who were active at the turn of the twentieth century.

In 1903 Guillaume Apollinaire published an essay titled “Des faux,” “On Fakes.” In it, Apollinaire recounts the story of the so-called “tiara of Saitapharnes.” He berates French officials for removing the tiara from display simply because it was found to be a modern forgery and not an artifact of the third century B.C.⁵ He explains that it had been universally lauded for its beauty and craftsmanship, and so deserved to remain on display—albeit, perhaps, in the Musée Luxembourg, among the modern works, rather than in the Louvre. He calls scholarly outrage at the forgery “purely archaeological” and therefore “of no importance whatsoever” (9). He goes on to cite

some examples of great works that are, in a "purely archaeological" sense, fakes. Among them, he lists the Gospels, which, he explains, "are later than those to whom they are attributed"—a charge that calls into question their status as historical documents without quite impugning their value as revelation (11). He concludes with the story of a forger of his acquaintance who counterfeited medieval pottery. The forger took delight in his creations, saying: "I have created a god, a false god, a real, pretty, false god" (12). I take the forger to mean that his work, like the tiara of Saitapharnes, was false (even fraudulent) in the archaeological sense, but real or true (even divine) in some other, unnamed sense.

Apollinaire was not being merely mischievous or blasphemous—against Christianity or against art. Rather, I think he was making a point about authority. The critique of religious revelation holds a special, central place in accounts of modernity and of modernism. By referring to disputed claims about the authorship of the Gospels, I take Apollinaire to have been connecting his thoughts about art to the problem of modernism in the broader sense—as a refusal of received authority and an effort to establish another kind of authority, one based on reason and historical method. Ultimately, Apollinaire's point is also a point about theology, about modernism and about understanding art.

In Christian theology, this modernism process may, I think, be said to have begun with historical biblical criticism—that is what Apollinaire was referring to when he remarked that the Gospels were later than those to whom they had been attributed. Historical biblical criticism in the liberal Protestant tradition had gone much farther, even, than Apollinaire's remark would suggest. In fact, by the turn of the twentieth century, it had reached a radical conclusion. A couple of years after Apollinaire wrote "On Fakes," Albert Schweitzer could write, in his classic study *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, that historical biblical criticism had destroyed the notion of the "Dual Nature of Jesus," leaving two Jesuses in place of the traditional one—a historical Jesus and a timeless one:

But the truth is, it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world.⁶

On Schweitzer's account, the Jesus of tradition is a lot like Apollinaire's tiara of Saitapharnes: a counterfeit in an "archeological" sense but invaluable in another sense—specifically he is crucial and

powerful on account of the response his word can produce in us here and now—because of our response to his call. Obviously, Apollinaire treats his “real, pretty, false god” less gravely than Schweitzer does his liberal Protestant Jesus, but Apollinaire sees that they are engaged in the same, profoundly modernist project: letting go of received authority and seeking to reestablish authority on new bases, in terms of reasons and reflections and experiences accessible to the modern subject. Both Schweitzer and Apollinaire want you to forget about truth in the archaeological sense and let yourself be moved—to belief, to conviction—by your own experience. They can both be understood to be preaching what one theologian around the turn of the century called “faith without belief.”⁷ The disjunction between faith and belief means that a difference arises in practice between one’s ability to affirm beliefs and one’s ability to live them. The theme returns, slightly more subtly inflected, in Apollinaire’s great poem “Zone,” where he speaks of Catholicism and modernity:

You alone in all Europe are not antique, O Christian faith
The most modern European is you, Pope Pius X
And you, whom the windows look down at, shame prevents you
From entering a church and confessing this morning.
You read prospectuses, catalogues and posters, which shout aloud:
Here is poetry this morning, and for prose there are the newspapers.
There are volumes for 25 centimes full of detective stories,
Portraits of famous men and a thousand titles.⁸

Pius X represents an insistence on orthodox belief, so he can also stand for a radical denial of historical distance, of the difference between faith and the archaeological sense of doctrine. Even in the light of Pius X’s refusal of such distance the narrator finds himself trapped between the impulse to visit the confessional and the impulse to turn away from it. This is the connection between modernism’s transformation of religion and its role in art: losing authority, such as that of dogma, does not mean renouncing Catholicism, it means losing one’s ability to respond to it fully. We moderns are not free of belief; rather, we are blocked from it, distracted from it. We live in an age that has, as Kierkegaard put it, forgotten authority.⁹ The literature Apollinaire turns to immediately after his bout with the confessional continues that thought: the authority of poetry has ceded its place to the ephemeral chatter of the newspaper, which is the emblem for him, as it was for Kierkegaard, of our age of forgotten authority.

The equation between the experience of art and religious experience was hardly Apollinaire’s invention.¹⁰ But it had a special and rather specific currency toward the turn of the twentieth

century among certain writers and artists in France. A friend of Apollinaire's, the symbolist writer and critic Charles Morice, gave a fascinating lecture on some works of Eugène Carrière's that makes the point clearly. Carrière was also a friend of Morice's, and they shared what was then a common, vaguely Christian humanistic faith. In fact, Morice also discussed such matters with another, similarly minded friend of his, Paul Gauguin. The easiest way to characterize their common faith would probably be with a term they themselves invoked: *Jésus homme*, or Jesus man.



Fig. 1: Eugène Carrière, Christ en croix, 1897 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay)

The titular topic of Morice's talk is Carrière's *Christ en croix* or *Christ on the Cross* (fig. 1), but Morice approaches his thesis slowly, first reviewing a number of Carrière's other works. Morice considers Carrière's maternity pictures altogether, as a class, drifting between general statements and what seem like specific references (fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Eugène Carrière, *Maternité*, ca. 1897 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

Morice speaks of Carrière as aware of lines or arabesques that unite mothers and their children making of "the members of a family," as Morice puts it, "a unique being, a harmonious whole." "I know such a sleeping mother," he continues, "holding her child in her arms; sleep has not effaced the traces of thought itself, of vigilant preoccupation, of concern; sentiment is fixed in it like an attempt at waking that will not delay." Morice then adds that "the hand that holds the little pressed body is not asleep." So, the two bodies are a single being, but the mother's body is also two separate beings—a sleeping woman and a vigilant hand. Now, as I have said, Morice does not say precisely which painting, if any, he has in mind. There is no guarantee, in fact, that his description will line up with any one painting of Carrière's. Nor am I sure I would describe the mother in the picture I have selected as "sleeping." On the other hand, since Morice's account insists on an expression of concern on the mother's face, how appropriate could it be to a painting in which the mother was *obviously* asleep? At any rate, this example does well enough, I think, to illustrate a contrast in vitality, in purposefulness, like the one Morice describes between the unselfconscious expressivity of the mother's face and the tension that closes her hand on the child's foot. What is important, especially important, to Morice about Carrière's approach to rendering the maternities is the internal difference, like two persons in one, which is figured in the hand's liveliness as it is in the mother's unconsciousness. He concludes:

Did the artist want precisely to mark maternal solicitude on this face, the constant and urgent terror of the thousand dangers that menace the little being? It is there, that solicitude, that terror and with many other secret

complications, with all that escapes analysis, with the irreducible synthesis of all of life itself, with the serious and the light, with the devastating and consoling occasions that comprise the religious drama of Maternity.

Religious, I said. Yes, and inevitably we are led to suggest this word apropos of Carrière's art. The maternities he recreates with such love and veneration all have the noble character of traditional holy families.¹¹

Ultimately, this "drama" (by which I take Morice to refer to the play of conflicting emotions and the unfolding of the connections and divisions between the persons pictured) is "religious." Morice drops the latter word like a bomb, anticipating surprise or resistance from his reader by following his use of the adjective immediately with an explanation: Carrière reverently appropriates the "noble character of traditional holy families." "Only," Morice adds, "there is no aureole around the forehead of the Mother and of the Child" (Morice 1899, 17).

The theme of a mother and child certainly seems, again in a general sense, ready for assimilation to the tradition of the Madonna and Child. But it is not just that fact about iconography and its cross-genre resonances that Morice has in mind. He wants to see Carrière's work as representative of a certain religious sentiment—one that conforms closely to the radically modernist theological sentiments I mentioned earlier in Morice and his colleagues' references to *Jésus homme*. "I see well that such an art is religious," Morice says, but he adds: "I do not see that it is Christian. And so what is its religion?—The Religion of Life—or, if you prefer, the cult of humanity, in the infinite."¹²

When Morice finally gets around to discussing the painting that is the nominal subject of his talk, Carrière's *Christ on the Cross*, he returns to his rumination on Carrière's way of mixing the divine and the mundane:

This Christ is human, and this woman who cries for him has no superhuman recourse... I am mistaken: he is divine, in all the beauty of his sacrifice. She is divine, too, because her pain is without limits.—This man is no wrongdoer, his face is noble and the crown of thorns attests to his royalty. He is a sacrifice. She who cries over him cries over a victim, not over a guilty person.—What! An innocent sacrificed! Yes, and he celebrates and consecrates by his voluntary death that eternal law of the necessity of pure sacrifices.—Ah! I wish this painting were in a church: the votive painting of the future church where humanity will celebrate the rites of the religion of the ideal, this immutable deposit, eternal, of all the changing religions.

And this church, which will it be?¹³

What Morice describes is not what we would call secular humanism. He loudly insists on the central role of the divine in it, and even refers to an eternal and immutable deposit, which I take to be a pointed allusion to the Catholic Church's immutable deposit of faith. But Morice's idea of a deposit of faith is importantly different from Catholicism's in two respects. First, it is, by definition, shared by all people who feel a religious sentiment—hence his reference to "eternal law," which he takes to include the notion that sacrifices must be pure, and therefore different from punishment. To this universal deposit, Morice opposes the contingent and evolving expressions of such truths, which are the various religions of mankind. These ideas—"religious sentiment" and vital immanence or relativism—are features of theological modernism that Pope Pius X, whom you will recall from Apollinaire's "Zone," explicitly and vehemently denounced as heretical.¹⁴ The quasi-Christianity Morice projects approvingly onto Carrière's Crucifixion is understandable, then, both in terms of the traditional iconography of orthodox Christianity and in terms of a generically human religious sentiment. But it is not Catholic.

Fig. 3: Eugène Carrière, *Théâtre populaire* (or *Le Théâtre de Belleville*), 1895 (Paris, Musée Rodin)

So what, as Morice asks, is this church, where Carrière's Crucifixion may hang? He lets the question itself hang, and then, changing topics, resumes his discussion with a different picture altogether—this one on a secular subject. It is Carrière's *Théâtre de Belleville* (*The Theater of Belleville*) (fig. 3). It shows a theater in the *faubourgs*, so a theater for workers, rather than for elite society. In such a theater, Morice explains, "one may best study the expression of emotion in faces." In the more sophisticated theaters, he says, one "sneers" or "whimpers"; in these popular theaters, one "laughs" or "cries boldly." But it is not just the amplitude of the emotions in the popular theater that impresses Morice—it is something more like a transformation the play induces in the crowd: "As the curtain rises," he writes, "the face of the naive spectator divests itself of borrowed grimaces; just now, it was an employee, a clerk, and the livery of his profession imposed on his physiognomy and on his attitude

something conventional. But the drama begins, and, before this contest of love and hatred, the clerk and the employee have become men." This has little to do with what Morice calls "the literary value of the play"; for the people who have come to watch, it is simply "about Life and Death." "It is into its own soul," he says "that this human crowd gazes." Then, he concludes, "In a moment, when the curtain has fallen again on the scene, banalities and vulgarities fall again over this soul."¹⁵

The frankness of the audience's expressions is a release from the masks they wear daily, the conventional expressions forced on them by their trades.¹⁶ A clerk is made, by the action of his *métier*, into something thing-like, something less than human. So the play does more than entertain him—it frees him, redeems him. To speak of redemption may seem out of place—it may seem as though I am forcing an issue—but not in view of Morice's more general thesis about Carrière's religious themes, and certainly not in view of the way he concludes his lecture:

And so what does it see, this crowd, on that stage, or rather in its soul? [. . .] It is true that, until now the Painter had hidden the drama from us. But finally, here it is! It is, do not doubt it, this sublime dialogue of heroic devotion and inconsolable pain,—it is this Christ on the Cross, this human Christ, and this weeping woman—this human Christ, greater than a God! Because the God knows that in dying he saves the world, and the man has no certitude. His last thought, his frightful last thought was, perhaps, a despairing conviction in the uselessness of his sacrifice. There it is—that is the supreme tragedy of our destiny—what the crowd watches, and that is why this crowd is so great. It participates with its years in the bloody effusion of a holocaust that is also an apotheosis, and it rises above itself by the nobility the drama's intensity confers on it. It has submitted to the counsel of the poet, and of all these souls a soul, a collective consciousness, is formed, which exalts itself and becomes ecstatic, with the suffering hero, in the joy of sacrifice.¹⁷

So ends Morice's lecture on Carrière—with the conceit that Carrière's *Christ on the Cross* is actually the dramatic spectacle that transfigures the audience in the *Theater of Belleville*.

Carrière "read and reread" Morice's lecture and wrote Morice to praise it.¹⁸ What Morice's remarks do is work out a relationship between divine and mundane and between beholder and art that illustrates and extends the problematic we have been following. In other words, I want to say, the members of Carrière's audience are not only witnesses to the act by which his *Jésus homme* gains divine authority (his "apotheosis"), but they demonstrate what it means to *share in* that authority (and freedom from the oppression of ordinary life) by "submitt[ing] to the counsel of the poet," and thus permitting themselves to be transfigured by its truth. Carrière's theater crowd

is a model for us who experience art, and his Christ is a model artist. Or, at least, he is Morice's ideal artist.

If I have spent a considerable time explaining these notions of modernism and authority, it is because I think they are an important context for understanding Picasso's early work. Morice was a friend of Apollinaire's before either of them knew Picasso. Morice was also an early supporter of Picasso's in Paris. He probably met Picasso by around 1902 through one of Picasso's friends. He wrote favorably about Picasso in that year and gave Picasso a copy of his collaboration with Gauguin, *Noa Noa*, which Picasso kept all his life. Further, Morice was instrumental in arranging a particularly important exhibition of Picasso's paintings in early 1905 at the Galeries Serrurier. On that occasion, he wrote another important piece of criticism on Picasso's works. I will come to that presently.

My claim about Picasso's paintings of the so-called Blue and Rose periods is that they participate in a paradigm close to that of Carrière's pictures as Morice interprets them. The quasi-religious iconography of Picasso's early work has been well remarked. Further, the mask-like quality Morice associates with the faces of ordinary people consumed by the routine cares from which they need liberation (if they are to be saved), takes on the status of a theme in Picasso's early work. (This, too, is well known, but I have a few points to add.) By contrast, I see many signs of a contrary sense of liberation from that oppressive care in Picasso's works—as if, even in the most wretched scene of despondence, Picasso includes at least the germ of redemption. Finally, I shall explain how Picasso often builds in a more or less clear, more or less direct address to the beholder, a call that shifts the beholder into the scope of the conflict he stages between oppression and redemption. In the end, I hope I will have complicated the commonplace view of the so-called Blue Period as a collection of pictures of sad, alienated, marginal figures.¹⁹



Fig. 4: Picasso, *The Two Sisters*, 1902 (The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg)

Let's proceed with examples. In the summer of 1902, Picasso was working on *The Two Sisters* (fig. 4). We have several drawings Picasso made for the painting. Almost all of Picasso's drawings on the subject—every one I know of, except what looks like the very first, crude formulation of the idea²⁰—show the two women holding hands (fig. 5).

Fig. 5: Picasso, Study for The Two Sisters, 1902 (Sotheby's, inventory number 356, N08486, 11/05/08; formerly Rosengart Collection, Luzern)

In none of these drawings do the women make eye contact—in fact, only in more advanced drawings does the woman on the left clearly open an eye. As in figures in other works of this period, the contours of the woman on the left are nearly straight through much if not most of her height, reinforcing the impression created by her bowed head and (in the majority of cases) closed eye that she is inward-turned almost to the point of being inert. (The stiffness of her pose reiterates itself in the shape of the archway behind her in some preparatory drawings and in the finished painting.)

I want to draw attention to three significant departures from the drawings that distinguish the painting. First, the women do not appear to hold hands in the painting as they do in the drawings—the woman on our right may rest her hand on her companion's far arm, but she may also simply fold her own arms together in front of her without touching the other figure. The important thing, as I see it, is that Picasso changed his mind and decided *not* to show their

clasped hands, which had been a central feature of his preparatory drawings. Also, the women's naked feet nearly or barely touch. (It is probably impossible to say whether they touch or not, but the fact that they make contact on the surface of the painting is no less pointed because of the uncertainty.²¹) The change displaces the gesture of contact from the eloquence of the hands to the dumb feet—it is no longer a gesture of sympathy or commiseration, but a furtive rapprochement, perhaps accidental, perhaps embarrassed. In fact, I hesitate even to call the meeting of the feet a gesture—the feet that touch are the load-bearing ones, the ones the women *cannot extend* toward each other; moreover, these feet are too clumsy and too little articulated to gesture. And yet, the feet take over from the hands the expressive task of defining the implicit communication between the women. Finally, the right foot of the bowed woman turns outward—I want to say inexplicably—toward the beholder, as if to open her figure in counterpoint to its general closing-up. We will see this turning-out again, which will make its meaning and its meaningfulness more forcefully apparent.

The encounter of the prostitute and the mother (as Picasso identified them²²) has been interpreted variously—as a transposed Visitation or an allegory of sacred and profane love or a meditation on woman's wretchedness.²³ The most specific and firmly historicized interpretation of the painting's subject matter claims that the painting represents the "two risks" that accompanied sex at the turn of the twentieth century: venereal disease (syphilis, as is clear from the white bonnet of the inmate of the syphilis ward) and pregnancy.²⁴ So it is especially striking, the combination of this double personification of consequences with the themes of closing-in and touching. The figure on the left, the syphilitic, closes herself up so completely and locks herself so firmly into the architecture of the composition that one feels the need, I believe, to wonder whether she *has* an inner life. Only her feet seem to say she does. So, apart from the ambiguous and minimal (and crucial) sign her foot makes, I take her expression and posture to signal the benumbed condition Morice felt it so urgent—or holy—to deliver the people from. Her companion shows little sign of awareness, either—her open, staring eye fixes on nothing in particular, so that one might imagine her to be lost in thought or sleepwalking.

Against the adults' abstracted or distracted reverie, the little hand of the child curls upward, as if to remind the beholder that the little creature is hidden away in the woman's garment, and that it is aware, in no way abstracted from its surroundings but with no understanding of any predicament, risk or gravity, either—just as infants always are. Further, the infant's hand goes apparently unnoticed within its fictional world, which is plausible as part of the

fiction. But since the infant's is the only hand visible in the picture's final form, and since it is placed so near the dramatic center of the picture—at the location of the former expressive hand-holding—, and since its delicate and lifelike fingers stand out so in contrast to the stony faces and postures of the women, it seems like a marked feature of the painting. Emerging as it does from within the closed form of the mother, whose contour also completely contains it, the infant's hand might read as an extension of the mother herself—it appears near the end of the form her arm makes under her cloak, like a miniature replacement for her own hand, or a limb sprouted by her heart to signal, in contrast to her body's stillness, a vitality hidden even from her. It is suggestively like the infants united to their mothers and the mothers divided within themselves in Morice's account of Carrière's *maternités*.

Indeed, since neither woman is shown as if she were paying attention to it or even aware of it, it is plausible and even clearly right to think of Picasso as directing the infant's little gesture to *your* attention *as opposed to* theirs, just as in Carrière's maternities hands and faces betrayed the secret and unconscious thoughts of infants and their sleeping mothers. So, like similar features of Carrière's pictures and like the women's feet, the infant's hand represents a sense in which the picture turns itself outward to address itself to the beholder. (A sense of the picture's address, so to speak, that opposes that sense in which it is about the silent, prolonged, introspective or unconscious encounter of the figures shown.)

Fig. 6: Picasso, The Blind Man's Meal, 1903 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Now, consider another painting of the Blue Period, from 1903: *The Blind Man's Meal* (fig. 6). The blind man feels the jug before him with his fingertips while he holds his bread in his left hand. Clearly enough, the man's blindness represents his isolation, the limitedness of his knowing, while his hands make visible his struggle against his separation from the world. His hands are large and the stark opposition between the dominant blue and the touches of cream and brown emphasize the solid volume of his hands along with the bread and jug, and do so at the expense of his body's fullness. His long, awkward, improbable arms attach to his volume-less body mysteriously. Indeed, the man's inability to see the things he touches heightens—and charges with meaning—both the selective effect of volume in the painting and the effect of a disjunction between his inexpressive face and his searching hands. It is his hands, not his eyes, that are his windows onto the world and our windows onto his soul. In this I sense a kind of similarity to the displacement of expression in the persons of the two sisters and even to Morice's account of Carrière's mothers, with their unconscious faces and their tense hands.

Further, one might even imagine that it is the man's contact with the bread and jug that calls the objects forth into solidity. In that sense, it is as if his touch illuminates his world for our vision as it does for him. Conversely, the pointed resemblance of the man's blind eye socket to the empty bowl on the table lets us suppose that his blind eye is as shallow and as empty as the bowl—a hollow without, one might suspect, a real interior.²⁵

Fig. 7: Picasso, Poor People on the Seashore (often called The Tragedy), 1903 (National Gallery of Art, Washington)

Now look at another 1903 painting, *Poor People on the Seashore* (fig. 7). The three figures turn together, but their downcast eyes do not meet. The three remain more or less isolated, unified by nothing, perhaps, but their misery. I say "more or less isolated" because the boy might be thought of as caressing the man's hip. The gesture is ambiguous—a marked fact, if only because his hands are the only two visible in the painting. If the boy's hand does rest on the man's hip, then the gesture may be read as an expression of sympathy, or love, or as an attempt to get or direct the man's attention. In any case, it will reduce the isolation they suffer—or at least, it will make them aware of one another. But it may not be a touch we see at all. This raised right hand may be making one of the cryptic gestures that are common among Picasso's early figures—a gesture so unreadable that, even if the other figures were looking at it, one supposes it would remain unintelligible to them as it is to us.

So one might say the representation of volume assumes even greater importance here than in *The Blind Man's Meal*. Insofar as our conjectures about the disposition of objects in the fictional volume determine whether we see the boy as touching the man, our understanding of volume in the picture becomes decisive for understanding the drama. This is why I find it particularly telling that the boy makes virtually the same gestures as the blind man in the other painting, as if to imply that he probes his obscure world the same way the blind man at his table does, but without objects to hold.²⁶ Instead of feeling for his jug and bread, the boy at the seashore grasps for his own world, summarized here in his companions, who form something resembling a family.²⁷ In the two paintings—between them, so to speak—Picasso constructs a comparison between touching and communication. He does so in *Poor People on the Seashore*, though, in such a way as, on one hand, to identify touching with communication. (If the boy is touching the man, they *are* in communication.) But, on the other hand, *Poor People* also suggests a difference between physical connection and communication. (That is to say, if we could determine that the boy is making a hieratic gesture in the air, whether he is signaling or reaching for phantom bread and wine, his reaching would be about another kind of communion.²⁸) Since Picasso leaves the two readings in pointed suspension, I propose that we take the two as superposed, one on the other, as if Picasso were trying to convince us the two gestures were synonyms (or homonyms, so to speak). Just two different expressions of the impulse to communion.

I will offer one more observation about this picture, and sketch some of its implications, before I move on. This time, it is the figures' feet. Each figure plants one fully visible foot on the shore. (Indeed, the prominent feet are among the most solid-looking objects in the picture.) One of the woman's feet is hidden beneath her long skirt. The foot at the end of the man's long left leg is truncated and mostly hidden behind the boy's left leg. And the boy's right foot is a ghost—a transparent foot at the end of a solid trouser-leg. In these 1903 pictures Picasso uses a variety of techniques to mobilize a sense that reality and dream, matter and symbol, profane and sacred, line up—ambiguously—with solidity of paint and fullness of modeling and qualities of line.²⁹

Note also that the feet are arranged in a conversation like that of their owners, but directed somewhat differently. The figures' faces turn into a center within the space of the painting, toward a point apparently located beyond the woman and before the man. The feet converge on a point outside the figures' circle, located on our side of the woman, because her right foot turns, a little strangely,

along or even beyond her shoulder, so that it points out of the painting. In the directness of their meeting, as well as its outward-facing orientation, the conversation of the feet provides a contrast to the awkward encounter of their owners. The outward turn of that circle of feet is a move toward the beholder—an embrace that opens itself to you, addresses itself to you.

Fig. 8: Picasso, *The Frugal Repast*, 1904 (Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA)

Other paintings show limbs belonging to separate bodies acting in unison, and even against their owners. A well-known etching of 1904 called *The Frugal Repast* shows two café patrons sitting together (fig. 8). As in *Poor People on the Seashore*, their expressions, especially their eyes, make them seem introspective and, insofar as they are lost in their thoughts, isolated from one another—an impression that inflects the physical intimacy their pose evokes. I imagine that their ability to withdraw from one another, even within such an embrace, points either to a particularly deep, habitual closeness, or, on the other hand, to an alienation that remains undiminished by physical contact. (One might even conclude that those two types of embrace are more similar than they first seem: no matter how deep it runs, the implicit understanding between intimates is still a silence, with its own conditions and prohibitions.)

Now, look at the way their bodies are represented. The man's right arm is bounded by straight, nearly vertical lines, as are similar features of other figures. And as in those cases, the long, straight contour acts as an exaggerated expression of his thinness—so exaggerated as to seem like a given, a straight line determined *a priori*, in advance of and irrespective of his body and its volume. The straight contours of the arm (and for that matter, the torso beside it) suppress the effect of a body's volume, despite the minimal play of light and shadow that makes the bony shoulder project as much as it does. Compared with the very similar form of his companion's right arm, he seems like a shadow she has cast on the wall behind her. This would be another case of technique selectively distributing different levels of presence, physical and psychological, to persons and parts of persons—just as if they depended for their very selves on what their companions could impart. Maybe the shallow, empty, tipped-up bowl in front of them refers in some way to the man's lack of volume and commensurate lack of interiority. (One might see the bowl's void as a match for his eye, just as the bowl matched the eye of the man in *Blind Man's Meal*.)

In direct opposition to the straight and flattened silhouette of his right arm, her left arm and shoulder are inflated to an improbable size. The man's left hand helps cover up the anatomical anomaly. Moreover, resting on the woman's shoulder, the man's hand completes a circuit of four hands that extend themselves along the outer edges of the square defined on three sides by the woman's arms and along the top by the line of her shoulders and jaw. Against the distraction and disconnectedness of the two persons, the four hands seem alive and purposeful. The hands even pair off to face partners (top and left, upper right and lower right), forming two direct confrontations. It is as if the hands busily carry on the exchange the couple cannot begin, or can no longer sustain, between them. Further, that conversation takes place on the woman's body, around her full and powerfully modeled breasts. The lively asymmetry of her breasts and the movement of the hands on the square perimeter of her torso evoke the promise or recollection or need or waste of sexual, fecund life within her and between the two figures—a mode of life that neither of them so much as begins to express outside that square, unless the woman can be felt to look at the beholder in such a way as to intimate her awareness of or desire to release that hidden life. So again, since that mode of life reveals itself most directly in the independent actions of the autonomous hands, one is left to wonder whether the figures in the picture know of it, or whether Picasso has perhaps addressed it behind their backs, as it were, to the beholder—something like the baby's gesture in the *Two Sisters* or the puzzle of

the boy's gesture in *Poor People on the Seashore*. In fact, since they sit in front of another meal of bread and wine, as did the man in *Blind Man's Meal*, Picasso may be attaching the same, double significance to their communion that we spoke of before. It may be their meal and also represent the prospect of their redemption. And, to the extent that the hands show something secret to us and to the extent that we are like the audience in Carrière's *Theater of Belleville*, this communion may hold out the prospect of redemption for us, too.

But Picasso's drama of authority is not altogether like Carrière's. In fact, in March 1905, writing on the occasion of the show he had arranged for Picasso, Morice criticized some of Picasso's earlier work—work such as we have been seeing, from his so-called Blue period—by saying that they made Picasso seem to “enjoy sadness without sympathizing with it.”³⁰ Given the salvific force Morice attached to the sympathetic attention of the theater-crowd, that is a quite literally damning charge he makes. Morice means to make up for it, though, by saying that he felt Picasso's more recent paintings showed his subjects in a more hopeful light. But I think Morice saw this difference between the Blue and Rose period works because he was missing the hints in Picasso's Blue-period figures, the ones I have been describing, the subtle indications of the possibility of redemption. And missing them amounts, on the account I am putting forward, to missing the point of Picasso's Blue period works altogether. Apollinaire responded to Morice's judgment in his *Revue immoraliste* the following month, writing:

It has been said of Picasso that his works bear witness to a precocious disenchantment.
I believe the contrary.³¹

Apollinaire goes on to say that Picasso is, rather, enchanted by every aspect of humanity and specifically by its versatility. He illustrates the point with an example:

In Rome, at Carnival, there are some maskers (Harlequin, Colombine, or the *cuoca francese*) who in the morning, after an orgy sometimes ending with a murder, go to Saint Peter's to kiss the worn toe of the statue of the prince of the apostles.
These are the beings who would enchant Picasso. ³²

In fact, Apollinaire represents Picasso as just such a figure, referring to a “mysticism that in Spain lies at the bottom of the least religious souls.” Apollinaire supposes that Picasso is not religious, but

believes that he must nevertheless retain "a refined veneration for Saint Teresa or Saint Isidore" (13).

Apollinaire's point is clearest, I think by contrast with Morice's popular theater-goers. Both writers describe divided people—people who live profane lives behind masks, lives that are transformed in moments by a redemptive sentiment conveyed to them by works of art (such as a play or a statue). Whereas Carrière's audience is redeemed from the soul-numbing routine of ordinary care by their response to the power of the Passion play they witness, though, Apollinaire's revelers engage *spontaneously* in both crime and piety. I take him to mean that Picasso's people embody—they are themselves—both the oppressive force and the redemptive impulse. Rather than struggle for freedom from their circumstances or seek an external redeemer; they struggle with themselves. They represent the failure, or the incompleteness, of the authority we establish for ourselves, in ourselves. If Apollinaire's struggle with the confessional and Picasso's supposed vestigial cult of the saints are any indication, they, too, are blocked from authority.

But it is not just a matter of representing the dividedness of their subjects or of themselves. The divided impulse, the blocked or forgotten authority Apollinaire evokes, is also written into the mode of the pictures' address to their beholders. Morice admires an art that changes its audience unconditionally, completely—even if it only does so temporarily. Picasso, on the other hand, does not represent his audience; he turns his pictures outward, so to speak, to address to you their accusation (insofar as you recognize in yourself such indifference, such slavish submission to the drives and cares of ordinary, profane life) as well as their call (for sympathy, for transformation). Perhaps you will transform yourself completely like Morice's popular theater-goers and enter into a communion of sympathy with the baby in the *Two Sisters* or the child on the seashore. Or perhaps Picasso's paintings will elicit a divided response from you. By referring to such a divided response, I have the following in mind. One might compare the thing-like exteriority of the wraiths and golems in Picasso's Blue-period pictures with the thing-like quality, the objecthood, so to speak, of the painting. Or of a stage set, or a worn statue, or a mask, or a tiara, or a clay jug. An object suitable for your merely archaeological interest. On the other hand, the signs of life in those works, the as-it-were secret indications of emotional response, suggest the possibility of the beholder undergoing a transfiguration, of the kind, if not the degree, that Morice described in the popular theater-goers. These works are, one might say, in one sense counterfeit, in another divine; moreover, one might say that their divided nature is their theme, so that we are called on to acknowledge both of their aspects and

hold them together—and not to overcome or bracket (except provisionally, momentarily) one in favor of the other. Perhaps the right response to Picasso's paintings is to see after all that they are "real, pretty false gods." I feel sure Apollinaire would want to insist further that we are, too.

Notes

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1. Steven Knapp, *Literary Interest: The Limits of Anti-Formalism* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 114.
2. Knapp, 118, citing Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 17.
3. For a compact explanation of the deep conflict between those who think of "original" meaning as being the author(s)'s intention and those who think of it as being the way the text (or work, etc.) would have been understood in the context of its production, see Walter Benn Michaels, "A Defense of Old Originalism," *Western New England Law Review* 31 (2009): 21-37.
4. For an explanation of this argument, see Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "Against Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (Summer 1982), 723-42, and Knapp and Michaels, "Against Theory 2: Hermeneutics and Deconstruction," *Critical Inquiry* 14.1 (Autumn 1987): 49-68.
5. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews, 1902-1918*, ed. Leroy C. Breunig, trans. Susan Suleiman, *The Documents of 20th Century Art*, gen. ed. Robert Motherwell (New York: Viking, 1972), 9 and n. 1, 476.
6. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, pref. F.C. Burkitt

(New York: Macmillan, 1948), 401.

7. Lucien Laberthonnière, "Dogme et théologie," *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* 5 (1908), 511; cited in Gabriel Daly, O.S.A., "Theological and Philosophical Modernism" in Derrell Jodock, ed., *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96.
8. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Zone," trans. Roger Shattuck, in *The Yale Anthology of Twentieth-Century French Poetry*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 7.
9. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Book on Adler*, ed., trans., intro. and notes by Howard H. Hong and Edna H. Hong, *Kierkegaard's Writings*, XXIV (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): The whole book is basically an ethical inquiry into the concept of a revelation, into what it means to be called by a revelation, into how the one who has had a revelation relates himself to the human race, to the universal, and the rest of us to him, into the confusion the concept of a revelation suffers in our confused age. Or, what amounts to the same thing, the whole book is basically an inquiry into the concept of authority, what it means to have divine authority, into the confusion, so that the concept of authority has been completely forgotten in our confused age. ("Editor's Preface," 3-4) See also Stanley Cavell, "Kierkegaard's *On Authority and Revelation*" in *Must we mean what we say?*, 164 and passim. My understanding of Kierkegaard's study of Adler proceeds largely from my reading of Cavell's essay.
10. I'd like to thank Keith Moxey for sharing with me his "Mimesis and Iconoclasm," *Art History* 32.1 (February 2009): 52-77, and Nanette Salomon for recommending several readings to my attention, including John Roger Decker, "The Technology of Salvation and the Art of Geergten tot Sint Jans: Manifestations of Soteriology in Material Culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004).
11. Charles Morice, *Le Christ de Carrière* (Paris: Edition de la Libre Esthétique, 1899), 16-17. Les mères qu'il nous montre à leur tendresse passionnée mêlent souvent une sauvagerie d'amour qui fait songer à l'ardeur même de la terre dans ses invincibles expansions d'avril. On sent que, pour lui, les lignes sont visibles, à

travers la mystérieuse atmosphère de la vie, qui rejoignent entre eux les êtres; pour lui, l'arabesque n'est pas interrompue qui fait des membres d'une famille un être unique, un tout harmonieux. On sent que ces bras maternels, où les enfants sont si étroitement serrés, ne dénoueront jamais complètement leur étreinte. Je sais telle mère endormie, tenant son enfant dans ses bras; le sommeil n'a pas effacé des traits la pensée elle-même, la préoccupation vigilante, l'inquiétude; le sentiment s'y est fixé dans comme une attente du réveil qui ne tardera pas,—et la main qui tient le petit corps serré ne s'est pas endormie. L'enfant reste corporellement uni à la mère; il vient d'elle comme elle va à lui et la ligne des deux formes est unique; unique aussi la ligne des pensées et des sentiments à travers les divers états de veille et de sommeil, d'angoisse ou d'apaisement.—L'artiste a-t-il voulu précisément marquer sur ce visage les sollicitudes maternelles, la terreur constante et instante des mille dangers qui menacent le petit être? Elle y est, cette sollicitude, cette terreur et avec bien d'autres secrètes complications, avec tout ce qui échappe à l'analyse, avec l'indécomposable synthèse de toute la vie elle-même, avec les graves et les légères, avec les prostrantes et les consolantes péripéties qui concertent ce drame religieux de la Maternité. *Religieux*, ai-je dit. Oui, et inévitablement nous sommes amenés à préférer ce mot, à propos de l'art de Carrière. Les maternités qu'il retrace avec tant d'amour et de vénération ont tout l'auguste caractère des saintes familles traditionnelles.

12. Morice 1899, 18-19. Je vois bien qu'un tel art est religieux. Je ne vois pas qu'il soit chrétien. Et quelle est donc sa religion?—La Religion de la Vie—ou, si vous préférez, le culte de l'humanité, dans l'Infini.

13. Morice 1899, 23. Ce Christ est humain, et cette femme qui le pleure n'a pas de surhumains recours... Je me trompe: il est divin, de toute la beauté de son sacrifice. Elle est divine aussi, parce que sa douleur est sans bornes.—Cet homme n'est pas un malfaiteur, son visage est noble et la couronne d'épines atteste sa royauté. C'est un sacrifié. Celle qui pleure sur lui pleure sur une victime, non pas sur un coupable.—Quoi! Un innocent sacrifié! Oui, et il célèbre et consacre par sa mort volontaire cette loi éternelle de la nécessité des sacrifices purs.—Ah! je veux bien que ce tableau soit un tableau d'église: le tableau votif de l'église future où l'humanité célébra les

rites du culte de l'idéal, ce fond immuable, éternel, de toutes les changeantes religions. Et cette église, quelle sera-t-elle?

14. Pope Saint Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis: Encyclical of Pope Pius X on the Doctrines of the Modernists, September 8, 1907* in *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. III 1903-1939, ed. Claudia Carlen (Raleigh, NC: McGrath, 1981), 73-74, § 8.

15. Morice 1899, 23-24. Je me rappelle, devant celui-ci, un autre tableau de Carrière: ce *Théâtre populaire*, exposé au Champ-de-Mars, il y a quatre ans, et qu'on vit à Bruxelles deux années plus tard.—Le théâtre, dans les faubourgs, est un des lieux du monde où l'on puisse le mieux étudier sur les visages l'expression des émotions.— On ricane souvent, dans les théâtres mondains, et quelquefois on pleurniche; mais dans le faubourg ouvrier on rit et on pleure franchement. Avec le rideau qui se lève, le visage du spectateur naïf se dépouille des grimaces empruntées; tout à l'heure, c'était un employé, un commis, et la livrée de son métier infligeait à sa physionomie et à son attitude quelque chose de conventionnel. Mais le drame commence, et, devant ce débat d'amour et de haine, le commis et l'employé sont devenus des hommes. Peu importe, n'est-ce pas, la valeur littéraire de la pièce; les gens qui sont là n'y entendent point malice, et c'est de la Vie qu'il s'agit pour eux, de la Vie et de la Mort. C'est dans sa propre âme, exaltée par un instant d'héroïsme ou de douleur (d'abnégation personnelle aussi, car elle ne craint point pour elle-même), que cette foule humaine regarde. Tout à l'heure, quand le rideau sera retombé sur la scène, banalités et vulgarités retomberont aussi sur cette âme. Mais maintenant les attitudes ont une singulière noblesse. Il y a de ces corps, demi-penchés sur le gouffre invisible de la scène, qui semblent des cariatides antiques supportant un poids vénérable avec leurs mains crispées aux balustres.

16. Morice's reading of Carrière clearly engages absorptive themes such as those Michael Fried has traced, beginning with his *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980). This is not the proper place to work out the relation of absorptive motifs to the issue of authority, but I believe there is such a meaningful relation.

17. Morice 1899, 24. Et que voit-elle donc, cette foule, sur cette scène, ou plutôt dans son âme? Et que parlais-je, tout à l'heure, de la valeur littéraire de la pièce? Il est vrai, jusqu'ici le Peintre nous

avait caché le drame. Mais enfin, le voici! C'est, n'en doutez pas, ce dialogue sublime du dévouement héroïque et de la douleur inconsolable,—c'est ce Christ en croix, ce Christ humain, plus grand qu'un Dieu! Car le Dieu sait qu'en mourant il sauve le monde, et l'homme n'a pas de certitude. Sa dernière pensée, son affreuse dernière pensée a été, peut-être, une conviction, désespérée de l'inutilité de son sacrifice. Voilà—c'est la tragédie suprême de notre destinée—ce que cette foule regard, et voilà pourquoi cette foule est si grande. Elle participe de ses larmes à la sanglante effusion d'un holocauste qui est aussi une apothéose, et elle s'élève au-dessus d'elle-même de par la noblesse que lui confère l'intensité du drame. Elle a cédé au conseil du poète, et de toutes ces âmes une âme, une conscience collective s'est formée, qui s'exalte et s'extasie, avec le douloureux héros, à la joie du sacrifice.

18. Letter from Eugène Carrière to Charles Morice, dated September 3, 1899, Charles Morice archives, Temple University, box 3, folder 8. On Carrière's paintings, and Morice's remarks on them, see *Eugène Carrière: 1849-1906* (exh. cat., Musées de Strasbourg, Ancienne Douane, Strasbourg, October 19, 1996-February 9, 1997), 134, 149.

19. It makes sense to place these pictures in a kind of subgenre, well represented among Catalan modernists, of representations of poverty and injustice. See, for instance, Pool, n.p., remarks accompanying figs. 53-84 and passim, and Patricia Leighton, *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). And I am sure the works of artists like Isidre Nonell form an important background, or one of them, against which Picasso meant his paintings to be seen. But Picasso's major paintings of the early years of the twentieth century have more to say, too. This is probably also the best place to point out that, although I'll use the terms "Blue Period" and "Rose Period" in referring to Picasso's early work, I don't find the terms very helpful. In fact, I feel they misidentify the important features of Picasso's early work (the dominant colors aren't the keys to understanding these works) and tempt one to see the discontinuity between the two phases as absolute. Still, and partly because one matter at issue between Morice and Apollinaire is how to describe the difference between the two sets of pictures, I'll use the terms in this essay. I urge the reader not to take them too seriously.

20. See Baldassari, "Picasso 1901-1906," as below.

21. This is also suggested in at least one preparatory drawing.
22. Letter to Max Jacob, [July] 1902, reproduced and transcribed in "La correspondance Max Jacob – Picasso," *Max Jacob et Picasso* (ex. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper and Musée Picasso, Paris, 1994), 9.
23. See John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1881-1906*, with the collaboration of Marilyn McCully (New York: Random House, 1991), 222-24. Anne Baldassari discusses possible sources for the picture that would confirm either its connection with the Visitation or with sacred (and specifically Mariological) subject-matter generally. She notes the suggestion (which she attributes to both Pierre Daix and John Richardson) that *Two Sisters* is based on an El Greco *Visitation* (ca. 1613-14, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, Washington, DC) that Picasso could plausibly have seen. She also points out similarities to two paintings by Domenico Ghirlandaio that are in Picasso's collection of photographic reproductions: the *Birth of St. John the Baptist* in the Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, and Ghirlandaio's own *Visitation*. Baldassari claims that these pictures, and a less well known and widely reproduced work of which Picasso owned a photograph, El Greco's *Christ Bidding His Mother Farewell* (now in the Museo de Santa Cruz) that may also offer a direct source of the *Two Sisters*, are part of a diffuse network of pictorial sources that pop up in mixed parts throughout the works of the so-called Blue Period. The sources Baldassari discusses are sometimes provocative and sometimes compelling, and taken together and in combination with other writers' parallel claims leave little doubt that sacred subjects are intended resonances for Picasso's work of this period. See Anne Baldassari, "Picasso 1901-1906: Painting in the Mirror of the Photograph" in Dorothy Kosinski, *The Artist and the Camera: Degas to Picasso* (ex. cat., Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas/Yale University Press, 1999), 297-99 and passim. Elizabeth Cowling offers a nice review of the parallels between Picasso's paintings of this period and religious works. She notes Picasso's proximity to a lively Catholic revival and represents his rejection of Catholicism as ambivalent (as does Apollinaire). See Cowling, *Picasso: Style and Meaning* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 98-99.
24. 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. I thank Harry Cooper for pointing out to me the similarity of the bowl and the eye socket.

26. Meyer Schapiro notes a similar parallel between the poses of two figures who perform very different activities. See his remarks on the drawing for *Woman with a Fan* (1905; Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College) and its relation to *La Toilette* (1906; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, N.Y.) in his "Picasso's *Woman with a Fan*: On Transformation and Self-Transformation" in *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: George Braziller, 1979), 115-16. Schapiro's point is that the gestures Picasso's figures perform, and the tensions they open up between touching and seeing, reveal them as "projection[s] of a duality in the artist's self" (116) that is repeatedly embodied in "a vigorous, urgent, unrelaxing, imaginative play of two great powers: seeing and manipulation, the strong forces of the eye and the hand, both demonically alert, the one to singularities and concurrences of form in the work of art, and the other to the potentialities of the instruments and the materials as thoroughly plastic and submissive—the grounds of a perpetual passage from the natural to the artistic and from the artistic to the natural" (117). He also sees this duality in terms that foreshadow my argument, if somewhat vaguely, when he contrasts the "self-binding posture" of Picasso in a Man Ray photograph of 1935 (which he compares to closed-up figures of the Blue Period) with the "penetrating eyes and with the strong hands of a preternatural power of manipulation" (118). I hesitate to follow Schapiro in seeing such figures as generally allegorizing the painter's work (116) or to accept at face value his characterization of the difference between poses of the "Blue" and "Rose" Periods (114).

27. Note that the pose of the boy repeats in some respects that of another painting, which may be earlier and may even have been included in the 1902 show Morice reviewed. See Pierre Daix and Georges Boudaille with Joan Rossalet, *Picasso: The Blue and Rose Periods*, second ed., trans. Phoebe Pool (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1967), 206 and 212, cat. No. VII. 21.

28. Referring to the blind man's gesture, Brigitte Léal says: "This liturgical gesture comes close to the religious compositions of Spain's Golden Age in the seventeenth century, such as Velázquez's *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*." (See Brigitte Léal, Christine Piot,

Marie-Laure Bernadac, *The Ultimate Picasso*, pref. Jean Leymarie, trans. Molly Stevens and Marjolijn de Jager [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000], 60.) I think the boy's outstretched hand also bears a striking resemblance—both in its position and in its relation to the body of his adult companion—to Christ's hand in El Greco's *St. Joseph with the Christ Child* (ca. 1597-99; Capilla de San José, Toledo, Spain), which Ronald Johnson says Picasso knew, at least by 1906. (See Ron Johnson, "Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' and the Theatre of the Absurd," *Arts Magazine* 55.2 [October 1980], 107.)

29. In this, Picasso's work of this period bears a strong resemblance to Gauguin's, whom he admired and whose work he knew. On this topic, see Debora Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000). As Silverman explains, building on brief remarks by Reinhold Heller, Gauguin used thin, matte paint surfaces to picture a spiritualized reality—"to weaken materiality of its hold on consciousness, to invert outer and inner reality, and to repudiate the penetrative, entangling encounter with the embedded stuffs of nature in favor of a transcendent, divinized abstraction" (112). See also Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1985), esp. 148-49.

30. Charles Morice, "Art moderne: Exposition d'oeuvres de MM. Trachsel, Gérardin, Picasso (Galeries Serrurier, 37, boulevard Haussmann)," in Pierre Daix, Georges Boudaille, *Picasso: 1900-1906*, 335; originally published in the *Mercure de France* (15 mars 1905). My translation.

31. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Picasso, peintre et dessinateur (Galeries Serrurier)," in Daix and Boudaille, 335; originally published in *La Revue immoraliste* (avril 1905). My translation.

32. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Picasso, Painter and Draftsman" in Apollinaire 1972, 13.