Francis Picabia: The *Espagnoles*

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Abstract

Francis Picabia's *Espagnoles* – kitsch paintings of Spanish women in folkloric costume – are arguably the most maligned and least understood aspect of his practice. Historically, the scholarship has all but ignored these paintings, while more recent surveys have struggled to account for them.

'Francis Picabia: The *Espagnoles*' provides the first dedicated account of these paintings. It asks how these nominally reactionary paintings relate to Picabia's avant-garde works; what are their enabling sources and evolving significations; and how do they intersect with a broader cultural politics, particularly the rising nationalism of the French Return to Order and the Spanish Civil War. Written from the perspective of the social history of art, it foregrounds a contextual reading of the *Espagnoles* while remaining attentive to their formal particularities. New material and discursive sources are uncovered, revealing Picabia's reliance on postcard iconography, and his ambivalent engagement with Spanish stereotypes, especially the Carmen myth. Picabia's Franco-Hispanic heritage is elaborated, as is his dialogue with Duchamp around the themes of Catholicism and the Bride. Dominant accounts of Picabia's Transparencies are challenged, and a new interpretation of the significant, but under-considered, painting *The Spanish Revolution* given.

The thesis concludes that the *Espagnoles* are not a mere side-line but an integral part of Picabia's practice. By drawing out the formal and thematic links between Picabia's radical Dada machine portraits and his *Espagnoles,* it becomes apparent that these bodies of work are less antithetical than has been assumed, the latter providing an indispensable supplement to the former.

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Illustrations appear in a second, separate volume.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Sections of this thesis have previously been published. Chapter 2 was published in nearly identical form as “The Blood of France: Joan of Arc and Francis Picabia’s La Sainte-Vierge” in *Dada/Surrealism* no. 22 (2018). Elements of the Introduction and Chapter 3 appeared in revised form as “Francis Picabia es un Espagnol!” in Musée Gernet, *Picasso Picabia: La peinture au défi,* edited by Aurélie Verdier (Paris: Somogy éditions d’art, 2018), Exhibition catalogue: 47-53.

Preface

In order to improve readability, paintings will be referred to by their conventional English titles whenever possible. The notable exception to this rule is the term *Espagnoles*, which is used as the collective noun for Picabia's pictures of Spanish women. There are two reasons for this exemption. Firstly, *Espagnoles* is the commonly accepted term for these paintings within Anglophone scholarship. Secondly, its retention helps subtly preserve the fact that we are dealing with French representations of Spanish women.

Given the preservation of the plural *Espagnoles*, individual paintings titled *Espagnole* will also be called as such. However, when paintings have longer titles, *Espagnole* will be changed to *Spanish Woman* to avoid awkward, compound, bi-lingual titled. For example, *Espagnole, châle bleu* will be referred to as *Spanish Women with Blue Shawl*.

A few other paintings will also be referred to by their French titles. *Novia* and *Flamenca* are more commonly known by their original French titles than their English translations, and I will follow the convention of leaving them untranslated. French titles will also be used when no standard translation is available, or when some distinction or connotation suggested by the original would be lost.

Introduction: Dada looks Spanish

'DADA has melancholic fingers and looks Spanish'.

Francis Picabia, 1920.[1]

At the height of his lifetime notoriety, the avant-garde artist Francis Picabia suddenly began exhibiting *Espagnoles* – kitsch images of Spanish women in folkloric costume. Complete with shawls, kiss curls and beauty spots, these painted señoritas catalogue and perpetuate stereotypical ideas of Spain.

Picabia produced these clichéd *Espagnoles* intermittently throughout his career. Over a hundred of them pepper his oeuvre. The earliest examples are all faux naivety and folksy charm (fig.1). Subsequent versions are more refined (fig.2). Executed in watercolour, the medium's delicacy only amplifies the *Espagnoles'* mawkish appeal. Picabia produced this 'classic' type of *Espagnole* in considerable numbers but in limited variations, his serial, quasi-mechanical production intensifying their connotations of industrially churned out kitsch (figs.3-6). Finally, Picabia turned to oils, painting *Espagnoles* with a technique calculated to be even more abhorrent than the subject matter.

Picabia first exhibited the *Espagnoles* in the context of Paris Dada. Debuting them at the Galerie la Cible in December 1920, Picabia hung *Espagnoles* alongside examples of his recent Dada machine paintings.[2] 'There are people

[1] Francis Picabia, 'Philosophical Dada' in Francis Picabia, *I am a Beautiful Monster: Poetry, Prose and Provocation*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2007), 214. This text originally appeared in *Littérature* (13 May 1920), and had previously been recited during the Dada performance at the Université populaire de Faubourg (19 February 1920).

[2] Francis Picabia, Galerie la Cible (also known as the Povolovzky), Paris, 10-25 December 1920. Judging from the catalogue, Picabia showed eleven Spanish women, several Dada works and some old Impressionist canvases; see Marie de La Hire, *Francis Picabia* (Paris: Galerie la Cible, 1920). The catalogue list is also reprinted in Maria Lluïsa Borràs, *Picabia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 214, n.66.

who do not like machines', he remarked by way of an explanation. 'I offer them *Espagnoles*'.[3]

Today, the machines are overwhelmingly preferred. The mechanomorphs are now canonical, while the *Espagnoles* remain a marginal presence, even within the specialist scholarship. The ubiquity of Hispanic motifs within Picabia's work is routinely noted but rarely discussed. A full review of the literature will be given in the following chapter. For now, it will suffice to note that only one scholar has deemed these paintings sufficiently interesting to write about them in any depth.

This longstanding neglect can be traced back to the *Espagnoles*' initial reception. Neither the Galerie la Cible exhibition nor the *Espagnoles* were well received. As Man Ray later recollected, Picabia's new direction 'was not taken seriously by the critics, while the avant-garde considered his latest developments rather superficial – a let-down from his earlier Dada provocations'.[4] Picabia seemed to concur: 'it's a bit ridiculous to paint *Espagnoles* and even more to exhibit them', he gleefully conceded.[5]

Money, Money, Money

The intervening years have done little to ameliorate this initial hostile assessment. Animosity, however, has gradually given way to confusion. Writing in Dada's centenary year, Anne Umland, the curator of MoMA's recent

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[3] 'il y des gens qui n'aiment pas les machines: je leur propose des Espagnoles' Roger Vitrac, "Interview de Francis Picabia", *Journal du people*, 9 June 1923 cited in *Francis Picabia: Singulier Idéal* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la Ville Paris, 2002), Exhibition catalogue, 223.

[4] Man Ray, *Self Portrait: Man Ray* (Boston: Little Brown, 1999), 159. Man Ray is actually discussing a more radical over-painted *Espagnole* from the Transparency series.

[5] '*C'est un peu ridicule de piendre des Espagnoles, et plus encore de les exposer*'. Picabia, *L'Ére nouvelle* (10 May 1923), cited in *Singulier Idéal,* 223*.* Picabia goes on to defend the *Espagnoles,* saying that he 'finds these women beautiful', and, having no speciality as a painter, 'is not afraid to compromise himself vis-à-vis the imbeciles'.

Picabia retrospective *Our Heads are Round so our Thoughts can Change Direction* (2016-17), was openly puzzled by these paintings. Understandably struggling to reconcile the apparently reactionary *Espagnoles* with the radical machine portraits, her catalogue essay excuses them as the contingent product of financial necessity.[6] This explanation is an old one. First proposed by art historians in the 1960s, it has gone unchallenged ever since.[7] Fiscal motivation is unlikely, though. Picabia was hardly destitute. Heir to a fortune, his personal wealth seems to negate in advance the charge of financial opportunism. Besides, there is little evidence that these paintings were particularly lucrative for him.[8]

Even if the *Espagnoles* could be shown to have sold in great number, economics cannot account for the one Picabia hung in his home. This placement speaks of a personal rather than financial investment in these images. Nor can money explain the Hispanic figures which adorn Picabia's

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[6] Anne Umland, "Francis Picabia: An Introduction" in *Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round So Our Thoughts Can Change Direction,* ed. Anne Umland and Cathérine Hug (New York and Zurich: The Museum of Modern Art and the Kuntsthaus, 2016), Exhibition catalogue, 15.

[7] Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et* 391, *Vol. 2* (Nice: Centre du XX Siècle, 1982), 126; Marc le Bot, *Francis Picabia et la crise des valeurs figuratives* (Paris: Éditions Klincksiek, 1968), 177-179.

[8] In March 1926, Picabia auctioned off several paintings including *Spanish Woman with Brown Comb* (c.1922-24), which sold for 4,700 francs. The esteemed authors of the Picabia catalogue raisonné take this as 'testimony to the early popularity of Picabia's stereotypical "Spanish Women"'. This sale, though, appears to be an anomaly. At least five other *Espagnoles* failed to sell. And the next day, Marcel Duchamp, who helped organise the auction, wrote to the collector Jacques Doucet trying to offload them at 2,000 francs each. Consulting the catalogues for Picabia's exhibitions in these years, the same *Espagnoles* reappear in several shows, a reasonable sign that they remained unsold and in Picabia's possession. Stuck with these works, Picabia eventually overpainted them, transforming them into the first of his Transparencies. See William Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Volume II, 1915-1927* (New Haven and London: Mercartorfonds, 2017), 371; Marcel Duchamp, *Affectionately, Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk (Ghent: Ludion Press, 2000), 154-55. A catalogue list for the auction can be found in Borràs, *Picabia*, 295, n.9.

private correspondence (figs.7-8).[9] Such images operate within the circuits of homosocial, not economic, exchange. A contemporary Don Juan, Picabia identified with Spain, and his letter-drawings signal this identification to his friends. The monetary argument, then, is not only unconvincing but unrevealing. It tells us nothing about the formal, historical, or iconographical substance of the paintings themselves. Instead of explaining the *Espagnoles*, it merely explains them away, inadvertently constructing them as unworthy of serious attention.

The Return to Order

A secondary objection to the *Espagnoles* might be that they are symptomatic of Picabia's alleged capitulation to the Return to Order, the period of vituperative nationalism and cultural conservatism that followed the First World War.[10] While such charges have not been directly levelled at the *Espagnoles*, this is a logical extension of the general condemnation of Picabia's interwar work, which is accused of being formally regressive and politically reactionary. A fuller rehearsal of the objections to Picabia's interwar realism will again be provided in the literature review. Currently, it will suffice to note that I am highly sceptical of such arguments, which seem to be premised on the dubious

[9] Between 1917 and 1923, Picabia sent letters decorated with Spanish figures to Guillaume Apollinaire, Alfred Stieglitz, André Breton and Jean Crotti. Two other illustrated letters were sent to unknown recipients, one of whom is assumed to be Suzanne Duchamp, the other Breton. These letters are reproduced in Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 234-235; 315; 370. Another letter to Breton, depicting the bullfighter Joselito, held in private collection, has recently come to light. I am grateful to Aurélie Verdier for bringing it to my attention.

[10] The classic accounts of the Return to Order are Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) and Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalga: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,1995). Although focused on the German context, Devin Fore's *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: MIT Press, 2012) provides a compelling revisionist account of the phenomena.

assumption that art and politics run like train tracks, synchronously and parallel. History is rarely this neat and an overly direct correlation of art and politics risks negating both categories by ignoring the relative autonomy of both. As will be made explicit later, the *Espagnoles* do not constitute a first compromising step on the road to artistic perdition nor do they represent some comfortable accommodation with the forces of cultural reaction.

The story of Picabia's pre-war avant-gardism and post-war reaction is a simplified fiction. By mixing *Espagnoles* and mechanomorphs at the Galerie la Cible gallery, Picabia thumbed his nose at the Return to Order as much as Dada. Refusing to have his identity defined by his allegiance to a particular style, Picabia resisted the political-aesthetic blackmail of the period, declining to align himself either with the progressive vision of Dada and later Surrealism laid out by André Breton or with the chauvinistic concepts of national style underpinning the French neo-classical revival. Picabia's provocative eclecticism – no doubt a sign of his insincerity to those enamoured with narratives of coherent formal progress and the desire to see a single unique style linked to an exclusive authorial voice – was always more a deliberate strategy than a sign of uncertainty.[11] His antagonistic juxtaposition of styles was not some facile act of willed incongruity. Nor is it indicative of cynical equivocating with regards to the new aesthetic orthodoxy of the Return to Order.

Selective Blindness

Nonetheless, the tandem production of *Espagnoles* alongside other bodies of work has contributed to their current standing. Today, the *Espagnoles* appear as a peripheral activity tangential to Picabia's main career. Studies that focus

[11] This strategy extended to the guest list. Picabia invited his high-society friends as well as his artistic coterie. Jean Cocteau was also invited, seemingly with the express intent of annoying Breton. For an account of the opening night, see Michel Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2009), 165-8. A contemporary report from *Comoedia* (12 Dec 1920) is reproduced in Borràs, *Picabia*, 215, n.68.

on specific periods of Picabia's work, most notably his Dada years, habitually exclude the *Espagnoles*, which seem to fall outside of their nominal remit. The two styles, though, are historically commensurate. Shown side-by-side at the Galerie la Cible, the *Espagnoles* first appear in the context of Dada. Moreover, Dada itself is said to, 'looks Spanish'.[12]

Conversely, monographic retrospectives and surveys that subdivide Picabia's career into a succession of period styles – Impressionism, Cubism, Dada, Monsters, Transparencies, kitsch figuration, late abstraction – also struggle to account for the *Espagnoles.* Produced concomitantly with these other groups of paintings and subject to limited variation in appearance, the *Espagnoles* are not easily situated within a developmental narrative premised on formal evolution. Not that Picabia would care. 'All paintings', he claimed, 'must be completely absurd and useless, especially with regard to the wonderful evolution of art'.[13]

A formalist framework has the added drawback of emphasising stylistic rupture at the expense of thematic continuity. Hispanic references, though, are discernable at every stage of Picabia's career. As a young artist, he sketched the Spanish town of Fuenterrabía (1907). He titled a major cubist painting *Procession of Seville* (1912) and a minor Dada drawing *Flamenca* (1917). Motifs from Catalan frescos populate the Transparencies of the late 1920s, while a crucial figure painting of the 1930s, *The Spanish Revolution* (1937) responds to the Spanish Civil War. Even Picabia's penultimate canvas, the abstract painting *The Earth is Round* (1951), derives from a medieval Spanish manuscript.[14] Seen from this perspective, the *Espagnoles* are not simply an enduring part of Picabia's practise but an integral one, tied to a longstanding

[12] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 214. No doubt this description is intended as a thinly veiled self-portrait, but it also serves to tacitly link the *Espagnoles* and Dada.

[13] Picabia to Christine Boumeester, September, 1947 cited by Arnauld Pierre, "The Sacrilege of Points: Francis Picabia's Quasi-monochromes and the Return of Dada" in *Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round*, 266.

[14] Candace Clements, "Ce que j'aime peindre! Retour sur les dernières oeuvres Picabia", *Les Cahiers du MNAM* 124 (Summer 2013): 84-99.

current within his work. A reappraisal of the *Espagnoles* will, therefore, have reciprocal implications for an understanding of Picabia's practice as a whole. Naturally, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the entirety of Picabia's oeuvre or even all of his Spanish themed paintings. However, I will touch on most of the paintings mentioned above. Some, such as the Transparencies and *The Spanish Revolution,* will be addressed at length.

At best, the marginalisation of the *Espagnoles* outlined in the preceding paragraphs is the unfortunate result of pragmatic necessity: an inevitable consequence of a real need to constrain research projects and present neatly sequenced exhibitions. More likely, though, is that there is something structural to this persistent exclusion. Only by exorcising the *Espagnoles* contaminating presence could the myth of Picabia the uncompromising Dada nihilist be constructed and preserved. Today, however, this iconoclast is an orthodox figure, long assimilated to the canon. A thirty-year-old observation by Sarah Wilson still stands: 'it is the dialectical rather than the Dadaist Picabia, the painter of both machines and Spanish girls, who perplexed and continues to perplex his critics'.[15]

The ongoing inability to grasp these two strands simultaneously is no doubt a result of the normative binaries informing conceptualisations of modernism. My opening remarks presented the *Espagnoles* and the machines within the familiar antithesis of avant-garde and kitsch. This expediency is problematic, though.[16] Such an opposition contains and conceals a number of other

[15] Sarah Wilson, "The Late Picabia: Iconoclast and Saint" in *Francis Picabia 1879-1953* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, 1988), Exhibition catalogue, 29.

[16] Although the terms 'avant-garde' and 'kitsch' have independent origins and histories they are now structurally related concepts. Despite a tendency to hypostatise the pair as opposites, no rigid distinction can be made between them. The contents and boundaries of both categories are subject to constant historical negotiation. As Thomas Crow and others have argued, avant-garde artists have repeatedly drawn on the images and techniques of mass culture, cinema and tourism to power their formal innovations, while the culture industries have absorbed the lessons of the avant-gardes. Each side dialectically reinvigorating itself through the incorporation of its opposite. Conversely, formalist prohibitions, such as Clement

hierarchical pairings that reinforce the negative assessment of the *Espagnoles*. Originality and seriality, high art and low culture are only the most obvious of these binaries. Cosmopolitan and provincial could also be added to the list. For in addition to appearing pictorially retrograde, the *Espagnoles* are also wilfully parochial.

As a Cubist, Picabia spoke of abstraction as a quasi-universal language. As a Dadaist, he was a lynchpin in a network of international artists. The diagrammatic aesthetic associated with his Dada work seems at once impersonal and transnational. New York is the subject of the series of abstract watercolours he produced in 1913. Americanisation is one of a constellation of themes associated with his subsequent machine paintings. Yet by 1920, Picabia no longer looks across the Atlantic but downwards towards Spain. A reconsideration of the *Espagnoles*, therefore, entails not only scepticism of some of modernism's structural categories but also its dominant cartography. Picabia's Dada work is typically situated within transatlantic dialogue taking place between Paris and New York. The *Espagnoles* suggest another axis. They indicate the importance of an alternative vertical geography, one orientated towards Mediterranean Spain.

Many artists associated with the figurative turn of the 1920s looked to the Mediterranean at this point. Their gaze, though, is temporal more than spatial. Looking backwards, rather than outwards, they were drawn to the Mediterranean as the site of Europe's historic centre. Picasso's neo-classical figures, for example, populate a composite Arcadia, part ancient Greece, part ancient Rome. The *Espagnoles* do something different. They are nationally specific, not pan-regional. Nor do they re-engage with the classical tradition in the same laudatory way. Where others dress their figures in loincloths and togas, Picabia wraps his in Spanish shawls. The reason for this, I will argue,

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Greenberg's, which were designed to shore up the purity of the medium, paradoxically result in a self-defeating dialectic. The formal quickly became formulaic, a hallmark of the very kitsch it was meant to avoid. See Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), Chapter 1.

is that it was not the general humanist turn to figuration that led Picabia to the Spanish women but rather his own need to deal with Spanishness that led him back to figuration. In order to demonstrate this, it is necessary to consider Picabia's subject position in more detail.

Outlining something of Picabia's biography will provide some necessary background information, fleshing out the historical conjecture within which I will situate the *Espagnoles*. Throughout the thesis, I favour a contextual reading of these paintings, locating them against a backdrop of rising nationalism in France and later the Civil War in Spain. An understanding of Picabia's subject position is therefore useful, in as much as it helps reveal how the *Espagnoles* intersect and come into conflict with the discursive construction of French modernism, French Nationalism and Spanish identity.

'Picabia is a Spaniard!'

'Francis Picabia must now be at the front as a painter; there is no doubt that he will capture unforgettably the authentic face of war.'

Guillaume Apollinaire, 1 April 1915.[17]

Apollinaire is making an April fool's joke.[18] Picabia, famously, never fought in World War I. The expectation that every man should do his duty was an anathema to the artist who had no intention of wagering his life for his country,

[17] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews, 1902-1918* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 440.

[18] Apollinaire and Picabia were close friends, but their relationship soured over their antithetical attitudes to the war. On the productive aspects of their friendship, see Phillipe Dagen, "'C'est de moi qu'il s'agit' Picabia, Picasso and Apollinaire 1907-1914" in *Picasso Picabia: La peinture au défi*, ed. Aurélie Verdier (Paris: Somogy éditions, 2018), Exhibition catalogue, 28-37; Roger Rothman, "Modernist Melancholy: Guillaume Apollinaire and Francis Picabia after 1912", *French Cultural Studies* 20, no1 (2009), 5-26.; Katia Samaltanos, *Apollinaire: Catalyst for Primitivism, Picabia, and Duchamp* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981).

France. Deserting the army at the first opportunity, Picabia sat out the war. Dividing his time between Barcelona and New York, the artist became a 'globetrotter in the middle of a global war'.[19]

Before abandoning his post, though, Picabia briefly worked as a military chauffeur. The artist and the general he drove did not get on. Picabia's persistent insubordination and disregard for protocol infuriated his superior. A period photograph records a brooding Picabia (fig.9). Seated amongst his fellow soldiers he is the only man not wearing his regulation cap. Picabia did not merely go about hatless, though. Instead, he claims to have embellished his uniform with a toreador's hat.[20]

As Nancy Ring explains, this unconventional addition to his military fatigues signified three things: it connoted an antiquated model of individualised combat rendered obsolete in the era of industrialised slaughter; it critically evoked Spanish neutrality at a time of compulsory national service in France; and, most significantly, it visually asserted Picabia's Spanish heritage.[21] For, although born and raised in France, the paternal side of Picabia's family were of Spanish descent.[22] Picabia's mother was French but his father was born in Cuba while it was still Spanish territory, and, depending on the source, the painter was entitled to either Spanish or Cuban citizenship.[23] Picabia's

[19] Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), 71.

[20] I take this anecdote from Nancy Ring, *New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp in America, 1913-1921* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI dissertation services, 1998), 20-21. Ring attributes the story to Picabia's daughter Jeannine Bailly-Cowell, citing Camfield's 1964 PhD as the source. I have been unable to consult this thesis and when I asked Camfield about it he had no recollection of the anecdote. Almost certainly Picabia invented the story. The validity of the tale is unimportant, though. Even as a fabrication it is revealing.

[21] Ring, *New York Dada*, 20-21.

[22] The most up-to-date discussion of Picabia's family origins is William Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Volume I*,*1898-1914* (New Haven and London: Mercartorfonds, 2014), 36-38.

[23] Buffet-Picabia states that her husband was entitled to Cuban citizenship. Borràs, however, claims the artist was entitled to Spanish citizenship. See Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Some

Hispanicising hat, Ring therefore concludes, served to emphasise 'his Spanish ancestry over his French citizenship'.[24]

Given Picabia's disregard for the obligations of national service, his hostility to all forms of patriotism, and his failure to take up the foreign citizenship available to him, it is unlikely that his ancestral homeland commanded much genuine allegiance. Ring's observations are pertinent, but Picabia's sartorial gesture has an inbuilt ambiguity. For, if clothing can play a performative role in the self-construction of an identity, it cannot ontologically ground one. Today's clothes are tomorrow's laundry, and Picabia's hat is merely the disposable projection of an identity.

Speaking of clothing, Picabia declared that 'if you don't want dirty ideas you should change them like your shirts'.[25] There can be little doubt he considered national allegiance one such idea. Writing in 1920, he penned a thinly veiled defence of his war avoidance. In a revealing paragraph, he contrasts the actions of Apollinaire, a Polish citizen who voluntarily fought for France, to those of the proto-Dadaist Arthur Cravan, who, like himself, sat out the war in Barcelona and New York.

> To dupe = Guillaume Apollinaire. I much prefer Arthur Cravan who toured the world during war perpetually obliged to change nationality in order to escape from human stupidity. Arthur Cravan disguised himself as a soldier in order not to be a soldier; he did as all our friends

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Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp" in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Havard University, 1988), 258; and Borràs, "Picabia, el Español", 37.

[24] Ring, *New York Dada*, 21.

[25] Picabia, *Funny Guy Handbill* (Paris, 1921) (fig.10). An English version can be found in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster* 279. André Breton later modified Picabia's aphorism, writing 'I wish I could change my sex as I change my shirt' in his introduction to Man Ray's booklet *La photographie n'est pas l'art* (1937). Man Ray subsequently cited Breton in his article 'Photography is not Art' (1943), which is reproduced in *Man Ray: Writings on Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2016), 145.

> do who disguise themselves as honest men in order not to be honest men.[26]

From Picabia's perspective, Cravan is lying with good faith. His dishonesty serves his own best interest. Apollinaire, meanwhile, risks his life for reified abstractions – God, King and Country – that care little for his sacrifice.

Picabia's attitude here is fully Nietzschean. Ruminating on 'the point of honesty in deception', the German philosopher contrasts those who 'in the act of deception […] are overcome by a *belief in themselves*' to the founders of religion who languor in a state of self-deception.[27] Like Nietzsche before him, Picabia pairs deception with self-consciousness opposing them to self-deception or false consciousness. The so-called honest man, Picabia and Nietzsche concur, is really being dishonest to himself.

As is clear from his defence of Cravan, Picabia recognised that dressing up can function as a disavowal of the very thing it seems to signify. No doubt, Picabia's hat signified a momentary desire to be recognised as Spanish, but, as part of a performed opposition to military service, this identification was contingent upon particular historical circumstances. Objective material conditions powered subjective identification. Rather than defiantly perform a pre-existing Spanish identity, as Ring implies, Picabia might be desperately trying to create one. Whether we view Picabia's hat as a strategic act of self-construction or a sincerely felt declaration of identity, the assertion of his Iberian heritage at this conjuncture registers more explicitly as a critique of France than as a token of affiliation with Spain.

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[26] Picabia, *Jésus-Christ Rastaquouère* (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1920) reproduced in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 241.

[27] Friedrich Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader* (London: Penguin, 1977), 149-50. There is no evidence that Picabia was familiar with this line, which appears in *Human all too Human*. Picabia would have encountered the theme though in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Gay Science* and *Ecce Homo*, the books by Nietzsche that he is known to have read. Picabia was also familiar with the writings of Max Stirner, another advocate of 'the heroism of the lie'. Max Stirner *The Ego and its Own* (London: Verso, 2014), 282-3.

Nonetheless, Picabia remained immensely proud of his Spanish ancestry. Throughout his life, he attributed everything from his immoralism to his small feet to his Spanish origins. The same cause was blamed for his melancholia, Don Juanism and gentleman's pride.[28] Crucially, however, Picabia never sought the Spanish citizenship to which he was entitled. With the onset of the war, he came to regret this decision. Maria Lluïsa Borràs writes that 'we know from Gabrielle Buffet [the artist's wife] that Picabia lamented many times that he had not opted for Spanish nationality when he came of age'. [29] Possessing a keen sense of irony, Picabia could not have failed to have realised that as a Spaniard he could have avoided the war and remained in France, but as a Frenchman he had to evade it by fleeing to Spain.

Following the end of the hostilities, Picabia's mixed paternity and dubious war record had made him a figure of suspicion in his native France. [30] Avant-garde artists, especially foreigners, were denounced as Germans spies, Bolshevik sympathisers and Jewish conspirators. [31] Attacks were not only verbal. On one occasion a decorated war veteran attempted to assault Picabia, singling

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[28] This list of attributes is my paraphrased translation of one given in Maria Lluïsa Borràs, "Picabia, el Español," in *Francis Picabia: Exposición Antológica* (Madrid: Salas Ruiz Picasso del Miniterio de Cultura, 1985), Exhibition catalogue, 37.

[29] '*Sabemos por Gabrielle Buffet que Picabia lamentó muchas veces no haber optado por la nacionalidad española a la mayoría de edad'*. Borràs, "Picabia, el Español," 37. This mildly contradicts Buffet's published account, which claims Picabia was entitled to Cuban citizenship (see note 20).

[30] Writing in *Le Canard Déchaîné,* 11 February 1920, Roland Gatenoy expresses his regrets that Picabia did not defend France during the war. That same year, George Desvaillières facetiously asks Picabia what he did during his time in colours. Gatenoy's comments are cited in Elmer Peterson, "The Barbarians Breach the Walls: Dada's Press, Paris 1920 " in *Dada and the Press*, ed. Harriett Watts and Stephen C Foster (New Haven: GK Hall and Co., 2004), 228. Picabia's exchange with Desvaillières is detailed in Arnauld Pierre, "Dada Stands its Ground: Francis Picabia Versus the Return to Order ", in *Paris Dada: The Barbarians Storm the Gates*, ed. Elmer Peterson, (Farmington Hills: GK Hall and Co., 2001), 132-33.

[31] In 1917 at the opening of Albert Gleizes' exhibition at the Dalmau gallery in Barcelona, Picabia narrowly avoided being arrested after he was accused of being a German spy. In the same year French agents tried to recruit him to spy on the Germans. These contradictory events are indicative of Picabia's uncertain status at the time.

him out as Dada's ringleader. 'You are all bastards!' the would-be assailant yelled. 'You are not French! Down with all *métèques!* ' [32] Typically translated as 'foreigners', *métèques* is more accurately a pejorative term for Mediterranean immigrants.[33] Unsympathetic journalists also sniped at Picabia's parentage.[34] *Le Merle Blanc,* for example, published an article captioned 'We Demand that Picabia be Led Back to the Spanish Border'.[35]

Picabia responded to the ongoing press hostility, penning a rejoinder to Madame Rachilde (the pen name of the novelist and playwright Marguerite Vallette-Eymery), who had criticised the international Dada movement.

> Madame,
>
> You've presented yourself on your own, with your lonely French nationality. Congratulations. As for me, I am several nationalities, and Dada is like myself.
>
> I was born in Paris, of a Cuban, Spanish, French, Italian and American family, and what is most astonishing is that I have a very clear impression of being all these nationalities at once!
>
> This is no doubt a form of dementia praecox; I prefer, however, this form to the one that affected William II, who considered himself to be the only representative of the only Germany.

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[32] '*Vous étes tous des Salauds!... Vous n' êtes pas des Français!... A bas les métèques!*...' Germaine Everling, *L'anneau de Saturne* (Paris: Fayard, 1970), 125.

[33] See, for example, Paula K. Kamish, *Mamas of Dada: Women of the European Avant-Garde* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 61.

[34] On the press response to Paris Dada generally, see Peterson, "The Barbarians Breach the Walls: Dada's Press, Paris 1920", 227-291. Details can also be found scattered throughout Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris.*

[35] *Le Merle Blanc* (Paris, 29 January 1921), 1 cited in William Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 159.

> William II and his friends were good patriots. Just like you, Madame...[36]

Pointing out what he sees as the minimal difference between the French patriot and their German enemies, Picabia's letter is a defiant celebration of ancestral miscegenation.

This vocal defence of his racial origins formed part of a broader counter-attack. Picabia repeatedly intervened in debates around French modernism, mocking period anxieties regarding ethnicity, authenticity and art. Picasso provided a recurrent target for Picabia's invective. The best-known example is his *Portrait of Max Goth* (1917), which satirises the Ingres-styled realism of Picasso's *Portrait of Max Jacob* (1915).[37] However, as Aurélie Verdier demonstrates, Picabia's one-way rivalry with Picasso was highly ambivalent.[38] Conforming to the psychoanalytical model of reaction-formation, Picabia's contemptuous derision was, in reality, the negative expression of his otherwise envious admiration. Without disputing the acuity of Verdier's analysis, it is clear that socio-historical factors could momentarily over-determine the psychodynamics of personal rivalry. As an adjunct to the process she identifies, I would argue that something else is at play with regards to the two artists' shared Spanish origins.

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[36] Picabia, letter to Madame Rachilde published in *Cannibale,* no.1 (25 April 1920) reproduced in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 209. Four years later, Picabia substantially recycles the terms of his letter: 'I am neither painter, nor writer of literature, neither Spanish, Cuban, nor American', he states, 'I am alive'. Picabia, *Caravansérail* (1924) cited in Aurélie Verdier, "[SIC] Picabia: Ego, Reaction, Ruse", *October*, no. 157 (2017): 83.

[37] The most celebrated analysis is Rosalind Krauss, *The Picasso Papers* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 89-210. For a critique of Krauss's argument, see Aurélie Verdier, "L'Hainamoration : Picabia Avec Picasso", *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'art Moderne*, no. 124 (Summer 2013), 57-83.

[38] Verdier, ibid., 69-71.

In the run-up to the Galerie la Cible exhibition, Picabia repeatedly refers to Picasso's Spanishness in his published writings.[39] At times, Picabia mobilises Picasso as his proxy, indirectly testing his own uncertain identity. Picabia's repeated claim that Picasso is 'Spanish on his father's side, Italian on his mother's and had a French education' resonates with his own declaration of identities to Rachilde.[40] Elsewhere, though, Picasso functions as one pole in a rhetorical conflict of French and Spanish art. This was a meaningless opposition for Picabia, who straddled the Franco-Hispanic divide.

Writing in February 1920, Picabia mischievously states that Picasso is French and his collaborative partner the Frenchman Braque Spanish.[41] Ridiculing Picasso's *Ingrisme* and the notion of Cubism as a national style, Picabia switches the nationalities of its pioneering exponents. Deriding French claims to Cubist patrimony again in March, Picabia adopts a mock patriotism, joking 'Braque only asks that Picasso be forgotten, long live France!'[42] In April Picabia inquires 'is Cubism a French or Spanish art?'[43] However, the sardonic tone soon returns: 'Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris, your Cubist colleagues claim you took everything from them: that's indeed the impression they gave me!'[44] This new pairing of Picasso and the Spaniard Gris, rather than the more natural Braque, is revealing. So too is the staging of derivativeness and originality. Through the use of ironic inversion, Picabia acerbically contrasts Spanish creativity with its French commodification. Picabia later repeated this theme, bluntly stating 'Cubism was invented by Picasso, it became of Parisian

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[39] On Picasso's perceived racial status at this point, see C.F.B. Miller, "Interwar Picasso Criticism" in *Picasso Harlequin*, ed., Yve-Alain Bois (Milan: Skira, 2009); and Jonathan Brown, *Picasso and the Spanish Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

[40] Picabia, *391*, no. 1 (25 January 1917), 4. Cited in Dawn Ades, ed. *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology* (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 110. Picabia repeats this description of Picasso, putting the words directly into Picasso's mouth, in *391* no.4 (25 March 1917), 8.

[41] Picabia, *391*, no. 11, (February 1920), 4. Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 180.

[42] Picabia, *Dada,* no.7 (March 1920), 6. Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 206.

[43] '*Le cubisme est-il un art Espagnole ou Français? Répondre Au San Pareil'*. Picabia, *Cannibale* no.1 (25 April 1920), 11 reproduced in Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et 391: Tome II* (Nice: Centre du XX Siècle,1982), 191.

[44] Picabia, *391*, no.12 (May 1920), 5 in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 203.

make'.[45] Continuing, Picabia draws a direct parallel between Picasso's position and his own: 'Dadaism was invented by Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia – [Richard] Huelsenbeck or [Tristan] Tzara found the word Dada – it became Parisian or Berlinesque in spirit'.[46]

Written in the aftermath of his acrimonious separation from the Dada group, Picabia's claim to have embodied the Dada attitude in advance of the movement did not go unnoticed. Fellow Dadaist Hans Arp promptly responded, chiding that 'only imbeciles and Spanish professors could take an interest in dates'.[47] Far from a piece of Dadaist absurdism – the statement follows a declaration that Arp wore a brioche in his left nostril – this comment was directed squarely at Picabia.[48] Recognising it as a personal attack, Picabia retaliated in his *Funny Guy Handbill* published shortly afterwards (fig. 10). Here Picabia appropriates Arp's insult, proudly declaring himself to be 'an

[45] Picabia, *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, supplement to *391*, no.15 (10 July 1921) 3. Reproduced in *Picabia, Beautiful Monster*, 268. Picabia is probably drawing on Walter Arensberg's 'Dada is American', which includes the line 'Cubism was born in Spain; France appropriated the patent for it with no government guarantee. Unfortunately, just like French matches, it didn't catch on'. Picabia was familiar with this text, which he read extracts from at the Grand Palais on 5 February 1920. Picabia's recital is discussed in Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris*, 111. Walter Arensberg, 'Dada is American', *Littérature,* No. 13 (May 1920) is reproduced in Ades, ed. *The Dada Reader,* 190-91.

[46] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 268.

[47] Hans Arp, *Dada au grand air* (6 August 1921), 2. Cited in Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris*, 211-212. Partially because of Hans Richter, who quotes Arp's wider paragraph but missed out this specific line, a particular reading of *Dada au grand air* dominates the scholarship. Typically discussed in terms of a bi-partisan conflict between Tzara and Huelsenbeck over the Dada brand, it is often overlooked how Arp weighs-in on Picabia's role in what was, at this point, a three-way feud. For an early example of this oversight, see Lucy Lippard, ed. *Dada's on Art: Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and Others* (New York: Dover Publications, 2007), 22 (first published in 1971). For a more recent example, see Michael White's commentary to Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), 247.

[48] Ribermont-Dessaignes's comment in *Le Coeur à Barbe* that Pierre Massot 'has turned Spanish and signs Pedro de Massot' should also be interpreted in this light. *Le Coeur à Barbe* was written in direct response to Picabia's *La Pomme de Pins*, which Massot helped publish. Ribermont-Dessaignes cited in Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris*, 251.

idiotic Spanish professor' before adding – the typesetting is unequivocal – 'PICABIA **IS** A SPANIARD!'

Despite Picabia's emphatic declaration, his claim to Spanish identity is uncertain and unstable. His Spanishness is at once real and imagined, inconsistently projected and externally imposed. At no point in his life, though, would it be more precariously exposed than in the run-up to the first exhibition of *Espagnoles* in 1920. The press denunciations, the attempted assault, the exchange with Rachilde, as well as Picabia's critiques of French Cubism and claim that Dada looks Spanish, all occurred in this year.[49] It was within this conjuncture that Spain became the point where personal identity, political discourse and artistic practice intersected for Picabia. Linked to issues of creativity and originality, Spanishness became a prevalent part in a wider debate surrounding Picabia's contested place within French modernism. This was a period in which ideas of race and painting were discursively entwined. As Kenneth Silver details, there was a widespread concern that the cuckoo of German *Kultur* was laying its egg in the nest of French civilisation.[50] Opponents of Cubism, therefore, erroneously denounced it as a German import. Anti-Spanish sentiment was less pervasive, but it still clearly inflected the ideological tenor of aesthetic discourse. Situated in this context, the *Espagnoles* no longer appear so complicit with the Return to Order's figurative turn. Rather, like Picabia's writings, they read as a failed intervention into this cultural politics.

Spanishness

Whether or not the French-born Picabia was truly Spanish is not a significant issue. Legally and culturally he was most certainly French. The pertinent question is, what notions of Spanishness were available to Picabia and his

[49] The sectarian infighting with his former Dada colleagues occurred in the aftermath of the show, which had exacerbated tensions within the group.

[50] Silver, *Esprit de Corps,* especially the Introduction and Chapter 1.

critics? Answering this question will provide an outline of the model of national identity operative in this thesis.

Like all other countries, Spain is a protean entity. Its geographic boundaries are subject to historical variations, its culture in a state of perpetual flux. Any notion of a timeless national character rooted in antiquity is an illusion. As historians of nation and nationalism have routinely emphasised, a sense of national consciousness is a relatively recent phenomenon tied to the emergence of the nation-state.[51] National identity, meanwhile, is something of a rhetorical device, a selective appeal to race, geography, and history that produces the very thing it purports to describe. Classic formulations such as Eric Hobsbawm's 'invented tradition' and Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' foreground the fictive element involved in the formation of national identity. Contemporary theories of the historical constructedness of national identity were, of course, unavailable to Picabia. Yet, even within his lifetime (1879-1953), notions of Spanish identity were highly unstable, most notably during the period 1898-1939.

[51] The classic accounts of the historical emergence of modern political nationalism and the foundational role of the nation-state in producing it are by Ernst Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson. Their work needs supplementing by the analyses of sociologists Anthony Smith, who emphasises the longer durational histories of ethnic identities and national myths, and John Hutchinson, who develops a theory of cultural nationalism. Hutchinson's understanding of culture is largely restricted to the high arts and in turn needs supporting by the work of Michael Billing and Tim Edensor, who provide useful considerations of the intersection of nationalism, popular culture and everyday life. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Malden, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 2006); Eric Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Program, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 2006); Anthony D. Smith and John Hutchinson, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995); and Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002).

In 1898, Spain lost the Spanish-American War and with it her most lucrative colonial assets. Stripped of the vestiges of empire, Spain could no longer maintain the illusion of being a preeminent world power. A crisis of national identity ensued. Conservatives, Catholics and monarchists primarily attributed this so-called 'Disaster of 1898' to a decline of traditional values; Liberals, Republicans and the bourgeoisie mainly viewed it as the inevitable consequence of a failure to modernise. The former advocated strong centralisation and a tenacious commitment to Hispanic tradition, the latter a panacea of secularisation, industrialisation and Europeanisation.

These political fault lines both followed and exacerbated Spain's pre-existing ethnic and economic tensions. Madrid had long been the centre of monarchical and state power, but, economically, the Castile region was underdeveloped. Financially and industrially, the capital lagged behind some of the peninsula's Northern provinces, most notably Catalonia. Consequently, the writers, poets and philosophers who compromised the so-called Generation of 1898 spoke of *dos españas* or two Spains: one the stalwart of catholic-monarchism, with its heartland in Castile; the other the champion of liberal republicanism with its epicentre in Catalonia.[52]

In reality, this binary opposition is overly simplistic. Pronounced state particularism existed in many regions of Spain. Catalonia was far from alone in asserting her ethnic uniqueness or evoking her historical independence from Castile. The Basque countries, Galicia and Andalusia also provided alternative focal points for collective identification. Many parts of Spain had once operated with relative autonomy, with their own regional parliaments and *fueros* (charters granting local rights and privileges, including some control over taxation, legislation and conscription). This, coupled with their unique

[52] Antonio Machado coined the phrase in his *Proverbios y Cantares* (Proverbs and Songs) of 1909, but the sentiment can be traced back further. Goya's *Fight with Cudgels* (c.1820-23) seems to anticipate the theme, which was first directly expressed by Mariano José de Larra, who wrote, 'here lies half of Spain, it died of the other half' in *All Souls' Day* (1836). Machado's contemporary, the philosopher Unamuno, makes a similar point when he compares Spain to the intrauterine fighting of the biblical twins Jacob and Esau.

regional languages and independent cultural practices, stood as an obstacle in the formation of a specifically Spanish identification. High levels of illiteracy at the turn of the century meant that many 'Spaniards' could not even speak Castilian Spanish, only a regional vernacular.

Universal primary education, established in 1909, helped correct this. But the introduction of a national anthem and the mandatory display of the Spanish flag on municipal buildings at this point registers the desperation with which the State attempted to provide common symbols of nationhood. Still, it was not until 1923 that the government outlawed regional flags and made Castilian the official national language. Agitation for home rule peaked in this year. Basques, Galicians, and Catalans protested in Barcelona for the rights to self-determination. The military, who had very definite ideas about national unity, violently suppressed them and Primo de Rivera, the recently installed dictator quickly began an enforced programme of *españolización* (Spanishisation).

A nation alienated from itself, Spain was unable to achieve a convincing, or even workable congruence, of political, national or regional identifications. An absolute monarchy and semi-feudal peasantry existed alongside a prospering bourgeoisie and an increasingly class-conscious proletariat. Ancient clerical, communal and monarchical affiliations, as well as emerging political and class allegiances, provided impediments to national identification. Monarchists split themselves between defenders of the Bourbon incumbent and supporters of the rival Carlist pretender. In Catalonia, Jesuit factions formed an alternative rallying point to Papist Madrid, while for the labouring and rural classes, anarchism provided compelling alternatives to Marxism. Consequently, no self-evident conception of Spanish identity was available during Picabia's lifetime. Nor was a single competing version convincing enough to achieve hegemony. Following 'The Disaster', the Catholic-monarchism of Alfonso XIII, the soft-dictatorship of Primo de Rivera (1923-30), and the liberal Second Republic (1931-39) all failed to unite the nation.

Aware that the nation did not already exist, first Rivera and then the Republic set about creating it. Each marshalled state resources in attempts to produce

their respective visions of a patriotic citizenry.[53] All sides established nationalist pedagogies to instil a shared sense of ideology and identity to the country. None succeeded. Only following the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the establishment of Franco's dictatorship could a precarious national unity be imposed. As the Civil War makes painfully apparent, Spain lacked the 'deep, horizontal comradeship' Anderson argues is essential to the formation of a nation's imagined community.[54]

It is highly unlikely that Picabia had much understanding of this conflicted history. Probably, he was aware of the broad issues – Paul Dermée calls for a free Catalonia in the Dada journal *Z* to which Picabia contributes [55] – but Picabia was rarely, if ever, genuinely informed about political matters. Unlike Miró, whose early work evidences a deep concern with the Catalan peasantry, Picabia's representations of Spain are noticeably one-dimensional.

Born and raised in France, Picabia necessarily lacked the sort of immersion in Spain's common culture that might be considered essential to the formation of a sense of Spanish identity. Geographically removed from Spain, Picabia was neither educated within the circuits of Spanish culture nor habituated in the rhythms and routines of its daily life.

A caricatured proponent of a top-down model of nationalism, for whom the state apparatus disseminates a sense of national consciousness through the imposition of a standardised language, education and culture, might question Picabia's claim to be an *Espagnol*. Likewise, an equally one-sided advocate

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[53] For details of these projects and reforms, see Alejandro Quiroga, *Making Spaniards: Primo de Rivera and the Nationalization of the Masses, 1923-30* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Sandie Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and National Identity in Republican Spain* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); and Clare Mar-Molinero and Angel Smith, eds., *Nationlism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsular: Competing and Conflicting Identities* (Oxford and Washington: Berg, 1996).

[54] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

[55] Elmer Peterson, "Paris Dada: Publications and Provocations" in Peterson, *Paris Dada: The Barbarians Storm the Gates*, 13.

of a ground-up model of nationalism, for whom the formation of a sense of national identity involves active participation in the quotidian traditions, rituals and practices of daily life, might also remain sceptical.

Identity, in both cases, is conceived as a set of embodied habits and the patterns of discourse that sustain them. Picabia's position outside these circuits does not automatically invalidate his identification. It merely means that more emphasis must fall on the imaginative and projective, rather than the imposed and performative, parts of identity formation. It would be wrong, however, to assume that Picabia's Spanishness was devoid of any mechanisms of interpellation. Although apparently reluctantly, Picabia's father instilled his son with some understanding of Spanish.[56] Picabia also travelled to Spain on numerous occasions.[57] The extent to which the tourist's gaze

[56] It is hard to gauge Picabia's fluency in Spanish. Picabia's friend Christine Boumeester writes, 'your father was bored by you. He never wanted to talk to you in Spanish'. However, John Richardson records that Picasso appreciated Picabia's company because it allowed him to converse in his native language. Other than the occassional, probably copied, inscription on a painting, there is no direct evidence Picabia could write Spanish. Boumeester's unpublished, undated notebook is cited in Borràs, *Picabia*, 15. John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso: The Triumphant Years, 1917-32* (London: Jonathan Cape, Random House, 2007), 54.

[57] Picabia made his first recorded trip to in Spain in 1902. He returned to Spain in 1907, stopping off at San Sebastian, Bayona, and Fuenterrabía, before travelling through Burgos, Guadalajara and Valdepeñas. His next visit was in April 1909, when he went to Seville on honeymoon. In 1916, he returned to Spain seeking shelter from the war. Landing in Algeciras near Seville, he travelled up to San Sebastian before making his way back down to Barcelona, where he settled in August. Despite an apparently carefree lifestyle, Picabia was now bored of Spain. In a letter to Apollinaire, he grumbles 'Eight months of Spain is enough'. To Alfred Stieglitz, he complains that 'here there is nothing, nothing, nothing', the first recorded instance of the triplicated negation that would fill his future Dada manifestos. Picabia returned to Barcelona twice in 1922 to organise an exhibition. He made his final trip to Spain in the summer of 1927. Even when not in Spain, Picabia kept the country close. When Picabia relocated from Paris to Tremblay-sur-Mauldre in 1922, he had the tiny courtyard of his house paved at great expense to resemble the patios of Spain. The interior of his next property, he filled with 'Spanish *Bondieuseries*' (devotional object of little merit). Picabia's time in Barcelona is discussed by numerous authors; see Pablo Jiménez Burillo leyre Bozal Chamorro "Pablo

informed Picabia's conception of Spain will be discussed in Chapter 3. First, though, it is necessary to provide the long-postponed review of the scholarship.

Picasso y Francis Picabia en Barcelona" in *Picasso Picabia: La Pintura en Cuestión,* ed. Aurélie Verdier (Barcelona: Fundación Mapfre, 2018), 24-35; Jordi Falgàs, "Gliezes and Picabia at the Gallery Dalmau: Too Green for Our Teeth" in *Barcelona and Modernity: Picasso, Guadí, Miró, Dalí*, ed. William Robinson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 319-27; Christopher Green, "The Foreign Avant-Garde in Barcelona, 1912-1922" in *Homage to Barcelona: The City and its Art 1888-1936*, ed. Micheal Raeburn (London: Hayward Gallery, 1986), 183-192; Pascal Rousseau, "'El exilio de las Ramblas' Las vanguardias Francesas en Barcelona Durante la Primera Guerra Mundial" in *Barcelona, Zona Neutral 1914-1918*, ed. Fèlix Fanés and Joan M. Minguet (Barcelona: Fundació Juan Miró, 2014), 175-179; and Rafael Santos Torrorlla, "Francis Picabia y Barcelona" in *Francis Picabia 1879-1953: Exposición Antológica* (Madrid: Ministerio de cultura, 1985), 49-56. Picabia's letters to Apollinaire and Stieglitz are cited in Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol II, 234-5.* The descriptions of Picabia's house are taken from Everling, *L'anneau de Saturne*,147 and Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, 290.

1. Exhibition Histories and Literature Review

Selective Canonisation, 1930-70

As detailed in the Introduction, the detrimental assessment of the *Espagnoles* dates back to the 1920s. Their continued marginalisation, though, is partially a consequence of Picabia's institutional reception in the 1930s. In 1936, Picabia featured in two seminal exhibitions: *Cubism and Abstract Art*, and *Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism*. Organised by MoMA's Alfred H. Barr, these shows initiated Picabia's selective entry into the canon. Of the two, the latter most decisively shaped his future reception. As Michael R. Taylor notes, 'while Picabia's pivotal role in the international Dada movement was recognised during his lifetime, his pioneering contribution to the development of abstraction was for many years overlooked by critics and historians'.[58] Four decades would pass before Picabia's 'early engagement with abstract art became better appreciated'.[59] Even today, Picabia remains an often strangely liminal presence in the history of Cubism and abstract art.[60] In contrast, a vast body of scholarship flourishes around his Dada career.

It is not my intention to address the literature on either of these two bodies of work here. Picabia's early Cubist and late abstract periods fall outside the

[58] Michael R. Taylor "Francis Picabia: Abstraction and Sincerity" in *Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925*, ed. Leah Dickerman (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), Exhibition catalogue, 112.

[59] Taylor attributes this reversal of fortunes to the publication of Camfield's monograph in 1979. Camfield is no doubt important, but he is not the sole cause. Virginia Spate's pioneering reappraisal of Picabia's Orphic work was also published at this point. More important still was the rediscovery of *The Spring* and *Dance at the Spring* in 1975. Last seen at the Armory Show in 1913, these paintings were acquired by MoMA, who exhibited them to great acclaim in 1980. Virginia Spate, *Orphism*: *The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris 1910-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 275-339.

[60] David Cottington's otherwise exemplary history of Cubism mentions Picabia's role as an organiser and financier but neglects to address his actual work. David Cottington, *Cubism and its Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

timeframe covered by this thesis and do not directly relate to its main topic. Likewise, the bulk of the Dada scholarship, which is primarily concerned with the iconography of the machine paintings and issues of technological modernity, has no immediate bearing on the *Espagnoles.* [61] This material will instead be addressed selectively in the body of the thesis when pertinent to particular arguments. Similarly, a review of the literature on the Transparencies will be postponed until Chapter 4, where it is more germane. For now, I will confine the discussion to a consideration of the history and reception of the *Espagnoles* and to publications that raise methodological or thematic issues related to the current inquiry.

Returning to *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism,* it is important to note that this exhibition had two lasting consequences for the study of Dada. Firstly, it institutionalised a city-centred model of the movement that has struggled to capture the peripatetic Picabia, who pops up in New York, Paris, Barcelona and Zurich.[62] Secondly, it contributed to an evolutionary and Franco-centric

[61] Standalone essays on the machines included Philip Pearlstein, "The Symbolic Language of Francis Picabia" *Arts* XXX, no.4 (January 1956): 37-43; William Camfield, "The Machinist Style of Francis Picabia", *The Art Bulletin* 48, no. 3-4 (1966): 309-22; William Innes Homer, "Picabia's *Jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* and Her Friends", *The Art Bulletin* 57, no. 1 (1975): 110-15; Willard Bohn, "Picabia's Mechanical Expression and the Demise of the Object", *The Art Bulletin* 67, no. 4 (1985): 673-77; Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Francis Picabia, Radiometers, and X- Rays in 1913", *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 1 (1989): 114-23; Arnauld Pierre, "Le dernier style machiniste de Francis Picabia: nouvelles sources", in *Francis Picabia: Galerie Dalmau, 1922* (Paris: Centre George Pompdou, 1996), Exhibition catalogue, 35-41. Mariea Caudill Dennison, "Automobile Parts and Accessories in Picabia's Machinist Works of 1915-17", *The Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1178 (2001): 267-83; Roger Rothman, "Between Music and the Machine: Francis Picabia and the End of Abstraction", *Tout-fait* (2002); Mariea Caudia Dennison, "Francis Picabia's 'Américaine' from the cover of '391', July 1917", *The Burlington Magazine* 146, no. 1218 (September 2004): 621-22; Cyrus Manasseh, "Art, Language and Machines: The Interrelationship Between Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Raymond Roussel (Under Roussel's Spell)", *Anistoriton Journal* 11 (2008-2009): 1-10; Hannah H. Wong, "Powering Portraiture: Francis Picabia's *291* Mechanomorphs Revived", *American Art* 29, no. 3 (2015): 118-31.

[62] This model remained dominant up until 2005, its framework replicated in the landmark series *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada* (1996-2004) and the exhibition *Dada: Zurich, Berlin,*

model of modernism that conceptualised Dada as an inchoate Surrealism. This influential framework was replicated in the subsequent landmark exhibitions, *Dada, Surrealism and their Heritage* (1968) and *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* (1978).

Picabia's refusal to join Surrealism in the 1920s ensured that he became an increasingly peripheral figure. His own activities compounded this marginalisation. Voluntarily absenting himself from the Parisian art world for much of the year, Picabia relocated to Cannes. Here, he set his sail against the wind of dominant taste, producing paintings that could not readily be assimilated within normative histories of modernism. Consequently, at the time of his death in 1953, the prevailing feeling was that Picabia had driven 'off the highway of modern art sometime in the 1920s, taking an irrelevant detour that would lead to oblivion'.[63] William Rubin, the curator of *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage*, certainly thought as much. With the onset of the Transparencies, he maintained, 'Picabia passed out of serious consideration as a painter'.[64]

As Rubin's statement makes clear, the curatorial parameters established in the 1930s continued to define Picabia's posthumous reception well into the 1960s. The rise of Neo-Dada practices in the 1950s may have begun to challenge the dogmas of mid-century formalism, but they continued to perpetuate the preference for Picabia the Dadaist. The publication of first-hand accounts of the Dada movement and Motherwell's pioneering anthology of Dada writings at this point had a similar effect. Picabia's reputation was consolidated but so too were the restrictions surrounding it.

Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris (2005). Since then, the hegemony of this model has been faltering. Recent scholarship has emphasised thematic issues at the expense of geographical locations, often foregrounding issues of geopolitical displacement, cultural migration and international dialogue.

[63] Robert Rosenblum, "Picabia in the Land of Kitsch" in *Picabia Nudes: Works from the 1940s* (New York: Panicali Fine Arts, 1989), Exhibition catalogue, 5.

[64] William Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* (New York: MoMA, 1968), 27.

As this flurry of publications indicates, Dada was now becoming the legitimate object of historical study. The painter Philip Pearlstein wrote his MA thesis on Picabia, publishing the earliest known assessment of the machine paintings in 1956.[65] The first PhD on the artist, William Camfield's *Francis Picabia: A Study of His Career 1895 to 1918*, followed in 1964. A year later the Sorbonne awarded Michael Sanouillet his doctorate for research on Paris Dada. Sanouillet's thesis resulted in several publications: *Dada in Paris,* a still-unsurpassed study of Dada activity in the city; *Picabia et 391,* an annotated anthology of Picabia's Dada journal; and *Picabia,* the first monograph on the artist.[66] A second monograph, Marc le Bot's *Francis Picabia et la crise des valeurs figuratives,* followed in 1968. Path-breaking as these slender studies are, neither concerns itself much with Picabia's post-Dada production. Le Bot's study terminates in 1925. Sanouillet's covers the last twenty-odd years of Picabia's career in as many pages. In both cases, the authors only mention the *Espagnoles* in passing, touching on them with sniffy disregard.

Something similar can be said of *Francis Picabia: Work 1909-1924* (1962), the artist's first posthumous retrospective.[67] Conforming to previously demarcated chronology, the curators abruptly terminated Picabia's career in 1924, the year of the *First Manifesto of Surrealism.* A second retrospective, organised by the Pop artist Richard Hamilton, followed in 1964. Again predominantly focusing on Picabia's Cubist and Dada periods, this exhibition was a little more expansive. It featured examples of Picabia's Transparencies and late abstract works, but no *Espagnoles*.[68] Indeed, only once during the whole decade does

[65] Pearlstein, "The Symbolic Language of Francis Picabia", 37-43.

[66] Michel Sanouillet, *Picabia* (Paris: L'œil du temps, 1964).

[67] Kunsthalle, Bern, *Francis Picabia 1879-1953: Werke von 1909-1924*, 7 July – 2 September 1962. In contradiction of its nominal timeframe, the exhibition contained three abstract paintings from 1937.

[68] Hatton Gallery, Newcastle, *Francis Picabia*, 26 Feb – 21 March and ICA 3 April – 2 May 1964. Ronald Hunt's catalogue essay dismisses Picabia's late nudes as the product of 'financial embarrassment', claiming, with an undercurrent of racism, that they were destined for the Algerian market. It would be interesting to know if this view was shared by Hamilton, who was making his own images of pin-up girls around this point. *Francis Picabia* (Durham:

an *Espagnole* appears to have been included in a Picabia retrospective. Tellingly, this was not reproduced in the catalogue.[69]

Expanding the Canon, 1970-1980

It was not until 1970 when the Guggenheim mounted the first major Picabia retrospective that his career received a fuller exposure.[70] Even then, this was not fully comprehensive. The institution's directors overruled the show's chief organiser, William Camfield, and refused to allow the inclusion of Picabia's Late Nudes. The exhibition also contained only one *Espagnole*; appearing second in the chronological list of exhibits, it is implicitly assigned to the realm of juvenilia.

Another expansive retrospective, mounted by *Galarie Nationale Paris*, took place in 1976.[71] Less prudish than their Guggenheim counterparts, the curators included examples of Picabia's Late Nudes. Three unadorned *Espagnoles*, as well as a handful of paintings that incorporate Spanish women into their composition, were also displayed. Despite dating from 1916 to 1924, these *Espagnoles* all appeared in a section of the catalogue dedicated to the years 1923-4.

An even more comprehensive overview of the artist's career became available at the end of the 1970s when William Camfield published his landmark study, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (1979). Combining sprightly prose,

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University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1964), Exhibition catalogue, un-paginated. Two years later, Hunt contributed an essay on Picabia to *Artforum's* Surrealism special, Hunt, "The Picabia/Breton Axis", *Artforum* V, no.1 (September 1966): 17-20.

[69] *Spanish Woman with Rose* (1916) is included in the catalogue list for Cantini Musée, *Picabia* (Marseille: Presses municipales de la ville de Marseille, 1962). Exhibition 20 March – 15 May 1962.

[70] William Camfield, *Francis Picabia* (New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, 1970), Exhibition catalogue.

[71] Jean-Hubert Martin and Hélèn Seckel, *Francis Picabia* (Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture George Pompidou, 1976), Exhibition catalogue.

lightly worn erudition, and unsurpassed knowledge of his subject, Camfield's indispensable monograph barely mentions the *Espagnoles*. The index of this doorstop book contains only three entries for Spain, two for *Espagnoles,* and a few other references to Hispanic themed paintings. While Camfield acknowledges that Picabia's 'early work concentrated on Spanish subjects – particularly Spanish women and toreadors – who fascinated him all his life' and highlights 'the rival of ubiquitous Spanish subjects' at various points in his career, he does not subject these paintings to any more consideration.[72]

Postmodern Picabia, 1980-90

The 1980s saw the continued rehabilitation of 'Late Picabia'.[73] This new fascination with his post-Dada figurative painting trailed more substantial shifts in taste. A backlash against the hermeneutic complexity and alienating asceticism of much neo-avant-garde practice contributed to a revival of interest in figurative painting, which a rapidly expanding art market greedily monetised.

Exhibitions such as *A New Spirit in Painting* (1981), *Zeitgeist* (1982), and *Documenta* (1982) showcased a new generation of figurative painters. Several of the artists associated with these exhibitions – David Salle, Sigmar Polke, and Julian Schnabel – explicitly acknowledged Picabia's influence. Salle's work in particular combined the tawdriness of Picabia's Late Nudes with the superimpositions of the Transparencies.

[72] Camfield, *Picabia: His Art, Life and Times*, 6 and 227.

[73] Late Picabia is a nebulous and overly expansive category. The exhibition *Francis Picabia: The Late Works* considers everything from the pin-up girl portraits of the 1930s through to the abstract dot paintings of the early 1950s to be Late Picabia. *Francis Picabia: Late Paintings* expands the timeframe further to include the Transparencies of the late 1920s, at which point Late Picabia encompasses half his career. See Dave Hickey, *Francis Picabia: Late Paintings* (New York: Micheal Werner, 2000); and Felix Zdenek, ed. *Francis Picabia: The Late Works 1933-1953* (Germany: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1998).

Unabashedly pulling on Picabia's cultural capital to help legitimate Salle's practice, the gallerist Mary Boone mounted a joint exhibition of the two artists in 1983.[74] The same year, another combined show, *David Salle/Francis Picabia*, was held in Munich, consolidating a persistent curatorial pairing that shows little sign of abating.[75] Unsurprisingly, critics deemed Salle's work derivative, but his repetition retroactively shaped the reception of Picabia's originals.

Salle was a polarising figure in the critical debates around postmodernism. Succinctly outlining the poles of this conflict, Hal Foster describes an opposition between a 'postmodernism which seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo and a postmodernism which repudiates the former and celebrates the latter: a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction'.[76] For many art historians, Salle exemplified this reactionary strand. His status as the typifying example of postmodern painting was disseminated to a larger audience by Frederic Jameson and David Harvey, both of whom discussed the artist in their authoritative books on the subject.[77] Picabia by extension became 'the precursor to most things postmodern'.[78]

October's Picabia: Casualty of the Culture Wars

It was against this backdrop that the influential art journal *October* published some of the most coruscating criticism of Picabia. Unwavering in its

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[74] Robert Rosenblum's catalogue essay again reasserted the connection to Salle. Robert Rosenblum, "Francis Picabia: The Later Works", in *Francis Picabia* (New York: Mary Boone and Micheal Warner, 1983), Exhibition catalogue , un-paginated.

[75] In 2013, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac staged another show entitled *David Salle/Francis Picabia.* That same year, Picabia was also reconnected to Schnabel. See Margrit Brehm et al., *Café Dolly: Picabia, Schnabel, Willumsen, Hybrid Painting* (Hamburg: Hatje Cantz, 2013).

[76] Hal Foster, *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), IX-X.

[77] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 175-6 and 179; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 48 and 63.

[78] Cathérine Hug, "Picabia after Picabia" in *Our Heads are Round*, 299.

commitment to serious art and written from an explicitly left-wing stance, *October* was unremittingly hostile to the 'clearly retrograde' Salle.[79] This assessment of Salle, made by *October* editor Douglas Crimp, was shared by his co-editors, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh, both of whom extended this criticism to Picabia.

In 1984, Bois lambasted Picabia for his political views.[80] Although not directly addressing Picabia's work, Bois's polemically titled essay "Francis Picaba: From Dada to Pétain" tacitly drew a line between Picabia's reactionary declarations and his post-Dada aesthetics. The article's accompanying illustration shows Late Picabias installed at the Mary Boone Gallery. The same year saw the first reprint of Benjamin Buchloh's classic text, "Figures of Authority, Cyphers of Regression".[81] Originally published in *October* in 1981, Buchloh's text parallels the contemporary eclipse of the neo-avant-garde under the triumphant neo-conservatism of the 1980s with the decline of the historical avant-garde during the conservative retrenchment of the Return to Order. Accusing Picabia of complicity with this process, Buchloh baldy contends that Picabia's post-Dada paintings are politically and aesthetically reactionary. In a second essay published in 1982, Buchloh refutes the radicalism of even the Dada work.[82]

Given Buchloh's intellectual authority and the pervasive influence of "Figures of Authority", it is necessary to address his criticism in some depth. The enduring appeal of this essay lies in its spirited defence of avant-gardism and its intellectual commitment to thinking through the relationship between social

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[79] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1993), 126

[80] Yve-Alain Bois, "Francis Picabia: From Dada to Pétain", *October* 30 (1984):121-127. Bois had written a critical book on Picabia in 1975, which was subsequently withdrawn and destroyed at the behest of Picabia's family.

[81] Benjamin Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression: Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting", *October* 16 (1981): 39-68

[82] Benjamin Buchloh, "Parody and Appropriation in Francis Picabia, Pop and Sigmar Polke", *Artforum*, March (1982): 28-34

process, ideology and artistic practice. But if Buchloh's intention is to grasp aesthetic transitions as the symptomatic expression of border shifts in the social totality, then the repetition he detects fails its own test. The socio-political 'backgrounds' underpinning the figurative revivals of the 1920s and 1980s are incommensurate. Crudely stated, the 1920s saw the increasing abandonment of liberal politics, economic collapse and the rise of Fordism, whereas the 1980s witnessed an entrenchment of neo-liberalism and a post-Fordist economic boom. Even the artistic parallels mask a substantial difference. Neo-expressionist figuration contested the values of a previous generation, while the figurative resurgence of the Return to Order occurred within a single cohort, with the same artists straddling both sides of the divide - occasionally, as in Picabia's case, working both styles simultaneously. Rather than a straightforward abandonment of modernism, the Return to Order is arguably better conceived as an internal modulation within it. Certainly, the widespread return to figuration after the First World War speaks as much to the structural limitations and impasses of artistic modernism, its inability to compellingly articulate the changed social circumstances, as it does the conservatism of individual modernists.

Expanding this discussion, it is not difficult to spot the intellectual currents powering the objections to Picabia's work. The fingerprints of Clement Greenberg and Peter Bürger are ever-present in condemnations of Picabia. Their views may not attract unqualified acceptance, but their tenacious legacy continues to be a silent hindrance to a fuller elucidation of the *Espagnoles*. Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* underwrites the untenable conflation of progressive form and progressive politics, while Greenberg's "Avant-garde and Kitsch" remains the *locus classicus* for the association of totalitarianism with aesthetic banality.

Together these odd bedfellows produce a set of persuasive, mutually reinforcing arguments in which politics condemns aesthetics and vice versa. Paradoxically, the arch-formalist Greenberg provides an impediment to a consideration of the formal mechanisms of Picabia's kitsch work, just as the legacies of historical materialist thought perversely forestall a detailed

investigation of their contextual circumstances. Instead, these traditions now silently authorise the un-reflexive dismissal of Picabia's work on formal and political grounds without the tiresome need of ever attending to their formal particularities or socio-historical complexities. This is certainly true for Buchloh, who pays scant attention to the formal properties of Picabia's work and contents himself with an overly schematic sketch of their historical conjuncture.[83] Premised on notions of stylistic regression and overly direct links between art and politics, Buchloh's arguments are haunted by teleological and utopian models of avant-gardism.

One final criticism must be made of Buchloh's Picabia. As Sara Cochran notes, 'Buchloh's understanding of Picabia's late career was limited by a lack of serious historical research'.[84] Criticising Bois's and Buchloh's selective citation of Picabia's writings, most of which were not readily available at this point, Cochran condemns the pair for their overreliance on the catalogue of Picabia's 1976 retrospective for their knowledge of his late paintings. This point is particularly germane. "Figures of Authority" has recently been republished with a new postscript.[85] Nothing in it suggests that Buchloh has bothered to familiarise himself with the subsequent thirty-five years of Picabia scholarship that has emerged since his essay was first published.[86] Instead, he laments the rehabilitation of non-canonical Picabia, complaining that what he hoped

[83] Buchloh's main point of intellectual orientation is neither Greenberg nor Bürger but Theodor Adorno, who is, of course, notoriously sniffy about mass culture. I suspect that Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*, which detrimentally opposes Stravinsky's 'reactionary', eclectic pastiche to Schoenberg's 'progressive', hermetic asceticism, provides the unacknowledged template for Buchloh's and *October's* comparative evaluation of Picabia and Duchamp.

[84] Sara Cochran, "Needing the Sun: Francis Picabia and the French Riviera 1925-45" (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2004), 217, n.507.

[85] "Figures of Authority" reappears in Benjamin Buchloh, *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2015),115-172. "Parody and Appropriation" is reprinted in Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2000), 343-365.

[86] Buchloh cites no Picabia scholarship published after 1976 and continues to attribute the Amorphist manifesto to Picabia, despite Pierre disproving this in 2002.

was a momentary aberration has become a new historical norm. 'Historians of twentieth-century art', Buchloh charges, 'are now encouraged to rewrite history from the perspective of the Reagan era'.[87] However, it is Buchloh's account, written against a backdrop of neo-conservative ascendency in the United States and corresponding with the high-water mark of debates over postmodernism, that now appears most unrepentantly entrenched in the perspective of the period.

I will return to the theme of postmodern Picabia in Chapter 4, discussing how period theorisations of the sign continue to shape the interpretation of the Transparencies. First, though, I want to outline alternative accounts of Picabia that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.

Other Perspectives, 1980-2000

Outside of the pages of *October*, the 1980s saw some more forgiving assessments of Picabia's career. Maria Lluïsa Borràs's substantial monograph, *Picabia,* was published in this decade. A confidant of the artist's widow, Borràs's research benefited from her closeness to Picabia's family, even if this familiarity ultimately compromised her critical edge. Empirically rich and lavishly illustrated, Borràs's hefty tome was copiously illustrated with *Espagnoles*. Her text, however, is no more loquacious about them than her predecessors. The discussion of *The Spanish Revolution,* for example*,* is confined to a single paragraph.[88]

Borràs also contributed a catalogue essay to a Picabia retrospective held in Madrid (1985). Accumulating her previously scattered observations about Picabia and Spain, she makes the first case for Picabia the Spaniard.[89] Though full of illuminating biographical details, her essay is unquestioning about what Picabia's Spanish identification entailed or how his paintings stage

[87] Buchloh, *Formalism and Historicity*, 162.

[88] Borràs, *Picabia*, 383-4.

[89] Borràs, "Picabia, el Español".

or reproduce it. The exhibition did, however, include a substantial number of *Espagnoles,* which were positioned as part of Picabia's post-Dada career. Their fulsome inclusion in this exhibition appears to have been entirely contingent on the show's Spanish location. The next significant Picabia retrospective, held at National Galleries of Scotland in 1988, was entirely bereft of *Espagnoles*. The highly uneven catalogue once again emphasised a postmodern Picabia.[90]

With the polarised culture wars of the 1980s fading into the background, it became apparent to some that this association of Picabia and postmodernism was a 'ruse'.[91] Consequently, Picabia's figure paintings received less partisan assessments. Three valuable exhibitions were staged in the 1990s: *Francis Picabia: Máquinas y Españolas* (1995); *Francis Picabia: Galerie Dalmau, 1922* (1996); and *Francis Picabia: Late Works* (1997).[92] *Máquinas y Españolas* nominally put the mechanomorphs and *Espagnoles* on an equal footing, though the catalogue text substantially prioritised the former. *Galerie Dalmau, 1922,* restaged one of Picabia's historical exhibitions, highlighting the simultaneous production of *Espagnoles*, machine works and abstract paintings, while *Francis Picabia: Late Works 1933-1953* contributed to the ongoing rehabilitation of paintings that were now felt to have been 'crushed under the weight of judgments that were both dismissive and authoritarian, as well as being for the most part inaccurate and unhistorical'.[93]

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[90] *Francis Picabia: 1879-1953* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 1988), Exhibition catalogue. The catalogue foregrounds a postmodern Picabia at various points, see Katherine Hegewisch, "Art is a Game like Love and Sport: Picabia and the Post-Modern Movement", 48-52.; and Robert Rosenblum, "Picabia: The Later Work", 44-47. The *Espagnoles* get a brief mention in the catalogue's stand-out essay, Wilson "The Late Picabia: Iconoclast and Saint", 29.

[91] *Inter Alia*, "Francis Picabia: Another Failure to Interpret the Work," in *Art Has No History!*, ed. John Roberts (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 37

[92] *Francis Picabia: Máquinas y Españolas* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1995). *Francis Picabia: Galerie Dalmau, 1922* (Paris: Centre George Pompidou, 1996). *Francis Picabia: Late Works 1933-53,* (Hamburg: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1998). Exhibition catalogues.

[93] Arnauld Pierre, "Greatness and Decadence in Art: Picabia in the Post-War Period" in *Francis Picabia: The Late Works*, 23.

One final, minor exhibition from this period is deserving of mention: *Francis Picabia o soño espagñol* (1996). Despite the promising title, 'Picabia or the Spanish Dream', the catalogue's brief text has little to say about the *Espagnoles.*[94]

Sexing the Machine, 1995-2010

Midway through the 1990s, Sanouillet published a review of the Dada scholarship up to this point. [95] The number of authors who had contributed to Picabia studies, he contended, could be counted on one hand: Pearlstein, Le Bot, Camfield, Borràs and himself.[96] This situation was about to change. In the second half of the decade, Picabia studies underwent a decisive expansion. Dada once again came to dominate discussions, but new questions and methodological perspectives associated with post-structuralism came to the fore. Issues of gender and identity now took centre stage.

The anthology *Women in Dada* contained two essays dealing with the configuration of gender in Picabia's mechanomorphs.[97] Caroline Jones's "The Sex of New Machine" provided an even more sophisticated analysis of this topic.[98] Foregrounding Picabia as a compromised subject of neurasthenic

[94] Museo do Pobo Galego, *Picabia o soño espagñol* (Santiago de Compostela: Centro Cultural Caixavigo, 1996), Exhibition catalogue.

[95] Michael Sanouillet, "Dada: A Critical History of the Literature in France and the United States" in *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics,* ed. Stephen C. Foster (New York: GK Hall, 1996), 223-260.

[96] ibid., 251-252.

[97] Elizabeth Hutton Turner, "*La juene fille américaine* and the Dada Impulse" and Barbara Zabel, "The Constructed Self: Gender and Portraiture in Machine-Age America", both in *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender and Identity*, ed. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: MIT Press, 1998), 4-21 and 22-47.

[98] Caroline A. Jones, "The Sex of the Machine: Mechanomorphic Art, the New Women and Franicis Picabia's Neurasthenic Cure" in *Picturing Science Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 145-80. For a more recent discussion of Picabia's neurasthenia, see Aurélie Verdier, "Ego Scriptor" in Camfield, et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné, Vol. II,* 182-201.

breakdown, Jones linked the artist's unstable subject position to the gender instability of his hermaphrodite machines. Ring's aforementioned PhD thesis on New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity addressed related issues. This problematic continued to dominate discussions of Picabia well into the next decade.

Pepe Karmel opened the millennium with yet another meditation on the theme of the sex of the machine.[99] Amelia Jones's *Irrational Modernism* (2004) advanced the discussion further, again relating Picabia's dysfunctional machine paintings to ideas of neurasthenia and 'equivocal masculinity'.[100] Unstable masculinity also formed a central tenant of David Hopkins' *Dada's Boys* (2007).[101] Balancing a consideration of compromised masculinity with a rival emphasis on homosocial dialogue, Hopkins' work anticipated the central theme of Tate's exhibition, *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (2008).[102]

The questions raised about gender and identity in these publications provide an important precedent for the concerns of my thesis. Although entirely unconcerned with the *Espagnoles*, these studies decisively opened the way for a more complex understanding of how Picabia's representational practice relates to his particular subject position and specific socio-historical conjuncture. My focus on Picabia's racial identifications offers a continuation of these concerns but from an alternative perspective.

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[99] Pepe Karmel, "Francis Picabia, 1915: The Sex of a New Machine" in *Modern Art in America*, ed. Sarah Greenough (Boston and London: Bulfinch Press, 2000), 203-19.

[100] Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada,* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2004).

[101] David Hopkins, *Dada's Boys: Masculinity After Duchamp* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

[102] *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), Exhibition catalogue. The three artists were also the subject of a second show in this year, Jean-Hubert Martin, *Surexposition: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia; sexe, humour et flamenco* (Paris: Passage de Retz, 2008), Exhibition catalogue. Despite the implication in the title, the catalogue does not really address Picabia's Hispanic themes.

Formalism vs the New Historicism: George Baker and Arnauld Pierre

The first decade of the new millennium also saw the publication of two major Picabia monographs: Arnauld Pierre's *Francis Picabia: La peinture sans aura* (2002) and George Baker's *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (2007).

A self-styled 'anti-monograph', Baker's book contains an experimental conclusion that professes to 'remake its own art historical form in the guise of the Dada work' it discusses.[103] Yet, strip away the rhetorical claims – 'art history has never looked like this' – and what remains is something relatively conventional: a study of a canonical artist structured around medium-specific chapters.[104] This is not to say that the book is without insight. *The Artwork Caught by the Tail* provides a conceptually sophisticated reappraisal of Picabia's Dada work, which moves well beyond the nihilistic, anti-art clichés and detrimental comparisons to Duchamp. Baker's endeavour is also impressive in its intellectual seriousness; however, certain of his arguments overreach and his vertiginous deployment of theory often threatens to eclipse his nominal subject. In terms of the current inquiry, it is worth noting that Baker only mentions the *Espagnoles* in passing.[105] Finally, Baker's attention to the formal details of Picabia's work, both here and in more recent writings, is laudable, even if some of his particular readings fail to convince.[106]

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[103] George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tale: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2007), 10 and 12.

[104] ibid. This claim is made in the inside flap of the book's dust wrapper. It is repeated on the publisher's website https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/artwork-caught-tail (accessed 14/03/2019).

[105] ibid., 260.

[106] Recently, Baker argued for the influence of Picasso's 1909 Horta de Ebro landscapes on Picabia's Cubist paintings of 1912, particularly *The Procession of Seville*. 'It is not necessary to "prove" that Picabia had seen the Horta de Ebro', he writes. 'The formal testimony of Picabia's and Picasso's paintings speaks for itself'. The visual evidence though hardly supports these claims. The Picassos are easel paintings, in a rectangular format. Undergirded by the cubist grid they deploy a tonal palette of earth colours. Picabia's cubist work is typically on a salon scale in a square format. His preference is for centrifugal composition and the use of heightened colour contrasts. Baker's description of Picabia's palette as faecal, a notion he

Recently, Baker has championed the methodological superiority of his Kraussian formalism explicitly opposing it to what he terms the 'discursive' and 'New-Historicist mapping' of Arnauld Pierre.[107] Although I attend closely to the form of Picabia's work at several points in this thesis, my overarching approach is unquestionably closer to Pierre's. Not only do I share his historically grounded approach, but I also explicitly build on his arguments.

To date, Pierre has been a lone, if persuasive, voice in the reappraisal of the *Espagnoles*. Addressing these paintings on several occasions, he makes a number of significant observations about them.[108] Pin-pointing their immediate sources in the work of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Pierre identifies Ingres' portrait of *Madame Aymon* (1806) as the template for *Espagnole* (1901) and her siblings (figs. 1.0 and 1.1.). Other paintings, such as *The Spanish Night* (1922), he contends, also allude to the work of the French neo-classicist (figs. 1.2 and 1.3).

Building on these allusions to Ingres and Picabia's claim that the *Espagnoles* are fakes, Pierre goes on to argue for a revision in their dating. The 1902 *Espagnoles*, he proposes, actually date from 1920 but were deliberately misdated by the mischievous artist.[109] Picabia is known to have erroneously

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adopts from Michael Taylor's analysis of *Dances at the Spring* (1912), is also questionable. Written prior to the cleaning of the painting, what Taylor saw as faecal colouration was probably discolouration, although I do agree that there is something excremental in the impasto handling. *The Procession of Seville* does not represent nuns, as Baker claims, but male inquisitors. Nor does Baker's analysis take into account Salon Cubism. Formally and thematically, *Dances at the Spring* has more to do with Gleizes's *The Bathers* (1912) and Metzinger's *Two Nudes* (1910-11) than anything produced by Picasso. See George Baker, "The Body after Cubism", *October* 157 (Summer 2016): 35-62. (An abridged version of this essay appears in *Our Heads are Round*, 40-49. All my references though are to the extended *October* essay.)*;* Taylor "Abstraction and Sincerity", 110-12.

[107] Baker, "The Body after Cubism", 50, n.21.

[108] Arnauld Pierre, *Francis Picabia: La peinture sans aura* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 163-174; Pierre, "Dada Stands its Ground: Francis Picabia Versus the Return to Order".

[109] Might this potential reversal of dating somehow allude to Alfred Jarry's proto-Dada novel *Supermale,* written in 1902 but set in 1920?

dated other canvases, and, as Pierre makes clear, the ironic citation of Ingres only makes sense in the context of the neo-classical revival.[110] A work like *The Spanish Night* (1922) is satirising *Ingrisme* rather than Ingres.

I am sympathetic to Pierre's hypothesis, which is indirectly supported by my own contention, outlined in the Introduction, that Spanishness took on heightened importance for Picabia in 1920. Conversely, a 1902 dating raises the question as to why would Picabia hold on to these slight paintings for eighteen years before exhibiting them. The self-styled 'Funny Guy' did do some funny things.[111] Still, it would be perverse for an established artist to start suddenly exhibiting their juvenilia. Ultimately, it is of little consequence whether or not Picabia produced a half a dozen or so *Espagnoles* in 1902. Their initial reception and the vast bulk of their subsequent production unquestionably took place long after this point. Exhibition histories, known provenance, and published testimony all indicate that Picabia only seriously began painting *Espagnoles* in 1920.[112]

If my thesis lends support to Pierre's dating hypothesis and builds on his path-breaking analysis, it also makes independent claims. I develop or depart from Pierre's insights in two key respects. Firstly, I draw out Picabia's reliance on forms of popular culture. Ingres is not the only source for *Espagnoles.* Throughout the thesis, I reveal new postcard sources, opening up questions about how the *Espagnoles* are informed by mass culture and the tourism

[110] *Animal Tamer,* for example, was exhibited at Salon d'Automne in 1923, complete with its erroneous date '5 *juillet* 1937'. *At the Theatre* (c.1945-46) is prominently dated 1935, although it was executed a decade later.

[111] I borrow this formulation from Mary Ann Caws, "Snapshotism", *London Review of Books* Vol 30, no.4 (2008): 25.

[112] Although I am arguing that the *Espagnoles* did not resolve into a coherent body of work until 1920, I would hazard a slightly earlier conception point. In an overlooked statement, Duchamp writes 'in Barcelona in 1917 he [Picabia] conceives his type of Spanish Women'. Written for an auction catalogue at Picabia's behest, Duchamp's statement is presumably based on first-hand information. See Marcel Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 166.

industries. These postcards suggest a different set of interpretive frameworks and historical contexts to those explored by Pierre. Moreover, these postcards allow me to advance a more thoroughgoing analysis of how Picabia mobilised his source materials. This approach also puts me at odds with Baker, who recently complained that 'Picabia scholarship has become far too attached to the "empirical", to source-finding and a general iconographism that often belies the strength and the operation of Picabia's work itself'.[113] While some accounts of Picabia's machine paintings are certainly susceptible to such an accusation, it is not my aim to elevate source materials into a master referent by which to fix a painting's meaning. Rather, by paying close attention to the discrepancies between Picabia's paintings and his sources, I aim to attend to Picabia's formal and iconographic choices.

Secondly, my analysis of the *Espagnoles* differs from Pierre's in its timeframe. Pierre's appraisal of Picabia's hostile engagement with the Return to Order is compelling but begs the question of how the *Espagnoles* function elsewhere in his career. Whether or not Picabia first painted *Espagnoles* in 1902 or 1920, he continued producing them for the rest of his life. The cultural politics of the 1920s, therefore, cannot readily account for the later *Espagnoles* or the Spanish themes that are detectable in Picabia's earlier Cubist paintings. Moreover, Pierre's focus on the Return to Order and Ingres necessarily prioritises Picabia's relation to French culture, leaving questions of Spanishness underexplored.

The same might be said of Elza Adamowicz's recently published *Dada Bodies* (2019).[114] Heavily indebted to Pierre's previous analysis, Adamowicz argues that *The Spanish Night* mocks the integral body of the neo-classical revival

[113] Baker, "The Body after Cubism", 50. n. 31.

[114] Adamovicz, *Dada Bodies: Between Battlefield and Fairground* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2019), Chapter Three. Chapter Two also addresses Picabia, looking once again at issues of gender and the machine.

and the integral body politic desired by the Return to Order. Picabia, she claims, is 'shooting the classical body'.[115]

Without wishing to dispute the acuity of this point, it does not constitute a sufficient analysis of *The Spanish Night*. Fixated on the female figure, this argument is – literally – only half the picture. Adamovicz remains silent about the male flamenco dancer and the Spanishness of *The Spanish Night.* Consequently, her account begs several questions: if this painting attacks the French neo-classical revival of the day why is it explicitly titled *The Spanish Night*? Likewise, if it is an assault on French body politic, why the inscription *Sangre Andaluza* (Andalusian blood)?

This inscription, I have discovered, is taken from a Spanish postcard (fig. 1.4). Picabia appropriates both the postcard's caption and its distinctive cursive script. The same source, incidentally, also provides the template for *Untitled (Espagnoles)* (c.1922-23; fig 1.5).[116]

Unaware of this postcard source, Adamowicz fails to recognise how *The Spanish Night's* ambivalent dalliance with the classical tradition is mediated by a rival engagement with the ephemeral objects of Spanish popular culture. Like Pierre before her, Adamowicz also misses the full extent of Picabia's classical allusions. The placement of the targets in *The Spanish Night,* I would suggest*,* slyly configures the painting's *Espagnole* as a Venus pudica. A comparison of the right-hand side of the painting with a contemporaneous postcard of the *Venus de' Medici* makes this clear (fig. 1.6).[117] Picabia not only replicates the sculpture's basic morphology, substituting targets for hands, he also imitates the formal conventions governing the *Venus de' Medici's*

[115] ibid. 'Shooting the Classical Body' is the title of chapter 3.

[116] This postcard is actually one of a set. I suspect that another postcard in the series may provide the template for the male figure in *Spanish Night*, his jacket having the same three dangling, tassels as the one worn by the man in the postcard.

[117] I am not suggesting the *Venus de' Medici* is the painting's definitive source, only that the *Spanish Night* references a painting or sculpture of this type.

photographic reproduction: white female figure set against a black background; head in profile with the hair tied up at the back; torso frontally parallel to the picture plane; silhouette emphasised at the expense of sculptural values.

Picabia's mobilisation of classical tropes in *The Spanish Night* does more than simply mock the Return to Order. The combination of targets and pudica pose configure the *Espagnole* as an object of violence and eroticism, a theme that will be more fully explored in Chapter 3, where Picabia's reliance on postcard sources will also be elaborated in more depth.

Catalogue Raisonné (2015-) and Retrospective (2016-17)

The last few years have seen a growing interest in the *Espagnoles*. The exhibition *Singulier idéal* (2002) included an expansive selection of *Espagnoles,* which it strategically grouped together.[118] Presumably, this was done in order to avoid having to situate them accurately within the chronological narrative of Picabia's career, Pierre's monograph having thrown their dating into doubt.

Unsatisfied with this solution, the curators of the most recent Picabia retrospective *Our Heads are Round so our Thoughts can Change Direction* (2016-17) considered including an *Espagnole* in every section of this exhibition.[119] Unable to locate and secure enough quality loans in time, this idea was dropped. In the end, only two *Espagnoles* were shown in each of the show's venues. Displayed in spaces dedicated to Picabia's 1922 Dalmau show, they were curatorial positioned at the threshold of his Dada years and his later figurative paintings.[120]

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[118] *Francis Picabia: Singulier idéal* (Paris: Paris Musée d'Art Moderne, 2002), Exhibition catalogue.

[119] Anne Umland, conversation with the author, 15 February 2017.

[120] *Spanish Woman* (1922) was included in both venues. *Spanish Woman with Brown Comb* (c.1921-25) was shown in New York and *Espagnole* (1902/1920) at Zurich. The catalogue

Dating has also proven a problem for the esteemed body of scholars producing the Picabia catalogue raisonné.[121] Set to become the definitive Picabia resource, the published volumes provide a wealth of new information about the *Espagnoles'* exhibition histories and provenance but little more in the way of interpretation. A footnote in the first volume notes the problems the *Espagnoles'* dating presents but leaves the issue hanging, promising to address it in Volume II.[122] The second volume, however, does not return to the question, although Pierre does briefly discuss the *Espagnoles*, rehearsing some of his earlier thoughts on the subject.[123] Recently, a third volume of the catalogue raisonné has appeared. Primarily concerned with untangling the complex chronology of Picabia's paintings of the 1930s, this publication again all but ignores the *Espagnoles*. However, I will return to this publication briefly in the Conclusion, where I discuss how my thesis intersects with the most recent scholarship. Now, though, I will outline the structure of the rest of the thesis.

Thesis Outline

A comprehensive analysis of all the *Espagnoles* is beyond the scope of the current inquiry. Fortunately, such an enterprise is undesirable. Given the high degree of repetition, an exhaustive survey of the *Espagnoles* would be counterproductive. Instead, I have chosen to focus on a handful of illustrative examples. Tracking the chronological development and accumulating signification of the *Espagnoles*, each chapter is structured around a detailed discussion of a single painting or a cluster of interrelated works. The second

reproduces all three. *Spanish Woman* is known to be one of several *Espagnoles* shown at the Dalmau in 1922, but there is no evidence that the other two paintings were part of this exhibition. Their inclusion in this context, however, is not unreasonable.

[121] Pierre is a member of this body. While the rest of the group accept the merits of his thesis, they have chosen to tentatively accept Picabia's dating of the *Espagnoles*.

[122] Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. I*, 106, n.16.

[123] Pierre, "Mechanical Udnie: A Theatre of Automata in the Days of Dada" in Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 146-181.

chapter, however, does not address the *Espagnoles* at all but instead focuses on Picabia's canonical Dada drawing *The Virgin Saint* (1920).

No doubt, a chapter on *The Virgin Saint* will strike the reader as incongruous, or at the very least in need of explanation. Its inclusion helps develop previously raised points while opening up new themes that will be pursued in the subsequent analysis of the *Espagnoles*. As has been repeatedly emphasised, the *Espagnoles* only emerge as a coherent body of work at the end of 1920 in the context of the Return to Order and Paris Dada. It is, therefore, useful to have a broader understanding of this conjuncture. *The Virgin Saint* allows us to think through Picabia's concerns at this point. The themes of *The Virgin Saint* – carnality, spirituality, and nationality – it will be argued, are also those of the *Espagnoles*, although these continuities and conceptual resonances will only become fully apparent as the thesis unfolds.

Prefacing a discussion of the *Espagnoles* with a consideration of a canonical Dada work then helps embed Picabia's painted señoritas in the rest of his oeuvre, connecting its current margins with its accepted centre. Previously, scholars have only posited links between the *Espagnoles* and the Dada machines, and although I will draw out further connections between these two strands in due course, there are drawbacks to this approach.[124] Yoking together the *Espagnoles* and the machines threatens to preserve the very separation it promises to overcome. This pairing tacitly perpetuates the opposition of avant-garde machine and kitsch figuration, compounding the issue by coding the former masculine and the latter feminine.[125] This problem is made more acute by the fact that the coupling of *Espagnole* and machines

[124] As noted in the Introduction, Wilson suggest a dialectical link between the *Espagnoles* and the machines without elaborating on what it might be. Pierre connects their dehumanising artificiality. Baker briefly parallels them to Duchamp's Bride and Bachelors. See Wilson, "The Late Picabia", 29; Pierre, "Mechanical Udnie", 166; and Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, 260.

[125] The classic account of the association of mass culture with the feminine is Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture Postmodernism* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), Chapter 3 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other'.

is premised on an analogy with Duchamp's Bride and Bachelors. Unquestionably, Duchamp's Bride informs the construction of the *Espagnoles*, something which will be elaborated on in Chapter 4, but if gender in the machine paintings is ambivalent at best, then ascribing these mechanical hermaphrodites the role of bachelor is reductive. Moreover, this model risks making Picabia's practice subservient to Duchamp's, a man whose work provides no precedent or purchase on his friend's Spanish enthusiasms.[126] Focusing on the *Virgin Saint* avoids these issues. It provides an alternative ground with which to test the *Espagnoles'* affinity to Dada, without locking them into a binary relationship with machines or elevating Duchamp into their master referent.

In addition to providing the necessary contextual and thematic preliminaries for a discussion of the *Espagnoles*, the chapter on *The Virgin Saint* also makes some claims in its own right. Against the consensual belief that the painting refers to the Virgin Mary, I propose Joan of Arc as a potential transformative point of reference, contextualising the painting in relationship to the postwar monopolisation of the Saint's image by the French Far Right. This conjunctural analysis is supported by a formal reading of the work that debunks its status as a random ink splat. This, in turn, opens out onto a discussion of how form and formlessness are discursively entwined with issues of reproduction, showing how the current readings of *The Virgin Saint* as either blood or semen are complementary to each other. Finally, I address how the drawing's formal strategies and thematic resonances can be related to Duchamp's contemporaneous work *Dust Breeding*.

Following this detour into *The Virgin Saint*, each of the subsequent three chapters develops a specific reading of the *Espagnoles* emphasising their relationship to one of the scurrilous ink blot's themes: eroticism, Catholicism, nationalism.

[126] Duchamp did title an early version of his Bride motif *Dulcinea* after a character in Don Quixote, but this is the exception that otherwise proves the rule.

Chapter 3 considers the *Espagnoles* of the early 1920s that are roughly contemporaneous with *The Virgin Saint*. The evolution of Spanish motifs in Picabia's work before 1920 is addressed, tracking the emergence of the *Espagnoles*. An extended consideration of *Spanish Women* (1922), also known as *Spanish Woman with Cigarette*, helps unpick the discursive construction of Spanish women in French culture, raising questions about the extent to which Picabia perpetuates and engages with popular cultural representations of the Spanish women as erotic object and *femme fatale*.

Chapter 4 addresses Picabia's Transparencies, a suite of which he structured around Spanish motifs. Combining sacred and secular references, these paintings configure the *Espagnole* as equal parts Virgin Mary and Spanish Maya. Indeed, one Transparency combines the image of a Virgin of Montserrat with that of a smoking *Espagnole*, directly bringing together themes discussed in the previous two chapters. The use of transparency in conjunction with the recurrent imposition of *Espagnole* and toreador in the Transparencies is also addressed, returning us to the Duchampian dynamic of the Bride and the Bachelors. Expanding on this topic in relation to the Transparencies avoids the problems outlined above, allowing Picabia's dialogue with Duchamp around specific Catholic themes to emerge as an aspect, though not an exclusive referent, in the *Espagnoles*.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides an extended analysis of Picabia's painting *The Spanish Revolution*, returning us to issues of nationalism and war, first broached in the chapter on *The Virgin Saint*. To date, reflections on artistic responses to the Spanish Civil War have primarily been confined to accounts of a handful of works, most notably *Guernica*, included at the Spanish 1936 Pavillion. Consideration of *The Spanish Revolution* complicates this picture of aesthetic modernism circa 1936 and its relationship to politics. I discuss the sources for this painting, which I have uncovered, arguing that French reporting of the Spanish Civil War and fear of the spread of anarchist revolution to France inform the construction of Picabia's painting far more than the actual situation in Spain. First, though, it is necessary to address *The Virgin Saint*.

2. *The Virgin Saint* (1920): The Blood of France

Francis Picabia's blasphemously titled drawing, *The Virgin Saint*, first appeared in the twelfth issue of his journal *391* (fig. 2.0). Originally published in May 1920, Picabia's iconoclastic gesture is now canonical. An icon in its own right, *The Virgin Saint* continues to serve as the ubiquitous visual shorthand of Dada's nihilistic, anti-art tendencies within general accounts of modernism, despite the existence of a large body of specialist literature that expands the significance of the drawing well beyond these persistent clichés. Indeed, *The Virgin Saint* has been subject to such wide-ranging interpretations that George Baker has complained it is in danger of becoming the Rorschach blot of art history.[127] For Baker, it seems the drawing solicits projection rather than analysis, the semantically virgin work irresponsibly impregnated with meaning by iconographic and contextually minded historians. While it is easy to see how *The Virgin Saint's* indeterminacy of form might result in over-determined explanations, there are some broad points of convergence within the scholarship. Many of these recurrent interpretive themes, most of which can be traced back to the drawing's original reception, are already mentioned by William Camfield in his foundational Picabia monograph.

Camfield's claim that *The Virgin Saint* is 'unmodified by aesthetic considerations', for example, anticipates Baker's insistence on its *informe* properties.[128] Picabia's splash is also widely regarded as symbolising bodily fluid. Tears and lactation, urine and excrement, have been all been suggested, but it is blood and semen that are the most persistent references. Here, Camfield merely hints at that the drawings sexual nature.[129] Criticising his timidity in developing this theme, David Hopkins has provided the definitive account of *The Virgin Saint* in terms of sexual defloration. The drawing is, after

[127] Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail,* 38.

[128] Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times*,141.

[129] ibid., 141.

all, quite literally, a stained sheet.[130] With connotations of both ejaculate and blood, the splash signifies the collective residue – the combined 'sexcrement' – of the virgin's first sexual encounter and forms a scurrilous critique of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. Building on Hopkins' insights, Elizabeth Legge has further developed the drawing's religious associations, expanding the range of bodily fluids under consideration.[131]

In what follows I question not only the extent to which the drawing is unmodified by aesthetic concerns but also the degree to which the drawing acts as a critique of the Immaculate Conception, a reading premised on the assumption that the titular virgin saint is Mary. The second half of this essay considers the magnitude of Picabia's aesthetic indifference and his use of chance in the construction of *The Virgin Saint*. Through a close formal reading of its *informe* qualities, I deduce the likely process of its production from its finished form, exploring the evolution of the image from the original drawing to its final presentation in *391*. As late as 2007, when the last substantial texts to critically engage with *The Virgin Saint* were published, the original drawing was considered lost.[132] Its re-emergence in 2008, when it was acquired by the Centre Pompidou, provides new visual evidence about the evolution of *The Virgin Saint,* which to date has not been considered in the scholarship.[133] The form of *The Virgin Saint* will then be tied to the wider discourse of the Return to Order before being used to explore new links between Picabia's work and

[130] Hopkins, *Dada's Boys,* 15-41. An earlier version of the relevant chapter appeared as David Hopkins, "Questioning Dada's Potency: Picabia's *La Sainte Vierge* and the Dialogue with Duchamp", *Art History* 15, no. 3 (September, 1992): 317-333.

[131] Elizabeth Legge, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Virgin: Francis Picabia's *La Sainte Vierge*", *Word and Image* 12, no. 2 (April-June 1996): 218-242.

[132] Both Hopkins and Baker, who published their important commentaries in 2007, seem unaware of the existence of the original drawing, which Hopkins refers to as 'lost'. Hopkins, *Dada's Boys,* 222.

[133] This chapter was written prior to the publication of the second volume of the catalogue raisonné which does briefly consider some of the issues raised here. See Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol II*, 288.

that of Marcel Duchamp. First, however, I want to consider another candidate for the role of virgin saint.

Although it is an entirely natural supposition that *The Virgin Saint* refers to Mary, and the arguments developed from this assumption are sophisticated and compelling, the designation virgin saint alone is not enough to substantiate Mary as the sole referent. The Catholic Church recognises over fifty virgin saints. Here, I will argue that the drawing also refers to a second blessed virgin: Joan of Arc.[134] This shift from Mary to Joan provides a new framework for addressing *The Virgin Saint,* but one that helps continue existing conversations around the themes of Catholicism and bloodshed within the scholarship.[135] In particular, this saintly substitution both develops and substantiates Legge's claim that the ink stands 'metonymically for blood' and that the drawing alludes to the carnage of World War One.[136] By embedding *The Virgin Saint* within the nationalist discourse of the Return to Order and its postwar cult of Joan of Arc, a more historicised interpretation of these themes

[134] *The Virgin Saint* is the most common translation of the drawing's French title, *La Sainte Vierge.* The argument of this chapter over-relies on this translation and is compromised by the alternative translations Holy Virgin and Blessed Virgin, both of which emphatically refer to the Virgin Mary. Nonetheless, my claim that Joan is a pertinent point of reference is still supported by Picabia's conflation of Joan of Arc with an ink bottle, and by the historical context of the drawing's production, the details of which are discussed in the chapter.

[135] Hopkins has also revealingly traced *The Virgin Saint's* myriad connections to Duchamp, contextualising the drawing in and a shared homosocial dialogue around androgyny, gender and crossdressing. In this regard it should be note that substituting Mary for Joan, undoubtable the most famous crossdresser in French history, potentially supports rather than distracts from his arguments. As Mary Louise Roberts has shown, the Joan of Arc haircut gained in notoriety in the first half of the 1920s, with the *garçonne* citing Joan as a precedent for her perceived mannish looks. Always a dapper dresser, Picabia's was friendly with some of the leading fashion designers of his day and both his wife and mistress favoured contemporary looks. Picabia's close friend Christian (Georges Herbiet) even inscribes the name Antonine de Paris – the man who revived the haircut – on his drawing *L'Oeuf Pourri*, (1921), a work that closely relates to Picabia's *L'Oeil Cacodylate* (1921). Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 63-87.

[136] Legge, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Virgin", 232-33.

can be provided, concretely grounding the drawing in the period's conflicted, cultural politics.

Picabia's writing supports the contention that *The Virgin Saint* relates to Joan of Arc. In his poem 'Chimney Sperm', which appeared in the same issue of *391* as *The Virgin Saint*, Picabia makes a revealing reference to Joan. Midway through the poem, we find the incongruent line 'Joan of Arc ink bottle'.[137] The close presence of this phrase and its obvious implications for our understanding of *The Virgin Saint* has not previously been considered.[138] If Joan of Arc is an ink bottle, then the splashing of its contents would symbolise *her* blood and by extension that of the nation, Joan having claimed to be the blood of France. Furthermore, if the production of the drawing utilised, as is almost certain, an ink dropper inserted into a bottle then *The Virgin Saint* would enact its sexual metaphors – both penetration and ejaculation – in the process of its making.[139] At the very least, the accumulation of innuendos within 'Chimney Sperm' operate to cast doubt on Joan of Arc's purity. Undoubtedly, Mary makes for a more scandalous target, one more fitting with Picabia's characteristic love of shock and lack of restraint, but questioning Joan's virginity has both precedent and period logic.

Blood and Soil: Joan of Arc and the Far Right

Even within her lifetime, Joan's virginity was a contentious issue. Inspected by the court of Charles VII before her departure to battle and by the Burgundian faction following her capture, the verification of her maidenhood became tantamount to establishing her sanctity. Inevitably, over-concern in this matter made for easy burlesque. Voltaire's scandalous *La Pucelle d'Orléans,* for

[137] 'Jeanne d'Arc bouteille à l'encre'. 'Chimney Sperm', *391* no.12, Paris (March, 1920) reproduced in Francis Picabia, *La Sainte Vierge* (Antwerp: Ronny van de Velde, 1993), Exhibtion catalogue. An English translation is available in , 202-3.

[138] Legge has mentioned this poem in relation to *The Virgin Saint,* but makes no reference to this particular line. Legge, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Virgin", 220.

[139] After numerous attempts at trying to recreate this drawing, I believe this is the most likely way it was produced.

example, was unflinching in its satire of Joan's nocturnal temptations.[140] *The Virgin Saint* can, therefore, be situated in a lineage of polemical satire that extends at least as far back as the Enlightenment. As Voltaire's parody indicates, the modern origins of this satire emerge from a Republican critique of the *ancien régime* and Catholicism. By 1920, however, virtually the whole spectrum of political opinion had appropriated or made appeals to Joan, attempting to articulate her as a symbol for their rival brands of post-revolution nationhood. If the Far Left proved the notable exception, the Far Right provided the staunchest defenders of Joan's legacy. Ultra-nationalist Charles Maurras, Far Right Republican Maurice Barrès and proto-fascist, political theorist George Sorel all aligned Joan with their causes. So did Maurras's associate George Valois, the future founder of the short-lived fascist party *Le Faisceau*. In the years prior to the publication of Picabia's drawing it became part of the rhetoric of Maurras's *Action Française* to insist on Joan's impeachable virginity, contrasting it with the sullied reputation of the Republic's Marianne.[141] By situating *The Virgin Saint* against the increasing politicisation of Joan's virginity and the prevalent public discourse around her in 1920, a strong case emerges for considering her a pertinent reference for the drawing.

In 1920, Joan of Arc was an issue of topical and political importance in France. The long, arduous process of her canonisation was coming to an end. Fifty-one years and three popes since the campaign calling for her sanctification had first been launched the Vatican finally completed the hundred and eighty-degree turn that saw the once excommunicated heretic and former whore of Armagnac become officially recognised as a virgin saint.[142] With the issue of her virginity settled during the devil's advocate's case against her, Pope

[140] On Voltaire, see Nora M. Heimann, *Joan of Arc in French Culture (1700-1855): From Satire to Sanctity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1988), 13-43.

[141] I will italicise Action Française when referring to the newspaper and leave it un-italicised when referring to the associated movement.

[142] The first petitioned for Joan's canonisation was initiated by Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans and presented to Pius IX on 8 May 1869. The Devils advocate's case lasted from 1888-1920 after the Vatican inaugurated the official process at the behest of Leo XIII. On 6 January 1904 Pius X, declared Joan 'venerable' and then 'holy' in 1909, when she was officially beatified.

Benedict XV presided over her canonisation on 16 May 1920, in a widely publicised ceremony attended by approximately 30,000 people.

In the same year, another long-running campaign also came to fruition: the Third Republic finally legislated a public holiday honouring the Maid of Orleans, first agitated for in 1884. The near simultaneous resolution of these two campaigns was hardly coincidental. The war had accelerated both processes, with Joan being called upon to unite the flock and the nation against the twin dangers of socialism and atheism. Cynicism and political expediency, as much as belief and benevolence, were the motivating factors as the secular and the sacred staked their rival claims to symbolic ownership of the saint. It was against the backdrop of these debates, with her canonisation pending, that Picabia produced *The Virgin Saint.*

As an empty signifier, Joan had long been a contested figure. Elements of the Left were drawn to her peasant origins, seeing in her the prototype of the Revolution's Liberty. Anti-clericalists and Protestants seized upon her condemnation by Catholic trial. Catholics viewed her as a devout and inspired mystic; and for monarchists, especially the Orleanist factions, she was a loyal knight of the king. Appropriated by republicans and royalists, squabbled over by Catholics, Protestants and atheists, by 1920, when the 'apogee of her cult was reached' Joan was an overcharged and overdetermined icon in French culture.[143] In her valuable examination of the historiography of the saint, Nadia Margolis points out the central importance of the writings of the secular historian Jules Michelet (1798-1879) in both reviving and reconstructing Joan's post-revolutionary legacy.[144] Already referred to as a saint by Michelet, his writings 'spawn virtually all of Joan's future political and artistic reincarnations' and largely set the terms of her political contestation

[143] Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 223. See also Heimann, *Joan of Arc in French Culture,* Chapters 1 and 5.

[144] See, Nadia Margolis, "Rewriting the Right: High Priest, Heros and Hooligans in the Portrayal of Joan of Arc (1824-1945)" in *Joan of Arc, a Saint for all Reasons: Studies in Myths and Politics*, ed. Dominique. Goy-Blanquet (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 59-104.

throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[145] After Michelet, Joan was no longer a provincial figure but an unstable trinity, part revolutionary symbol of nationhood, part blessed virgin in the model of Mary, and part Christian martyr in the model of Christ; the 'Christ of France', as Alexandre Dumas would later call her. Napoleon tried to utilise her secular and saintly connotations to help reconcile Church and State, but throughout the Second Empire and the Third Republic, she was a highly contested figure.

During Picabia's lifetime, it was ultimately the Right that proved most successful at articulating Joan as a symbol for their ideological causes.[146] During the Third Republic, strands of conservative nationalism and proto-fascism epitomised by Maurras, Barrès and Sorel, revered Joan. Subsequently, the neo-Catholic revival that was underway following the separation of Church and State in 1905 was increasingly inflected by anti-parliamentarianism. In particular, Action Française monopolised Joan for its cause, placing her on almost equal footing with the king.[147] In 1910, Action Française published Charles Péguy's *The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc* as part of a patriotic revival of interest in the saint. It was warmly received by Barrès and Sorel, for whom Joan's harsh Catholicism expressed 'the eternal soul of France'.[148]

The material realities of the Right's ideological claim to be the exclusive legislators of Joan's social meaning would become unmistakably apparent in

[145] Margolis, "Rewriting the Right", 60.

[146] On Joan's appropriation by the French Right, see Margolis, "Rewriting the Right"; Margolis, "The 'Joan Phenomenon' and the French Right" in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996), 265-287; Jennifer Kilgore, "Joan of Arc as Propaganda Motif from the Dreyfus Affair to the Second World War", *Lisa* VI, no. 1 (2008), http://lisa.revues.org/519 (accessed 29 October 2015); Martha Hanna "Icon and Ideology: Images of Joan of Arc in the Idiom of Action Française, 1908-1930", *French Historical Studies* 14 (1985): 215-39.

[147] Margolis, "Rewriting the Right", 69.

[148] Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 83.

1909. Following reports that Sorbonne professor Francois-Amédée Thalamas had questioned Joan's sanctity, military prowess and virginity, he became a target for the Camelots du Rio, a proto-fascist youth movement assembled from the street vendors of *Action Française*. The Camelots du Rio attacked the imprudent educator, disrupting his Wednesday classes and those of other Jewish professors for the remainder of the year. Action Française celebrated this violence and provided financial support for those imprisoned for their part in it.[149] Their campaign of intimidation only dissipated with the stationing of armed guards outside the Sorbonne.

The Thalamas Affair resonated with wider concerns about educational standards following the separation of Church and State. More crucially, it became caught in the slipstream of the ongoing fallout of the Dreyfus Affair, the ramifications of which marked the political fault lines of pre-war French politics. Not only had Dreyfus recently been exonerated in 1906, but Émile Zola's famous defender, Anatole France, had just published his book, *The Life of Joan of Arc* (1908), which once again derided the saint. The proximity of these events ensured that any critique of Joan became synonymous with a pro-Dreyfus position, feeding the Far Right's paranoia of an international Jewish plot aimed at undermining the French military. As Mark Antliff notes, 'Maurras never tired of contrasting Joan, as the embodiment of plebeian, Catholic France, with the wealthy, rootless cosmopolitanism of the Jew'.[150] With the defence of Joan now becoming the Right's self-appointed task, 'From 1908-1914 the *Action Française* sought to unequivocally establish Joan of Arc as the symbol of non-Republican France'.[151]

The First World War intensified the cult of Joan. The European conflict accelerated the Catholic revival as people struggled to find explanation and comfort for the horrors and sacrifices of the war years. There was also an attendant rise of diverse forms of spirituality and religious practice outside of

[149] Hanna, "Icon and Ideology", 222.

[150] Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism*, 91.

[151] Hanna, "Icon and Ideology", 217.

the Church's control. Virgin sightings and virgin cults flourished. While these were typically Marian, there was also a growing adoption of St. Thérèse and Joan of Arc as favoured saints.[152] The Vatican's rapid post-war canonisation of both Thérèse and Joan registers the desperate attempt to bring these cults under official, ecumenical control. In particular, Joan, the Warrior Saint, became the unofficial patron of the French army. Her image was carried into battle. Planes were named in her honour. Even the reflection of a German spotlight on a cloud was reportedly misinterpreted as a sign of her divine presence.

During this period Joan was also an increasingly prevalent figure within French popular culture. The five hundredth anniversary of her birth fell in 1912, stimulating a growing interest in the saint and a popular appetite for her cinematic and literary representation. This momentum continued throughout the war, but not without rearticulating her meaning in the process. Films, such as Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman* (1916), whose prologue depicted contemporary soldiers discovering the remnants of her sword in a trench, help illustrate how quickly Joan became a 'metaphor of France's martyrdom during World War I'.[153] A contemporary postcard, a version of which is tellingly captioned by Barrès, also indicates the extent to which Joan had become emblematic of anti-German unity and the symbolic defender of the *Union Sacrée* (fig. 2.1). Barrès, in particular, became closely associated with the saint, authoring a book endorsed by Maurras, *Autour Jeanne d'Arc* (1916), which he dedicated to the Federation of the War Wounded.[154] Following the war, the Right consolidated its hegemonic control over the saint's conflicting legacies. Re-proposing a national day of celebration in her honour, Barrès resumed a cause he had first agitated for as president of the League of Patriots

[152] J. M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 66.

[153] Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 270.

[154] This was Barrès second work on Joan following his *Le Jubilé de Jeanne d'Arc* (1912).

in 1914. As numerous publicity photographs testify, Barrès maintained a highly visible connection with the saint (fig. 2.2).[155]

By 1920 Paris Dada's enemies were lining up behind Joan of Arc. Neither Maurras, Barrès nor Benedict XV's public appropriation of Joan could be congenial to Dada. The group had metaphorically attacked the Pope at the beginning of the year. [156] Action Française had complained about the Dadaists in February 1920, eliciting a response from Picabia.[157] More importantly, Barrès association with the Maid alone would be enough to condemn her in the eyes of Paris Dada. Sentenced in absentia for crimes against the security of the mind, Barrès was the accused in the mock Dada Trail (13 May 1921), and a regular target of Dada's tireless invective. The Barrès Trial may have acted as a catalyst for Picabia's separation from the movement, but it would be wrong to assume he held any sympathy for Barrès.[158] On the contrary, Barrès virulent nationalism was an anathema to Picabia, who, as we saw in the Introduction, managed to avoid seeing action in the First World War, and now found his national origins and dubious war record subject to public scrutiny. Picabia's war avoidance, however, testifies as much to his commitments as his desire for self-preservation.

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[155] Barrès was photographed by Maurice-Louis Branger standing in front of Frémiet's statue of Joan of Arc in the Place des pyramides during a demonstration by the League of Patriots (14 July 1912). The statue had been a common rallying point for protest since 1894. Barrès also posed for a series of press photographs with Alice Dumars who appeared as Joan at the Joan of Arc fête (8-15 June 1913).

[156] On 26 May 1920 at the Dada Festival balloons were released labelled with the names of individuals suspect to Dada, including the pope. Phillipe Soupault then attempted to burst them with a knife. Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris,* 127.

[157] *Action Française* (14 February 1920) included the article 'Dada is only an Inconsistent Farce' as well as a response by statement by Picabia, which is reprinted in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 182.

[158] Picabia found the idea of Dada courts and sentencing, even in the form of a parodic mimicry of the State apparatus, contrary to the spirit of the movement. Ever restless, he was already growing bored of organised Dada. His interest and influence were declining and the homosocial bonds that united the group starting to strain.

Picabia subscribed to an extreme form of anarcho-individualism. Philosophically, his libertarian world view was grounded in the work of Max Stirner and Friedrich Nietzsche, who justified his natural self-centeredness and provided a precedent for his polemical aphorisms.[159] Politically, however, Picabia remained forever under-informed and over-opinionated. Arrogance compounded ignorance and Picabia often made highly unfortunate public statements. Naturally, Picabia's pronounced individualism meant he loathed collective politics, a theme we will return to in Chapter 5, but it also inoculated him against the nationalist rhetoric of the *Union Sacrée*. Picabia's brand of egoism rejected any diminution of individual power, seeing in every moral standard a coercive mechanism for subjugating the individual and curtailing personal freedom. The Third Republic's preaching of Joan's 'zeal for the Fatherland as an antidote for … egotism' was antithetical to Picabia's egotistical philosophy.[160] Picabia had little investment in any of the terms Joan

[159] Theresa Papanikolas notes that Picabia also wrote for the anarchist periodicals *Les Humbles* and *La Forge.* Her work is the most significant general account of the influence of anarchism on Paris Dada. Regrettably, however, she makes little attempt to discuss how Picabia's politics related to his visual practice. Theresa Papanikolas, *Anarchism and the Advent of Paris Dada: Art and Criticism, 1914-1924* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 8. Picabia's interest in Stirner and Nietzsche is discussed by numerous authors: Janse van Rensburg, "Picabia and Nietzsche", *South African Journal of Cultural Art History* 1, no. 4 (1987); Allan Antliff, "Anarchy, Politics and Dada" in *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York*, ed. Francis M. Naumann (New York: Whitney Museum, 1996); Borràs et al., *Francis Picabia: Máquinas y Españolas*, 20-21; Allan Antliff, *Anarchy and Art: From the Fall of the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007), Chapter 3; Francis M. Naumann, "Aesthetic Anarchy" in *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia*, 59-76; Christopher Green and Jens M Daehner, *Modern Antiquity: Picasso, de Chirico, Léger, Picabia* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2011), 7-9; Sarah Hayden, "*Jésus-Christ Rastaquouère*: Francis Picabia's Anti-Art Anti-Christ,", *The Irish Journal of French Studies* 13 (2013): 41-67; Sara Cochran, "Needing the Sun: Francis Picabia and the French Riviera 1925-45" (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2004), 158-160. Details of Picabia's Nietzsche appropriations and references in his own writing can be found in the accompanying commentary and footnotes to Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*.

[160] Carolyn Snipes-Hoyt, "Jeanne d'Arc Visits Paris in 1912: Dramatis Personae and Personification", *The French Review* 73, no. 6 (May 2000): 1141-1154. For a wider consideration of Joan in French education, see Margaret H. Darrow, "In the Land of Joan of

of Arc was said to embody. For him, God and Nation were unfortunate constructs that ultimately acted as instruments of domination. Contemptuous of the military and the rhetoric of duty and self-sacrifice, Picabia was naturally antagonistic to the abstract idealism of crown, cross, and county. 'One dies as a hero or as an idiot', he memorably claimed, adding caustically, 'which is the same thing'.[161] This scathing caveat, exemplary of the Picabia's habitual insensitivity as much as his beliefs, poured scorn on the post-war cult of the dead.[162] Accusatively Picabia continued, 'You like death for others. Death, death, death'.[163] The timing of this pronouncement is significant. It appeared in *Dadaphone (issue 7 of Dada)*, a journal whose publication was deliberately timed to coincide with that of *391* and the public reception of *The Virgin Saint*.[164] This triplicated repetition of death confirms *The Virgin Saint's* most obvious connotation, bloodshed, preoccupied Picabia at the time.

A more exact understanding of Picabia's attitude to Joan of Arc, though, emerges in another of his contemporaneous writings. On 10 June 1920, Picabia completed his scandalous, semi-autobiographical novel-cum-manifesto, *Jesus Christ Rastaquoère*, just four months after *The Virgin Saint.* It is not unreasonable to assume that Picabia was working on the book at the time he produced the drawing. The blasphemous titles link the two works, and

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Arc: The Civic Education of Girls and the Prospect of War in France, 1871-1914", *French Historical Studies* 31, no. 2 (2008): 263-291.

[161] Picabia, "Dada Cannibal Manifesto" in *Dadaphone* no.7 (March 1920): 3 reprinted in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 204.

[162] This is a consistent theme in Picabia's writings and one only aggravated by Apollinaire's being awarded the Legion of Honour. About military honours Picabia claims, 'they've created an order for the dead. Every ten years a commission will open the coffins and the corpse best preserved against maggots will be decorated with the white cross. They'll pin it in place of the nose'. He also notes that 'Men covered in crosses bring cemeteries to the mind' Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 299 and 279.

[163] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster,* 204.

[164] Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris*, 152.

the novel also questions the Virgin's sexual purity.[165] Writing in the *Rasterquoère* Picabia makes explicit reference to Joan:

> Evil for evil's sake, the cerebral lobes of Joan of Arc, those of Marshal de Rais, on the field azure or the grey matter, the Maid and the maidens, and finally the monks of madness: don't you think we need to leave all of that on the street corner? I much prefer the mystifications of Jesus Christ Rastaquoère. [166]

Here, Picabia places his veiled alter ego, the eponymous Rastaquoère, in opposition to both Joan of Arc and her companion-in-arms Marshal de Rais. A scandalous figure in French history, the Baron Gilles de Rais became famous as a celebrated defender of France in the Hundred Years War but infamous as a practitioner of ritual child sacrifices. The discovery of corpses of multiple children on his land led to his confession of mass infanticide and subsequent execution in 1440. [167]

In evoking Joan of Arc and the Baron at this moment in French history, Picabia is far from innocent. There are highly charged resonances to this coupling. Picabia implicitly asserts a continuity between the soldier-serial killer and the saint. In doing so, he also suggests a link between the contemporary veneration of Joan of Arc as a symbol of France and the recent death of many of her sons. Joan, the Catholic motherland's most famous warrior, concisely embodies for Picabia the unpleasant entanglement of religion, nationalism and violence.

For the anti-Parliamentary, pro-Catholic Right, Joan too acted as a convenient symbol of national and religious martyrdom, a symbol of a collective history

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[165] 'THE BLESSED VIRGIN DANCES THE TANGO WITH THE GREAT PIMP […] the Blessed Virgin is in fact the true proprietress of prostitutes', Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 239.

[166] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 229.

[167] Nonetheless, Picabia's friend and biographer Pierre Massot still claimed to prefer Gilles de Rais to Joan of Arc. See Pierre Massot, *Francis Picabia* (Paris: P. Seghers, 1966), 41.

that they appealed to in the construction of a contemporary identity. Inevitably comparisons were drawn between the supreme sacrifice of the French soldiers and the story of Christ. The centrality of the sacrificed son within the Christian narrative of redemption and resurrection not only served the understandable need to memorialise the war dead but, more problematically, dovetailed with Far Right rhetoric. As Mark Antliff points out, fascist leader George Valois compared the 'combatant's spiritual transformation to that of Joan of Arc, and even to that of the Virgin Mary as expressed in the Magnificat'.[168]

As stated, this combination of nationalism, Catholicism, and militarism was repugnant to Picabia. His extreme individualism and belief in the ultimate self-serving nature of authority leading him to mock the incredulity of 'all the madmen of the world, […] all those who believe in the Blessed Virgin, or Joan of Arc'.[169] Like Valois, but with an antithetical evaluation, Picabia brings Joan and Mary into alignment.

If the persistent readings of *The Virgin Saint* are correct, then, in linking the drawing with bloodshed, it may not be the hypothetical defloration of the Virgin Mary that best links the two terms but their simultaneous embodiment in the figure of Joan the Virgin Warrior. Blood, of course, has a privileged place in the lexicon of the extremism, signifying the racial purity Picabia lacked. Bloodshed was also a key part of the rhetoric of the French Far Right, which proselytised the necessity of violence in the process of national regeneration, lauding Joan as the personification of their militant Catholicism.

Blood and Semen: Horizontality and the *Informe*

Before continuing to discuss bloodshed, it is first of all necessary to consider the form of *The Virgin Saint* and in particular how liquidity operates in the construction of the drawing. George Baker has forcefully argued that the form

[168] Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism,* 249.

[169] Picabia, *The Little Review* (London and New York, Autumn, 1921) reproduced in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 276.

of *The Virgin Saint* acts as a meditation on the conditions of drawing.[170] In an inventive reading, Baker compares *The Virgin Saint* to another Picabia drawing, *Young Girl* (*Jeune Fille,* 1920), a simple circular hole cut out of a blank piece of paper (fig. 3.5). Contrasting the former's inimitable, chaotic accident with the latter's repeatable, mechanical geometry, Baker argues that the pair represent Picabia's attempt to map the formal limits of drawing. Baker's attention to the neglected issue of the form of *The Virgin Saint* is salutary and his caution against anthropomorphising the image salient, but his argument has significant limitations.

As appealing as it is, Baker's reading is premised on the internal coherence of Picabia's oeuvre and the flat rejection of iconographic interpretation. Despite the merits and originality of his thesis, Baker's pairing of splash and hole seems to unavoidably reinstate the very sexual connotations that he sets out to avoid. Such a formalist reading also divorces the drawing from any wider history and contentiously brackets out the title, which forms a significant part of its meaning. This ahistorical approach is in danger of becoming unhistorical, attributing to Picabia an understanding of medium more characteristic of a later period of modernism. Tacitly, Picabia is reinserted into – recuperated for – the standard narrative of mainstream modernism premised on an understanding of the formal autonomy of the medium. Not only does Picabia's career largely fall outside of this trajectory, but this model of modernism has historically acted as an intellectual straitjacket that limits our understanding of the rich complexity of Picabia's work.

Moreover, a purely formal reading of *The Virgin Saint* misses how the very language of art history and artistic innovation – creation, production, genius, patronage – is dependent on biological and sexual metaphors.[171] From

[170] Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail,* 33-50.

[171] On the relationship between gender, form, and the terminology of art history, see David Summers, "Form and Gender" in *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, eds. Norman Bryson, Michael Anne Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 384-411.

Aristotle's belief that procreation was the result of semen acting on menstrual blood, through to Nietzsche's claim that there is a link between 'the creative instinct of the artist and the distribution of his *semen* in his blood', the two substances most persistently associated with *The Virgin Saint* have been discursively entwined with notions of creation and creativity.[172] For two thousand years, blood and semen have been intermittently regarded as the formless precursors to form. Any exclusively formal reading of *The Virgin Saint* is automatically compromised by the fact that the *informe* is always already discursively associated with the bodily abject.[173]

Even if it were possible, it would not be desirable to separate *The Virgin Saint's* formal and connotative properties, nor to settle on a singular reading of the drawing as either blood or semen. As we have seen, both substances have long been equated with the formless. The transition of one into the other is also a recurrent theme of Western thought, again dating back to the earliest post-Socratic philosophers. Aristotle, for example, held that menstruation was the result of a women's inability to convert blood into semen, an idea that reoccurs both in alchemical and mystical traditions. In Christianity, the blood of Christ is tied to the notion of resurrection and rebirth, a theme I will return to at the end of this chapter. Gnostic sects even consumed semen as a substitute for Christ's blood.

Interpreting Aristotle's ideas for medieval Catholicism, Archbishop Gilles de Rome reiterated the philosopher's belief that procreation was the result of semen acting on menstrual blood. Gilles was fascinated by the ability of these formless liquids to transform themselves into solid human form. Comparing the process to human reproduction to the production of artworks, Gilles's

[172] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (London: Penguin, 2017), 453 (§ 805).

[173] The same may be said of *ungestalt*, the German equivalent of the *informe*. Valentine Groebner notes that 'the wounded and dead on late-medieval battlefields were described as *ungestalt*, referring to the extreme violence that made humans formless'. It might also be noted, given Picabia's use of dropped ink, that cadaver comes from the Latin *cadere*, to fall. Valentin Groebner, *Defaced: Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Zone Books, 2004),12.

claimed sperm carved the blood like a sculptor. As Beate Fricke elaborates, contemporaneous medieval painters were also fascinated with Gilles problematic, and in particular by the ability of paint – a liquid substance that is combined and dried to produce mimetic appearances – to allegorise this process.[174]

Naturally, Picabia was unlikely to be conscious of the Aristotelian origins of this conceptual heritage. Though as an alumnus of an elite Jesuit college it is highly likely he was familiar with some of the Catholic iterations of the Aristotelian tradition. He was also probably cognisant of some late nineteenth-century variations on the theme, in particular, Nietzsche's belief in the reabsorption of semen into the blood.[175] There can be little doubt, however, that Picabia was familiar with the substitution of blood and paint. Apollinaire notes in the *Cubist Painters*, a book Picabia helped finance, that 'during the French Revolution someone painted with blood'.[176]

The issue of *The Virgin Saint's* form then is worth pursuing in more depth. Two 'studies' exist for the *391* image, which I will refer to as *The Virgin Saint I* and

[174] Beate Fricke, "A Liquid History: Blood and Animation in Late Medieval Art", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 63/64 (2013): 53-69. For a further discussion of the interrelationship of paint and blood, see Anne Dunlop's essay "Drawing Blood" in the same volume.

[175] It is also possible Picabia was aware of this theme through his neurasthenia. A medical belief that the testicles were the source of masculinity led to man being conceived as a spermatic economy. Any diminution in their functioning was held to inevitability affected creativity, physical and mental health. Consequently, any illness was liable to be treated with injections of testicular extracts. Concoctions such as Spermin of Poehl or Boettcher's Sperm Crystals were prescribed to treat neurasthenia. Picabia's American neurologist, Dr Collin's was highly sceptical of such procedures but notes they were 'very considerably used, especially in parts of Europe, in the treatment of neurasthenia'. It is possible Picabia discussed this treatment with Collins or either of his two European Neurologists. Joseph Collins, *The Treatment of Diseases of the Nervous System: A Manual for Practioners* (New York: W. Wood and Company, 1900), 52.

[176] Guillame Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters* (University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2004), 39.

The Virgin Saint II (figs. 2.3 and 2.4).[177] This numbering, which was not given by the artist, could be misleading. The second drawing was designated such following its belated discovery in the archive of Jacques Doucet. It would seem a redundant exercise to make a second version of *The Virgin Saint* once it had received its definitive form and public life in *391*. More plausibly, *The Virgin Saint II* was produced first and deemed unsatisfactory for some reason before the decisive version made. The large A in the top right-hand corner of *The Virgin Saint II* certainly suggests it is primary, although the handwriting has not been verified as Picabia's. At the very least, it seems likely that both drawings were made in a single session. As Adrian Sudhalter has recently noted, the paper stock is identical in each drawing.[178] Both drawings also exhibit a telling combination of straight and torn edges, indicating that they were cut from a larger sheet of paper. Although their edges do not align, it is quite feasible that both drawings originated on the same leaf. Sudhalter hypothesises that both drawings may have originally formed opposite corners of a larger sheet and that potentially another two lost drawings may have been created on the same piece of paper.[179]

However many drawings there originally were, the process of making *The Virgin Saint I* was more involved than is ever given credit. Careful consideration of the image's contours (and how gravity affects liquids) is revealing. The splashes on the paper give a visual record of the ink striking with force, the consensus being this was most likely caused by ink being dropped rather than as the result of expressive gesture. It is highly unlikely, however, that Picabia only made one application of ink. There are several semi-circular or near-circular bulges in the main body of the image, each of which marks the partial circumference of a separate drop of ink. The

[177] It is not typical, but not unprecedented, to number the first image. Normally, this drawing is simply titled *The Virgin Saint*. In order to minimise confusion in the following discussion, I have used *The Virgin Saint* to refer the *391* version and *The Virgin Saint I* to refer to the original drawing.

[178] Adrian Sudhalter, *Dadaglobe Reconstructed* (Zürich: Scheidegger and Spiess, 2016), 123.

[179] Sudhalter, *Dadaglobe*, 123. I would like to thank Dr Sudhalter for discussing this with me and for generously making available her unpublished research on the two drawings.

centrifugal nature of the splashes and the even bleed-out around these circular areas tells us the paper was horizontal when these formed. This much applies to both studies. Elsewhere though in *The Virgin Saint II* the ink does not behave consistently with its sibling. It is noticeable that certain contours of *The Virgin Saint I* are crisp. These lines and perimeters were not produced by the ink's impact but by its flow. The rivulets of ink that stream out of the main 'body' of the image almost certainly need the paper to be vertical, or tilted to form. This is clearly registered by the three lines that run off the paper parallel to each other in the same direction. Following the central of these three lines back through the main body of the image and out the other side we hit a small ink peninsula extending from the main body. This patch noticeably alters course to flow in a direction consistent with that of the other three lines, again suggesting the paper was tilted. However, elsewhere, the ink flows in alternative directions. This is most apparent in the single line that extends towards the top right corner of the page and in the small drip running out of, or into, the main body, which points toward the bottom left-hand corner. As these lines run perpendicular to the set of three, they were produced at a separate point. If there were sufficient ink on the paper to create these drips at the time the three parallel lines formed, they too would have flown in the same direction (and vice versa). Furthermore, if all the lines were produced in one go by tilting the paper, first one way and then the other, we could reasonably expect at least one line to deviate from its course registering the change in orientation. As we have straight lines flowing in contradictory directions, it is certain that they were produced independently of each other.[180]

What the visual record confirms is that *The Virgin Saint* was built up in several stages. Composed is too strong a term, but this is a determined indeterminacy, the often mentioned element of chance used in a minimally mediated way. What is irrefutable, but so far overlooked, is that Picabia cropped the drawings' top and bottom edges – the folds and hatching out are visible in the original – and rotated it to achieve the final form it took when presented in *391*, where it

[180] Alternatively, and this seems more plausible for the single line running toward the upper right, it could have been created by blowing the ink whilst the paper was horizontal.

appears upsidedown in regards to the original. The image was resized, reframed, and reprinted, giving it a uniformity that masks the material inconsistencies and different saturations of the ink in the original.[181] Texture and tint of the paper also changed.[182] A new, clean border was added, and the hand-written title and signature rendered typographically, providing a sharper contrast with the central splash. The title and frame form an integral part of the staging of the final drawing, as it was presented in *391*.[183] Picabia considered the title as a visual element of the work, making considerations about its positioning and presentation. The textual is not a disposable supplement to the visual here.[184] Indeed, Picabia frequently inscribed his titles on to his paintings, setting up a semantic relay between the textual and visual through which his work signified.

If I have laboured this description, it is to make the point that we should not talk about the drawing and its reproduction as if they were the same thing. Nor, given the editing, can we say that the *391* image is completely devoid of aesthetic considerations, or produced entirely according to the laws of chance. Finally, if we can, just about, make out a vague figure in the *391* version of *The Virgin Saint*, we must recognise that Picabia oriented the image in a way that facilitates this reading. Picabia's inverting of the drawing is one cause of this, but it is the shift from the horizontal axis of its production to the vertical axis of

[181] The original image is 33 x 24 cm. *391* issue 12 measures 38 x 56cm with *The Virgin Saint* covering 27 x 23.5 cm of this. Unable to consult an original copy of *391*, I have taken these measurement from the deluxe facsimile edition that replicates the original formatting. Picabia, *La Sainte Vierge* (Antwerp: Ronny Van de Velde, 1993), Exhibition Catalogue.

[182] This change is less apparent in reproductions. The original drawing is on a slightly laid, grey tinted paper; the *391* version on smooth paper, which although now yellowed would originally have been closer to white.

[183] It is not unusual for these elements to be cropped from reproductions. It is debatable if this recurrent exclusion of textual rest on a formalist belief in the self-sufficiency of the visual to generate meaning, or, on the contrary, if the exclusion is predicated on trying to preserve a fundamental lack of meaning for the anti-art gesture.

[184] For a counter-history of modernist premised on titling practices, including those of Picabia, see John C. Welchman, *Invisible Colors: A Visual History of Titles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

its reception that is key. The spatial transition from horizontal to vertical moves the splash from the realm of the index to that of the icon and helps explain the image's strange ability to be read as both representational and as a refusal of representation.

Building on Leo Steinberg's notion of the flatbed picture plane, Rosalind Krauss makes the important distinction between the horizontal – an optical plane visualised within a vertical surface – and horizontality where a work registers that it was physically prone in the process of its production.[185] Associating horizontality with the annihilation of structure, Krauss establishes it as the privileged vector of the *informe.*[186] This distinction is pertinent. Not only does it reinforce the idea of *The Virgin Saint* as an attack on draughtsmanship, but also makes clear that Picabia's drawing is not about describing contour or boundary. Rather the drawing records an 'operational process' registering an event.[187] Central to Krauss's discussion of horizontality is the work of Jackson Pollock and its reception in post-war, North American art.[188] Her genealogy though can be extended back through Dada. Here, horizontality functions as the 'medium' for Dada's experiments with chance.[189] Horizontality is the vector of both Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-14) and Arp's various collages of *Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance* (1916-17), works which provide the most obvious procedural precedents for *The Virgin Saint*.[190] More than either of his colleagues, though,

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[185] Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," in *Jackson Pollock: New Approaches*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe and Pepe Karmel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 155-179.

[186] Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone, 1997).

[187] Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford Univesity Press, 1972), 950.

[188] Krauss begins this discussion in "The Crisis of the Easel Picture", developing it in greatest depth in *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1993), 243-308.

[189] Krauss, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture", 168.

[190] We should not assume chance meant the same thing in each case. Arp's chance works with squares are highly mediated, structured around an implicit grid formation whose residual commitment to platonic form is logically incompatible with the *informe*. Arp's association of chance with the divine and the unconscious are also largely incompatible with Picabia and

Picabia's use of horizontality is tied to the *informe,* operating, as in Bataille's inaugural definition of the term, 'to bring things down in the world'.[191] Although Krauss has cautioned against flatly conflating the horizontal with the abject, she and Yve-Alain Bois have also connected horizontality to a recurrent baseness and bodily leakage that resonates with *The Virgins Saint's* metaphoric connotation of bloodshed.

Like Macbeth's 'damn spot', however, *The Virgin Saint* speaks not only of bloodshed but also of blame. Artistically blood can register guilt, often through its formless liquidity. In another work tied to the theme of virginity, Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1598-9), the blood flows away from Judith, who remains miraculously untainted when she decapitates her would-be rapist (fig. 2.5). Her virginity preserved, Judith's dress remains immaculately white during the process of Holofernes's decapitation. Contrast this with same artist's depiction of another beheading, *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* (1609), where the *femme fatale's* red throw symbolically covers her in blood (fig. 2.6). *The Virgin Saint*'s themes of bloodshed and guilt were immediately recognised. The same month that Picabia's drawing appeared in *391*, the satirical journal *Le Crapouillot* published an article on the fictitious Toutou movement (fig. 2.7). An obvious parody of Dada, this article was illustrated with a random splat of ink entitled *Justice Purses the Crime*, which blatantly references *The Virgin Saint* and directly evokes wrongly spilt blood.[192]

Le Crapouillet was not the only magazine to respond to *391*. In an intriguing afterlife, *The Virgin Saint* was reprinted a month later in the paper *Les*

Duchamp's concerns. And although Picabia is closer to Duchamp's pataphysics than Arp's metaphysics he lacked the interest or knowledge in speculative science that underwrote his friend use of chance.

[191] Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31.

[192] *Le Crapouillot* also contains an image captioned *Portrait of Saint Joseph*, although this appears to parody Arp's work.

Hommes du Jour.[193] Under the title of 'Deux Écoles' (Two Schools), the article contrasted Picabia's *The Virgin Saint* with another by Ingres (fig. 2.8). Setting Picabia's drawing on the right-hand side, the run-off from *The Virgin Saint* is tellingly positioned to flow away from Ingres' virgin. Inadvertently, the comparison reiterated a distinction Picabia himself had already made. As noted in the Introduction and Literature Review, Picabia continued to mock Ingres and his privileged place in the work of Picasso while simultaneously appropriating and bastardising the French master's work to form the base of his own. It is plausible therefore that Picabia was aware of Ingres' painting *Joan of Arc at the Coronation of Charles VII* (1854) which established the artistic convention of depicting Joan with a halo. As staunch Orleanist and anti-republican, Ingres incorporated a rare self-portrait into the picture, actively associating himself with the saint.[194] This painting – an 'inordinate technical pedantry' in Baudelaire's summation[195] – was divisive upon its reception, not least because it invited comparison with Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) whose dishevelled, bare-breasted Liberty competed with Ingres' Joan as the rival feminine embodiment of nationhood. It is not implausible that Picabia was aware of this history and debates.

The assertion that *The Virgin Saint* might respond to Ingres is not only consistent with Picabia's wider practice and frames of references at the time but can be substantiated linguistically: Ingres is a near homophone for *encre* (ink). Etymologically, *encre* derives from *encaustum*, a red or purple coloured ink that reinforces the connotations of blood. Elsewhere, Legge has drawn our attention to the substitution of ink for blood in the adage about the relative might of the pen and the sword, continuing to argue that Zola's novel *L'encre et le Sang* (1866) could also be a possible referent for Picabia's splat.[196] In typical Dada wordplay, this could easily become Ingres and blood, a topical

[193] Unknown author, "Deux Ecoles", *Les Hommes du Jour,* April 1920: 16-17.

[194] Heimann, *Joan of Arc in French Culture,* Chapter 5 'Joan of Arc and the July Monarchy; Michelet, Marie d'Orleans and Ingres', 132-176.

[195] Baudelaire quoted by Heimann, *Joan of Arc in French Culture ,* 171.

[196] Legge, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Virgin", 232.

combination given that the previous year a major Ingres retrospective was organised for the benefit of wounded veterans.

It is highly feasible then that Picabia's anti-drawing was intended as a calculated formal negation of *Ingrisme*, within the Return to Order. As Kenneth Silver has made clear, in his seminal *Esprit de Corps*, the patriotic demands of the period found their ultimate expression not in representational content but at the level of form.[197] For Silver, Picasso's adoption of Ingres as a model is paradigmatic of how an elevation of academic technique offset a general lowering of avant-garde ambition. The *informe* of *The Virgin Saint* is set sharply against classical harmony and the resurgence of draughtsmanship that the Ingres revival celebrated. Parallel to the readymade, which undermines aesthetic value through mass-produced seriality, Picabia here deploys a radical process of deskilling in a way that ironically produces a unique artwork, only to allow it to circulate it as a mechanically reproduced copy.[198] Parodying both the criteria of uniqueness on which value is traditionally based and the contemporary claim that drawing was the art of structure, Picabia's act of deliberate incompetence is a riposte against Ingres' 'technical pedantry' and all its connotations. If Baker is correct in suggesting *The Virgin Saint* is concerned with the conditions of drawing, it is arguably its discursive parameters, rather than its ontological ones, that most preoccupied Picabia. *The Virgin Saint* certainly flaunts the formal limits of the medium, but in doing so, it also positions itself against a contemporary discourse on what constituted French drawing. Within the Return to Order, the formal vocabulary of art was increasingly seen to express and celebrate homogenised, essentialist notions of racial identity tied to the idea of national style. Form,

[197] Silver, *Esprit de Corps,* 62.

[198] *The Virgin Saint* is also a joke against those who criticised Picabia for copying machine parts but who held copying from nature or old masters to be acceptable. Louis Aragon notes that 'whenever Picabia spoke of the inkblot he signed, he didn't neglect to draw attention to the inimitability of such a splatters. He congratulated himself that his inkblot was more difficult to cop than a Renoir'. The themes of Ingres and ink, copying come together in Picabia's copy of Ingres signature which appeared *391* no. 14. Louis Aragon, "The Challange to Painting" in *The Ends of Collage,* ed. Yuval Etgar (London: Luxembourg and Dayan, 2017), 105.

therefore, was a social issue, linked to the project of national, cultural construction just as much as Joan of Arc was. It is not easy, or advisable, therefore, to separate the levels of Picabia's critique into isolated formal or iconographic readings. *The Virgin Saint* is an act of critical debasement operating on a double register. The *informe* acts as a hinge between Baker's anti-mimetic, formal reading of the drawing and Hopkins' and Legge's insistence on its bodily metaphors.[199] Horizontality provides the pivot between index and icon, situating the drawing in an indeterminate space between anti-art critique of classical form and signifier of the abject, leaking body.

I will return to a number of the themes raised in this discussion of *The Virgin Saint* in future chapters. As noted previously, nationalism and war form the background to the analysis of *The Spanish Revolution* given in Chapter 5, saints and the Catholic revival are important topics in Chapter 4's consideration of the Transparencies. First, though, I will turn to the *Espagnoles* of the early 1920s that Picabia made shortly after *The Virgin Saint* considering their relationship to the drawing *Young Girl* mentioned briefly in this chapter.

[199] Legge's describes of *The Virgin Saint* as 'incontinent' ties nicely with Krauss's argument about the importance of horizontality in Warhol's urination works.

3. *Spanish Woman* (1922): *Carmen*, *Cigarreras*, *Cupletistas*

In the months following the publication of *The Virgin Saint,* Picabia began organising his exhibition at *Galerie la Cible*. As noted in the Introduction, this show marked the public debut of the *Espagnoles*, a body of work that most scholars have struggled to reconcile with Picabia's Dada machines. However, below the apparent oppositions – figuration and machines, hard-edged graphics and sentimental painting, avant-garde and kitsch – there are strong formal continuities between the mechanomorphs and *Espagnoles*.

A comparison of *Spanish Woman with Blue Shawl* (c.1920-24) and *Flamenca* (1917) is revealing (figs. 3.1 and 3.2). The visual language may be different, but the underlying grammar is comparable. Structurally the two images are broadly commensurate. The *Espagnole* may be more grounded, anchored to the bottom edge of the canvas, but verticality, centrality and frontality are shared features of both. In each case, a single figure sits on a flat, blank background. Pictorial space is compressed and indeterminate. Nothing indicates if we are looking at an interior or exterior, an expanse or void. The palette is limited in both instances too, restricted to three colours and the neutral ground.

Linguistic continuities reinforce these shared formal conventions. *Flamenca* is a female-gendered noun, something not registered in the English translation, *Flamenco*. Through his title, Picabia both Hispancises and feminises the machine. Anthropomorphising *Flamenca* we might even read it as an image of a dancer, her arms thrown up in a triumphant *olé*. A comparison with Picabia's *Dancer* (c.1922-24) is certainly suggestive (fig. 3.3). *Flamenca's* central corkscrew-like shaft adds a further suggestion of a pirouetting movement.[200] If this invocation of dance and rotary motion recalls the thematics of Picabia's Cubism, *Flamenca* more directly anticipates the

[200] Dennison identifies *Flamenca* as a diagram of the valve spring of an internal combustion engine, suggesting that the sound of the clattering valve might have remind Picabia of castanetes. Dennison, "Automobile Parts and Accessories", 676-83.

Espagnoles. Not only was this painting hung alongside them at the *Galerie la Cible*, but Picabia also pointedly titled these *Espagnoles*, *Flamenca*.[201]

Formal and linguistic similarities then suggest that the *Espagnoles* may be as much a continuation of the machines as their dialectical complement. Following the logic of this procedure, it is tempting to posit a connection between the 'Spanish-flavoured' portrait *Young Girl* (1912) and a Dada work of the same name, briefly mentioned in the previous chapter (figs. 3.4 and 3.5).[202] The first depicts a woman in profile, her circular earing placed almost centrally on the canvas. The second is simply a round hole cut out of the centre of a sheet of paper. What we witness here is the sublimation of the earlier proto-*Espagnole*. Sublimation should be here understood both in the chemical sense of the term, as a transition from one state to another without passing through an intermediary stage, and in the Freudian one, of diversion of libidinal drives into culturally acceptable activity.[203] For what the hole in *Young Girl* (1920), a version of which is inscribed 'bracelet of life', indicates is not so much the continuity of the Spanish body but a Spanish carnality.[204]

Such a conclusion may initially appear overreaching. However, the transition of *Espagnole* to circle, if not quite a hole, is discernible elsewhere in Picabia's work. In *Echynomie livide* (c.1923) and *Lamp* (c.1923), Picabia reduces the *Espagnole* to eyes, mouth and beauty spot, before overlaying these features with circular motifs (figs. 3.6 and 3.7).[205] In both cases, the underlying facial

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[201] This was also the case at Picabia's show at the Galerie Dapayrat (1-15 Feb 1921). A catalogue list for which is reproduced in Borràs, *Picabia*, 215, n.76.

[202] 'Spanish-flavoured' is George Baker's description of this painting; see his "The Body after Cubism", 37. For discussions of *Young Girl* (1920), see Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail,* Chapter 1 and Hopkins, *Dada's Boys,* 15-16.

[203] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (London: Penguin, 2004), 21.

[204] This inscription was added to the drawing when it was reproduced in *Proverbe* (March 1920).

[205] *Echynomie livide* is worthy of further study. According to the Comité Picabia, the title refers to the insect family Livid Tachinid. I would suggest the reference is more specific, to the sub-specie *Echynomie grosse,* Europe's largest fly. Like its English counterpart livid, *livide* is both

morphology bears a marked resemblance to that of *Spanish Woman*, more commonly known as *Spanish Woman with Cigarette* (1922; fig. 3.0). Indeed, one anonymous reviewer even claimed that *Lamp's* female figure 'amuses herself blowing smoke rings from her cute little mouth'.[206]

More explicitly, though, these smoke rings read as cogs. *Lamp* can, therefore, be situated midway on a continuum stretching between the *Espagnoles* and machine portraits like *Novia* (fig. 3.8). Another Hispanicised, feminised machine, *Novia* means bride or fiancée in Spanish. Through its title, this mechanical proto-*Espagnole* once more registers Picabia's interest in the implicitly sexualised but oddly disembodied señorita.

The idea of a buried eroticism at work in the *Espagnoles* is something that a contemporary viewer might struggle to recuperate. However, it can be recovered via a sustained consideration of *Spanish Woman.* Among the most frequently exhibited *Espagnoles,* this painting has come to function as a paradigmatic short-hand for the series.[207] In many ways, it is a typifying example. The plain background, undefined face and overlarge eyes are a

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a cognate for angry or furious and a term used to describe the discolouration of bruised flesh. Angry fly or bruised fly are therefore suggested. If the later meaning was intended, it is possible that Picabia picked *Echynomie* because of its similarity to *ecchymoses*, a medical term for bruise. This specialist term was used by Duchamp in his pun '*Rrose Sélavy et moi nous estimons les ecchymoses des Esquimaux aux mots exquis'* from *Anemic Cinema* (1926). Tantalisingly, Picabia swapped *Echynomie livide* with Man Ray, who later produced two black and white photographs of it. In one version, Man Ray tinted the eyes green and in the other magenta. This colouration recalls Duchamp's *Pharmacy* (1914), a work Picabia directly responded to in 1921. Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 374.

[206] 'Les sept merveilles' (1924) cited in Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 375.

[207] There are pragmatic reasons for *Spanish Woman's* high visibility. A lot of *Espagnoles* have uncertain dating and are in unknown, private collections, making them doubly difficult for curators. *Spanish Woman* has a secure dating and an owner who is willing to lend it. Consequently, it has appeared in high profile exhibitions such as *Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia*, and *Our Heads are Round*. On the painting's exhibition history, see Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 338.

recurrent feature of the *Espagnoles*. *Spanish Woman's* cigarette, though, is an unusual, if highly revealing detail, one tied to popular notions of Spanish femininity within French period culture.

From the mid-nineteenth century, there was a growing interest in Hispanic culture in France, with the *Espagnole* emerging as a minor sub-genre within salon portraiture. Popular cultural representations of Spanish women also flourished, with Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen* (1845) providing the archetypal example for Picabia's generation.[208] By briefly sketching the evolution of the Spanish stereotype between 1840 and 1920, we can recover something of the *Espagnoles'r* original connotations. Then, having elaborated on the painting's discursive sources, I will address its iconographic ones, before finally discussing the painting's conflicted cultural politics.

The *Espagnoles*: A Genealogy

Napoleon's disastrous Peninsular Campaign (1807-14) was not entirely devoid of benefits. The Emperor may have failed to conquer Spain, but for a while the plunders of war steadily made their way back to France. Among the treasures crossing the Pyrenees were enough paintings to fill the Louvre's new *Galerie Espagnole,* which opened in 1838.[209] The gallery did much to stimulate public interest in Spanish culture, particularly among painters.

Subsequently, Spain became a place of pilgrimage for French artists and writers. Historically, the Iberian Peninsula had not been part of the Grand Tour and thus remained something of a novelty. According to period rhetoric, only tourists now went to Rome. Real travellers headed to Spain. Among the self-styled adventurers wandering south was the novelist and art critic Théophile

[208] Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen and Other Stories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[209] For a comprehensive overview of the *Galerie Espagnole* and the French interest in Spanish painting generally, see Gary Tinterow et al., *Manet/Velazquez: The French Taste for Spanish Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), Exhibition Catalogue.

Gautier. Inspired by the English writer George Borrow's *The Bible in Spain* (1841), Gautier began publishing a serialised travelogue detailing his Iberian escapades.[210] Initially, a popular newspaper column, Gautier soon compiled his writings into a book. Published as *Voyage en Espagne* in 1843, it became one of the era's defining accounts of Spain. Credited with establishing a popular 'image repertoire', *Voyage en Espagne* elevated the humble fan and shawl into the privileged signifiers of Spanish exoticism.[211]

Gautier's impact extended well beyond the literary public. As chairman of the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*, he was in contact with fellow board members Gustave Doré and Édouard Manet. Both men were keen Hispanophiles. Doré illustrated Jean-Charles Davillier's *Travels through Andalusia* (1874), while Manet produced several Hispanic themed pictures. Other artists shared their Iberian enthusiasms. From Courbert and Corot to Regnault and Renoir, French painters began turning their hands to *Espagnoles*.[212]

This fascination with all things Iberian continued into the early twentieth century. In 1921, the year after Picabia debuted the *Espagnoles*, an anonymous American art critic observed that 'now and then some foreign country becomes the hero of the day in Paris. At this hour it is Spain. Following Spanish fashions in dress, Spanish dancers and Spanish music comes the turn of Spanish painters'.[213]

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[210] Borrow published two of the earliest first-hand accounts of Romani life in Spain, *The Zincali: Or, an Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (1841) and *The Bible in Spain* (1842). The later, in particular, was highly popular throughout Europe, running through several editions even in translation.

[211] José F. Colmeiro, "Exorcising Exoticism: Carmen and the Construction of Oriental Spain" ,*Comparative Literature* 54, no. 2 (2002): 133. As Colmeiro notes, neither the fan nor the shawl are actually Spanish; both are colonial imports from the Philippines.

[212] This list could easily be expanded to include Charles de Steuban, Eugene Giraud, Ernest Hebert, Jean-Pierre Antigo, Alexandre Antigna, and Henri Adrien Tanoux. A special mention might be made of Alfred Dehodencq, *Confraternity in Procession Along Calle Génova, Seville* (1851), which provides a suggestive precedent for Picabia's *Procession of Seville*.

[213] Unknown author, initials M.C., "Paris", *American Art News* 20, no.8 (3 December 1921): 8.

This taste for Spanish music and dance had been rekindled by the Universal Exhibition (1889), which created 'a resurgent interest in the Spanish Gypsy in the Parisian press'.[214] Many of Picabia's associates responded to this burgeoning interest in flamenco culture, with the likes of Albert Gleizes, Marius De Zayas and Man Ray producing works on the theme.[215]

Marie Laurencin also produced numerous Hispanic themed paintings. She painted several of them in Barcelona, the city in which she and Picabia conducted an affair in 1917. Laurencin's *Two Spanish Women* (1915) directly anticipate Picabia's *Espagnoles* (fig.3.9).[216] Her *Spanish Woman with Fan* (undated) provides an even more revealing point of comparison (fig. 3.10).[217] An overlap in iconography is to be expected. Fans and mantillas are necessary details, something both artists needed to connote Spanishness. What is truly striking, though, are the formal parallels. Laurencin's preference for half-length portraits of frontally-facing figures set against an ill-defined, shallow ground is something shared with Picabia's *Espagnoles*. Executed in watercolour, pencil and ink, *Spanish Woman with Fan* even deploys the same materials as the bulk of Picabia's *Espagnoles*.

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[214] Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 129. For a wider consideration of this subject, see Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World's Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005) and, on the continued interest in Spanish music after this point, Samuel Llano, *Who's Spain?: Negotiating Spanish Music in Paris, 1908-29* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), especially the chapter "*Domesticating Difference: Carmen and the 'French Canon' in the 1920s*", 161-191.

[215] Again this list could easily be expanded. For a wider consideration, see Agnès Rousseaux, *La nuit espagnole: flamenco, avant-garde et culture populaire, 1865-1936* (Paris: Paris-Museé, 2008), Exhibition catalogue.

[216] Briony Fer connects Laurencin's *Two Spanish Women* to Picabia's 1922 Dalmau works, but not directly to the *Espagnoles*, which she discusses in the next paragraph. See Briony Fer "Picabia's Worldliness" in *Our Heads are Round*, 112.

[217] While in Barcelona, Picabia produced a mecanomorphic portrait of Laurencin. Based on a diagram of a car's cooling fan, Picabia's portrait presumably alludes to Laurencin's numerous paintings of women with fans. Although the previous scholarship does not appear to have recognised this.

Gitanas

From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century then, fans and flamenco were prevalent motifs in everything from the lowly travelogue to the high arts. It was during this period that the Spanish gypsy, or *gitana*, coalesced into a recognisable trope.[218]

The *gitana* is an Orientalist fantasy. The offspring of Napoleonic imperialism and French Romanticism, she is the exotic, erotised 'other' in the period imagination. Consequently, my use of the term *gitana* is not meant to denote any empirical, or self-identifying group but rather names a set of enabling fictions in the production of the *Espagnoles*.

The *gitana's* cultural connotations are highly selective, derived, in the most part, from fanciful accounts of Andalusian life. As the former capital of medieval, Moorish Spain, Andalusia helped authorise a notion of Spanish exceptionalism, a sense that the country was not entirely European. 'Africa begins at Pyrenees' Alexandre Dumas *père* is alleged to have said.[219] Poet Alfred de Vigny expressed a similar sentiment, claiming that Spaniards were 'Catholic Turks', while Chateaubriand dubbed them 'Christian Arabs'.[220] This

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[218] Although such peoples are more correctly referred to as Romani, the pejorative category Gypsy (uppercase) is preserved here in order to maintain a clear distinction between historical conceptions and contemporary ones. The designation gypsy (lowercase) is then used to refer to fictional representation of the Gypsy in the wider culture. On this nomenclature, see Stewart Dearing, "Painting the Other Within: Gypsies According to the Bohemian Artist in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *Romani Studies* 20, no. 2 (2010): 166-167. And Lou Charnon-Deutsch, "Travels of the Imaginary Spanish Gypsy" in *Constructing Identity in Contemorary Spain*, ed. Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22-24.

[219] This is an apocryphal attribution. The phrase was already in common usage, a variant having appeared in Dominique Dufour de Pradt's *Mémoires historiques sur la révolution d'Espagne* (1816), published when Dumas was fourteen.

[220] Vigny *Cinq-mars* (1826) and Chateaubriand (1838) cited by Colmeiro, "Exorcising Exoticism: Carmen and the Construction of Oriental Spain", 131-2. Victor Hugo makes the related claim, 'Spain is still the Orient; Spain is half African' in the preface to *The Orientals* (1829).

slippage and conflation of identities – Africa with Andalusia, Andalusia with Spain – was compounded by a burgeoning ethnographic interest in the region's gypsy population.

For much of the nineteenth century, gypsies had strong associations with bohemia. Romantic artists were, therefore, inclined to identify with them, representing gypsies as sympathetic outsiders whose ancient lifestyle stood in implicit opposition to the twined scourges of bourgeois morality and industrial modernity.[221] Such Romanticism rarely escaped the racial prejudices of the time. If the *gitana's* proximity to the gypsy liberated her from societal constraint, her African ancestry lent her a purported savagery. [222] While from the Moor she acquired something of the salacious connotations of the harem, the mantilla functioning as an update of the concubine's veil.[223] Pre-industrial innocence quickly slipped into dangerous worldly eroticism.

Male artists and writers perpetuated this fantasy of *gitana* promiscuity, which they found at once appalling and highly appealing. Discussing the importance of *lácha*, or 'corporeal chastity' within Spanish Romani culture, Borrow noted that intercourse with 'white blood' was not considered to constitute a loss of

[221] For a consideration of this topic, see Marilyn R. Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: The Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1985) and Dearing, "Painting the Other Within".

[222] The gypsy and the *gitana* or *Flamenca* were related but separate types in the period imagination. At the Universal Exhibition of 1889, Romanian and Hungarian Gypsies appeared in their respective national exhibits while Spanish Romani performed on the main stage. A contemporaneous illustration in *Les Belles au Monde*, 1889 details four types of gypsy, including a much lighter skinned, dancing *gitana* complete with fan. In general Andalusian Romani were consider Gypsy aristocracy and had a generally more favourable reputation than their brethren. The illustration is reproduced in Dearing, "Painting the Other Within,", 171. For a more extensive discussion on the French construction of the *gitana,* see Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy,* 47-86 and "Travels of the Imaginary Spanish Gypsy".

[223] On complex associations and attitudes towards the veil at this point in France, see Marni Reva Kessler, *Sheer Presence: The Veil in Manet's Paris* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

virginity.[224] Mérimée went further, boasting of having made 'conclusive experiments' with regards to the possibility of such congress.[225]

Picabia appears fully cognisant of this trope. Like the *gitana*, *Spanish Woman* is considered both 'cloyingly sweet' and 'subtly monstrous'.[226] However, it is his painting *The Gypsy* (*La Gitane)* that gives the fullest expression to the fantasy of the *gitana's* erotic availability (fig. 3.11). *The Gypsy* depicts a single *Espagnole* who holds up her skirt, exposing its interior. Revealed in the centre is a small black hole, which is positioned roughly over her crotch. Framed by fabric folds and a tasselled fringe, this cloth opening blatantly alludes to that which it conceals. Indirectly advertising her sex, Picabia's *Gypsy* continues the logic of the *Young Girl* pair. It also conforms to the period stereotype. 'No females in the world,' Borrow tells us, 'can be more licentious in word and gesture'.[227]

If the *gitana* was available and desirable, she was rarely conventionally beautiful. Borrow describes her as 'wild' and 'singular' in appearance.[228] A sentiment reiterated by an anonymous traveller who claimed that these 'women are pleasing without being pretty, and are very flirtatious'.[229] Likewise, Mérimée was of the opinion that 'beauty is a rare attribute among the *gitanas* of Spain', before conceding that 'while they are still very young their ugliness may not be unattractive'.[230] Paradoxically, her physical flaws only served to

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[224] George Borrow, *The Zincali: Or, an Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (Philadelphia: James M. Campell and Co., 1843), 81.

[225] Mérimée, "Letter to the *Inconnue*" cited without reference in Carl Van Vechten, *The Music of Spain* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918), 113. Vechten and Picabia were loosely acquainted. During the First World War, both men were residents of the Brevoort hotel in New York. They were also among the small handful of guests invited to Duchamp's thirtieth birthday party.

[226] 'Cloyingly sweet' is Umland; 'subtle monstrosity' is Mundy. Umland, "Francis Picabia: An Introduction", 15; Jennifer Mundy, "The Art of Friendship", 46.

[227] Borrow, *The Zincali,* 49.

[228] ibid., 49.

[229] Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy,* 54.

[230] Mérimée, *Carmen,* 344.

enhance the *gitana's* appearance. Notably, she was often said to possess some facial peculiarity that enhanced her appeal through its striking contrast. Picabia's saccharine, swivel-eyed *Espagnoles* connote such tales. A painting like *Andalusia* (c.1938-40) directly links the lazy eye, the flamenco dress and southern Spain (fig. 3.12).

Carmen

Unquestionably, the most enduring example of the *gitana* myth is Mérimée's *Carmen,* whose eponymous heroine provides the unsurpassed embodiment of the Spanish gypsy femme fatale. An immensely popular tale, *Carmen's* influence continued to resonate throughout Picabia's lifetime, with Bizet's operatic version eventually eclipsing the novella's fame.[231] Marthe Chenal gave a renowned performance of the opera, cutting an early recording of *Carmen* for *Pathé* in 1915. A close friend of Picabia's – the pair are rumoured to have been lovers – Chenal also owned two *Espagnoles*. [232]

In addition to the numerous operatic interpretations of *Carmen*, Picabia was presumably aware of at least one of the many high-profile cinematic adaptations of the story. Between 1906 and 1920, thirty *Carmen* movies were released, making her the most frequently portrayed women on screen.[233] (The

[231]Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) was initially not well received. Met with critical hostility and accusations of immorality, it was not performed again until 1883, after which point it was subject to numerous celebrated performances.

[232] In 1923, Chenal lent two paintings, both titled *Head of a Spanish Woman,* to Picabia's exhibition at the Danthon Gallery. See Borràs, *Picabia*, 246-7, n.30.

[233] See Anne Davis and Phil Powrie, *Carmen on Screen: An Annotated Filmography and Bibliography* (Woodridge, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2006) and Phil Powrie, *Carmen on Film: A Cultural History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). Special mention might be made of *La fête Espagnoles* (1920), written by Louis Delluc and Germaine Dulac. Delluc – who Picabia is known to have read – published film criticism by the Dadaists Phillipe Soupault and Louis Aragon in the journal *Le Film*. Deluc, meanwhile, went on to collaborate with the Surrealists. See Rudolf E. Kuenzli, *Dada and Surrealist Film* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1996), 69, n.25; and Jennifer Wild, *The Parisian Avant-Garde in the Age of Cinema, 1900-1923* (California: University of California Press, 2015), 8.

second, incidentally, was Joan of Arc.) As the most prevalent representation of a Spanish woman in early cinema, it is almost inconceivable that *Carmen* did not inform Picabia's *Espagnoles*, though her cultural saturation means that it is not essential to establish Picabia's direct familiarity with either the novella or any of its multiple cinematic, theatrical or musical variants. On the evidence of the paintings alone, it is clear that Picabia had a high degree of awareness of the *Carmen* clichés. Several *Espagnoles* are depicted, like Mérimée's heroine, with flowers in their mouths (figs. 3.13 and 3.14).

Picabia does, however, appear to have been directly familiar with at least one variation on the story, Pierre Louÿs's derivative *The Woman and the Puppet* (1899). Picabia's watercolour *The Spanish Mistress (Woman and Puppet*) (1922) is thought to be named after the book (fig. 3.15). Although the Comité Picabia notes that this relationship is not definitive, a comparison of Picabia's drawing with William Siegel's illustrations to a 1930 edition of the novel is suggestive (fig. 3.16). There can be no question of direct influence here. Picabia's drawing predates Siegel's, and it is highly unlikely that the American illustrator knew anything of Picabia's obscure painting. Rather, these two independently produced drawings testify to the existence of a set of shared visual conventions used when representing Spanish women. The same trope crops up in a period postcard, which also features a bare-chested, smoking *Espagnole* (fig. 3.17). A similar figure appears in another work by Picabia, *Barcelona* (c.1926-27). Here, a naked señorita and clothed man hold the same cigarette in their superimposed hands. Encased in a heart and with a prominent skull in the foreground, the drawing taps into the myth of the Spanish *femme fatale*.

Cigarreras

The motif of the smoking señorita is once again derived from *Carmen*. The first woman in literature to smoke, Carmen's initial appearance in the novella is marked by multiple references to smoking and cigarettes. Upon first seeing Carmen, the novella's narrator puts out his cigar, it being impolite for a

Frenchman to smoke in front of a lady. Carmen responds, telling him that not only does she partake, but that she also works in a cigar factory, though as the narrative progresses, it is made clear that she supplements her income with theft and prostitution. The association of prostitution and tobacco finds an analogue in the description of the cigar factory itself. Configured as an updated version of a smoke-filled harem, the women working in the hot factory 'don't believe in overdressing, especially the young ones'.[234] Partially through these orientalising overtones and partially through the phallic and oral associations of the cigar, *Carmen* links cigarettes and *gitana* with male desire with Gautier's description of Spanish woman's complexion as 'tawny as a Havana cigar' conflating these terms.[235]

Mérimée based the tobacco factory in *Carmen* on a real one in Seville. It quickly became something of a tourist destination, with the likes of Gautier and Barrés among those trying to get a glance of its fabled inhabitants. One travel writer described its cigarette producing occupants, or *cigarreras,* in familiar terms, reporting that while they 'are great beauties', they are 'not noted for their chastity'.[236]

In reality, the *cigarreras* strategic position within an economically significant but female-dominated industry made them key players in the history of Spanish feminism and trade unionism. The *Cigarrera* Strike of 1896 resulted in two days of rioting in Seville, an event that consolidated their reputation for hot-headed self-abandon.[237] The press gleefully reiterated Mérimée's stereotypes, depicting the factory as a den of sapphic excess and its workers

[234] Mérimée, *Carmen*, 20. Illustrated versions of this novel and Louÿs's *The Woman and the Puppet* typically depict a table of topless señoritas rolling cigarettes.

[235] Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians,* 1.

[236] William Howe Downes, *Spanish Ways and By-ways: With a Glimpse of the Pyrenees* (Boston: Cupples, Upham and Company, 1883), 87-88.

[237] D. J. O'Connor, "Representations of Women Workers: Tobacco Strikes in the 1890s", in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain,* eds. Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 151-172.

as impulsive coquettes. The *cigarrera's* and the *gitana's* reputations started to overlap. Similarly to the wild-eyed *gitana* and the evil-eyed gypsy, the *cigarrera* developed a reputation for having oddly dilated pupils: a result, it is now believed, of prolonged exposure to tobacco dust.

The *gitana-cigarrera* hybrid soon became central to the iconography of the iconic French cigarette brand *Gitanes*.[238] The company's marketing frequently pulled on Hispanic tropes.[239] One advert features a group of distinctively Hispanicised women, their hair adorned with curls and roses. Their high *peinetas* (hair combs) spell out the brand name *Gitanes* (fig. 3.18). Framed within a cut-off trapezoid of white space, which reads as a spotlight cast across a stage, this advert implicitly configures these women as showgirls. Again, this is undoubtedly informed by *Carmen*, performances of which routinely featured troupes of smoking chorus girls.[240]

Cupletistas

The popularity of *Carmen* also impacted on the development of Spanish musical theatre. The 1890s saw the emergence of *cuplé*, a form of popular narrative song.[241] Typically risqué in nature, its performers, known as *cupletistas*, would often pull on the *Carmen* persona in their acts. Several *cupletistas* became famous throughout Europe. Many regularly worked in

[238] A heavy smoker, Picabia would certainly have been aware of *Gitanes*, a popular brand that has been in continuous production since 1910.

[239] On the use of images of 'exotic' women to sell cigarettes see: Dolores Mitchell, "Images of Exotic Women in Turn-of-the-Century Tobacco Art", *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992). Mitchell notes that although it was unusual for the women to be depicted smoking, it was more common in the images of Spanish women.

[240] A clear affront to nineteenth-century French gender norms, early performances of the opera generated major controversy for permitting women to light-up on stage.

[241] Serge Salaün, *El Cuplé, 1900-1936* (Madrid: Colección Ausral, 1990). For a brief discussion in English, see Salaün "The Cuplé: Modernity and Mass Culture" in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, eds. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford University Press, 1995), 90-94.

Paris.[242] Carolina 'la belle' Otero, a self-styled Andalusian Romani became a star of the Folies-Bergère. Luz Chavita (Luisa Lacalle) performed at Folies-Bergère and the Opéra-Comique, where she gave a celebrated performance of *Carmen* in 1901 (fig. 3.14). Another, Fornarina (María del Consuelo Vello Cano) burst onto the international scene with a turn at the Parisian Apollo in 1907.

By the 1920s, interest in *cuplé* was beginning to wane. Many Spanish divas, though, remained internationally famous beyond the Second World War, having already been absorbed into music's and cinema's expanding star systems. One such figure was Imperio Argentina, whom Picabia painted sometime around 1940. Her film roles included *Carmen, la de Triana* (1938) and *La cigarrera* (1948).[243] Other performers took similar roles, playing up the Spanish stereotypes (figs. 3.19-22).

An early twentieth-century postcard of the *cupletista* Fornarina captures her hamming up the *Carmen* persona (fig. 3.22).[244] Her wild-eyed, vacuous eroticism and dangling cigarette are all indirectly echoed in Picabia's coquettish *Spanish Woman.* While I am not suggesting that this postcard is a direct source, merely indicating how the painting replicates the discursive logic of *Carmen*, *cigarreras* and *cupletistas*, it is nonetheless clear that Picabia did refer to such souvenirs in the production of other *Espagnoles*.

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[242] On the appeal of *cuplé* in 1920s France, see Eva Woods Peiró, *White Gypsies: Race and Stardom in Spanish Musicals* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 65-100.

[243] Picabia's decision to paint *Imperio Argentina* in 1940 is potentially significant. *Carmen, la de Triana* (1938) was shot in Nazi Germany. Its star met an infatuated Führer, news of which resulted in her films being pulled from cinemas in Republican Spain. I have been unable to ascertain if this story was reported in France, but this seemingly innocuous painting is possibly far more provocative than has been previously realised. Of all the *Espagnoles*, *Imperio Argentina* is only one that explicitly names its subject, Picabia clearly wanting his audience to know who he is representing.

[244] Fornarina's pose also evokes that of Raphael's *La Fornarina* (1518-19*,* who similarly touches her own breasts. The origin of the actress's stage name are unknown, but is possibly an allusion to Raphael's painting or Ingres' *Raphael and Fornarina* (1813-14).

Postcards

Picabia reliance on appropriated imagery is well known. Plagiarism, it might be said, was the only -ism he consistently practised. Unsurprisingly, such visual piracy is also discernible in the *Espagnoles*, many of which he based on Spanish postcards.[245] So far, I have been able to discover nine previously unknown sources. The one for *Spanish Night* was discussed in Chapter 1 (fig. 1.4). Three others will be addressed in subsequent chapters (figs 4.12, 4.13 and 5.5). The other five will be detailed in the next few paragraphs (figs. 3.24, 3.26, 3.28, 3.30 and 3.32).

Picabia's reliance on Spanish postcards can be traced back to 1907 and a sketch he made of the Basque town of *Fuenterrabía*. Although Picabia visited *Fuenterrabía* at this point, he likely made the drawing after the fact. The picture's composition and framing replicate that of a contemporaneous postcard (figs. 3.23 and 3.24).[246] Subsequent Hispanic themed pictures, such as *Untitled (Torero;* c.1922) and *Bullfight* (c.1925-1926) are also

[245] Picabia's reliance on postcards dates back to his Impressionist period. This dependence appears to peak in the 1920s with the *Espagnoles* and Monsters. Something different is happening in both cases though. In the Monsters, Picabia abstracts his postcard sources, distorting figures and overlaying them with a confetti of dots and ticker-tape zig-zags. Verdier argues that these additions were psychologically necessary, part of a defensive mechanism by which Picabia could conceal or disavow his reliance on copying. Such anxieties are less evident in the *Espagnoles*. Here, Picabia makes little attempt to cover his tracks. Perhaps he assumed that his Spanish sources would be unavailable to his French audience. The pictorial economy of many of these paintings, though, is so close to that of the postcard as to border on the declarative. On Picabia's use of postcards in other phases of his career, see Pierre, *La peinture sans aura*, 51-67 and 210-215; Verdier "Art=Sun=Destruction", 170-175; Verdier, "Monstres et métamorphoses" in *Picasso Picabia*, 191-192; Camfield et al., *Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 399.

[246] A second drawing of *Fuenterrabía* possibly made after another postcard is detailed in Pierre, *La peinture sans aura,* 63.

unquestionably based on postcards, as are several *Espagnoles* (figs. 3.25-3.28).[247]

Woman with Guitar (1926-27) blatantly imitates a postcard of the *cupletista* Nereida (figs. 3.29 and 3.30). [248] Another *Espagnole* depicts the entertainer Paquita Alcaráz (figs. 3.31 and 3.32). Typically produced in sets, such postcards regularly feature the same performer in a variety of poses. Consequently, it is possible to infer the existence of an exact source from an approximate one. Even when a potential candidate is unforthcoming, it is clear that all of the *Espagnoles* replicate the iconography and vernacular of these postcards, with Picabia's compositional framing and use of selective colouration to emphasise flowers and shawls imitating that of these hand-tinted souvenirs (figs. 3.33-46). Like *Spanish Women with Cigarette*, three of these postcards depict women wearing a pink and yellow flower in their hair.

The marked similarities between Picabia's prototypes and paintings give unequivocal testimony to just how circumscribed his images of Spain are by the visual conventions of the tourist industries. Conversely, the differences between finished paintings and sources cast light on his decision-making process and sense of aesthetic judgement. For even when Picabia seems to be reproducing a postcard exactly, minor changes are always discernible. *Woman with Guitar*, for example, subtly departs from its visual source. A bare arm gets covered up. More torso gets exposed. Earrings disappear, but the unique configuration of rings adorning the model's hands remain. The distinctive details of the *peineta* (comb) are preserved, yet facial physiognomy falls by the wayside. Picabia closes Nereida's smiling mouth, inclining her head slightly to give her a more melancholic, introspective air.

[247] William Camfield notes that Picabia sent out several postcards, including images of women in Andalusian costume, during his honeymoon in Spain. Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. I,* 108.

[248] Three other named *Espagnoles*, *Juanita* (1926), *Pilar* (1927) and *Totó* (1927), are also likely to be of *cupletistas.* Postcards of women performing under these names at this point exist, though no direct sources have emerged.

Something similar happens in the *Espagnole* based on Alcaráz. The head is too gaunt and angular ever to be mistaken for that of the actress, and her jolly grin has been replaced with a look that is at once plaintive and severe. Whether Picabia was unconcerned with imitating her face or concerned not to is impossible to tell.[249] What is clear is how he fixates on the Hispanicising details. The folds and patterning of his painted mantilla closely correspond to those in the postcard.

Other minor changes also serve to amplify a sense of Spanishness. Alcaráz's right eye becomes notably lopsided and enlarged. Her crucifix, partially concealed in the postcard, is now on full display. Such modifications are consistent with changes to other *Espagnoles*. The wonky eyes of *Andalusia* and *Spanish Woman* are surely a fabrication of Picabia's imagination, as is the crucifix that gets added to *The Spanish Revolution* (to be discussed in Chapter 5). Backgrounds are also typically changed. In *Untitled (Torero),* Picabia relocates Joselito from the photographer's studio to the bullring.

Beyond furnishing Picabia with a repertoire of Hispanicising iconography, the postcard probably held a more general appeal. For artists of his generation, part of the postcard's value was its implicit opposition to received 'high' culture.[250] Mass-produced, poorly coloured, and decidedly 'low' brow, postcards were a form of visual culture antithetical to the accepted standards of fine art. Arch-Modernist critic Clement Greenberg later recognised as much. Grousing about artists who 'prize qualities of the popular reproduction because

[249] In a portrait like *Imperio Argentina*, Picabia clearly intends the figure to be recognised. Other times he works to prevent it. One would be hard pressed to identify *Untitled (Torero)* as an image of Josilito. Yet, in a letter to Breton, Picabia directly inscribed the bullfighter's name on a drawing.

[250] Picabia's colleagues Breton and Éluard intended to write a book on the postcard and the popular unconscious. The project failed to materialise, but Éluard did publish an article on the subject in *Minotaure* - Paul Éluard, "Les plus belles cartes postales", *Minotaure,* no. 3-4 (1933) reproduced in David Prochaska and Jordan Mendelson, eds. *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2010), Chapter 10.

of its incongruous prosaic associations', Greenberg explicitly linked the appeal of 'postal card chromeotype' with a desire to 'sin against decorum'.[251]

Some such dynamic is undoubtedly at play in the *Espagnoles*. However, the allure of the postcard is simultaneously more complex and less seditious than Greenberg suggests. On some level, his loathing of the chromeotype is driven by the unacknowledged realisation that its formal properties are compromisingly close to those of the high modernism he espouses. For rather than straightforwardly repudiating modernism, the postcard shared with it a tendency to flatness and matter-of-fact technique. What Picabia got from the postcard then was not a negation of his formal interests – flatness, centrality, facingness – but a way of realising them. The tension between mechanically reproduced multiple and hand-painted original was central to both the postcards and his practice.

Espagnoles: A Counter-Tradition

My discovery of Picabia's postcard source initially appears to put me at odds with Arnauld Pierre, who, as noted in the literature review, argues that the *Espagnoles* are derived from portraits by Ingres.[252] Likewise, my recovery of the long, discursive currents informing the production of the *Espagnoles* contrasts with Pierre's account, which tightly situates these paintings within the cultural politics of the Return to Order. In reality, though, there is nothing particularly incompatible about our arguments.

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[251] Clement Greenberg, "Surrealist Painting" in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume One,* ed. John O'Brian (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 229. Greenberg seems unaware of it, but many of the Dada and Surrealist artists were avid postcard collectors. In addition to Breton and Éluard, Paul Citroen and Salvador Dalí are also known to have been collectors. From the evidence amassed here, so too was Picabia.

[252] As an exception to this reliance on Ingres, Pierre once posited a postcard source for *Spanish Woman with Comb* (c.1922-6). More recently, the Picabia committee, of which he is a member, have connected the same painting to Ingres's *Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière* (1806). See Pierre, *La peinture sans aura*, 175 ; and Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II*, 448.

Spanish Woman may be a bastardisation of Ingres' *Portrait of Madame Aymon,* as Pierre claims (figs. 1.0 and 1.1). However, Ingres's painting only furnishes Picabia with a generic template, not his Hispanicising details. *Spanish Woman's* resemblance to *Madame Aymon* is only discernible in her overall posture and mouth. The rest of Picabia's painting has a much closer affinity with the Fornarina postcard (fig. 3.22). Some fusion of references then is not only highly feasible, it is also part of the point. By mingling French and Spanish sources, Picabia nods towards his own mongrel identity. Moreover, by hybridising neo-classical art with ephemeral souvenirs, he critiques normative cultural values.[253] Indeed, one of the ways that the *Espagnoles* satirise Ingres and the Return to Order is by undermining their claims to cultural superiority through an equation with the souvenir and the low-brow performer.

Undoubtedly, Ingres remains pertinent to any explanation of the *Espagnoles,* but as Pierre has already provided a definitive account of this relationship and I have outlined the general stakes of Picabia's engagement with Ingres in the previous chapter, I will not pursue this argument in any great detail here. Although Ingres was renowned for his wall-eyed figures, I want to return to Manet instead, as a way of expanding upon Pierre's insight that Picabia was explicitly interested in a fake Spain.

Picabia's interest in fake Spain, I would argue, is not merely a personal quirk. It is something tied to the discursive rhetoric of French modernism since the time of Manet. Picabia may never have expressed much interest in the painter of *Olympia*, but a comparison of the two is revealing nonetheless. Tempting though it is to start likening Picabia's smoking *Spanish Woman* to Manet's *Gypsy with a Cigarette* (1862), the affinities that concern me are more between

[253] During the early 1920s, Picabia appears to be hybridising Ingres and postcards, but around 1927 he seems to move to exclusively using postcard sources.

the two artists' historical conjunctures than their specific canvases.[254] Moreover, Manet's precedent as a painter of Hispanic figures has far wider resonances than any single painting.

Manet occupies a peculiar role in the French tradition of representing *Espagnoles*. Where the Orientalists of his generation aimed for realism, Manet deliberately accentuated artifice. As Carol Armstrong notes, 'Manet distinguished his offerings from the Spanish vogue of the day by underlining not their Spanish authenticity […] but their Spanish theatricality'.[255] Manet thematises this performed Spanishness in numerous paintings: *Mme V…in a Costume of an Espada (1862)* and *Young Woman Reclining in Spanish Costume* (1862) both link Spain with the act of dressing up (figs. 3.47 and 3.48). The latter pushes this combination of artifice and imitation further, through art-historical citation of Goya. Quotation, performance and artificiality here become deeply imbricated with what Armstrong terms Manet's 'Spanishicity'.[256]

According to Michael Fried, Manet's interest in the Spanish masters was the result of an explicit concern with the question of national style.[257] The deliberate artifice of his 'Spanish' paintings is the flipside to a period belief that 'Frenchness resides in truthfulness'.[258] Likewise, Picabia's celebration of a fake Spain forms as an oblique response to the Return to Order's championing of the cultural superiority and innate authenticity of French art. The acute anxiety experienced by Manet over what constituted French painting in the

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[254] For many years, *Gypsy with Cigarette* was owned by Degas, but it emerged onto the market following his death in 1917. A catalogue of the Degas collection appeared the following year, two years prior to Picabia debuting the *Espagnoles.*

[255] Carol M. Armstrong, *Manet Manette* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 99.

[256] On 'Spanishicity' and dressing '*à la espagnole*' in Manet, see Armstrong, *Manet Manette*, 93-133.

[257] Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 80-87.

[258] ibid., 84.

1860s finds a parallel in the discourse of the 1920s. As detailed at various points in the thesis already, the question of national style re-emerged for Picabia's generation in the debates regarding the Return to Order, the foreignness of Dada, and the Spanishness of Cubism.

Picasso's *Portrait of Woman in Mantilla* (1917) might then also be placed within a counter-tradition of *Espagnoles* (fig. 3.49). Picasso's sitter is French-Moroccan but her costume Spanish. Picasso's technique meanwhile is faux-pointillist. Dispensing with the colour theories underpinning pointillism, Picasso instead gives us a painterly confetti of coloured dots that act as a shorthand signifier for French painting. A related work, *Olga in Mantilla* (1917), is also artificially Hispanicised (fig. 3.50). Here, Picasso's Russian fiancée Olga wears a makeshift mantilla fashioned from an old tablecloth. Made while Picasso was in Barcelona with *Parade*, these paintings were likely known to Picabia, who was in the city at the time and is known to have met with Picasso on at least one occasion. [259] The consciously performed Spanishness and questioning of national style exhibited in Picasso's paintings would likely have appealed to Picabia's sensibilities. It is even possible that Picabia's use of Ingres as a model for *Spanish Woman* relates to his earlier engagement with Picasso's *Ingrisme*. Regardless of any direct influence, Picabia's pseudo-señoritas have a greater affinity with Picasso's and Manet's artificially Hispanicised women than Return to Order realism.

Maquillée

Just as Manet's *Mme V…in a Costume of an Espada* artificially Hispanicises a French mademoiselle*,* so *Spanish Woman* Hispanicises Ingres's *Madame Aymon.* Suggestively, this procedure recalls the story of Picabia dressing up as a toreador recounted in the Introduction. Equally tantalisingly, Picabia raised the possibility of transitioning between Spanish and French identities in a justifying statement he made about the *Espagnoles*. As we heard in the

[259] Even if Picasso did not show the painting to Picabia personally, it was reproduced in the Spanish press, in *Vell I nou* 46 (15 June 1917).

Introduction, Picabia claimed he produced *Espagnoles* for those 'who don't like the machines', but he continued this statement by declaring 'if they don't like the *Espagnoles*, I will make them *Françaises*……'[260]

The prospect of a French *Espagnole* resonates with Picabia's cultural identifications and opens up a new reading of a previously undiscussed work, *La femme maquillée* (fig. 3.51).[261] Although all the Ingres-derived *Espagnoles* are in some minor sense French, *La femme maquillée* provides us with what might be an explicitly Frenchified variation of the *Espagnole*.

The link between *La femme maquillée* and the *Espagnoles* suggested by Picabia's statement is supported by some undisputable formal correspondences. Further confirmation comes from Picabia's insistence that the *Espagnoles* were fake. Publicly, Picabia defended the *Espagnoles,* claiming he found them beautiful; in private, he insisted on their inauthenticity. Quizzed by Juliette Roche, who asked him 'if you no longer believe in painting why do you paint so many *Espagnoles*?', Picabia replied 'they are false'.[262] In this regard it should be noted that *maquiller* means not only to apply makeup but also to fake, to falsify, to fabricate and to forge. Added to these primary notions are connotations of masking and disguise. *La femme maquillée* translates both as 'the masked woman' and 'the made-up woman', the dual sense of made-up preserved in translation.

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[260] Interview with Roger Vitac, *Journal du people* (9 June 1923) cited in Francis Picabia, *Singulier idéal,* 223.

[261] To my knowledge, this painting has never been reproduced in the literature, let alone commented upon. The painting was sold by Christie's in 2013.

[262] *'Si no cree usted en la pintura ¿por qué pinta tantos cuadros de españolas?' 'Son falso'.* This conversation reportedly took place between Juliette Roche and Picabia on the 25 Feb 1920 at the second Section d'Or show. Cited by Jean-Jacques Lebel, "La máquina Picabia" in *Francis Picabia: Máquinas y Españolas*, 53. For an informative discussion of Picabia and Roche's relationship, though one that over emphasises Roche's Dada credentials, see Kamish, *Mamas of Dada*, 94-121.

One way that Picabia might have falsified *La femme maquillée* is through its dating. Although signed and dated 1901, I believe that it is more likely that *La femme maquillée* was produced later. As noted in the Literature Review, Picabia is known to have spuriously dated his work, and Pierre contends that the 1902 *Espagnoles* in fact date from 1920. His argument strongly resonates with my proposed dating for *La femme maquillée.* Not only did *La femme maquillée* also appear in the *Galerie la Cible* exhibition, but this is the earliest date to which I can securely trace its provenance. Even if Picabia's dating is legitimate, it is still significant that the first time he chose to display either *La femme maquillée* or the *Espagnoles*, it was alongside each other.

Iconography might also provide support for this renewed dating. Although *La femme maquillée's* resemblance to Oscar Wilde, who died in 1900, approximately coincides with the 1901 dating, the figure's haircut and bow tie are generally more redolent of the androgynous fashions of the 1920s than those of the fin-de-siècle.[263] Victor Margueritte's infamous novel *La Garçonne* was published in 1920, providing the enduring term for these new women. 1920 also marked the first appearance of Duchamp's female alter-ego, Rrose Sélevy. *La femme maquillée's* visual similarities to Wilde and the *garçonne* give the painting connotations of the dandy and drag, two strategies of self-consciously performed identity currently being exploited by Picabia's friend Duchamp.[264]

[263] Picabia was interested in Wilde. He mentioned him in his writings, and in 1913 signed a petition in defence of Jacob Epstein's Oscar Wilde monument. He was also a friend of Wilde's nephew, the Dadaist Arthur Cravan.

[264] On the intersection of Dada and dandyism see Susan Fillin-Yeh, "Dandies, Marginality, and Modernism: George O'Keeffe, Marcel Duchamp and other Cross-Dressers" in *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity*, ed. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1998), 174-205; and Brigid Doherty, "Fashionable Ladies, Dada Dandies", *Art Journal* 54, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 46-50.

As one cultural historian argues, 'by 1920 to be beautiful meant adopting artificial means to construct a feminine mystique'.[265] The decade also witnessed a revival of that relic of courtly display, the painted beauty spot. Typically, cosmetics aim to enhance natural appearance, the best make-up providing the illusion of its absence. The beauty spot, however, visibly declares its artifice. In both *La femme maquillée* and *Spanish Woman*, the beauty spot serves to emphasise a sense of constructedness. Suggestively, Spanish women appear to have been a point of reference for French fashions at this point. Two issues of French *Vogue* from this period feature representations of Hispanicised women on the cover, while across Europe, the cosmetics industry also pulled on the allure of the Carmen type.[266] The English manufacturer Coty produced a *Gitane* range of makeup. The Russian company *TeZhe* sold a *Carmen* perfume.

The 1920s saw a marked increase in the overt use of makeup. The expansion of women into the workplace gave them increased financial independence. This growing consumer power coincided with several technical innovations in the cosmetics industry resulting in the increased availability of these products.[267] Yet, if the New Woman, the Flapper Girl, and the *Garçonne* might individuate themselves through artificial outlined lips and the use of heavy kohl around the eyes, within traditional French discourse and routines of *maquillage*, conspicuous makeup had long been considered a sign of indecency.

A hallmark of the demimonde, makeup had recently been culturally associated with promiscuity and artificiality. These connotations of wantonness and vulgarity meant makeup was historically the preserve of the actress or the

[265] For a wider account of the politics of French dress in the 1920s, see Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[266] *Vogue*, May 1922 and October 1923.

[267] The first synthetic hair dye was produced in 1907. The first razor marketed for women and the first push lipstick appeared in 1915. A swivel version followed in 1923. Modern nail varnish became commercially available in 1917.

prostitute. Without wishing to suggest that *Spanish Woman* represents either type, through the *cigarrera* and *Carmen*, she picks up the connotations of both. Consequently, she preserves something of the double meaning inherent in the idea of being 'made-up' or a 'painted lady'.

There is more here than simple wordplay. As an application of coloured pigment to a surface, makeup provides an excellent metaphor for painting. Picabia may even have been using the associations of cosmetics and prostitution as an analogy for art. In his ongoing criticising of Cubist mercantilism, Picabia once quipped that there was little difference between a concubine and the fraudulent con-cubists, while in an unrealised screenplay he describes how a painter with a false beard attempts to buy a handbook on the 'The Art of Makeup'.[268] In one peculiar statement, Picabia explicitly links painting and prostitution, makeup and fake Spain. Discussing the Orientalist painter Roybet, Picabia claims it is 'better to sleep with a casual stranger who asks: is Spain beautiful? As she would affirm: I went to Roybet, and well nothing fake about it! As for me, I find all artist's studios fake; they are pretty rooms made up like old whores'.[269]

This equating of artist and prostitute has a venerable history. Tied to the decline in artistic patronage and the rise of the art market, we find this equivalence articulated from the beginning of French modernism. Charles Baudelaire asks 'what is art?' His answer: 'Prostitution'.[270] Meditations on *maquillage* also appear in Baudelaire's seminal text *The Painter of Modern Life*. Transitioning ideas in *The Painter of Modern Life,* Baudelaire segues his discussion of artist-dandy-flâneur into a consideration of the prostitute via a deliberation on cosmetics. Celebrating the fake in terms as applicable to

[268] Picabia, "The Law of Accommodation Among the One-Eyed" in *Beautiful Monster*, 332. I discuss this script in greater depth in Chapter 4.

[269] *La Vie Moderne* (18 March 1923). Cited by Pierre, "Dada Stands its Ground", 154, n.31. My comments here follow Pierre's suggestive footnote. More recently, Pierre has connected the *Espagnoles* to hairdresser's mannequins, *Mechanical Udnie*, 166.

[270] Baudelaire *Fusées* cited by Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1994), 173.

modernist painting as personal appearance, Baudelaire writes, 'who would dare to assign to art the sterile function of imitating Nature? *Maquillage* has no need to hide itself or to shrink from being suspected; on the contrary, let it display itself if it does so with frankness and honesty'.[271] Makeup and painting, suggests Baudelaire, should accept their inherent artifice. As we shall see, *Spanish Woman* is also tacitly sceptical about the nature of representation and the equation of appearance with truth.

Spanish Woman

Whether Picabia was drawing on Ingres, contemporary postcards or hybridising both in a deliberate attempt at short-circuiting high and low cultures, it is clear that his return to figuration neither entailed a return to the model, nor realism as it had been historically understood. In his recent intervention into the scholarship on interwar realism, Devin Fore has insisted that many artists of this period 'did not reiterate previous paradigms naively, but rather invoked them self-consciously', placing the representational language of the previous century in quotation marks.[272] Identifying a counter-movement within the Return to Order itself, Fore argues that formal returns are not in themselves reducible to ideological re-inscription. Refusing to equate the figurative revival with political conservatism *tout court*, Fore instead gives closer scrutiny to the formal operations of individual artists, highlighting how their realism differed from its pre-modernist predecessors. Such an approach can be productively applied to the *Espagnoles*. This necessitates a more detailed consideration of the form of *Spanish Woman*.

A combination of watercolour, gouache and pencil on paper, *Spanish Woman* measures 71 x 51 cm, with the woman herself being a little under life-sized. Centred on the top of her head are a pale-pink flower and a large, brown comb. A second, possibly faded flower, of washed-out, muddy yellow sits to the right.

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[271] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon, 1995), 34. I have italicised *maquillage* for consistency.

[272] Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism*, 10.

Described with loose, concentric brush marks, these floral elements are echoed in the pattern of her shawl. From her slightly open mouth hangs a cigarette – a white rectangle of paint that conveys no sense of cylindricality – that issues forth a plume of grey smoke. This same grey colour is repeated in the makeup that adorns the lids of her oversized eyes, one of which stares directly at the viewer, while the other squints off towards the edge of the canvas. Black hair and a beauty spot complete this portrait of a Spanish woman.

Except, I would argue, this is not strictly a portrait at all. There was no sitter for *Spanish Woman*, no real woman to which she immediately refers. At best, this is a second-degree portrait, an image of an image. Picabia's deforming citation of his sources fails to preserve the identity of the original sitter, or what Sarah Betzer terms, with specific reference to Ingres, the 'sitter's share'.[273] Perhaps this explains why the *Espagnoles* convey so little sense of subjectivity. Beyond a mild coquettishness, the faintest suggestion of licentiousness befitting a descendent of *Carmen*, the main characteristic that *Spanish Woman* exudes is vacuity. She lacks any real sense of either interiority or corporeality. The cigarette's smoke has more substance than she does. The palest of washes helps give depth to her nose and throw her chin forward, but the sides of her face are virtually non-existent. A light pencil line describes her right cheek while nothing demarcates her left. Physiognomy flattens out, merging with the ground whose colouration it shares. With the figure/ground opposition starting to blur the painting begins to read less as an image of a Spanish woman than as an accumulation of signifiers of Spanish femininity. Little of human substance exists beyond or behind these signs.

Frequently in the *Espagnoles* of the early 1920s, it is these signifiers of Spanishness – fans, mantillas, guitars, roses – that are emphasised. Being in

[273] The concept of the sitter's share has been formulated as a way to acknowledging the agency of the sitter in shaping their own pictorial representation. Sarah E. Betzer, *Ingres and the Studio: Women, Painting, History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 13.

these paintings is more a question of appearance than essence. The *Espagnoles'* accoutrements are not some disposable supplements; they are her ontological foundations, the only thing that constitutes her as Spanish. Uninterested in producing images of concrete individuals at this point, Picabia instead prioritises accessories, depicting not human subjects but that which makes them visible, legible as a type.[274] This concern with the Spanish woman as a category is reflected in Picabia's titling strategies. Very rarely do the *Espagnoles* have proper names. The majority are merely titled *Espagnole*. When titles do differentiate them, it is primarily through variation in accessories: *Spanish Woman with White Mantilla*, *Spanish Woman with Red Rose*, *Spanish Woman with Blue Shawl*, and so on. Practically interchangeable and produced in a serialised, almost mechanical manner, these *Espagnoles* are less a negation of the machine works than a displacement of their concerns. Identifying specific sources for all the *Espagnoles* is, therefore, less important than recognising how a generalised logic of photo-mechanical reproduction informs their production. Rather than representing some absolute retreat from the avant-garde, the *Espagnoles* continue to operate through the logic of readymade and mechanical reproduction. Technological modernity is no longer depicted but internalised, migrating from the level of iconography to that of form. Any simplified trajectory of descent from avant-gardism to figuration misses how Picabia uses the strategies of the former – deliberate deskilling, copying, and readymade images – in the production of the latter, while his use of hand-painted postcards as source material reinforces the central dialectic of painting and photography, original and copy, at the heart of his work.

Spanish Woman is not, then, the image of a Spanish woman supplemented by a rose, a beauty spot, a cigarette. Rather, it is these supplements that allow us to read her as a Spanish woman. She is an effect of these signifiers of Spanishness. This profoundly anti-humanist way of picturing the subject is decidedly at odds with the more general re-humanisation of art in interwar realism. Nor can the *Espagnoles* be assimilated to the neo-classical turn. Not

[274] Later portraits like *Imperio Argentina* clearly follow a different logic.

only is Picabia mocking Ingres, but when it came to period conceptions of the Spanish woman 'the proposed model of femininity did not reference classical perfection'.[275]

Historically, the *Espagnoles* may be part of the figurative revival of the Return to Order, but ideologically they are not. Resurrecting the figure, but not the model of subjectivity historically associated with it, Picabia developed a quasi-portraiture that jettisons the genre's traditional requirements. From the Renaissance onwards portraiture, in Western art has been broadly tied to a particular humanist understanding of the subject. Within this tradition, the portrait's primary function has been to individuate. Central to this operation is the representation of the face, which not only acts as a record of an individual's external appearance but also registers something of their interior experience. The *Espagnoles* refuse this double remit. Divorcing the face from the project of individuation, Picabia does not attempt to capture a physiognomic likeness nor invoke the interior life of the subject. Instead, he depicts the *Espagnole* as a tautological multiple, her appearance always already mediated by mechanical reproduction and the mythic stereotypes of the tourist industry.

Tautology, Roland Barthes tells us, is a hallmark of myth.[276] Repetition habituates myth's ideological message, naturalising it until it no longer appears as such. Ideology, in this sense, does not refer to consciously held opinions or partisan views. Rather, it designates a nebulous domain of un-reflected-upon assumptions, attitudes and prejudices. Not quite the same as 'false consciousness', which carries implications of manipulative, top-down deception, it identifies something closer to a 'cultural unconscious', a set of ingrained dispositions and practices that structure the way an individual

[275] Jesusa Vega, "Spain's Image in Regional Dress: From Everyday Object to Museum Piece and Tourist Attraction" in *Visualizing Spanish Modernity*, eds., Susan Larson and Eva Woods (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 211.

[276] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000), 152-153 contains a specific discussion of tautology. What I have in mind, though, is Barthes' more pervasive idea that repetition drains away history to produce the illusion of mythic essences and timeless sameness.

perceives the world. This is ideology congealed into received wisdom and common sense.

Nothing if not repetitive, the *Espagnoles* are ideological in this restricted definition. If they work against the ideology of the Return to Order, they are nonetheless profoundly ideological in their reliance on mythic stereotypes. Like their postcard sources, the *Espagnoles* trade in highly clichéd stereotypes. They may do so declaratively, foregrounding the signifiers of Spanishness, but Picabia remains complicit with that which he critiques. Like Barthes' myths, the *Espagnoles* are a form of second-order signification, parasitic on pre-existing signs.

Picabia's postcard sources were produced to satisfy the needs of a nascent tourist industry. They overemphasise cultural difference and vernacular style, fetishising marginal or residual elements within Spanish culture. The 'authentic' image they project is one that is often kept artificially alive. Such postcards typically conform more to the expectations of the tourist's gaze than a region's contemporary actuality.[277] Semi-fictive to begin with, any connection to reality is further attenuated by the postcard form. Circulating at a spatial-temporal remove from the culture it depicts, the postcard's decontextualised imagery is received abroad as the one-dimensional signifier of a commodified Otherness.

Seemingly aware of the limitations of his postcard sources but unable to surpass them, Picabia inevitably preserves something of their original signification. His romanticised representations of Spain are reductive and shaped by period attitudes. They naturalise a set of culturally specific

[277] As Eva Wood notes, 'the Carmen narrative, internalised by the Spanish, catalysed an exotic, ironic marketing of this stereotype by its own inhabitants'. By the mid-nineteenth century, Gypsies were reportedly being shipped in to populate tourist locations, while street vendors, entertainers and tourist's guides also found it lucrative to adopt the dress codes expected by visitors. Eva Woods "Visualizing the Time-space of Otherness" in *Visualizing Spanish Modernity*, 288.

assumptions about Spain. The *Espagnoles*, in particular, are informed by normative ideas about Spanish women prevalent within turn-of-the-century French culture. Emblematised by the figure of Carmen, the stereotypical señorita was considered erotically available, though potentially deadly. The prevalent trope of the Spanish *femme fatale* is not something separate to the *Espagnoles*, a mere background or context located somewhere vaguely behind the paintings. The *Espagnoles* are performative, not reflective. They reproduce and perpetuate a set of assumptions about eroticised Spanish women that Picabia had internalised.

The next chapter, on Picabia's Transparencies, continues to explore the *Espagnoles'* erotic dimension elaborating their connections to Duchamp's Bride. It also returns us to Catholic themes, first raised in relation to *The Virgin Saint*. A discussion of *Woman with Cigarette,* formally known as *The Virgin of Montserrat,* helps bring together themes of the current and previous chapters, while also opening up new aspects of the *Espagnoles'* evolving signification.

4. The ‘Spanish’ Transparencies (c.1927): Hispanicising the Bride

In 1928, Picabia informed a journalist that he was finished with ‘Spanish types’.[278] The claim was disingenuous. Picabia may have temporarily ceased painting his ubiquitous *Espagnoles*, but he was certainly not done with them. Unsold canvases got recycled, and old *Espagnoles* became the first of a new series of paintings known as the Transparencies (1927-1932). *Spanish Woman with Butterfly* (c.1927), for example, was reworked and renamed (figs. 4.0 and 4.1). Rechristened *Spanish Woman with Camel* (1928), this painting is just one of a dozen or so early Transparencies to incorporate Spanish motifs.

Picabia’s Transparencies are baffling paintings. Composed through the superimposition of seemingly unrelated images, they are both formally complex and frustratingly enigmatic. I am far from alone in finding them unforthcoming. Many scholars consider them essentially meaningless. The first half of this chapter details the current interpretations of the Transparencies, showing the limitations of this pessimistic conclusion while still struggling to articulate a more positive answer. Then, once the hermeneutical complexities of the Transparencies have been outlined, it moves on to address the unique features of what I will term the ‘Spanish Transparencies’

Although Picabia never spoke of the Transparencies in terms of sets or suites – he barely discussed them at all – it is nonetheless permissible to conceive of a specific Spanish cycle. Formal and iconographic markers suggest it. The combination of an *Espagnole*, a toreador, and a figure appropriated from Catalan Romanesque frescos is a recurrent feature of these paintings. Exhibition histories also confirm that these paintings were grouped together by Picabia. In October 1928, Picabia displayed most of the Spanish

[278] Interview with George Goin, *La Saison de Cannes* (No 10, 12 Feb 1928), 15. Cited in Borràs, *Picabia*, 335.

Transparencies together at the Galerie Théophile Briant.[279] In addition to *Spanish Woman with Camel*, the exhibition also included *Young Girl in Paradise*, *Pink Beast*, *Yellow Beast*, *The Parrot, Butterfly,* and two paintings called *Seville* (figs. 4.2-4.6 and 4.18). It may well also have included *The Women of Love*, *Woman with Cigarette, Woman with Blue Shawl* and *Untitled (Six Eyes?),* a work presumed to be the lost painting *Six Eyes* (figs. 4.5, 4.16, 4.28 and 4.31).[280]

For various reasons, the Spanish cycle has failed to attract the same level of attention as later variants.[281] Among the earliest examples of the style, the Spanish Transparencies are usually moderate in size and executed in watercolour. Later versions are more ambitious in scale and painted in oil. This shift in medium allowed for a greater accumulation of layered motifs, resulting in more complex paintings. This new formal and iconographic richness includes multiple art-historical references, which have proven irresistible to later art historians. But even at the time, the later Transparencies had a greater visibility, thanks, in the main, to the promotion of Picabia's new dealer, Léonce Rosenberg.

This chapter seeks to redress the lacuna surrounding the Spanish Transparencies. These paintings testify both to the continued significance of the *Espagnole* and to her changing signification. What function does she perform within the Transparencies? What new valences does she acquire?

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[279] Galerie Théophile Briant (26 Oct – 15 Nov 1928).

[280] No catalogue for this show is known to exist, but an exhibition list is reproduced in Borràs, *Picabia, 334-5.* Picabia showed seven paintings titled *Spanish Woman*. Based on measurements and dating, I believe the largest of them to be *Woman with Cigarette*. *Untitled* (*Six Eyes?)* is presumed to be the lost work *Six Eyes*. Althought the Lamb actually has seven eyes, the dimensions match. Iconography hints that the missing *Trumpets* (102 x 73.5) might be *Women of Love* (105 x75). Likewise, *Yellow Serpent*, the only painting for which no measurements are available, could well be *Woman with Blue Shawl.* Other missing works, including the *Green Beast* and *Pink Serpent,* are presumably similar to *Pink Beast*. The exhibition also included two other paintings titled *Toreador*, one of which is likely to be *Seville*.

[281]

What new meanings are revealed? Before attempting to answer these questions, it is necessary to make a lengthy detour, saying more about the Transparencies in general and the interpretive conundrums they generate. Because the existing scholarship has almost exclusively focused on later Transparencies like *Atrata* (1929), I will initially do likewise (fig.4.7). Momentarily bracketing out the Spanish Transparencies will allow me to address the general methodological issues raised by the Transparencies before moving on to the specific features of the Spanish variants. The use of religious iconography within the Spanish Transparencies will then be addressed, situating them within the context of the interwar Catholic revival. The chapter concludes by unpicking the Transparencies' conceptual affinities with the work of Marcel Duchamp, analysing the role the *Espagnoles* play within these paintings.

Classicism

Despite Picabia occasionally reworking old canvases in the production of the Transparencies, it is mildly misleading to describe them as palimpsests. Overpainting here is a stylistic effect more than an act of expediency. The Transparencies' logic is one of deliberate accumulation not erasure and re-inscription. Unlike the palimpsest, where previous layers are subordinate to the most recent, there is rough equality in the legibility of the Transparencies' successive inscriptions. Signs are apprehended simultaneously rather than successively. Indeed, Picabia overlays his images in such a way as to create visual and conceptual relays, enmeshing separate tiers in a tangled network of interpenetrating motifs and spatial vectors.

In *Atrata* (1929), for example, Picabia overlays multiple images of hands suggesting an intricate interplay of touching and holding . A single hand, in the painting's top right-hand corner, grasps an implied sphere. The same object is supported from below by the partially suppressed figure of Atlas. Consistent with other aspects of Picabia's practice this image is pillaged. The *Farnese Atlas*, a second-century copy of a Hellenistic sculpture, provides the template

for Picabia's central Titan, though his use of red outline adds further connotations of Renaissance chalk drawing (fig. 4.9).[282] A copy of a copy of a copy, this drawing of a recreated sculpture thematises the Transparencies recurrent deployment of visual appropriation, anachronic displacement and inter-medial translation.[283]

Art historians have now uncovered a great many of the Transparencies' sources. Recently, there has been a growing awareness of Picabia's reliance on imagery derived from popular culture.[284] While his quotations of other artists – Dürer, Titian, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, Guido Reni – have long been recognised, no account of the Transparencies, it seems, exists without an obligatory charge sheet of art-historical appropriation. [285] Pin-pointing sources is, of course, essential. Iconographic inventories, however, often amount to

[282] An eagle-eyed Camfield was first to note these sources. Camfield, *Picabia*: *His Art, Life and Times*, 235-6. The most recent discussion is Jens Daehner, "Transparent Strata and Classical Bodies, 1922-31" in *Modern Antiquity*, ed. Christopher Green and Jens M. Daehner (Los Angles: Getty Publications, 2011), 107-113.

[283] An emphasis on the anachronic has been central to a number of recent studies that have drawn productive parallels between medieval and modern art. Exponents of this approach, such as Alexander Nagel and Amy Knight Powell, work by foregrounding the formal and structural affinities between the two periods. Nagel cites the Transparencies as a potential candidate for such treatment, but Picabia's reliance on direct quotation could prove to be a blind spot for a methodological procedure premised on analogy and similarity. Despite the undoubtable merits of the Medieval/Modern scholarship, I have not found it to be best placed to tackle the Transparencies. Thomas Nagel, *Medieval/Modern: Art out of Time* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 14.

[284] Annette King, Joyce H. Townsend and Bronwyn Ormsby, "Otaïti 1930 by Francis Picabia" *Tate Papers 28. http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/28/picabia-otaiti accessed 09/03/2018*. This paper details Picabia's reliance on contemporary nude photography, in particular Peter Landow's *Nature and Culture: Women* (1925). My own research has uncovered Picabia's continued reliance on Spanish postcards in the production of the Transparencies, an example of which is discussed below.

[285] Camfield, *Picabia: His Art Life and Times,* Chapter 16; Borrás, *Picabia*, Chapter 9; Pierre, *La peinture sans aura,* 220-1 and 224-5; Sarah Wilson, *Francis Picabia: Accommodations of Desire - Transparencies, 1924-1939* (New York: Kent Fine Art, 1989), 5-23.

little more than a 'consoling play of recognitions'.[286] Identifying the sources of Picabia's shop-soiled classicism is one thing, accounting for them is another.[287]

Picabia's engagement with the classical tradition is highly ambiguous. He was contemptuous of what he termed 'paintings for antiquarians' and hostile to the shortcomings of the Return to Order's classical turn.[288] 'Not knowing what to say anymore […] they cry out long live classicism', Picabia mockingly declared, while simultaneously making paintings that reference the canon.[289]

His ironic distance from the classical revival appears to be openly acknowledged in *Atrata*. In his *Natural History*, Pliny recounts the myth of Zeuxis, a painter of such staggering verisimilitude that birds tried to peck the grapes from his frescos. Picabia evokes this myth of painterly realism only to undercut its aspirations in the very act of painting. *Atrata's* cartoon bird and grapes fall woefully short of realising a realism comparable to reality itself. This lampooning of the ambitions of the neo-classical revival is also a possibly self-deprecating quip about his own limitations as a painter: *Pica* is Spanish for beak or peck. The French *picorer* (peck) shares the same etymology.[290]

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[286] I take this formulation from Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), 88.

[287] Christopher Green et al., *Modern Antiquity* contains the best discussion of Picabia's relationship to the classical revival. It provides a compelling elaboration of the historical currents shaping the Transparencies but sometimes struggles to compellingly link these to the paintings. Why, it might be asked, does Picabia turn to Botticelli when the general trend is to Ingres and Poussin? If he just wants to signify classicism, why Botticelli and not Raphael, Leonardo or Michelangelo?

[288] Francis Picabia, "Le Salon des Indépendants" (1923) cited by Daehner, "Transparent Strata", 108.

[289] "Thank You, Francis!" *Littérature* no.8 (1923) reproduced in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 300.

[290] In his poem *Unique Eunuch* (1920), Picabia plays on the similarity between his name and *picaflor*, Spanish for hummingbird and slang for a skirt-chaser. See Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 191. Interestingly, hummingbirds appear in the Transparency *Villica Caja* (1929).

Picabia's hostility to straight classicism, however, finds its most emphatic expression at the level of form. During the Return to Order, the drive for legibly ordered pictorial space paralleled the desire for a rationally ordered social sphere. The revival of the homogeneous space of perspectival construction trailed the construction of imagined sameness in the *Union Sacrée*. Picabia's citation of his classical predecessors' iconography, however, goes hand-in-hand with the thoroughgoing negation of their pictorial syntax. Dismantling perspectival space and blurring figure-ground relationship, the Transparencies bring the condition of experimental cinematography to bear on painting.

Cinema

Picabia's long-standing familiarity with photographic techniques of double exposure and superimposition is incontestable. Around 1914, he sat for a double-exposed photograph (fig.4.10). A decade later he deployed superimposition in his cinematic collaboration *Entr'acte* (1924). Unsurprisingly, Gertrude Stein, Man Ray and film critic Gaston Ravel all immediately connected the Transparencies to cinematography.

The translation of techniques associated with film into painting, a practice Pavle Levi terms 'cinema by other means', was widespread at the time. [291] Picabia's debt to cinema, however, extended far beyond the imitation of a handful of technical procedures. As Jennifer Wild argues, early cinema constituted a specific 'epistemological modality' that transformed conditions of viewing, modes of representation and even the act of beholding.[292] With live entertainment accompanying short film screenings, early cinema was marked by disjunctive narratives and disconnected visual spectacle. The static, stable viewpoint associated with conventional cinema and perspectival painting was

[291] Pavle Levi, *Cinema by Other Means*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Picabia is briefly discussed on pages 40-42.

[292] Jennifer Wild, *The Parisian Avant-Garde in the Age of the Cinema*, *1900-1923* (California: The University of California Press, 2015). Especially the introduction, where Wild outlines her ideas, and Chapter 2, where she address the impact of cinema on Picabia's Dada work.

destabilised. Back projection (in French, *projection par transparence*) allowed spectators to be seated on both sides of the screen, flipping the image for half the audience. With a nod to Rosalind Krauss, Wild terms this mode of filmic address one of 'cinematic horizontality'.[293] Building on Wild's analysis, Masha Chlenova claims that the Transparencies replicate early cinema's mode of non-discursive presentation.[294] Her argument is highly suggestive and resonates with Picabia's inter-medial cinematic experiments, but overlooks significant shifts in the history of cinema.[295] By 1910 the disjunctive cinema of the café-concert and the music hall was already a residual form. Dominant until 1907, this model of cinema was eclipsed during the period 1907-1913 by the rise of narrative film and the proliferation of conventional auditoriums.[296]

The new venues and their attendant technologies transformed filmic discourse. During the 1920s, the Surrealists began to see cinema as analogous to the mind.[297] The screen came to allegorise the dream, with projection acting as a potent metaphor for mental processes. Such an equation is succinctly captured in the title of an essay that is strictly contemporaneous with the Transparencies: Robert Desnos' 'Dream of the Night Transported to the Screen' (1927). Picabia was a friend of Desnos, and it is highly likely that

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[293] ibid., 13-15.

[294] Masha Chlenova, "Transparencies 1927-1930" in Umland, Our *Heads are Round so Our Thoughts can Change Direction*, 188-193.

[295] Picabia and René Clair's film ***Entr'acte*** was screened as the interlude of the ballet *Relâche* (1924), for which Picabia designed costumes and sets. Recent discussions of this project include Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail* , 288-337; Caroline Boulbès, "Relâche and the Music Hall" in Umland, *Our Heads are Round so Our Thoughts can Change Direction*, 134-139; Chris Townsend, "The Last Hope of Intuition: Francis Picabia, Erik Satie and René Clair's Intermedial Project *Relâche*", *Nottingham French Studies* 50, no.3 (Autumn 2011): 43-64; and Malcom Turvey, *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2011), 77-104.

[296] I take this periodisation from Tom Gunning, "Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde", *Wide Angle,* 8, no. 3-4 (1986): 63-70.

[297] For recent discussions, see Haim Finkelstein, *The Screen in Surrealist Art and Thought* (London: Routledge, 2007); and R. Bruce Elder, *Dada, Surrealism and Cinematic Effect* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012).

knew this text. At the very least, he was familiar with its tropes. Picabia's screenplay *The Law of Accommodation among the One-Eyed* instructs readers to 'film it for themselves on the screen of their imagination'.[298]

I will return to this screenplay shortly. For now, it will suffice to note that neither the disjointed spectacle of early cinema nor the Surrealists' cinema-as-unconscious can adequately explain the Transparencies. The connections are real enough, but it is easy to overemphasise Picabia's dependence on cinema as a site or a technology. Anti-narrative, anti-perspectival tropes are an integral part of modernist painting's internal resources, and cinematic projection cannot fully account for the Transparencies' painterly experimentation.

Painting

Superimposition in the Spanish Transparencies has as much to do with the properties of watercolour as it does with cinema. Overlaying is the watercolourist's default process. Certainly, Picabia might have picked this medium precisely in order to replicate cinematic effects, but he continued to develop the Transparencies' uniquely painterly qualities. Working in a variety of non-compatible oil and water-based mediums, including yacht varnish and radiator paint, Picabia encouraged the premature ageing, discolouration and cracking of his paintings, his unstable paint mixtures separating in unpredictable ways.[299] The result may reflect the old Dadaist's disdain for permanence and value – an expressed preference for bad paintings that are momentarily entertaining over masterpieces that are eternally boring – but Picabia was never more engaged with the material properties and process of his craft. As the layers of varnishes increase, his imagery is progressively

[298] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 330.

[299] The technical construction of the Transparencies is detailed in King, Townsend and Bronwyn, "Otaïti", *Tate Papers.* I was lucky enough to hear King speak on this topic at the Tate symposium *Picasso, Picabia, Ernst*, 25 November 2016. The papers from which are collected in Annette King, Joyce Townsend and Adele Wright, *Picasso, Picabia, Ernst: New Perspectives* (London: Archetype Publications, 2017).

pushed back below the surface of the picture plane. Depending on the colour of the varnish, his recessed images often appear trapped in amber or submerged in shallow water. Figures appear to be petrified in resin or drowning in aquatic gloom. The actual act of looking at these claustrophobic and occasionally introspective paintings seems far removed from the conditions of spectacle and spectatorship engendered by early cinema.[300]

Whatever technical debt the Transparencies owe to cinema, discursively they ground themselves within the history of modernist painting. As both Picabia and Duchamp explicitly stated, the Transparencies were an attempt to represent three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface without recourse to the formal solutions of either classical perspective or Cubism.[301] Amongst Picabia's Cubist associates, the issues of pictorial space were discursively entwined with considerations of contemporary philosophy and speculative science. Gleizes and Metzinger had advised painters 'to refer to non-Euclidean scholars' and to 'mediate lengthily on certain of [Georg Friedrich Bernhard] Riemann's theorems'.[302] If Riemannian space can be characterised 'as containing shreds of Euclidean space […] that are juxtaposed but not attached to each other', then Picabia's Transparencies come closer to realising it than his Cubism ever did.[303]

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[300] Given the use of household varnish, the appearance of these paintings has no doubt altered since they were first painted. Nonetheless, the complex layering of images alone invites a sustained scrutiny of the fixed image that seems irreducible to cinemas fleeting viewing conditions.

[301] Preface to the catalogue *Francis Picabia: 30 Years of Painting* (1930), reproduced in Francis Picabia, *Lettres à Léonce Rosenberg 1929-1940* (Paris: Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne, 2000), 65; Marcel Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 157.

[302] Gleizes and Metzinger, *Cubism*, in Antliff and Leighten, *A Cubism Reader: Documents and Criticism, 1906-1914* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 424. Picabia helped finance Gleizes' and Metzinger's book.

[303] Albert Lautman, cited by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2008), 535.

Picabia's understanding of non-Euclidean geometry and Bergsonian simultaneity was probably superficial, but their pertinence to Transparencies remains apparent.[304] Amongst the pre-war avant-garde, interest in such scientific theories and developments often overlapped with outright mysticism. Far from automatically leading to the disenchantment of the world, technology proved surprisingly compatible with metaphysical yearnings. Discoveries like the x-ray revealed a world beyond normal human perception, a visionary revelation akin to that of the mystics. While the Transparencies' connection to the x-ray remains largely self-evident, initial observers were equally alert to their metaphysical currents.[305] Picabia's dealer, Léonce Rosenberg, compared the Transparencies to stained glass windows, an observation that applies as much to their luminosity as their iconography. Noted occultist Vivian du Mas went a step further, declaring that the Transparencies depicted an astral realm he had personally experienced.[306] Preposterous as this assertion is, it provides a useful reminder of superimposition's early application in spirit photography. It is not the Transparencies' metaphysical connotations, however, that account for their peculiar intractability. Their knottiness is a direct result of Picabia's application of the logic of montage to painting. While the Transparencies' connection to Cubism and cinema are frequently noted, their crucial relationship to montage has remained overlooked.

[304] The Puteaux Cubists' understanding of Riemann was specious. Gleizes and Metzinger get Riemann's name wrong in *Cubism*, and Duchamp admits he 'never read seriously the works of Riemann' as he was incapable of comprehending them. Duchamp's unpublished interview with Serge Stauffer is cited by Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2013), 594, n. 1.

[305] On Picabia's early interest in x-rays, see Linda Dalrymple Henderson, "Francis Picabia, Radiometers, and X- Rays in 1913", *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 1 (1989).

[306] Vivian Du Mas, "L'Occultisme dans l'art de Francis Picabia", *Orbes* (13 November 1931) reproduced in Picabia, *Lettres à Léonce Rosenberg,* 148-156.

Montage

Defined at its broadest, montage names the practice of combining pre-formed signs. An eminently intertextual process, montage can neither be defined by reference to a single medium (film, collage), nor by a specific set of technical procedures (cutting and pasting).

As early as 1930, Louis Aragon identified Picabia as one of the few painters to have absorbed the logic of collage. What Aragon has in mind is the denial of skill and sentiment evidenced in the mechanomorphs and *The Virgin Saint*, but it is the Transparencies that most closely hew to the principles of montage.[307]

From its inception, montage produced two rival interpretive camps. During the 1920s, these antithetical poles were being formulated by Picabia's erstwhile Dada colleagues, Aragon and Breton.[308] For Breton, montage was primarily about the production of signs; for Aragon, it was largely a matter of their deconstruction. Breton favoured a syntagmatic model of montage in which heterogeneous elements combined to create new meanings. Conceived as a dialectical synthesis, montage for Breton resolves into an orchestrated, harmonious whole. Aragon, meanwhile, championed montage as a process of *détournement*, in which intertextuality disrupts and destabilises formal unity and the field of meaning. Dialectical in a negative sense, montage in this instance seeks to preserve and foreground contradictions, through the

[307] Aragon, "The Challenge to Painting", 104-5.

[308] Elza Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) identifies Max Ernst's debut Paris exhibition at the Au Sans Pareil gallery in 1921 as the initial catalyst for Aragon's and Breton's theorising. Ernst posted the work for this exhibition to Picabia's house, where it was inspected by the Dada group prior to hanging. Picabia was therefore aware of Ernst's montages and his friend's enthusiastic responses to them, even though he did not attend the actual exhibition. Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris,* 180-183 contains a speculative, but persuasive, discussion of the reasons behind Picabia's absence.

deliberate dissonances of the parts or the subversion of a sign's conventional meaning.[309]

Together, Breton's and Aragon's competing models of montage form a complementary pair. As Jacques Rancière recently summarised, montage is always both a coupling and an uncoupling of images; it stages a clash and constructs a continuum in a single stroke. Consequently, all montage exists somewhere between these two poles, the logic of which is always intermingling.[310] The Transparencies, likewise, remain trapped between what Rancière calls 'the power of conjunction assumed by montage and the power of disjunction involved in radical heterogeneity'.[311]

Rancière's observations have a relevance here in excess of their explanatory forces. Rancière does not mention either Breton or Aragon in *The Future of the Image*, but his discussion of montage perpetuates the problematic they established. His binary model of montage not only exemplifies how Aragon's and Breton's thought continues to define the framework within which montage is conceptualised but is also indicative of how Aragon's position has come to be privileged as the more radical option.

If Breton's position arguably dominated at the time of the Transparencies' production – his Hegelian bent was shared by Sergei Eisenstein and Ezra Pound – then Aragon's position had come to dominate by the time of the Transparencies' reception in the 1980s.[312] The reasons for this are too complex to trace in detail, but the main paths through the labyrinth can be marked out. Firstly, while Surrealism had long lost its critical edge, Aragon's position retained a contemporary relevance. Secondly, the Hegelian element

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[309] This summary draws heavily on Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage,* 4-5.

[310] Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 56-67.

[311] ibid., 38.

[312] Pound knew Picabia and contributed to *391*. So far, this relationship has primarily attracted the attention of Pound scholars, see Daniel Albright, "Pound, Picabia and Surrealism" in *Ezra Pound and Referentiality,* ed. Hélèn Aji (Paris: Presses de L'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), 161-75.

in Breton's thinking – his belief that collaged fragments might resolve into a coherent, meaningful totality – had become deeply unfashionable. Poststructuralism ruled the philosophical roost. Categories like mediation and totality were viewed with suspicion. The latest theoretical novelties emanating from France provided a galvanising pole for a generation of art historians frustrated with the limitations of iconography and mid-century formalism. Where older iconographic traditions of interpretation sought to pin down the signified, the new approaches foregrounded the instability of the signifier.

For Anglophone audiences, this reception of recent French philosophy coincided with the belated assimilation of an earlier tradition of German critical theory, which began to appear in translation in the early 1970s. Of particular importance for the understanding of montage were famous 'Expressionist debates' of the 1930s in which montage's divisions and fissures were championed as offering a truer representation of reality than any naive realism. This position, initially argued for by Ernst Bloch, received the equivocal support of Theodor Adorno and the enthusiastic endorsement of Walter Benjamin who championed montage's disruptive critical potential.[313]

However, it was Benjamin's writings on allegory that proved most decisive for the theorisation of montage. In 1978, Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* received its first Anglophone translation. (Written in 1925 and published in 1928, it coincides with the production of the first Transparencies.) An attentive reader of Aragon, Benjamin contrasted the symbol, which sought to unify meaning into an organic totality, with the allegorical fragment which critiques symbolic totality by foregrounding the separation between sign and signified. With allegory, Benjamin notes, 'any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else'.[314]

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[313] Ernst Bloch, "Discussing Expressionism" in Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, (London: Verso, 2007), 16-27; Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer", *New Left Review* 1/62 (July-August 1970): 83-96; Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: The Athlone Press, 1997), 136-163.

[314] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, London: Verso, 1992), 175.

Art historians later absorbed Benjamin's theory of allegory. Peter Bürger made it the cornerstone of his landmark work *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974).[315] Craig Owens drew on it his influential account of postmodernism's appropriated imagery (1980).[316] Commenting on the reception of *The Origin of Tragic Drama*, Thomas Crow gripes that

> around 1980 resting on a few such aphoristic pronouncements plucked from this densely allusive and elliptical treatise, a new consensus formed "around the message of uncertainty, of slippage, of unreadability, and of fragmentation that allegory not only conveys but also, in a necessary act of redoubling, itself becomes".[317]

Crow is objecting here to Owens' and others' interpretations of the work of Robert Rauschenberg, whose Combines are the direct descendants of the Transparencies. 'All attempts to decipher' Rauschenberg's work, Owens claims, 'testify only to their own failure, for the fragmentary, piecemeal combinations of images that initially impels reading is also what blocks it'.[318] This account of Rauschenberg's Combines has strong parallels with current readings of the Transparencies, which reach similar conclusions through less explicit theorisation.

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[315] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota, 1984), 68-82.

[316] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism", *October* 12, (Spring 1980): 67-86.

[317] Thomas Crow, *The Long March of Pop: Art, Music and Design 1930-1995* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 75. See also Ed Krčma, *Rauschenberg/Dante: Drawing a Modern Inferno* (New Haven and London, 2017), Chapter 2 'Image, Allegory, Intention', 68-105.

[318] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism Part Two", *October* 13 (Summer 1980): 68.

The Obscurity of Transparency

Shuttling between mythology, mysticism and modernity, the Transparencies court ambiguity. Straddling the academy and the avant-garde, they wed anachronistic iconography to a resolute historicity of form. Trick photography nourishes their painterly experimentation. Montage powers their combinatory logic. Perspective gets dismantled, only to be returned to its etymological root: *perpicere,* to see through. Meanwhile, layering paradoxically to negate depth. Such formal and thematic intricacies make the Transparencies challenging to read. Spatial complexity generates further uncertainty. Fixed horizons, static vanishing points and a coherent sense of a perspectival recession fall by the wayside, but spatial relationships are not entirely 'suspended' as has some have claimed.[319] Figures remain upright in relation to the painting's bottom edge, preserving a minimum sense of orientation.

Nonetheless, the Transparencies' complexity seems calculated to both invite and frustrate interpretation. Titles like *Sphinx* (1929) openly thematise this riddle-like status. Others, such as *Atrata,* evidence self-conscious obscurantism. Named after a type of moth, *Atrata* is just one of several Transparencies whose titles presuppose a knowledge of lepidopterology.[320] Beyond a suggestion of metamorphosis, these butterfly references are only tangentially related to the representational content of the paintings they name. Rather, these esoteric titles compound the Transparencies' semantic density, generating further referential richness. Picabia's practice of appropriation only exacerbates the issue, producing additional polysemy. By tearing images from their contexts, Picabia generates a patchwork of pictorial fragments that combine completion and incompletion within themselves.[321] Neither free-

[319] *Inter Alia,* "Francis Picabia: Another Failure to Interpret his Work", 58.

[320] The meanings of these titles eluded scholars for decades until Picabia's source, Paul Girod's *Atlas de poche des papillons de France, Suisse et Belgique* (1912), was discovered among Olga Picabia's artefacts. Pierre, *La peinture sans aura*, 234.

[321] 'The fragment combines completion and incompletion within itself, or one may say, in an even more complex manner, it both completes and incompletes the dialectic of completion and incompletion'. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The*

standing signifiers in their own right, nor exclusively a token of an original unity from which they are detached, these fragments generate new meanings within the pictorial economy of the Transparencies without ever shaking off the referential connotations of their source.

It is worth noting, however, that Picabia does attempt to arrest the chain of significations. When he incorporates the *Farnese Atlas* into *Atrata*, he shaves the sculpture's beard, distancing his image from the source. It seems reasonable to assume that he intended his audience to recognise the general mythological reference, rather than a specific source. Likewise, Botticelli's *Portrait of a Man with Medal* (c.1475) provides the template for *Atrata's* central face and hands, but fidelity to the original does not appear to be an issue (fig. 4.8). Once again, Picabia takes liberties with his copying. The man's hair is cropped, his hat and ring removed. Are these abbreviated citations Picabia's attempt to cover his tracks or a futile strategy to prevent the image standing metonymically for Botticelli? Authorial intention cannot answer the issue. Both an addition and subtraction, the fragments unavoidably signify on a dual register.[322]

One risk inherent in the identification of Picabia's sources is the tendency to emphasise the sign's original location over its function within the Transparencies. Inadvertently, this prioritises temporal displacement over spatial placement, sign over syntax. Here, a traditional iconographic approach sits in odd contiguity with a poststructuralism-informed iconophobia. The former has identified Picabia's sources but struggles to explain how they

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Theory of Literature in German Romanticism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 50.

[322] One weakness of Benjamin's theory of allegory that partially infects Bürger's conceptualisation of montage is a belief that the artist can simply posit meaning. 'The allegorist' – this is Bürger summarising Benjamin – 'pulls one element out of the totality of the life context, isolating it, depriving it of its function. Allegory is therefore essentially fragment [...] The allegorist joins the isolated fragments of reality thereby creating meaning. The posited meaning; it does not derive from the original context of the fragments'. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 69.

operate within the Transparencies, while the latter seem incapable of seeing in them anything other than the free play of the signifier.[323]

The sign may be arbitrary, but its usage is socio-historically determined. Patterns of deployment, conditions of use, conventional associations, and period values can, to a greater or lesser extent, be recovered, partially arresting the flow of signification. Yet, historicising approaches have often reached the same grim conclusion about the Transparencies' underlying intractability. On this occasion, meaninglessness can at least be read symptomatically. Like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), they describe a world reduced to a 'heap of broken images', their montage form giving expression to themes of destruction and discontinuity.[324] An expression of a deeper crisis of values, the Transparencies seem to thematise a generalised loss of meaning afflicting interwar Europe. As Christopher Green notes, the production of the Transparencies coincides with the French translation of Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. Reading the Transparencies through the lens of Picabia's lifelong Niezscheanism, Green cites the artist's 1920 claim that 'there is nothing to understand, nothing, nothing but the value you give to everything yourself'.[325]

Sara Cochran reaches a similar conclusion. Picabia, she writes, leaves it to the viewer to 'determine any larger meaning'.[326] Drawing on the artist's published testimony, Cochran recounts that the Picabia 'insisted that the arbitrary juxtapositions within them [the Transparencies] would lead to fortuitous meetings and fruitful hybridisations'.[327] Taken at face value, Picabia's statement converts our collective failure to understand the Transparencies into evidence that we have understood them all too well.

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[323] 'decontextualized figures become free-floating signifiers', Cochran, "Needing the Sun", 82.

[324] T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land" in *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 41.

[325] Picabia, *Jesus Christ Rastaquourère* (1920), np cited in Green, *Modern Antiquity*, 9.

[326] Cochran, "An Alternative Classicism: Picabia with and against Picasso and De Chirico" in *Modern Antiquity*, eds. Green and Daehner, 34.

[327] ibid., 34.

However, Picabia's expressed intentions often flagrantly contradict each other and his actual practice.[328] Rather than describing his motivations, his insistence on the aleatory might as readily function to conceal them. At the very least, the closeness of his professed procedure to the Surrealist chance encounter looks suspiciously like an attempt at positioning his paintings in-line with 'advanced' taste. The Transparencies, Picabia explained, are 'the resemblance of my interior desires where all my instincts may have a free course'.[329]

Despite methodological differences then, the scholarly consensus is that the Transparencies resist interpretation. Obscurity, it seems, defines the Transparencies. Camfield notes that they are 'transparent […] in form but veiled in content'.[330] Baker speaks of a 'hermetic confusion' verging on the unreadable.[331] Pierre concurs, claiming that they are 'arbitrarily assembled'.[332] Daehner calls them 'impossible to solve rebuses'.[333] Chlenova goes with 'indecipherable'.[334] Finally, Cochran emphasises how 'decontextualised figures react like free-floating agents in unstable relationships, seemingly ordered only by proximity to each other'.[335]

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[328] Verdier, "[SIC] Picabia: Ego, Reaction, Ruse" unpicks the discrepancy between Picabia's published statements, which repeatedly stress the importance of truth and sincerity in art, and his practice, which relies heavily on copying and the ersatz. Drawing on Freud's notion of reaction formation, Verdier outlines how Picabia's commitment to sincerity mutated into its own opposite. I would hazard that this dialectic may have a secondary twist. As discussed in the Introduction, Picabia openly championed deliberate insincerity and falsification as preferable to what he saw as naive sincerity and credulous truths. His taste for Nietzsche's *Gay Science* may well provide a counterweight to what Verdier terms his 'melancholic burden'.

[329] Statement given for the exhibition *Francis Picabia: Thirty Years of Painting* cited in Camfield, *Picabia*: *His Art Life and Times*, 233-4.

[330] ibid, 234.

[331] George Baker, "Picabia and Calder: A Trajectory" in *Calder/Picabia: Transparence* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2015), Exhibition catalogue, 18.

[332] Pierre Arnauld, "Calder and Picabia: Thoughts on Transparency" in *Calder/Picabia*, 13-14.

[333] Daehner, "Transparent Strata", 112.

[334] Chlenova, "Transparencies 1927-1930", 190.

[335] Cochran, "An Alternative Classicism", 34.

While such descriptions might reasonably describe densely, claustrophobic late Transparencies like *Sphinx*, they certainly do not apply to the cycle of Spanish Transparencies of 1928 that concern us. These paintings conform to a different logic. Among the simplest of the Transparencies, they are more aminable to analysis. It is easier to unpick how they were constructed and what order their motifs were laid down. Pictorial combinations are certainly not 'arbitrary', nor are they 'only ordered only by proximity to each other'. Imagery is highly circumscribed and marked by a referential circularity. Spain forms an obvious link between the various components. Recurrent compositional principles are also discernible. Paintings are frequently structured around the central, vertical axis. Images of toreadors and *Espagnoles* are consistently superimposed, hinting at a concealed eroticism. A beast of apocalypse appropriated from a Catalan fresco normally accompanies them, adding a religious connotation. Unfailingly, these three key components – *Espagnole*, toreador, and beast – are stacked so that one or more of their eyes align.[336] The multiplication of eyes and heads is recurrent.

While it is easy to demonstrate that Picabia deployed a consistent set of iconographic and formal devices, it is much harder to establish what these signifying structures might mean. The slipperiness of montage cannot be negated. And as Crow notes about Rauschenberg, any attempt to establish a 'rigid lexicon of prescribed meanings' is ultimately as flawed as that of the 'ruin-of-meaning' consensus.[337] The two positions simply invert each other: the first overvaluing iconography and authorial intention, the latter dismissing it. The alternative to the absolute relativism of the semiotics of infinite regress cannot be the absolute certainty of a fixed inventory of symbols. Crow's concerns about the misplaced belief in the inherent radicalism of unreadability and the

[336] Beyond this formal norm, there is no discernible logic dictating the combination. Figures are stacked in various orders and eyes aligned both vertically and horizontally.

[337] Thomas Crow, "Rise and Fall: Theme and Idea in the Combines of Robert Rauschenberg" in *Rauschenberg: Combines*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 231-56.

overly hasty assumption of the indecipherability of Rauschenberg's work apply equally to the Transparencies.

Picabia – this is my central claim – consciously invests the Spanish Transparencies with meaning. They may have failed to signify as he intended, but he nonetheless intended them to signify. Camfield intuits as much. The Transparencies, he observes, contain 'suggestions of private symbolism'.[338] What might actually be symbolised, though, has so far proven elusive. *Inter Alia* (Dave Beech and Mark Hutchinson) have been unforgiving about this silence. Scholars, they demure, have too readily accepted Picabia's statement about the Transparencies resembling his desires and psychic drives. 'Camfield', they write, 'accepts Picabia's word, and then, finding the paintings enigmatically unforthcoming with fragments of Picabia's soul, falls into silence. He is not alone in doing so. One might well wonder if any of Picabia's interpreters even bothered to look at the paintings at all'. [339]

The tone is overly harsh. What sets off as mild ridicule ends up as mildly ridiculous in its claim that Camfield has failed to attend carefully to the Transparencies, but the injunction to let the paintings speak louder than Picabia is justified. My own contention that the Transparencies are meaningful stems from attention to their iconographic configurations and the metaphorical valences of transparency. The following interpretation of the Spanish Transparencies moves between the paintings and their discursive and socio-historical context while also seeking precedents within Picabia's oeuvre. For whatever meaning Picabia fashions in the Spanish Transparencies, he did so out of resources within his work and the wider culture.

Camfield's claim to detect a private symbolism at play is therefore valid as long as we do not take private to mean either 'self-enclosed personal language' or 'unmediated expression of the unconscious'. Instead, private should identify

[338] Camfield, *Picabia: His Art Life and Times,* 233. This statement dates from 1979 and is unlikely to be entirely representative of his current thinking.

[339] *Inter Alia,* "Picabia: Another Failure to Interpret the Work", 56. A footnote names these other interpreters as Sarah Wilson and Donald Kuspit, ibid., 62, n.52.

something akin to the relatively closed, but still communal, patterns of meaning and reference that operate within any given subgroup. Picabia, I would suggest, only ever intended the Transparencies to fully signify within the sub-cultural formation of which he was a part. In an elitist mode, the Transparencies work to produce a separation between an 'in' group who might be able to read them and those who cannot.[340] It is not, therefore, as straightforward as declaring Camfield right and those who claim the Transparencies are provocatively meaningless wrong. Each is simultaneously correct and incorrect, each grasping one pole of a dialectic of meaning and mystification by which the Transparencies work. Like much of twentieth-century art, the Transparencies maintain a tension between private allusion and public confusion. Their formal, iconographic and surface complexity serves to exclude the general public, while concealed meanings remain discernible to specific audiences.

Who then was in a position to discern the likely meanings of the Transparencies? The answer that will be pursued here is Marcel Duchamp. Pierre's recent suggestion that Duchamp might have seen in the Transparencies 'a distant echo of his own Virgin Mary, hanging in the translucent plane of his *Large Glass*', strikes me as well-founded.[341] The second half of this chapter aims to substantiate Pierre's undeveloped hypothesis.

Barcelona, 1927

Before unpicking the conceptual affinities linking the *Espagnole* to Duchamp's Bride, it is worth addressing the Spanish Transparencies' sources. Picabia likely amassed the bulk of his iconographic material in the summer of 1927 during a trip to Barcelona. Here, he would have had ample opportunity to acquire the postcards that provide the templates for that year's batch of

[340] Nietzsche advocates this strategy in *The Gay Science*, one of Picabia's favourite books. See Nietzsche*, The Gay Science,* § 381 'On the Question of Being Understandable'.

[341] Pierre, "Calder and Picabia", 12.

Spanish themed paintings, including the previously discussed works *Espagnole with Guitar* (1927) and *Bullfight* (c.1927). As we shall shortly see, the postcard also furnished some of the Spanish Transparencies' imagery. The Transparencies' debts to postcards might not be solely iconographic, though. Like the postcard, they append a private message to publicly circulating, decontextualised imagery.

This complex transformation of public into private is characteristic of the postcard, as Susan Stewart explains:

> First as a mass-produced view of a culturally articulated site, the postcard is purchased. Yet, this purchase, taking place within an 'authentic' context of the site itself, appears as a kind of private experience as the self recovers the object, inscribing the handwriting of the personal beneath the more uniform caption of the social. Then in a gesture which recapitulates the social's articulation of the self – that is, the gesture of the *gift* by which the subject is positioned as place of production and reception of obligation – the postcard is surrendered to a significant other.[342]

Stewart's analysis of the postcard provides a suggestive parallel for the operation of the Transparencies themselves, with Duchamp acting as the significant recipient.

Returning to the Transparencies' specific sources, *Subtlety* (1927) cites a postcard of the matador Nicanor Villalta (figs. 4.11 and 4.12). Picabia replicates Villalta's pose, and the matador's name appears on the canvas between the horse's head and the figure's shoulders, written in the same distinctive script as on the postcard. Another set of postcards feature the bullfighting poster that appears in the painting's background (figs. 4.13 and

[342] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 138.

4.14).[343] *Subtlety* replicates these postcards' clichéd pairing of matador and *Espagnole,* although Picabia superimposes his stereotypical couple on top of each other, hinting at a concealed eroticism.

This veiled licentiousness may connect to personal circumstance. Concerned that Spain would be too hot for her, Germaine Everling unwisely stayed at home. Picabia travelled instead with their son Lorenzo and the boy's nanny Olga Mohler. By the end of the holiday, Picabia's and Olga's relationship was on a less than professional footing. Now a couple, the pair whiled away their afternoons visiting museums and churches. No doubt, their itinerary included a trip to the Barcelona City Museum, where an internationally recognised collection of Catalan Romanesque artefacts had recently been installed. Here, Picabia likely acquired a copy of exhibition's catalogue, Folch y Torres *Catálogo de la Sección de Arte Románico* (1926), which served as his main reference point in the production of the Spanish Transparencies.[344] This publication reproduces the statue of the Virgin Mary that features in *Subtlety* (fig 4.15) and a large number of frescos from the Valley of Boí, whose motifs people the other Spanish Transparencies (figs. 4.16 - 4.21).

Catalan Romanesque

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Valley of Boí in northern Catalonia was considered a provincial backwater. Home to a colony of cretins, it was artistically associated with the work of Isidre Nonell, who sketched the valley's

[343] The reproduced postcards are probably not the exact source. The manufacturing code indicates they are number one and five of a set. Almost certainly another card in the series would provide a more exact correspond.

[344] Sarah Wilson appears to be the first to posit this catalogue as Picabia's source. This is accepted by the Comité Picabia, who detail examples of images from the publication appearing in the Transparencies. Sarah Wilson, *Picabia: Accommodations of Desire,* 25, n.12; Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol II*, 132-135 and 459-461. For a discussion of Picabia's continued reliance on this catalogue for the production of his late abstract paintings, see Clements, "Ce que j'aime peindre! Retour sur les dernières oeuvres Picabia", 84-99.

unfortunate inhabitants in the late 1890s. Following the discovery of a series of remarkable frescos housed within the valley's numerous churches, this situation rapidly changed. During the opening decades of the twentieth century, the region became recognised as the epicentre of Catalan Romanesque art. The Boí frescos were now the object of international attention and regional ambition.

In 1901, the Regionalist League of Catalonia won the majority of seats in the municipal elections. Breaking the corrupt *turno* system, which had historically ensured the alternation of power between the Liberals and the Conservatives, the Regionalists had their first taste of administrative control. Alert to the symbolic value of culture, they immediately established the Municipal Board of Museums and Fine Arts. Tasked with the long-term goal of creating a permanent museum of Catalan art, the Board organised the Exhibition of Ancient Arts (1902) as a stopgap. Far from an exercise in disinterested antiquarianism, this critically acclaimed exhibition aimed to raise Catalan consciousness. By foregrounding artworks produced prior to the unification of Spain, the exhibition highlighted indigenous cultural production. *La Veu Catalunya,* the affiliated newspaper of the Regionalist League, dutifully championed the exhibition, contrasting the values of medieval Catalan art – humble materials and simple, direct form – to the perceived excesses of artworks produced under Spanish patronage.

While the Exhibition of Ancient Arts played a major role in fostering an appreciation of the Catalan Gothic, the Boí frescos were not yet widely known. It was not until 1906, when the renamed Barcelona Museum Board sent Joseph Pijoan on a reconnaissance mission to discover and document the frescos, that they achieved any real visibility. Pijoan's multi-volume landmark study *Les pintures murals Catalanes* (multiple volumes, 1907-11) kick-started

a wave of publications on them.[345] Available in France by 1908, it is possible that Picabia was aware of Pijoan's text.[346]

However Picabia became aware of the frescos, his understanding of their status as a marker of regional identity is difficult to gauge. Catalan independence was a topical issue in France, but the frescos remained a marginal concern.[347] It was not until 1930 that the French art press began to give them any significant attention.[348] Interest continued to build throughout the decade, catalysed by Picasso's involvement in a campaign to have the frescos safeguarded in France during the Spanish Civil War. Picasso's interest in the Catalan Romanesque predates this period though, and it is feasible that he discussed the frescos with Picabia in the 1920s.[349] Elizabeth Cowling, who raises this possibility, even hazards that Picabia's interest in the frescos might have rekindled Picasso's own.[350]

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[345] From 1923-28, Walter W. S. Cook published no less than six articles on the Catalan Romanesque in *Art Bulletin*. Two significant Spanish publications, Gertrud Richert's *La pintura medieval en España* (1926) and Josep Gudiol y Cunill *Els pintors I la pintura mural* (1927), also appeared around the time of Picabia's trip to Barcelona.

[346] This feasible but unsubstantiated suggestion is made by Sarah Wilson. See Wilson, *Picabia: Accommodations of Desire,* 25, n.13.

[347] In 1926, Francesc Macià, the founder of the Catalan independence party *Estat català*, attempted to invade Catalonia from his French base. The planned 'liberation' failed. Macià was arrested and put on trial in France. His tribunal, and the issue of Catalan independence, was widely discussed in the press.

[348] Torres published two articles on the frescos in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1930.

[349] In 1925, Picasso begin holidaying in Juan-les-pins, close to where Picabia lived. The two men saw each other often. They are known to have seen each other in the summer of 1927, but it is unclear if this was before or after Picabia's trip to Barcelona. On Picasso's longstanding interest in the Romanesque, see Juan José Lahuerta et al., *Romanesque Picasso* (Barcelona: MNAC, 2016).

[350] Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso: Meaning and Style* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002), 479-480. Cowling's dubious hypothesis rests on a belief that Picabia was citing the frescos as early as 1925. While a handful of Transparencies do bare this date, their Romanesque details are later additions, dating from late 1927 at the earliest. On this point, see Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. II,* 126-7.

Picasso's *The Kiss* (1925), Cowling notes, conflates Picabia's canoodling *Monsters* and a Catalan fresco of the Virgin Mary (fig 4. 22). Accordingly, she surmises that Picasso's painting depicts an incestuous Mary and Christ, and thus 'constitutes an outrageous travesty of the time-honoured theme of maternal love'.[351] This interpretation is highly appealing. It resonates with Picabia's blasphemous *The Virgin Saint*, which Cowling raises as a precedent, and anticipates the salacious use of the frescos in the Transparencies. The role the Virgin plays within the Spanish Transparencies will be discussed shortly. For now, though, Picabia's declarative citation of the frescos cannot be productively compared to Picasso's subtler allusions to the same material. Picasso's references are subsumed under his authorial voice, filtered through his other stylistic preoccupations and evidence a higher sensitivity to regional politics. His deployment of the fresco's apocalyptic iconography during the 1930s, for example, serving to allegorise Spain's ongoing political deterioration.

Picabia was drawn to the same apocalyptic iconography. Images of mythical beasts illustrating scenes from the *Book of Revelation* populate the Transparencies. But such references probably have more to do with a fashionable taste for Byzantine art and its apocalyptic iconography in France.[352] In 1926, several medieval artefacts, including a rarely seen illuminated manuscript, *The Apocalypse of Saint-Sever*, went on display at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris.[353] An outstanding success, the exhibition had to be extended for an extra week to meet with demand. 'Day after day', one observer wrote, 'the public fairly fought its way into the small room which housed so many of the priceless treasures of France. Busy men and women,

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[351] Cowling, *Picasso*, 471.

[352] From the mid-nineteenth century, the Byzantine was the subject of belated art-historical canonisation. Numerous modern artists sought inspiration in the Byzantine, while modernism's emphasis on flatness and abstraction helped legitimate the Byzantine, sensitising viewers to its formal properties. For a recent discussion of these reciprocal links, see Roland Betancourt and Maria Taroutina, eds., *Byzantine/Modernism: The Byzantine as Method in Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[353] *Exposition du moyen âge* (28 January – 27 March 1926).

whose special work is far removed from anything which touches the Middle Ages, made repeated effort to discover a time of day when the room did not resemble a bargain counter at Bon Marché'.[354] Whether or not Picabia was among the jostling crowds is unimportant.[355] The impact of the exhibition was widely felt. The *Apocalypse of Saint-Sever* in particular generated excitement amongst Surrealist circles. Georges Bataille discussed the manuscript in *Documents,* making a case for its Spanish origins, while Picasso fed its imagery into several subsequent paintings.[356] Picasso's deployment of apocalyptic motifs will eventually provide a parallel to Picabia's. First, though, it is necessary to outline something of the interwar Catholic revival, which forms the background to both their activities.

Renouveau catholique

As detailed in Chapter 2, the Great War accelerated the Catholic revival in France. Known as the *Renouveau catholique,* this religious turn continued through the 1920s. The decade saw the Third Republic re-establish diplomatic

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[354] Louis John Paetow, "Exposition du moyen âge" in *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies,* Volume 1, No 2 (April 1926): 217.

[355] Picabia would have had opportunity to see this exhibition. He typically spent winter in Paris, returning to the south of France in the summer. In 1926, he probably remained in the capital until March, when there was major auction of his work.

[356] At least three Picasso paintings – *Crucifixion* (1930), *Guernica* (1937) and *Night Fishing at Antibes* (1939) – have been linked to the *Apocalypse of Saint-Sever*, though other apocalyptic iconography, including the Boí fresco, has also been proposed for the latter two. See Ruth Kaufmann, "Picasso's Crucifixion of 1930", *The Burlington Magazine,* 111, no. 798 (Sept 1969); C.F,B, Miller, "Bataille with Picasso: *Crucifixion* (1930) and the Apocalypse", *Papers of Surrealism* 7 (2007); Timothy Anglin Burgard, "Picasso's *Night Fishing at Antibes*: Autobiography, Apocalypse and the Spanish Civil War", *Art Bulletin* 68, no. 4 (Dec 1986): 657-672; Juan Larrea, *Guernica* (New York: Ayer Co., 1969); Anthony Blunt, *Picasso's Guernica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 53-55; Herschel Chipp, *Picasso's Guernica: History, Transformations, Meanings* (California: University of California Press, 1988), 87; Eberhard Fisch, *Guernica by Picasso: A Study of the Picture and its Contexts* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1988), 53-55.

relationships with the Holy See.[357] St. Thomas Aquinas and Neo-Scholasticism became fashionable topics, and the once minor genre of the Catholic novel became a staple of mainstream publishing. According to one historian, by the decade's end, 'a new position of religious faith amongst French intellectuals had become accepted as a normal feature of literary life in the interwar years'.[358]

Catholicism after the War was not the same as before it, however. Before the conflict, Pope Pius X had condemned modernism as 'the synthesis of all heresies'.[359] His post-war successors took a more liberal view.[360] No longer seen as antithetical principles, fresh articulations of Catholicism and modernism became possible. As *Jazz Age Catholicism* author Stephen Schloesser demonstrates, 'Catholicism came to be imagined by certain cultural and intellectual elites not only as being thoroughly compatible with "modernity" but even more emphatically as constituting [its] truest expression'.[361]

This rapprochement was partially made possible by a faltering of Catholicism's old alliances with the forces of reaction. In 1926, no less an authority than the Pope denounced the Action Française. Its publications were placed on the index, and those who associated with the movement forced to choose between

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[357] The so-called 'Vatican question' was first debated in the chambers in 1920). Relations with the Holy See were officially re-established in 1929.

[358] H. Stuart Hughes cited in Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Post-war Paris* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 6.

[359] Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis* (***Feeding the Lord's Flock***), Papal Letter, 1907, Section 39 'Modernism and all the Heresies'. Strictly speaking, modernism here refers to a specific body of liberal theological opinion. But as the pontiff also denounces liberalism, secularism, Kantian philosophy, evolutionary principles, the spirit of novelty and most other post-Enlightenment values, his accusation of heresy can be legitimately applied to modernism in the most expansive sense. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis.html. (accessed on 09 September 2018).

[360] Benedict XV (pontiff 1914-1922) and Pius XI (1922-39).

[361] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism*, 5.

their politics and their faith. With the Right's hegemony wavering, liberal and socialist Catholicism underwent a resurgence. The *jeunesse ouvrière catholique*, the young Catholic workers movement established in 1927, even succeeded in recruiting members from within France's red belt communes.

Jacques Maritain

Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain is indicative of this shift. A one-time sympathiser of Action Française, Maritain rapidly distanced himself from the movement following the Papal condemnation.[362] Now routinely overlooked, Maritain had an extraordinary influence on the cultural landscape of the Return to Order.[363] He established his reputation as the unofficial theorist of 'mystic modernism' in 1920 with the publication of *Art and Scholasticism.* A collection of essays, *Antimoderne,* followed two years later. Despite the provocative title, Maritain was far from hostile to modernism. 'That which I call *anti-modern*', he explained, 'might just as well be called *ultra-modern*. It is well known, in fact, that Catholicism is *anti-modern* on account of its immovable attachment to tradition as it is *ultra-modern* on account of its bold ability to adapt itself to the new conditions erupting suddenly in the lifeworld'.[364]

Like Baudelaire's famous definition of modernism, which Maritain knowingly invokes, this defence of Catholicism yokes together the transient and eternal.

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[362] Maritain's politics are highly inconsistent. A committed Dreyfusard as a youth, by the early 1920s, he had become associated with the Far Right. Endorsed by Valios and a friend of Maurras, Maritain wrote a regular column for *Revue universelle*, a satellite publication of *Action Française.* Later, he was strongly opposed to Vichy, and his writings adopted by the Christian Democrats.

[363] Neither Silver's nor Golan's classic accounts of the phenomenon mention him. Maritain problematises normative accounts of interwar modernism premised on the strict opposition of avant-garde experimentation and Return to Order reactionary. He also provides contextual weight to theories of the medieval/modern that so far have tended to prioritise structural analogies and formal comparisons over discursive formations.

[364] Maritain, "Avant-propos" to *Antimoderne* (1922) cited in Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism,* 163.

[365] The philosopher certainly admired the poet, but his thinking was more decidedly shaped by the writings of St Thomas Aquinas. During the 1920s, Neo-Thomism garnered considerable support, especially amongst artists. Rajesh Heynickx outlines its appeal:

> Neo-Thomism gave rise in the 1920s and 1930s to an architectonic thought system of which the conceptual nodes could function as a counterpart to all the constitutive antagonisms in modernist aesthetics, it helped to resolve disparities, to annul contradictions, and to reconcile disparate developments in a harmonious worldview.[366]

Science and theology, innovation and tradition, order and chaos, individual and community could all be harmonised. For Maritain, this precarious reconciliation was to be achieved through an idiosyncratic fusion of Baudelaire, Bergson and the Founding Fathers. Traditional theological notions, such as hylomorphism (the separation of form and matter) and sacramentalism (the idea that visible signs refer to an invisible reality) were particularly important to his thinking: 'By showing that both the ancient and avant-garde aesthetics advocated the "deformation" of surface representations in order to express a deeper sense of "form", Maritain united past and future in their opposition to *imitation* as understood by nineteenth-century naturalism.' [367] As Maritain himself explained, 'Artistic creation does not copy God's creation but continues it'.[368]

Maritain's aesthetic theories held considerable appeal for artists, not least because his defence of modernist experimentation made their activities

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[365] 'Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable'. Baudelaire*, The Painter of Modern Life,* section 5 "Modernity".

[366] Rajesh Heynickx and Jan de Mayer, eds., *The Maritain Factor: Taking Religion into Interwar Modernism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 17. I have removed a bracketed comment from this citation.

[367] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism,* 148.

[368] Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays* (London: Shed & Ward, 1943)*, 63.*

analogous to God's. *Art and Scholasticism* was widely read.[369] Its unusual sway was amplified by its author's direct acquaintance with much of the Parisian avant-garde. While it is unclear if Maritain ever met Picabia, their overlapping social circles make such an encounter highly probable. Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie and Pierre de Massot were close friends of both men.[370] Even if Picabia never met Maritain, he must have been aware of him.

Maritain was a highly visible figure at the time of the Spanish Transparencies. His publishing imprint was responsible for George Bernanos' *Under the Sun of Satan* (1926), a runaway bestseller that prompted the secular *Nouvelle Revue Français* to dub 1926 the year of the Catholic novel.[371] A second, expanded edition of *Art and Scholasticism* appeared in 1927, alongside a new book: *Art and Faith: Letters between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau*.[372]

A recovering addict, Cocteau had recently replaced opium with the opium of the masses. In 1925, under Maritain's spiritual guidance, he re-joined the Catholic flock. His return to the fold, naturally, drew the contempt of the Surrealists. The cover of *La révolution surréaliste no.7* is mockingly captioned 'the latest conversion' (fig. 4.23).[373] The following issue openly berates

[369] By the 1930s, there had been two French editions and several translations. T.S. Elliott, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Igor Stravinsky, Jean Cocteau, Eric Gill, Otto van Rees and Gino Severini, Max Jacob, and Georges Auric were all early admirers.

[370] Gino Severini, Igor Stravinsky, Max Jacob and Georges Auric were also mutual acquaintances. On arriving in Paris in 1919, Massot sought out both Maritain and Picabia, who would employ him as tutor to his children and editor of *391*. Massot remained friends with Maritain until at least 1925, when he took him to visit a dying Satie. See Sanouillet, *Dada in Paris,* 134; and Maritain, *Art and Faith,* 84-85.

[371] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism,* 15.

[372] Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau, *Art and Faith: Letters between Jacques Maritain and Jean Cocteau* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948).

[373] *La révolution surrealiste no.7* (15 June 1926). A serial proselytiser, Maritain had previously been instrumental in the conversion of Pierre Reverdy. On the topic of Surrealism, Maritain and conversion, see Fiona Bradley, *An Oxymoronic Encounter of Surrealism and Catholicism: Ernst, Dali and Gengenbach* (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1995), 69-95.

Maritain and his company of converts.[374] Published the same month as *Art and Faith*, *La révolution surréaliste no.7* provides the negative confirmation of Maritain's centrality to the Return to Order.[375] Its cover caption, however, is ambiguous. Just as Cocteau was renewing his faith, defrocked priest Ernest Gengenbach (Jean Genbach) was entering the ranks of the Surrealists.[376] For Breton, the so-called Pope of Surrealism, the critique of conversion and its parodic inversion are enacted simultaneously.

As antithetical as Surrealist anti-Catholicism and Maritain's neo-Thomism may initially seem, their mutual denunciations betray the narcissisms of small difference. Publicly, Maritain decried the 'friends of Lautréamont' and their literary Freudism, but his aesthetic ideas were often embarrassingly close to his adversaries.[377] Maritain's expressed preference for a 'transcendental realism' that prioritised hidden meaning over outward appearance is a theological variant of the Surrealist pursuit of the marvellous within the everyday.[378] Conversely, Surrealism's attempts to picture the unconscious are sacramentalism in a secular key. These opposing camps shared a belief in the possibility of the direct expression, rather than the symbolic representation, of the supra-sensible.[379] Each endorsed a dialectic of revelation in which the mundane would yield up the marvellous. For Maritain, though, Surrealism

[374] Maritain is attacked twice: first by Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, and then by Ernest Gengenbach. See *La révolution surréaliste no.8* (1 December 1926), 24-26 and 30.

[375] Christopher Green, notes that *La révolution surréaliste no.7* casts 'a wry eye on Jacques Maritain's activities', but overlooks its coincidence with the publication of *Art and Faith*. Christopher Green, *Art in France: 1900-1940* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 264.

[376] Gengenbach's fluctuating allegiances are discussed in Bradley, *An Oxymoronic Encounter,* 116-147.

[377] Maritain and Cocteau, *Art and Faith,* 107.

[378] Maritain, "The Frontiers of Poetry" in *Art and Scholasticism*, 97.

[379] Much Surrealism, of course, remains relatively contrived symbolism, but the dream of unmediated immediacy is part of the rhetoric of automatism and the chance encounter.

could only ever be transcendental realism's diabolical inversion.[380] 'Dreaming', he demurred, was a source of 'fake mysteries' and 'false deliverance'.[381]

Where in this strangely mirrored field should the Transparencies be situated? Much to their mutual annoyance, Picabia maintained shaky friendships with Breton and Cocteau. On the question of religion, however, he was unquestionably closer to Breton. Like many of the Surrealists, Picabia's well-honed taste for blasphemy presupposed a strong sense of the sacred. A reaction to the dogmas of his childhood, it also contained a fair dose of Oedipal rebellion. If this early grounding in the faith sharpened his frequent anti-clerical polemics, then his polemics invariably betray a negative attachment to the faith. Even when Catholicism was rejected, it remained an unshakable point of reference. Yet, despite Picabia's proximity to Surrealism, the Spanish Transparencies' fusion of hieratic iconography and modernist experimentation hews closely to the twin poles of Maritain's aesthetic. The philosopher favoured the Byzantine and the modern above all other, detecting in both the same tendency towards sacramentalism. With this observation, an incongruence in the scholarship becomes apparent. For despite the persistent accusations of meaninglessness that dog the Transparencies, thematically they remain associated with realms of higher, hidden, or repressed meanings. X-rays, n-dimensional geometry, astral visions, spirit photography and the unconscious all invoke realms unavailable to conventional sight.[382] The addition of the fresco's *Imago Dei* – the visual symbol of an invisible God – to this miscellany only strengthens the hypothesis that Picabia is less concerned with the negation of meaning than its concealment and disclosure. Apocalyptic iconography, after all, directly pertains to the moment of revelation.

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[380] In the preface to the English edition of *Art and Faith*, Maritain explicitly describes poetry as a battle of good and bad angels, epitomised by the Catholic writer Paul Claudel and the Surrealists. The "Frontiers of Poetry" contains a related claim, with Maritain rejecting present day art that 'elects for the devil' as a counterfeit of transcendental realism. See Maritain and Cocteau, *Art and Faith,* 7-8 and Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism,* 108.

[381] Maritain and Cocteau, *Art and Faith*, 107.

[382] Transparency itself connotes immediate, pure, unimpeded seeing.

Untitled (Six Eyes?)

With *Untitled (Six Eyes?)*, a painting formerly known as *Spanish Woman and the Lamb of the Apocalypse,* Picabia inseparably interlaces the themes of revelation, *Imago Dei* and higher vision by quoting *The Arch of the Apocalyptic Lamb of Sant Climent de Taüll* (figs. 4.16 and 4.17). Like the eye-adorned seraphim that also crops up in the Transparencies, the *Apocalyptic Lamb* alludes to extended sight. Its multiple eyes function as a symbol of God's omnipresent gaze: a timely reminder that even if we cannot see the Almighty, He can still see us. Moreover, each of the Lamb's seven eyes corresponds to one of the seven seals, which when broken are said to initiate the Apocalypse and the second coming of Christ.[383]

While *Untitled (Six Eyes?)* taps into these iconographic associations, it nonetheless resists a straight-forward iconographical interpretation. In its classical form, iconography establishes the conventional meaning of religious imagery through reference to the Bible, which serves as its master key. This protocol, which is already tested by the *Book of Revelation*, an elliptical text that eschews conventional narrative and consensual understanding, is further frustrated by the Spanish Transparencies. Unlike the anonymous artisans who crafted the fresco, Picabia is not illustrating scripture, and the Transparencies include visual material that is extraneous to any theological source.

Here, finally, a productive parallel can be drawn with Picasso. C.F.B. Miller argues that Picasso's painting *Crucifixion* (1930) works to exacerbate a 'split between theology and its other'.[384] Picasso, he continues, accomplishes this scission by deploying 'a painted variant of the collage method to intrude heterogeneous figures from his recent production into the closed system of the theological image, generating an excess of meaning unassimilable to that system'.[385] This process, which Picabia deploys more forcefully than Picasso,

[383] Book of Revelation, 5:5-6.

[384] Miller, "*Bataille with Picasso"*, 4.

[385] ibid., 4.

should, Miller insists, be understood in the 'context of a reactionary Catholic humanism, whose metaphysics privileged intelligibility'.[386] As the period standard-bearer for Catholic humanism, Maritain took legibility to be a prerequisite for art. 'Art', he insisted, 'must be *intelligible*. For *it is there above all for the instruction of the people, it is theology in graphic representation*. An unintelligible, obscure Mallarméan religious art is about as absurd as a house without a staircase'.[387] The Spanish Transparencies are just such an abode. Their complexity not only travesties Maritain's petition for didactic clarity but also ironises it. By referencing the *Book of Revelations*, Picabia throws the demand for lucidity back at the *Renouveau catholique,* confronting it with its own most intractable text.

Nonetheless, there is one element of the apocalyptic narrative that does signify more-or-less harmoniously with *Untitled (Six Eyes?)'s* extra-ecclesiastical references. The *Book of Revelation* foretells the marriage of the Lamb. St. John writes, 'that the marriage of the Lamb has come and the bride has made herself ready'.[388] *Untitled (Six Eyes?)* directly connotes this heavenly union. Here, an Apocalyptic Lamb is superimposed over a white-veiled *Espagnole*, a garment traditionally associated with marriage, the overlaying of the two figures further suggesting matrimonial fusion. In doing so, *Untitled* (*Six Eyes*) renews the *Espagnole's* association with the figure of the Bride, first discussed in relation to *Novia* in Chapter 3.

The Bride Shared

Picabia's interest in the figure of the *Novia* – Spanish, it will be recalled, for bride – can be traced back to 1912. In this year Marcel Duchamp presented him with the painting *Bride* (1912), initiating a conversation that would last for several decades. Unquestionably, the topic of the betrothed continued to

[386] ibid., 6.

[387] Jacques Maritain, "Some Reflection on Religious Art" in *Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1943), 144.

[388] Book of Revelation, 19:7.

preoccupy Picabia at the time of the Spanish Transparencies. At the Galerie Théophile Briant, he hung paintings titled *Duchamp* and *Bride* alongside them.[389]

Picabia's oeuvre makes repeated allusions to Duchamp's, with Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23), also known as *The Large Glass*, providing the most common point of reference.[390] Picabia's tri-part layout for *291 no. 5-6* (1915) nods to Duchamp's preparatory drawing *The Bride Stripped by Her Bachelors* of 1912 (figs. 4.24 and 4.25). While the right-hand panel of *291,* the drawing *De Zayas! De Zayas!,* alludes even more explicitly to the *Large Glass*.[391] Very few people, however, would be able to detect these references in 1915. Like the Transparencies, *291's* allusions could only have been recognised by a select group of insiders. *The Large Glass* was still a work in progress. Unfinished and un-exhibited, it would remain in Duchamp's studio for several more years. Enticingly, photographs of Duchamp's studio at this time show that he kept the two panels of *The Large Glass* stacked against one another (fig 4.26). Positioned like this the transparent realms of the Bride and Bachelors get superimposed in a manner

[389] Regrettably, both paintings are lost. Picabia's pairing of *Duchamp* and *Bride*, though, presumably alluded to Duchamp's short-lived marriage. On the 8 June 1927 Duchamp married Lydie Sarazin-Levassor, but the couple divorced the following January. Picabia, who acted as witness, gifted the couple the facetiously titled painting *A Marriage of Equals*.

[390] *She Corrects Manners Laughing* (1915), *Dance of St Guy/Tabac Rat* (1919/1949) and *Verre* (1922) all reference *The Large Glass*. Picabia's 1931 poster for the Ambassador's night club, which depicts a naked woman flanked by two sailors, also clearly relates to the theme of the Bride stripped bare, though due to the obscurity of this piece of ephemera this connection does not appear to have been previously recognised. Picabia also references other works by Duchamp. *Figure Triste* (1912) likely responds to *Sad Young Man on a Train* (1911); *Double Monde* (1919) relates to *L.H.O.O.Q*. (1919); *Pharmacie Duchamp* (c.1920-21) obviously corresponds to Duchamp's *Pharmacy* (1914); *Optophone* (1922) likely alludes to *Disc Bearing Spirals* (1923), which Picabia owned. There is also an untitled, undated watercolour that bears a marked resemblance to *Rotary Demi-sphere* (*Precision Optics*; 1925).

[391] *De Zayas! De Zayas!* quotes the schematics of *The Large Glass*. Typically, its title is interpreted as pun on 'the sea the sea', but given the frustrated erotics of *The Large Glass,* I would suggest 'desires, desires', or 'desire us, desire us' is also implied.

consistent with the repetitive, overlaying male and female figures within the Spanish Transparencies. With Duchamp, though, the union of the Bride and Bachelors is forever frustratingly delayed; with Picabia, it is always implicitly consummated. The male and female figures of the Spanish Transparencies always lie on top of each other. This erotic overlaying is also discernible in *291.* When folded the left-hand panel of *291,* a surrogate self-portrait titled *The Saint of Saints* sits on top of the central image *Young Girl in the State of Nudity*.[392] Sex, saints and superimposition are tacitly entwined here in a manner suggestively prescient of the Spanish Transparencies.

An intermediary stage on the path from *291* to the Spanish Transparencies can be found in an overlooked photograph of Picabia's dining room (fig 4.27). Hannah Wong persuasively argues that *291* mimics the conventions of a Christian altarpiece, so it is notable that Picabia hung three paintings in a triptych configuration in his own home. In a direct continuation of *291*, *The Saint of Saints* occupies the left-hand spot. *The Infant Carburettor* (1919), a machine work whose metallic surface Adrian Sudhalter directly compares to a medieval icon painting, sits in the centre.[393] An *Espagnole* to the right completes this pseudo-altarpiece.[394] The set of references established by this configuration – Picabia the Saint, Christian iconography and the *Espagnole* – are perpetuated in the Spanish Transparency, *Woman with Cigarette* (c.1926-28), also known as *The Virgin of Monserrat* (fig. 4.28).

Woman with Cigarette

With its central *Espagnole* and saintly alternative title, *Woman with Cigarette* (1928) taps into longstanding currents in Picabia's oeuvre. The painting unites

[392] The De Zayas 'portrait' sits on top of Picabia's just as it does in Haviland's contemporaneous photograph. Haviland also appears on the verso of *291.*

[393] Sudhalter, "War, Exile, and the Machine" in Umland, Our *Heads are Round,* 72.

[394] I have been unable to identify the specific painting, but its basic morphology is that of the *Espagnoles.*

the themes of the virgin saint and the smoking *Espagnoles* discussed in the previous two chapters.

Like the other Spanish Transparencies, the painting's immediate sources are tied to Picabia's trip to Barcelona. The same statue that appears in *Subtlety* crops up again, providing Picabia with the template for the figure of the Virgin Mary that he imposes over an *Espagnole*. Picabia outlines both figures in black but switches to grey to depict the Virgin's crown. In doing so, he introduces a note of visual ambiguity. The Virgin's crown now reads simultaneously as the *Espagnole's peineta* (comb). A separation between the two coloured lines creates further uncertainty about which head the crown-comb adorns. Structurally, this links the layers of the painting, producing a spatial compression. Conceptually, it intimates at the partial conflation of Mary and the Maya. With an eye towards Duchamp, we might say the crown-comb enacts the passage between the Holy Virgin and the Spanish Bride.

This couched equation of *Espagnole* and Holy Virgin is commonplace within the Spanish Transparencies. *Transparency* (c.1926) performs a similar trick using a saint from *Altar Frontal from La Seu d'Urgell* (figs. 4.29 and 4.30). This time, the saint's face is imposed over an *Espagnole's* head, so that the two figures share a halo. While the pattern of circles, which on the altar frontal denote the heavenly firmament, intimate the *Espagnoles'* sanctity when placed on her shawl. *Woman with Blue Shawl* (c.1927-8) is even more explicit (fig. 4.31). The blue mantle and supplicant hands of the central *Espagnole* recalls countless images of the Virgin Mary: Guido Reni's *Virgin in Prayer* providing such striking comparison as to propose itself as a direct source (fig. 4.32)

Returning to *Spanish Woman with Cigarette,* Picabia writes SCS CAS next to its central figures. A contraction of the Latin *Sanctus*, SCS is the standard abbreviation for holy or saintly. Both the letters and the script imitate those found in Catalan frescos, such as the *Apse of Santa Maria* (fig. 4.33). The letters CAS also appear in Catalan frescos, most clearly in *Apse of Estaon* were they serve to denote St. Luke (fig. 4.34). Sandwiched between LV and EVG, the full inscription reads LVCAS EV [AN] G [ELIST].

The patron saint of artists, St. Luke is reputedly the first icon painter and is often depicted executing a portrait of the Virgin Mary. It would be entirely in keeping for Picabia, the self-styled Saint of Saints, to equate his own activities with the Evangelists'. Alluringly, in the *Apse of Santa Maria*, the SCS appears in triplicated form. Conventionally translated as 'Holy, Holy, Holy', it can be interpreted to mean 'The Holy of Holies', but 'the Saint of Saints' offers itself as a possibility. The letters CAS also appear on the verso of the canvas. Were the writing to be confirmed as Picabia's, it would strongly support the idea that he was equating his own activities with that of St. Luke. Picabia's own signature appears on the painting's front. Placed centrally on the bottom edge of the canvas, it is framed by the body of the Virgin Mary and adds further credence to the idea that Picabia was putting himself forward, like St. Luke, as a painter of the Madonna. Crucially, amongst the many works apocryphally attributed to St. Luke is the sculpture *The Virgin of Montserrat* that shares its name with the painting.

The Virgin of Montserrat sculpture depicts the Virgin and Christ child seated on a throne of Wisdom (fig. 4.34). Formally, it resembles the statue Picabia references in the painting. Located in the Shrine of Santa Maria in the Montserrat Abbey just outside Barcelona, the sculpted Virgin is an important site of pilgrimage. Possibly, Picabia visited on it on his trip to Barcelona. Known alternatively as *Our Lady of Montserrat* and colloquially as *La Morenita* (The Little Black One), the sculpture is a celebrated example of a so-called Black Madonna.[395] Picabia's decision to delineate the virgin in *Woman with Cigarette* in black is unlikely, therefore, to be a coincidence. This painting anticipates the black *Espagnole* of *Rue Blommet* (1947) while looking back to *The Virgin Saint*, which Legge relates to the cult of the Black Madonna (fig. 4.36).[396]

[395] Elisa Foster, "The Black Madonna of Montserrat: An Exception to Envisioning Concepts of Dark Skin in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia?" in *Envisioning Others: Race, Colour and the Visual in Iberia and Latin America*, ed. Pamela A. Patton (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 18-50.

[396] Legge, "Thirteen Ways to Look at a Virgin", 227.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Historically, the sculpture *Our Lady of Montserrat* bore the inscription *Negra Sum Sed Formosa* – I am black but beautiful. The phrase originates in the Song of Solomon, a Biblical text whose celebration of carnal desire the Church has often struggled with. Unabashedly recounting the longing between man and woman, the earthly eroticism of the Song of Songs can be interpreted as an allegory of God's spiritual love for the Church. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, however, provided a more influential exegesis.

A twelfth-century French abbot, St. Bernard's teachings fuse the sexual and the spiritual. As Marina Warner notes,

> The antinomy at the crux of Christian thinking lies nakedly exposed in Bernard's use of erotic imagery. For, in his mysticism, one expression of love – carnal desire – disfigures the pristine soul, but another expression of love – the leap of the soul towards God – restores the primal resemblance. Both loves are expressed in the same language, which is principally drawn from that most languorous and amorous of poems, the Song of Songs.[397]

It is St. Bernard's commentary on the Song of Songs that establishes an equation between the sensual bride and Virgin Mary. Although St. Bernard explicitly posits the Virgin Mary as Christ's bride, ambiguous metaphors of betrothal appear in several of the gospels including, as we have seen, the *Book of Revelation*.[398] Raised within the Catholic faith and educated at a prestigious, private Jesuit school, Picabia was certainly highly familiar with the biblical narrative. As shall become apparent, he was also cognisant of at least one aspect of St Bernard's Mariology.

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[397] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1985), 129.

[398] ibid., 124.

Religious upbringing and education were not the only routes by which Picabia might have encountered St. Bernard. The saint makes a cameo in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In the concluding Paradiso section of this epic poem, Dante comes face-to-face with the Virgin Mary. St. Bernard, who is acting as Dante's guide, then intercedes to the Virgin to reunite Dante with his earthly beloved Beatrice. A seminal text of European literature, *The Divine Comedy* both perpetuates and disseminates St. Bernard's role as an intermediary between the earthly and heavenly bride.

Although Picabia's familiarity with *The Divine Comedy* has not been established, *Young Girl in Paradise* offers a tantalising glimpse of a connection (fig. 4.37). This painting again revolves around a central *Espagnole* and has a title that suggests both sanctity and possibly ecstasy. The *Espagnole* is flanked by two angels imported from Catalan frescos, who although derived from a scene of judgment are now missing their scales. A recurrent flame pattern unifies the painting's surface. The only element unconnected to Spain, this motif is lifted from Botticelli's illustrations to *The Divine Comedy*. This flame pattern appears in several drawings that illustrate the Paradiso section of this book, where it serves to designate the heavenly spheres. In *Dante and Beatrice in Heaven* (c.1481-1495), for example, it provides a divine backdrop to the reunion of the protagonist and his mortal beloved (fig. 4.38).

With its textual and iconographic references to heaven, *Young Girl in Paradise* might be regarded as a sublimated image of the Assumption. This act of displacement is also at work in Duchamp's *Large Glass*. John Golding draws attention to the structural similarities between *The Large Glass* and Raphael's *The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin*, noting that the horizontal division of the Bride and Bachelor domains in the former mirror the bi-lateral separation of heaven and earth in the latter.[399] This well-established insight

[399] John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 91-92.

has been developed by numerous scholars, most notably Hopkins, who provides the most expansive discussion of Duchamp's Catholic themes.[400]

Outlining the myriad religious resonances of Duchamp's work, Hopkins compellingly underscores how St. Bernard's Mariology informed the construction of the figure of the Bride.[401] Yet, surprisingly, he appears to overlook one crucial aspect of Bernard's thought. Hoping to explain the paradox of the Virgin Birth, Bernard had deployed the metaphor of light passing through a window into a room. Just as light can pass through glass without breaking it, so too could the Virgin's maidenhood remain intact, even as she conceived. Indubitably, Picabia was aware of this analogy. He writes 'the Blessed Virgin is, in fact, the true proprietress of prostitutes… The Blessed Virgin is made of glass, the light passing through leaves no trace; Joseph is like the midday sun'.[402]

This passage operates on a double register. Firstly, it satirises St. Bernard's doctrine. The reference to Joseph being like the midday sun bawdily mocks the assumption of heavenly impregnation. Secondly, it cryptically alludes to Duchamp's *Large Glass*. Intriguingly, in one of his myriad notes for *The Large Glass,* Duchamp makes what appears to be an indirect reference to St. Bernard. In a typically obtuse fragment titled 'The Shop Window', Duchamp explicitly mentions the possibility of 'coition through a glass plane'.[403]

The Law of Accommodation among the One-eyed

[400] Maurizio Calvesi, *Duchamp invisible: la costruzione del simbolo* (Rome: Officina Edizioni Roma, 1975); David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

[401] Hopkins, *The Bride Shared*, 51-52.

[402] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster,* 239.

[403] Duchamp, *Writings*, 74. This fragment has been predominantly interpreted as a critique of commodity capitalism. Duchamp goes on to speak about the inevitable disappointment that follows consummation with the object. But Duchamp was hardly a member of the Frankfurt school, and his phrasing here suggests an encoded theological register.

Although Picabia's veiled reference to Duchamp and St. Bernard predates the Transparencies by the best part of a decade, there can be no doubt that such ideas were at the forefront of his mind when he produced the Spanish Transparencies. Picabia's ongoing conceptualisation of transparency as the point where the erotic and the theological might become conflated is registered in his aforementioned screenplay *The Law of Accommodation among the One-Eyed*. Published in May 1928, this script helps elucidate the network of ideas implicit in Picabia's contemporaneous Transparencies. Its eccentric cast of characters includes a Seller of Transparent Cards, whose implications for the Transparencies have been previously postulated but not adequately explored.[404]

A form of novelty paper goods, transparent cards contain a hidden image that is revealed when held to the light. These concealed pictures are often titillating. Fig. 4.39 is a typical example. Alluding, perhaps, to Goya's pair of clothed and nude Maja, the card's reclining woman appears fully attired under ordinary circumstance but naked when exposed to red light. Like a secular parody of St. Bernard's allegory of the Immaculate Conception, it is the transmission of light through a solid surface that produces her sexualised transformation.

In *The Law of Accommodation*, the Card Seller carries a tray of such 'animated nudes'.[405] Hawking bawdy ephemera, however, is only a side-line. During the day he works at the Sorbonne, where he is a professor of theology. His evenings are spent preparing lectures and laying out pornographic cards. A coquettish manicurist provides his love interest. The Card Seller is obsessed with the manicurist, whom he envisions as a sister of Charity. When she offers him a cocktail, he receives it as the communion. Bedazzled by her, he 'sees

[404] In his commentary to Picabia's writings, Lowenthal posits a connection between the transparent cards and Alfred Jarry, seeing them as a 'possible licentious framework' for the Transparencies. Borràs mentions the vendor but makes no connection to the Transparencies, instead arguing that Picabia is satirising Surrealism. Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 467, n.1.; Borràs, *Picabia*. 336.

[405] Suggestively, the *Large Glass* has also been compared to an erotic postcard. See Juan Antonio Ramírez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even* (London: Reaction Books, 1998), 141.

her as the Blessed Virgin, he wants to offer her a pious image and chooses one from his portfolio, but as soon as it passes into the hands of the manicurist, it turns into a licentious card'.[406] Finally, he tries to dispose of his 'pornographic collection assuring each buyer that they will be entitled to plenary indulgence'.[407]

This repetitive coupling of religion and pornography would be uninteresting if it were merely a critique of the hypocrisy of the devout. The intrigue is how Picabia entwines the reversal of saintly and sexual with an erotic of transparency and transmitted light.[408] Once again, this dynamic seems tied to the passage from Virgin to the Bride that is central to *The Large Glass*.

Butterfly

This passage from Virgin to Bride is most directly connoted in *Butterfly* (fig 4.3). In this Transparency, Picabia superimposes the image of a bullfighter over that of a nude, castanet playing, señorita, encasing the pair in a heart. There is nothing accidental about the placement of these figures. The curve of the woman's breast also forms the collar of his shirt. The wings of a butterfly, which has alighted on her genitalia, describes the line of his waistcoat.[409] This

[406] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 336.

[407] ibid., 337.

[408] This unusual erotic opens up a new aspect to the Transparencies' engagement with cinema and Surrealism. Max Ernst's contemporaneous collage novel *La Femme 100 têtes* (1929) directly invokes the erotic fecundity of light. One collage depicts a man projecting an image from his crotch. Elsewhere, Ernst gives this equation a homoerotic inflection, in a collage of a projector beaming light on to a man's exposed buttocks. Something of this erotic is implied by Aragon, who writes that 'when before the naked screen lit by the projectors solitary beam, we have that sense of formidable virginity'. Aragon, "On décor" in *The Shadow and its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on Cinema,* ed. Paul Hammond (San Francisco: City Light Books), 54.

[409] The butterfly appears to be *Artica caja*, the garden tiger moth, which features in the Transparency of the same name. There is nothing particularly unusual about this moth, other than it comes out during the day. Picabia's attraction to it seems to be purely an aesthetic preference. Although I believe this to be a moth, I will continue to refer to it as butterfly, the distinction in French – *papillon* and *papillon de nuit* – being less pronounced.

placement of the butterfly invokes the labia, suggests the opening and closing of legs and thus when combined with the butterfly's traditional symbolism of metamorphosis, serves to allegorise the passage to sexual maturity. Such symbolism is highly prevalent within period visual culture. 'The icon of the butterfly woman', Maite Zubiaurre tells us, 'goes back to the turn of the century, but prevails well into the 1930s, gaining in subtlety and careful stylization'.[410] Subtlety is possibly overstating things. While few examples are as blatant as Picabia's, most are hardly sophisticated in their representation of the butterfly woman. Zubiaurre herself details the 'proliferation of illustrations of very young butterfly girls barely emerging from their prepubescent cocoon'. Often these girls appear dressed in red, adding a safely displaced suggestion of reproductive maturity (figs. 4.40 and 4.41). Burlesque performers also pulled on the butterfly woman trope, the shedding of the cocoon allegorising their own activities (fig. 4.42). Not all examples are overtly sexual, however. A period postcard depicts a woman in a blue dress emerging from what looks to be a shroud (fig. 4.43). Carried aloft on the back of a butterfly – a Catholic symbol of resurrection – she floats into the sky in a peculiar reenactment of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, circling us once more back to the problematic of *The Large Glass*. Tantalisingly, the Spanish term for butterfly*, mariposa* is a contraction of Mary's pose. A butterfly with its wings together is said to resemble her hands in prayer. Picabia's grasp of Spanish is unclear, but if he were aware of this, his open-winged butterfly-genitals would again be casting aspersions about the Holy Virgin.

The Spanish Bride

Against the dominant consensus, I have argued that the Spanish Transparencies are intentionally signifying paintings. They deploy a consistent set of iconography, a recurrent set of structuring principles and the metaphorical use of superimposition and transparency to convey meaning. With this new formal vocabulary, Picabia continued his old assault on Catholicism and the piety of the Virgin, extending his dialogue with Duchamp

[410] Maite Zubiaurre, *Cultures of the Erotic in Spain, 1898-1939,* 186.

around the theme of the Bride and the Bachelors. However, if Picabia intended the Transparencies to signify, if only to an audience of one, their meaning inevitably exceeded his control. Not only have the Transparencies largely failed to signify, but they now also signify something in excess of Picabia's intentions. For having unpacked the Spanish Transparencies' thematics, the paintings can now be read symptomatically.

By Hispanicising the Bride, Picabia unwittingly reveals more about the fantasies he maps onto Spanish women. In Chapter 3, I argued that the *Espagnole* perpetuated orientalist fantasies about the dangerous but sexually available Spanish Woman, the various strands of which coalesce in the emblematic figure of Carmen. With the Transparencies, though, the *Espagnole* is no longer linked with the Maya but to Mary, the Virgin Saint. This is less a shift in signification than the revelation of its other side. The two *Espagnoles* are strictly complementary. They form the twin poles of a Madonna-whore complex, which, like a Möbius strip, sees one pole inevitably convert into the other. This process is made visually explicit in *Woman with Cigarette*, which pivots a louche smoking *Espagnole* and a black Madonna. This misogynistic equation also marks the continuum of Catholic womanhood, whose twin poles are the Holy Virgin and the *Book of Revelation'* Whore of Babylon. As such, the Transparencies not only expose another aspect of Picabia's Iberian fantasy but also his residual attachment to the faith.

The following chapter picks up on the Whore of Babylon's associations with destruction and death. Tracing the *Espagnole's* evolving connotations, it concentrates on a single painting, *The Spanish Revolution*, which Picabia made in response to the Spanish Civil War. In doing so, it revisits the topics of war and nationalism addressed in Chapter 2 and questions of interpretation raised in this one.

5. *The Spanish Revolution* (1937): The Betrothed of Death.

A hasty sketch depicts two men wearing nothing but shorts (fig. 5.1). Initialled F.P. and P.P., the figures are none other than Picabia and his old friend Picasso. The drawing is housed in the *Picabia Album*, a scrapbook compiled by the artist's widow who captions it 'at the beach Juan-les-Pins 1937'.[411] No shoreline is discernible in the drawing, but given the date and location, one can only imagine that the two men are looking out across the Mediterranean towards war-torn Spain.

The Spanish Civil War, which broke out in July 1936, was a shared concern. In a letter to Gertrude Stein, Picabia recounts how Picasso called on him at six in the morning to discuss the situation unfolding in Spain.[412] That both men were preoccupied with the land of their ancestors is understandable, but it is hard to imagine what consensus there could have been between the pro-communist Picasso and the allegedly 'proto-fascist' Picabia.[413] Certainly, their pictorial responses to the conflict are poles apart.

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[411] Olga Mohler Picabia, *Picabia Album* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2016). Although Picasso and Picabia were both in Juan-les-Pins in the summer of 1937, the Comité Picabia advise caution regarding Olga's dating and description, which is possibly a latter addition. I am grateful to the Comité for the interest they have shown in this chapter and for discussing *The Spanish Revolution* with me. I am also indebted to Talia Kwartler at MoMA and Patrizia Solombrino at Thomas Ammann Fine Art for providing me with details of the verso of this painting.

[412] Francis Picabia letter to Gertrude Stein, 8 September 1936, Beinecke Library. Stein also recounts this event in *Everybody's Autobiography*. There is some confusion about this letter in the scholarship. Marcadé erroneously dates it to 17 July 1936, the day the civil war began. Borràs's translation – 'Picasso has settled in Mougins and came by to see me one day on board at six o'clock. It may seem strange, but we talked of nothing but Spain.' – is also mildly inaccurate. It is the time of Picasso's visit, not the topic of their conversation, which Picabia considers strange. See Gertrude Stein*, Everybody's Autobiography* (London: Virage, 1985)*,* 111; Borràs, *Picabia*, 383; Bernard Marcadé, "More Powerful, More Simple, More Human Painting" in *Our Heads are Round*, 211, n. 22. I am grateful to Verdier for providing me with an accurate transcript of this letter.

[413] Rachel Silveri cites Picabia's statement 'Mussolini may be a dangerous mad-man, but he will always be preferable to an effigy of Lenin' as evidence of Picabia's 'anti-communist, proto-

Picasso's response needs little introduction. *Guernica* (1937) is modernism's totemic painting. A combination of humanist outrage, formalist invention and political commitment, it stands as a testament to modernism's best intentions. It is everything that Picabia's contemporaneous *The Spanish Revolution* (1937) is not (fig. 5.0).

Most likely produced within the first quarter of 1937, *The Spanish Revolution* is Francis Picabia's most overtly political painting.[414] Its politics, however, are difficult to discern. Given the highly partisan nature of the conflict, ambivalence seems unlikely. Yet this is precisely how *The Spanish Revolution* is routinely characterised.

Borràs notes that this was the first time 'that a political event, whether historic or contemporary was recorded by Picabia's brush', but she makes little attempt to elucidate the painting's relationship to either politics or history.[415] Cochran concurs that this is the only painting from Picabia's 'interwar period that can be properly viewed as political', before rapidly conceding that it 'defies any clear interpretation of its meanings', leading her to question if it is political at all.[416] Similarly, Wilson contends that *The Spanish Revolution* is Picabia's 'one

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fascist' tendencies. While Picabia's statement is clearly anti-communist, it hardly constitutes a ringing endorsement of fascism. Rachel Silveri, "Pharamousse, Funny Guy, Picabia the Loser: The Life of Francis Picabia" in *Our Heads Are Round,* 327.

[414] Olga Picabia recollects that *The Spanish Revolution* was one of eight paintings Picabia exhibited at the Galerie Serguy, 20-30 April 1937. No catalogues for this exhibition exist, and the painting is not mentioned in any reviews. Consequently, the Comité Picabia are cautious about the painting's dating and title, neither of which were definitively given by Picabia. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, though, I have accepted Olga's normally reliable testimony. If the painting was exhibited in April 1937, it was probably produced earlier that year. Despondent over a poorly received show in Chicago, Picabia did little painting in the summer of 1936, working instead on a theatre venture with Gertrude Stein. He wintered in Paris away from his studio and most likely commenced the painting when he returned to the south of France in early 1937. Although some elements of my argument would need revising should Olga's dating be incorrect, its major claims would still stand.

[415] Borràs, *Picabia,* 383-4.

[416] Cochran, "Needing the Sun", 189-90.

political painting', but although going on to succinctly outline the artist's politics, she does not return to the painting itself.[417] Finally, Bernard Marcadé has recently argued that *The Spanish Revolution* is ambiguously caught between a critique of war and a fascination with its destruction.[418] Picabia, though, neither depicts violence directly nor invokes it indirectly through paint handling or other formal means. Paradoxically, Marcadé's accusations might more accurately be levelled at Picasso and Joan Miró, whose politically committed critiques of the Spanish Civil War are formally reliant on figural distortions or violent paint handling.[419]

Inevitably, though, *The Spanish Revolution's* lack of discernible political commitment and pictorial innovation invites unfavourable comparisons with *Guernica*. Where Picasso deploys a complex visual language of Cubist fracture and Surrealist distortions to express the corporeal and psychic traumas of war, Picabia opts for a cack-handed realism. If *Guernica* is tragedy, *The Spanish Revolution* is farce. Even by Picabia's standards, it is a ludicrous painting. Deliberately so, the absurdity of war is part of its rhetorical point.

At the centre of the painting stands an *Espagnole,* a motif that had lay relatively dormant in Picabia's work for the previous few years. Flanked by two preposterous cartoon skeletons, the resurrected motif is surrounded by death. With its combination of living and dead figures, *The Spanish Revolution* provides a twentieth-century take on the medieval *dance macabre*. Like its medieval precedents the painting's tone is inappropriately carnivalesque.

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[417] Wilson, "The late Picabia: Iconoclast and Saint", 33.

[418] Marcadé, "More Powerful, More Simple, More Human Painting", 210.

[419] For fascinating accounts of how Miró's responses to the Spanish Civil War were registered at the level of form – sandpaper supports, gouged surfaces, nightmarish colours – see Robert Lubar, "Painting and Politics: Miró's *Still Life with Old Shoe* and the Spanish Republic" in *Sur realism, Politics and Culture*, eds. Raymond Spiteri and Don LaCoss (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 127-60; and Robin Adèle Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 13-49.

If *The Spanish Revolution* looks back to the tradition of the *dance macabre,* its black humour also anticipates something of the Holocaust comedy. Analysing this phenomenon, Slavoj Žižek argues that laughter provides a way of coping with the incomprehensible.[420] Defending the conversion of tragedy into comedy, Žižek argues that because no representational strategy is ever fully capable of conveying the horrors of war, the best thing to do 'is to turn to comedy which, at least, accepts its failure to express the horror […] in advance'.[421] Such an approach works by making explicit the gap between what is represented and the impossibility of ever representing it adequately by working this opposition into the rhetorical structures of the work itself. If Pierre is surely right in reading *The Spanish Revolution* as a negative, Goyaesque counterpoint to *Guernica,* this is partially because the former helps register the shortcomings of the latter.[422]

From a different perspective, Borràs also holds that Picabia's laughter is really sardonically aimed at painting. Never, she contends, had Picabia 'more openly shown his contempt for "painterly painting" than in this work'.[423] Picabia's critique, however, is more pointed. By eschewing avant-garde aesthetics in favour of a representational language closer to tourist imagery, Picabia deliberately positions himself against those who believed in the political efficacy of 'advanced' art. Picasso is only the most obvious target. André Breton, who at this moment was marshalling Surrealism's dwindling energies into an ineffectual defence of the Spanish Republic, was also undoubtedly on Picabia's mind.[424] So too was Aragon, the editor of the communist daily

[420] Slavoj Žižek, *Did Someone Say Totalitarianism?* (London: Verso, 2001), 68.

[421] ibid., 68.

[422] Pierre, *La peinture san aura*, 244; and *Singulier idéal*, 333.

[423] Borràs, *Picabia*, 383.

[424] Other former Dadaists were also involved in support for the Spanish Republic. Benjamin Péret enlisted, fighting alongside POUM. Paul Éluard wrote in favour of the Spanish Republic. Tristan Tzara became the director of the Support Committee for Spanish Intellectuals and took over Louis Aragon's role as secretary to the Committee for Defence of Spanish Culture before making his way to the front in Madrid.

L'Humanité, a vital organ in mobilising support for the Spanish Republic, but one to which Picabia bore a personal animosity.[425]

Unlike Aragon's, Picabia's opposition to Surrealism never led him towards Socialist Realism. *The Spanish Revolution* is enigmatic, not didactic. Consequently, it is as far from Socialist Realism as it is from Surrealism. Picabia may have never looked towards Moscow for political or pictorial guidance, but he was undoubtedly aware of the broader cultural politics of the period. Debates about appropriate aesthetic-political relationships were a topical issue. In 1934, the Third International officially advocated the aesthetics of Socialist Realism. The following year the International Conference for the Defense of Culture took place in Paris. Subsequent meetings at the Maison de la Culture (14-16 May 1936) extended the fractious 'realism debates', with many leading members of the Parisian avant-garde adding their rancorous voices. The 'quarrel over realism' did, however, produce some unlikely alliances. Breton and Bataille momentarily put aside their differences to form *Contre-attaque*, a joint endeavour intended, in part, to provide an alternative to the combination of Popular Front politics and aesthetic populism endorsed by the official Left.

Picabia's use of popular vernacular has less to do with the orthodox Left's demands for direct expression and unequivocal messages than it does with the representational conventions of the Spanish Civil War itself. A comparison of the painting with contemporaneous propaganda makes this apparent. Like many Spanish Civil War posters, Picabia's pictorial space is highly compressed. His attempt at replicating the deep, spatial recession of De Chirico in the middle ground does little to negate the overall sense of flatness. *The Spanish Revolution's* formal set-up and iconography also bear a marked affinity with period posters. The painting's linking of cartoon skeleton and red flag are the stuff of anti-communist propaganda (fig. 5.2). Conversely, the central standard-bearing woman is a hallmark of left-wing agitprop, a similar

[425] Picabia had a series of public exchanges with the paper, which criticised him in 1927. See Cochran, "Needing the Sun", 151-155.

figure appears in a 1936 poster for the CNT (*Confederación Nacional Trabajo,* National Confederation of Workers), the anarcho-syndicalist trade union which became part of the Spanish Republican government in November 1936 (fig. 5.3). A second poster for the communist-backed International Brigade deploys a similar pictorial conceit. Although here the flag of the Spanish Republic morphs into a tri-coloured sky (fig. 5.4). Ultimately derived from Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), this recurrent use of the flag on top of a pyramidal compositional schema subtly connected the struggles of the Spanish Republic with the aims of the French Revolution.

Read against this broader visual culture, *The Spanish Revolution* appears less as a 'grotesque pendant to Picasso's epic *Guernica*' than it does a sarcastic before and after response to military recruitment posters.[426] Like the International Brigade image, *The Spanish Revolution* contains three central figures pushed forward to dominate the picture's frontal plane. Unlike the poster, where the triangular composition provides an upward, forward momentum, Picabia's figures remain immobile, anchored to the painting's bottom edge. Where the poster's compositional thrust imparts a sense of charging vitality, implicitly placing the viewer in the role of the enemy, it is much trickier to situate oneself in *The Spanish Revolution.* The skeletons are approaching life-size, pressed against the frontal plane of the canvas they occupy a space abutting our own. However, it is impossible to determine if the observer's intimate vantage point is that of a witness, a perpetrator, or a victim.

Nonetheless, the structural, iconographic and historical affinities between *The Spanish Revolution* and the posters are compelling. However, they remain part of the period's visual culture rather than confirmed sources. The only undisputable source I have been able to discover is a postcard from which Picabia appropriates his flag-bearing *Espagnole* (fig. 5.5). Differences between this postcard and the painting make explicit the deviations Picabia made from his starting image. These changes, which included significant additions such as the skeletons, as well as discrete alterations like the

[426] Marcadé, "More Powerful, More Simple, More Human Painting", 210.

inclusion of a cross on the *Espagnole's* necklace, register something of the artist's intentions.

Among these revealing amendments is the insertion of the Torre del Oro, the distinctive, dodecagonal building in the painting's background. Located in Seville, the Torre del Oro is neither an unknowing nor unsurprising detail. Picabia had family in Seville. His uncle was the city's former mayor, and Picabia had visited often. Naturally, Picabia would be concerned with the fate of this particular city. There is also a historical logic to this reference: Seville was the first major city to be taken by the Nationalist faction – a collection of monarchists, fascists, right-wing groups and the military – in the Spanish Civil War.

This knowledge of *The Spanish Revolution's* representational setting allows for a more accurate contextualisation of the painting than those currently available. Most likely produced within the first year of the conflict, *The Spanish Revolution* does not respond to the Spanish Civil War in its entirety, as the current scholarship implicitly does. As the inclusion of the Torre del Oro suggests, the painting responds more to the situation in Seville specifically than to that of Spain generally.

Socio-historical precision is necessary here. The early stage of the Spanish Civil War was subject to misreporting, self-censorship and rumour in the French Press, raising serious questions about what Picabia could have known about the conditions in Spain. Crucially, a fundamental transition in French war reporting was underway at the approximate time Picabia painted *The Spanish Revolution*. It is, therefore, highly regrettable that the painting cannot be dated more precisely in relation to this shift, or other significant developments during this time. Nonetheless, there was an ongoing tendency within French journalism to draw parallels between the circumstances in Spain and those in France, which was undergoing a period of acute political turmoil. Léon Blum's *Front Populaire*, which came to power in France in June 1936, was widely seen as the fraternal sibling of Spain's *Frente Popular*. Across the political spectrum, the fate of two popular fronts was equated. With concerns for the

French Third Republic being mapped onto the Spanish Second Republic, domestic and international politics became complexly conflated in French debates about the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish Revolution cannot then be linked to a singular political event. Rather, it demands to be located in a more complex social field, one including the Spanish Civil War, the political situation in France, and Picabia's politics. Nor can the painting be abstractly related to the Spanish Civil War. It requires situating concretely within the opening months of the conflict up until the point when the painting was most likely produced. Having done this, I will then go on to discuss the painting in relationship to Picabia's politics and consider how the domestic situation in France informs the construction and meaning of the painting. This will not resolve the commonly perceived ambiguities of *The Spanish Revolution*, only complicate them further. First, though, it is necessary to outline something of the situation in Seville, if only to highlight the complete inadequacy of Picabia's response.

Seville

Following the victory of the *Frente Popular* in the Spanish elections of February 1936, disgruntled elements in the military began plotting a coup. From 17 to 20 July, army generals attempted a synchronised takeover of the country's key cities. Failing to secure either Madrid or Barcelona, their botched coup transitioned into a protracted civil war.

Of the cities initially captured by the Nationalist generals, Seville was the most important.[427] Here, General Gonzalo Quiepo de la Llano, head of the

[427] This section draws on information synthesised from Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge* (Great Britian: Harper Collins, 2006), 105-106; Paul Preston, *Spanish Holocaust: Inquisitions and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London: Harper Press, 2013); Antony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Cassell, 1982); Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006); Robert Payne, *The Civil War in Spain 1936-39* (New York: G.P. Putnams, 1962); Ronald Fraser, *The Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil*

carabineros (frontier guards), led an uprising on the 17 July. An eccentric and an opportunist – he had previously supported the Republicans – Quiepo was also an egotist and a fantasist. By his own account, he took the city almost single-handed, assisted by only fifteen able men. In reality, there were over four thousand pre-prepared soldiers at his command, including cavalry and artillery units. Strategic locations such as the telephone headquarters, the governor's office, the town hall and the main roads were quickly secured, but the city did not immediately fall. In the next few days, Moorish mercenaries and members of the Foreign Legion arrived along with German and Italian planes and the brutal suppression of the recalcitrant working-class districts began. Using women and children as human shields, Quiepo's men entered these areas, indiscriminately tossing grenades into residential properties. Soldiers were 'given a free hand to butcher men, women and children'.[428] Raping and looting were encouraged. Knives and bayonets were used to kill anyone found in the streets.[429] As one French observer wrote, 'it was implacable, inexorable slaughter… one found the corpses of men intertwined and seemingly prepared to be strung like beads by the gaping wounds of bayonets and knives, which had been thrust into their bodies to the hilt'.[430]

By the end of July, Quiepo was running Seville as his private fiefdom. Instigating a systematic regime of terror that gradually spread out from the city across Andalusia, Quiepo began a *limpieza* (cleansing) of the Sevillean population. Figures need not detain us, but Antonio Bahamonde, Quiepo's propaganda officer, who defected in horror, claimed 20,000 died in Seville alone by the end of 1938.

Quiepo did not attempt to hide his actions or attitudes. Literally broadcasting them, the General boastfully detailed the atrocities he sanctioned with crude

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War (London: Pimlico, 1986); and Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Penguin, 2012).

[428] Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge*, 106.

[429] Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 90; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 160.

[430] Unnamed journalist, cited without reference in Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War*, 94.

sarcasm on his nightly radio broadcasts. Speaking on air on 23 July he authorised his men 'to kill like a dog anyone who opposes you' with impunity before encouraging them to rape communist and anarchist women who had 'made themselves fair game by their doctrine of free love. And now they have at least made themselves available to real men'.[431] Two days later he issued a stark warning to locals, cautioning them not to seek to take revenge on Nationalist supporters, stating 'that for every person killed I shall kill ten and perhaps even exceed that proportion'.[432] This was not an idle threat. When the bodies of two Falangists were found dead in the working-class district of Triana, seventy men from the area were selected at random and shot.[433] Quiepo's brutality was sufficiently harsh that even other fascists condemned it.

On 15 August, the future dictator, General Francisco Franco, arrived in Seville for the Feast of the Assumption. In a special ceremony presided over by the archbishop Llundáin, the Virgin's Ascension to heaven came to allegorise Spain's ongoing transformation from democracy to dictatorship. At the end of the ceremony, the flag of the Spanish Republic was lowered and the flag of the monarchy raised. Franco embraced it, kissed it repeatedly and wept. 'This is our flag', he said, 'the authentic one, the one to which we have all sworn, for which our forefathers died, a hundred times covered in glory'.[434] Then Queipo de Llano spoke, praising the flag in typical fascist terms. The red stripes signified 'the blood of our soldiers, generously shed', the yellow stripe

[431] Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, 206.

[432] Radio broadcast, 25 July 1937 transcribed in Fraser, *The Blood of Spain,* 128.

[433] Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, 141.

[434] Franco cited in Antonio Bahamonde, *Memoirs of a Spanish Nationalist* (London: London United Editions, 1939), 37-38. Bahamonde is the primary source for this ceremony. Secondary accounts include Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War*, 116-117; Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, 97; Payne, *The Civil War in Spain*, 107-10; Fraser, *The Blood of Spain,* 164; and Rafael Cruz, "Old Symbols, New Meanings: Mobilising the Rebellion in the Summer of 1936" in *The Splintering of Spain: Cultural History and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, ed. Chris Ealham and Michael Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005),159-176.

'Andalusian soil golden with the harvest of our fields'.[435] Finally, José Millán Astray, commander of the foreign legion, led the crowd in cries of 'Hail death! Hail death!' Outside, bodies of the recently executed littered the streets. Posters on the walls read 'Our flag is the only flag; the flag of Spain; our colours are always the same'.[436] Over loudspeakers, the marching song of the foreign legion, *El novio de la muerte*, The Betrothed of Death played: 'I became the betrothed of death, I drew her close with a strong embrace, And her love became my flag'.[437]

Flags

Although it is not my intention to suggest that Picabia was directly responding to a single event, the resonances between Franco's flag ceremony and *The Spanish Revolution* are striking. The Sevillian setting, the corpses, and the betrothed of death are shared features – the *Espagnole*, it will be recalled, is in part an update on Picabia's earlier Hispanicised bride, *Novia*. More importantly, though, the ceremony registers the symbolically contested status of the flag in Spain at this point.[438]

The flag Franco embraced was the familiar red and yellow flag of Spain. Originally an army standard, it was not adopted nationally until 1868 when it became associated with the monarchy. Five years later, the First Spanish Republic would introduce a new tricoloured flag of red, yellow and purple, happily allowing the two versions to co-exist. During Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-30), the original flag was made compulsory and rival flags

[435] Bahamonde, *Memoirs of a Spanish Nationalist*, 38.

[436] *ibid.*, 39.

[437] This is my translation of the song's final lines *me hice novio de la muerte, la estreché con lazo fuerte, y su amor fue me bandera*. A complete English transcription, which translates *bandera* as standard rather than flag, can be found in José Álverez, *The Betrothed of Death: The Spanish Foreign Legion During the Riff Rebellion, 1920-27* (Westpoint: Greenwood Press, 2001), 241-242.

[438] For a wider discussion of the contested nature of flags in Spain at this conjuncture, see Cruz, "Old Symbols, New Meanings", 159-176.

outlawed. Following his deposition, the Second Republic re-instated the tricolour version in 1931. Although Picabia was unlikely to be aware of this exact history, he would undoubtedly be familiar with these rival flags as well as the Catalan one. Indeed the contested status of the flag as a symbol of the nation is registered in his source material. For although the illustrated postcard depicts the red and yellow flag, there is no guarantee that Picabia's did as other postcards from the series features the same model supporting the Republican tricolour (fig. 5.6).

Printed in black and white these cards could be hand-coloured to represent either royalist or republican flags on demand (figs. 5.7 and 5.9). Changes to colouration also occurred. Some cards have a clean purple stripe, the result of a single colouring (fig. 5.6). Others are muddy purple, the result of over-painting an original red stripe, which peeks through the clumsy colouring (figs. 5.7 and 5.9). Presumably, such an alteration followed the shift from dictatorship to Republic in 1931, but without knowing when Picabia acquired his card, we can only speculate about which colour configuration was most likely to be available to him.

What is certain is that Picabia could not have encountered the postcard before 1919. Its caption comes from the *cuplé* song *Banderita*, first performed during that year.[439] Dated versions of the postcard, however, suggest that it was not in circulation until 1926.[440] Given that Picabia made his last trip to Spain in 1927, it is highly feasible that he acquired his copy then, in which case a yellow and red flag is most likely.

Red Rags

Significantly though, Picabia chose to represent neither royalist nor republican flag. By painting the flag in *The Spanish Revolution* a flat red, Picabia

[439] The full lyrics are reproduced in Salaün, *El Cuplé*, 278.

[440] Of the four dated postcards I am aware of, one is from 1926, two are 1927 and another 1929. In all cases the depicted flag is red and yellow.

deliberately avoids signifying any overt allegiances. At its most obvious level, his flag simply connotes generalised bloodshed. This symbolism, blatantly apparent in any case, would have been unavoidable for Picabia as part of the postcard's inscription, *llevas sangre* (you carry blood), explicitly makes this connection. Picabia, though, gives the flag a complementary secondary connotation through the presence of the toreador's skeleton encased within its folds. Implicitly, Picabia transforms the flag into the bullfighter's *muleta*.

Bullfights and bullfighters are a recurrent motif in Picabia's work, yet it is unclear if he was genuinely interested in the 'sport' or solely drawn to it as a clichéd signifier of Spain. He is known to have seen one bullfight in Barcelona, though there was ample opportunity for him to have watched more both in Spain and closer to home.[441] Bullfighters were the sporting celebrities of their day and the corrida was popular in Southern France. The Midi, in particular, was home to some of the finest bullfighting of the 1930s.[442] Prompted by the declining value of the peseta, many of Spain's top matadors regularly worked in France during this period. On the evidence of Picabia's paintings, however, it seems unlikely he followed the sport closely. As with the *Espagnoles*, these paintings seem to be based on old postcards and often depict bullfighters years after their prime.[443] Nonetheless, given the sport's popularity and his

[441] Elizabeth Cowling mentions a letter from Picasso to Apollinaire dated 18 October 1917 in which Picasso recounts running into Picabia at a bullfight in Barcelona. There is also a 1909 photograph of Picabia with Gabrielle-Buffet at an empty bullring in Seville. From the photograph it is unclear if they actually saw a fight, but this visit coincided with the *Feria de Abril*, the opening event of the bullfighting season. Cowling, *Picasso, 322.* The photograph is reproduced in Borràs, *Picabia*, 25.

[442] For a social history of the Spanish bullfight, see Adrian Schubert, *Death and Money in the Afternoon: A History of the Spanish Bullfight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). On the politics and popularity of bullfighting in France, see Richard Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 104-122.

[443] Interestingly, in the *Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, Gertrude Stein writes 'I have always loved Spanish dancing and Spanish bullfighting and I loved to show photographs of bullfighters and bullfighting'. Given her close contact with Picabia, it is possible that some of these photos served as sources for his painting. Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1981), 235.

attendance of at least one fight, Picabia would have possessed at least rudimentary understanding of the different protagonists in a bullfight.

Generalised designations such as ‘bullfighter’ or ‘toreador’ – a derivation of the Spanish *torero*, which enters the language through Bizet’s *Carmen* – obscure a hierarchy of roles. At the top is the cape-wielding *matador de toros*, literally ‘the killer of bulls’. Supporting him are a team of horse-mounted *picadors* who weaken the bull with lances. Below the *picadors*, who are further sub-divided by class, are the *banderillos* who stab the bull with colourful barbed sticks. Typically decorated to indicate the *banderillos’* place of birth, these sticks are called *banderillas*, or little flags.

The connection between these *banderillas* and *banderita*, the little flag mentioned in the postcard’s inscription, is unmissable and may have even prompted Picabia’s equation of the Spanish Civil War with the bullfight. Linguistically and thematically, the *banderillas* offer a forceful continuation of the link of bullfighting and death, flag and homeland, first suggested by the matador’s cape.

Picabia’s yoking of the bullfight to the Spanish Civil War can be read allegorically, the impending death of the bull symbolising the presumed fate of the Spanish nation. Such a reading of *The Spanish Revolution* is complicated, however, by the toreador’s skeleton, which implies the bull was victorious. Here, Picabia taps into the broader symbolic logic underlying the ritualised sacrifice of the bullfight. Historically understood as a duel between animal irrationalism and human ingenuity and artistry, the skeletal toreador in *The Spanish Revolution* implies the triumph of animal nature over human culture.

For the painting’s original audience, Picabia’s equation of bullfight and battlefield may have carried less abstract and more topical resonances. On 14 August 1936, General Yagüe captured Badajoz. Following the city’s ‘liberation’, thousands of pro-republican enemies were herded in batches into the centre of the city’s bullring and executed. The massacre was witnessed by several foreign journalists, including Jay Allen, who wrote

> At four o'clock in the morning they [the prisoners] are turned out into the ring through the gate by which the initial parade of bullfighters enters. There machine guns await them. After the first night the blood was supposed to be palm deep on the far side of the lane. I don't doubt it. Eighteen hundred men – there were women, too – were mowed down there in some twelve hours. There is more blood than you would think in 1800 bodies.[444]

The bullring massacre was widely reported in France. *Le Temps*, *Le Populaire*, *Le Figaro* and *Paris-Soir* all carried stories based on the first-hand reports of French journalists Jacques Berthe and Marcel Dany.[445] Later, unsubstantiated stories also circulated, suggesting some victims had been killed like bulls, with lances to the back of the neck.

The Spanish nationalists strenuously denied the atrocity, which was dismissed as fabrication in the French right-wing press.[446] Picabia, though, was almost certainly aware of this widely reported event, which is not to claim that *The Spanish Revolution* directly responds to it. Even less can this association

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[444] Allen's report first appeared in *The Chicago Tribune* (30 August 1936) and was subsequently published in the Paris edition of *The New York Herald Tribune*. The article is available online at http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1936/08/30/page/1/article/bombs-hit-center-of-madrid. (Accessed 06/07/2017) For wider details of Allen's activities, see Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War* (London: Constable, 2009), 314-397.

[445] Berthe's article was published in *Le Figaro*, 15 August 1936. The next day *Le Temps, Le Populaire, Le Figaro and Paris-Soir* all carried features based on Deny's report. See Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia, ed. *Corresponsal en España* (Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias, 2006). http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/corresponsales/sta_cecilia.htm. (Accessed 05 July 2017)

[446] A notable exception to the denials came from no less an authority than Yagüe. With chilling pragmatism Yagüe bluntly informed John T. Whitaker of the *New York Herald*, that 'of course we shot them. Was I expected to take four thousand reds with me as my column advanced racing against time? Was I expected to turn them loose in my rear and let them retake Badajoz?' Cited in Julián Casanova, *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 177.

substantiate a reading of Picabia's skeletons as the victims of right-wing military violence. When Ernest Hemingway fictionalised the Badajoz Massacre in *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* he reversed the roles of the two sides. Moreover, left-wing violence also carried associations of the bullfight. Lurid stories circulated of Republicans decapitating clergymen's ears and passing them around like souvenirs.[447] Such barbaric actions alluded to a bullfighting tradition. When a crowd feel a kill is exceptionally accomplished or spectacular, they wave their handkerchiefs like little flags, and the bull's severed ear is awarded to the matador.

The Spanish Revolution taps into both the generalised associations of bullfighting and the period equation of the bullfighter with the soldier invoked in one Spanish Civil War poster (fig. 5.10). Even if Picabia had no knowledge of this particular poster, he was aware of the general association. Writing in *Jesus Christ Rastaquouròre*, Picabia claims 'Bullfights make me want to laugh. War makes me want to laugh'.[448]

Red Flags

If the red flag connotes the bullfight, it more readily signifies communism or socialism. The title of Picabia's painting reinforces this reading. *The Spanish Revolution* conjures up images of proletarian uprising rather than a reactionary military coup. Marcadé, who was the first to draw attention to Picabia's unconventional title, claims the use of Spanish Revolution, rather than Spanish Civil War, was an anarchist designation.[449] In reality, it was part of the wider linguistic currency of the Far Left. POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*), Spain's Trotskyite Marxist party, produced a newspaper under this title. Distributed in Spanish, English, and French language versions, it is possible that Picabia was aware of it (fig. 5.11).[450]

[447] Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 261.

[448] *Jesus Christ Rastaquouròre* in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 233.

[449] Marcadé, "More Powerful, More Simple, More Human Painting", 210.

[450] The American anarchist group United Libertarian Organization also produced a journal with this title, but Picabia is unlikely to have encountered it.

Even if he was not, the presence of a red flag in *The Spanish Revolution* suggests Picabia is more concerned with the Marxist than the anarchist left whose flag is red and black. What is less clear is whether Picabia intended the skeletons to represent the victims or the portents of death. Is this an image of violence enacted on or by the Far Left? The history of repression in Seville, where the Nationalist army had a monopoly on the means of violence suggest the former, Picabia's politics the later.

Politics

I have briefly outlined Picabia's youthful commitment to the tenets of anarcho-individualism in Chapter 2. Unlike other scholars, I am not exactly convinced that Picabia became more reactionary as he got older. Undeniably, Picabia held troubling views. He was an elitist and an anti-Semite, but Picabia's life-long distaste for nationalism and authority – 'for me, happiness is to command no one and not to be commanded' – are incompatible with Fascism's twinned cult of leader and motherland.[451]

The problem is not that Picabia's politics changed but that they did not. With no reality principle strong enough to keep Picabia's pleasure-seeking individualism in check, his politics failed to evolve beyond his privileged, adolescent outlook or adjust themselves in relationship to the changing world circumstances. An indulged only child born into immense wealth, Picabia's extreme class-privilege isolated him to such an extent he was seemingly incapable of grasping political realities.[452]

Although shaped and sustained by his readings of Stirner and Nietzsche, Picabia's politics never amounted to a rationally thought through position. His

[451] Picabia, *391,* no.6 (1917), 4 in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 30. I would suggest that Picabia's quote is a bastardisation of Nietzsche's 'How I detest to lead and to be led. I won't command and I won't obey'. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, prelude 33.

[452] Picabia's first wife describes his 'total incomprehension' during the First World War. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp", 258.

readings never coalesced into a systematic or coherent political philosophy. Given his upbringing, Picabia's contempt for the herd and subscription to the natural inequality of men is unsurprising. However, class was not the only factor determining his outlook. Picabia was also heir to the legacies of Romanticism. A belief in the superiority of the artist was fundamental to his fluctuating sense of self-worth. Throughout his life, Picabia expressed contempt for politics, which he regarded as one of man's ongoing imbecilities and a major inconvenience to his freedom.

His anarcho-individualism permitted no real compromise or identification with collective politics. 'Poor revolutionaries made in series, they carry their advertising-label like a flag', he wrote in 1927, 'their kennels are too narrow for my wolf's soul'.[453] This libertarian outlook could find little common ground with the anarcho-syndicalism tendencies of the Spanish Left, and even less its various Marxist strands.

Throughout his life, Picabia remained assiduously hostile to communism. Picabia first began publishing anti-communist statements in 1921, his initial barrage of invective no doubt promoted by the formation of the French Communist Party (PCF) in December 1921. Intriguingly, these outpourings also coincide with Picabia's separation from the Dada movement and the start of his rivalry with Breton. Political and aesthetic antagonisms would forever be interrelated in Picabia's mind. Even after Breton's expulsion from the PCF, Picabia continued to conflate communism and Surrealism. When Gertrude Stein mentioned Picasso's support of the Republic, Picabia responded 'it's just Surrealism'.[454] While in *Orbes* he writes 'Surrealism is white…Communism is black…that makes gray' before going on to add that 'red excites bulls…it would seem'. [455]

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[453] Picabia, "Lumière froide" in *Le Journal des hivernants* (January 1927), 21 cited in *Beautiful Monster*, 325.

[454] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 111.

[455] Picabia, "Avis" in *Orbes* no.4 (Summer 1935), 20 cited in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster,* 344. The *Picabia Album* reproduces a lost painting of two bulls that Picabia showed in Chicago in January 1936. Although the reproduction is in black and white, the animals are clearly different

Written before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Picabia's reference to excited bulls most likely refers to the previous year's 'Red Terror' in which anti-clerical violence in Asturias led to the destruction of fifty-seven churches and claimed the lives of thirty-seven members of the clergy. Picabia's joint critique of Surrealism and communism suggest that any hostility towards communism was coloured by his opposition to his former Dada colleagues. It is notable then that many of Picabia's one-time associates were vocal advocates of the Republican side, often writing in the communist paper *L'Humanité.*

By the time Picabia painted *The Spanish Revolution,* communism was no longer the abstract menace it had been for him in the 1920s. In the legislative elections of May 1936, Léon Blum's Front Populaire had come to power. Across the French Rivera where Picabia lived, there was a pronounced swing to the Far Left. Cannes-Antibes, Nice and Golfe-Juan all returned communist candidates. In nearby Grasse, they elected a radical socialist.[456] Picabia suddenly felt conspicuous. As Olga later recalled, 'we were in no danger of passing unnoticed in the port of Golfe-Juan with our yacht and... our forty-two horsepower Rolls Royce'.[457]

Eleven days after the elections, Picabia wrote to Gertrude Stein complaining that 'the situation with communism is truly bad for everyone. The French are idiots to believe in Russia': presumably, a reference to The Franco-Soviet Treaty of Mutual Assistance ratified in February 1936.[458] A month later, Picabia repeats his concerns to Stein: 'I am afraid it will come to a sorry end. France is being run from Moscow, and they want a revolution at all costs'.[459] Another month later he writes 'Here we are living under absolute communism,

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colours. Unfortunately, I have found no other record of this painting, which may well relate to Picabia's statement, and acts as an allegorical premonition of the Spanish Civil War. *Picabia Album*, unpaginated.

[456] I take these details from Cochran, "Needing the Sun", 161-162.

[457] Mohler, unpublished memoires, 71 cited in Borràs, *Picabia*, 382.

[458] Picabia to Stein, 14 May 1936 cited in Silveri, "Pharamousse, Funny Guy, Picabia the Loser", 332.

[459] Letter to Stein, 10 June 1936 cited by Borràs, *Picabia*, 382.

communism in the rain. These poor fools want the moon...I work all day, the workers should act like me'.[460]

Picabia's comments are fatuous but not without a kernel of truth. His claim to be living under communism was not entirely unfounded. Olga recounts that 'every Sunday morning the red flag fluttered in our field of vision accompanied by the singing of the International'.[461] For Picabia viewing the red flag would be a daily occurrence, something he could see flying over the town hall of Golfe-Juan on the walk from his yacht to his studio. His decision to depict such a flag in *The Spanish Revolution* cannot be disassociated from these events. Domestic politics and a fear of socialism in France were a more tangible concern for Picabia than the situation in Spain.

Once again, the spectre of communism haunted France. This was a period of social unrest not seen since the days of the Paris Commune. A wave of debilitating strikes and factory occupations followed the bitterly contested and divisive French elections. Even the moderate newspaper *Le Figaro* denounced Blum's socialist government as a Bolshevik front, 'a screen for the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat in France'.[462] The country was polarised, seemingly on the verge of collapse. The military command, openly sympathetic to Franco's actions, believed a communist uprising to be imminent. Meanwhile, Blum feared France was 'on the eve of a military coup d'état'.[463] His suspicions were well-founded. In February 1937, a leaflet detailing how to stage a military putsch was circulated across regional and

[460] Picabia letter to Gertrude Stein, 1 July 1936. This letter is cited with minor difference in translation by Camfield and Silveri. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times*, 250; Silveri, "Pharamousse, Funny Guy, Picabia the Loser", 332.

[461] Mohler, unpublished manuscript, 71 cited in Silveri, "Pharamousse, Funny Guy, Picabia the Loser", 332.

[462] *Le Temps,* 5 June 1936 cited in Peter Jackson, "French Strategy and the Spanish Civil War" in *Spain in an International Context, 1936-1959*, eds. Christian Leitz and David J. Dunthorn (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Press, 1999), 59.

[463] Blum in *Le Populaire,* 15 October 1945 cited in Jackson, "French Strategy and the Spanish Civil War", 33.

national military headquarters at the behest of Deputy Chief of Staff General Paul Gérodias. This leaflet, obtained by Gérodias through clandestine links with the Spanish Nationalists, was leaked to the press to understandable outrage. Picabia would have unquestionably been aware of the 'Spanish Document Affair', which was widely reported and debated in Parliament. It is notable that the production of *The Spanish Revolution* appears to coincide with this revelation, rather than the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

The Press

Having twice touched on how French reporting might have informed Picabia's production of *The Spanish Revolution,* it is now necessary to consider the press coverage of the Spanish Civil War in more detail.

The Spanish Civil War coincided with the birth of photojournalism. From the outset, the conflict was covered extensively in France. Within two days of the attempted coup, French journalists descended on Spain, reporting from within both Nationalist and Republican-held territories. *Paris-Soir*, the highest-circulating French daily, had six correspondents in Spain alone, and another five back in France dedicated to covering the war.[464] *Je Suis Partout*, *Combat*, *L'humanité* and *Le Petit Parisien* also had reporters on the ground in Spain.[465] In addition to a large number of journalists, several famous authors – Ernest Hemingway, Arthur Koestler, George Orwell, WH Auden, John Dos Passos and André Malraux – also sent in their accounts of the conflict to the Press Association. Indeed, so many reports were filed with the various press

[464] According to Martin Minchom, *Paris-Soir* had a daily circulation of 1,700,000 in 1936. He also notes that from 19 July 1936 until 17 September 1936 every issue contained a feature on the Spanish Civil War. Martin Minchom, *Spain's Martyed Cities: From the Battle of Madrid to Picasso's Guernica* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2015), 25.

[465] I take these details from John Beals Romeiser, "The Limits of Objective War Reporting: Louis Delaprée and *Paris-Soir*" in *Red Flags, Black Flags: Critical Essays on the Literature of the Spanish Civil War*, ed. John Beals Romeiser (Madrid: Ediciones José Porrúa Turanzas, 1982), 137.

agencies that supply soon outstripped demand. The quantity of coverage, however, had little bearing on its quality.

Politically and culturally reductive, persistent clichés dogged French reporting. Familiar accounts of Spain as a land eternally caught between civilisation and barbarity continued. A new cast of characters re-enacted old roles. Communists and fascists now assumed the parts ascribed to the moors of old.[466] Zealous publishers also mercilessly edited articles. Partially this was done through a misplaced desire to preserve impartiality; partially because Catholic and conservative editors either refused to believe what was being reported or feared to alienate their readers and advertisers. *Paris-Soir,* for example, failed to report the saturation bombing of Madrid's civilian population. Believing the official line, that attacks were directed solely at military targets, the editors declined to publish a first-hand account of the atrocity written by their own correspondent, Louis Delaprée. An acerbic telegram Delapreé sent in response to the ongoing refusal to publish his reports registers this situation: 'I won't send you anything else. Not worth it. The killing of a hundred Spanish kids is less interesting than the sigh from Mrs Simpson, the royal whore'.[467]

Months later Delaprée died in a plane crash. His death, in December 1936, proved decisive in changing the direction of the coverage of the war. Posters of his face and quotes appeared in Paris, and an unedited pamphlet of his reports *The Martyrdom of Madrid* and a book *Died in Spain* were hastily published.[468] It is difficult to ascertain the effect this shift may have had on *The Spanish Revolution*. Most likely, Picabia remained ill-informed about the situation in Spain. Seville, in particular, was now safely under Nationalist control and the dispatches of foreign journalists subject to close scrutiny.

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[466] Martin Hurcombe, "Touring the Spanish Labyrinth: The French Far Right and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39", *Forum of Modern Language Studies* 41, no. 2 (2005); Martin Hurcombe, *France and the Spanish Civil War: Cultural Representations of the War Next Door, 1936-45* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

[467] Cited in Minchom, *Spain's Martyed Cities*, 160.

[468] Picasso was aware of these publications and it is feasible that he discussed them with Picabia. On Picasso's interest in Delapreé, see Minchom, *Spain's Martyed Cities.*

This shift in war reporting was neither absolute nor instantaneous. French interpretations remained profoundly shaped by domestic concerns, which understandably coloured their conception of the hostilities. Reporting everywhere tended to downplay the complexities and the specifically Spanish histories behind the conflict, framing it instead in stark binaries. Widely seen as a proxy war between Russia and the Fascist states, to this day the conflict is regularly conceptualised as an international war taking place on national soil. Consequently, as Hewitt notes, 'the Spanish Left and Right… lose their specifically national qualities and their internal complexity and become reflections of the polarised forces in the France of the Blum Government'.[469]

The feeling that the Third French Republic and the Second Spanish Republic were sister regimes enhanced the belief that the fortune of the two nations was tied. The situation in Spain exacerbated the pre-existing internal divisions in France. From the outbreak of hostilities, the outcome of the conflict was perceived as having a likely domino effect on France. As one newspaper put it in October 1936, 'The fate of the mass of Spanish people is now inseparable from the fate of the French nation'.[470] Any defeat of Spanish Nationalism was seen by the Right as a prelude to France drowning under the rising tide of communism, while for the Left the fall of Madrid represented Fascism's first step on the march to Paris. Writing in April 1937, Paul Nizan reminded readers of *Vendredi* that 'the Italian and German officers who get together at the Hotel Cristina in Seville have a special affection for the phrase "Next year in Toulouse"'.[471]

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[469] Nicholas Hewitt, "Partir Pour Quelque Part: French Novelists of the Right and the Spanish Metaphor 1936-1939", *Romance Studies* 3 (1983-84): 116.

[470] Jean-Richard Bloch, *Vendredi*, 14 October 1936 cited in Simon Dell, *The Image of the Popular Front: The Masses and the Media in Interwar France* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 143.

[471] Paul Nizan, *Vendredi,* 2 April 1937 cited in Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar, *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Havard University Press, 2005), 79.

France's internal divisions then were projected onto Spain, and Picabia's understanding of the situation in Seville was more likely to be informed by domestic political concerns than by an accurate representation of the situation over the Pyrenees. Like *The Spanish Revolution*, Picabia was probably conflicted about the Spanish Civil War. Descriptions of Spain's prime minister, Largo Cabellero, as 'the Spanish Lenin' would presumably horrify him, but it is unlikely that he found much comfort in Franco assuming the self-appointed role as the defender of Chrisitan civilisation.

Corpses

Anti-clerical violence in Spain did much to hurt the Republican cause abroad. The killing of clergymen, the ransacking of churches, and the desecration of graves were widespread. In this regard, Marcadé enticingly notes that *The Spanish Revolution* 'evokes the exhumation of clergy and the profanation of cemeteries and churches during the civil war'.[472] This appealing suggestion is left hanging, and Marcadé makes no case for Picabia's familiarity with these practices. Indeed, the photograph of disinterred corpses from Toledo cathedral that illustrates Marcadé's essay is taken from a 1937 German periodical that Picabia is highly unlikely to have come into contact with, although he may have plausibly encountered the photograph, which dates from September 1936, elsewhere.

The disinterment of bodies in Spain was widely reported abroad, especially in the Catholic press. Photographs of the exhumations in Madrid were available through French press agencies from the end of July 1936. Their publication produced an 'immediate and powerful public reaction'.[473] Coterminous events in Barcelona provoked even more outrage. Following the ransacking of the *Iglesia de la Eseñanza,* the mummified remains of nineteen Salesian nuns

[472] He also suggests a plausible link to the skeleton bishops in Luis Buñuel's *L'Age d'or* (1930); Marcadé, "More Powerful, More Simple, More Human Painting", 210.

[473] Bruce Lincoln, "Revolutionary Exhumations in Spain, July 1936", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 2 (April 1985): 244, n.6.

appeared in the streets of Barcelona. They remained there for five days, where they were seen by some forty thousand visitors.[474] Images of the nuns were rapidly disseminated through the international press agencies (figs. 5.12 and 5.13). Illustrated books on the subject also promptly appeared. Francisque Gay's *Dans les Flammes et dans la sang: les crimes contre les églises les prêtres en Espagne,* for example, was published in November 1936.

Photographs of exhumations, however, did not simply take the form of journalistic documentation of anti-clerical practice. Nor did they capture images of spontaneous sacrilege. Perpetrators of exhumations often self-consciously posed corpses for display, frequently photographing themselves amongst the disinterred (figs 5.14). Rather than destroying images, the perpetrators of these photographs use iconoclasm as a bizarre form of representational practice; a photographic extension of what Chris Ealham terms 'anti-clerical counter-rituals', which included the mock execution of statues, the donning of priest robes, and the burlesquing of liturgical ceremonies.[475]

The overwhelming association of such anti-clerical activities with the 'Red Terror' puts them in sharp opposition to Picabia's politics, but their macabre humour and use of iconoclasm as a representational practice would surely appeal to the painter of *The Virgin Saint*. Like the photographs, *The Spanish Revolution* seems to parody the traditions of displaying and parading relics common to Catholic Spain, opposing the material realities of death to the metaphysics of resurrection. Formally too, there are marked structural similarities between the photographs and the painting, both of which symmetrically arrange humans and corpse around a central vertical axis. Given these thematic and formal resonances and the public visibility of such images close to the production of *The Spanish Revolution,* it seems highly

[474] Lincoln, "Revolutionary Exhumations in Spain, July 1936", 244.

[475] Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937* (Oakland and Edinburgh: AK Press, 2010),187.

likely that Picabia was aware of them and wished to connote them with his painted skeletons.

Skeletons

Despite appearances, Picabia's cartoon skeletons are carefully realised. Seemingly nonchalant execution masks an underlying precision of thought. Positioned to divide the canvases into vertical quarters, with the *Espagnole* marking the halfway point, Picabia is exacting about both the placement and appearance of the skeletons. Accessories – toreador's hat and *Espagnole's* rose – provide them with external signifiers of gender, but Picabia also depicts subtle differences in bone structure. The narrower hips, heart-shaped gap, and longer sacrum of the male figure's pelvis conform to correct anatomical proportion, as does the circular pelvic inlet of the female skeleton. Picabia's detailed description of the pelvis provides a clear indication that he researched the skeleton's appearance, and it is likely that he consulted an anatomical treatise, or such source (fig. 5.15). Accurate anatomy is not maintained, however. Hands are oversized, and both skeletons lack a full complement of ribs. Rather, there is a specific investment in the hips that extends to how they are painted. While Picabia renders all the other bones as opaque solids, he makes the pelvis largely transparent.

As detailed in the previous chapter, transparency and superimposition are recurrent features of Picabia's work. Acutely sensitive to differences between looking at and looking through, Picabia meticulously stages the interplay of the female skeleton and the Torre del Oro. Tower and torso – from the base of the hips to the top of the neck – are the same length. Simultaneously an extension and inversion of each other, the spire and spine share the same rigid verticality and describe the same line. Far more blatantly, the female skeleton's legs both frame and contain the Torre del Oro, whose phallic spire neatly penetrates her pelvic opening. As already mentioned, Picabia had visited Seville and presumably knew of the famous building's origins as a military watchtower, even if he remained ignorant of the cult of virility and death then

sweeping the city. *Castrenses o castrados* – military or castrated – was the slogan of the brutally misogynistic culture Queipo unleashed across Andalusia. Across the region, (gang) rape and murder of women were widespread. An integral part of the suppression of towns such as Lucena, Arahal and Lora, rape was also systematically used as a punishment for women perceived to be on the Left.[476] If Picabia could not have known the full extent of these atrocities, neither can his configuration of the Torre del Oro as phallus be entirely separated from his lifelong contempt for the army.

This penetrative tower contrasts sharply with the male skeleton's limp hand, which is also framed by an opening made by an *Espagnole's* body. The linked arms of the male figure and *Espagnole,* in turn, underscore the absent appendage of the female skeleton. This detail is intriguing. Tantalisingly, within Anglo-American visual culture images of figures with severed legs have provided metaphors for colonial loss and dismembered Empire since the late-eighteenth century.[477] Picabia may not have been aware of this particular pictorial tradition, but a comparable intention is plausible, the skeleton's broken body meant to allegorise that of a larger body politic.

Certainly, Picabia would have been familiar with recent iterations of this trope. Dislocated body parts are recurrent motifs in Dada and Surrealist art. Max Ernst's collage *Défais ton sac, mon brave* (1929), for example, features a running man carrying a severed arm strapped to the side of his suitcase. The motif of the ditched limb used here to connote the physical and psychic traumas of war as well as the conditions of geopolitical displacement.[478]

Returning to Picabia, the visual relay he sets up between the skeleton's various limbs can be completed by considering the male figure's legs. Just as

[476] Detailed examples are given in Preston, *Spanish Holocaust,* 131-178.

[477] For a brief genealogy of this tradition, see Ann Uhry Abrams, "Politics, Print and John Singleton Copley's Watson and the Shark", *Art Bulletin* 62, no. 2 (1979): 265-267.

[478] This analysis follows T.J. Demos, *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2007), 22.

the female skeleton straddles the Torre del Oro, the male skeleton tellingly frames Picabia's signature. Highly alert to the power of the autograph, especially his own, Picabia had a conceptually sophisticated understanding of the signature. In *Francis Picabia by Francis Picabia* (1920), for example, Picabia simply authenticates his signature by signing his name twice. Economically foregrounding the iterability of the sign, this gesture anticipates the arguments of Derrida's *Signature, Event, Context* by the best part of seventy years.[479] More famously*, L'oeil Cacodylate* (1921) provides a potent investigation of the signature's problematic relationship to issues of authorship, authenticity and value. Primarily produced by the accumulation of others' signatures, *L'oeil Cacodylate* challenges the notion of the artwork as the coherent product of a single authorial hand. Cynically reasoning that the more signatures his canvas acquired, the more valuable it would become, Picabia performed the dual operation of increasing exchange value, while simultaneously undermining aesthetic values, the nominal criteria by which artwork are said to be valued.

Although no longer directly concerned with a critique of the signature or an exploration of its status as sign, Picabia continued to deploy it with sensitivity. Generally, he followed convention, signing his canvases along the bottom edge in the least cluttered corner. The deliberate off-centred placement of the signature in *The Spanish Revolution* is unusual, though not unprecedented in his work. One notable example of this positioning and framing strategy occurs in *Espagnole* (c.1926-27), where the mantilla brackets Picabia's signature (fig. 5.16). Aesthetic concerns likely motivated this decision. This is the only area of flat colour on the base of the canvas, and a signature could be lost or compromise the busy details of the mantilla. Nonetheless, this positioning of the signature tacitly serves to associate Picabia with the figure above it.

[479] For a wider discussion of the status of name and signature for Picabia, see Aurélie Verdier, "Francis Picabia's Quasi-Name", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthtics* 63/64 (2013): 215-227 and Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail,*Chapter 2 "Signature, Event, Context" appears in Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

In *The Spanish Revolution,* Picabia's signature operates as a linking mechanism, associating the artist with the dead toreador. The diminutive Picabia has also made the male skeleton notably shorter than his female companions. This abandonment of conventional proportional relationships between the figures is unlikely to be an accident, given Picabia's exacting depiction of the pelvis. Picabia's self-identification with the skeletal toreador is also tacitly confirmed by his early painting, *Self-portrait as a Toreador* (1926), and through the homophonic connection with *picador*.[480] Signature and pun provide clear links between Picabia and the dead bullfighter, whose hat further invokes the tale, mentioned in the Introduction, of Picabia donning such headwear during his brief period of military service.

Identification is not the same as representation, though. We cannot assume the skeleton is either solely, or straightforwardly, a surrogate self-portrait, even if biography might support such a limited interpretation. The dynamics of Picabia's romantic entanglements are notoriously complex, but the coexistence of wife and mistress are a consistent feature. Gabrielle-Buffet (wife) and Germaine Everling (mistress) gave way to Germaine (common-law-wife) and Olga (mistress), which was in turn supplanted by Olga (wife) and Suzanne Romain (mistress), to say nothing of the extended cast of bit players in the unfolding erotic drama of his life.[481]

However much *The Spanish Revolution* might hint at a necrophiliac *ménage-à-trois*, the painting's three figures are equally configured as paired sets: the two skeletons, the two women, and the male cadaver and the *Espagnole.* Arm-in-arm and enveloped in the flag, the deceased toreador and the *Espagnole* form a couple, but the two skeletons are also implicitly paired. Could the painting be folded down the middle, then these two cadavers would even lie on top of each other. This imaginative operation, suggested by the painting's

[480] This title is possibly an attribution rather than Picabia's own. The figure does not look like Picabia, nor does it resemble his other self-portraits.

[481] Picabia had finally separated from Germaine in 1936, and was living exclusively with Olga at the time of *The Spanish Revolution*.

strong central line and structural symmetry, represents a continuation of the logic of *Spanish Night* and the Transparencies in which Picabia routinely superimposed the image of a toreador over an *Espagnole.*[482]

Curiously, the male skeleton is not only linked to both female protagonists, but he is also the only member of the ensemble to establish a relationship with the viewer. His eyes, curiously spared the process of decay the rest of his body has been subject to, return the viewer's gaze. Positioned at approximately arm's length from the observer, and looking directly at them, there is a mild sense that the skeleton mirrors the position of the artist, amplifying the already established connections between Picabia and the toreador. If it remains unlikely that Picabia intended for *The Spanish Revolution* to be read as a mirror that reveals the truth behind appearance, the painting certainly alludes to the classical tradition of the *memento mori*. Félicien Rops, *The Supreme Vice* makes a particularly suggestive comparison (fig 5.17). Vanitas themes are also implied by the male skeleton's bony embrace of the *Espagnole*. Invoking the tradition of death and the maiden, the subtexts of this couple are the fleetingness of appearance and the perils of seduction. Seen from this perspective, the female skeleton and the *Espagnole* are not rivals for the toreador's affections, but representations of the same figure in different states.

A straightforward opposition of death and maiden cannot account for the ambivalent dynamic of Eros and Thanatos in *The Spanish Revolution.* It will be recalled that as a daughter of Carmen, the *Espagnole* is invested with an undercurrent of dangerous eroticism. Moreover, as the standard-bearer, the flag's connotations of death and blood are hers by extension. Seductress rather than the seduced, the expanse of red cloth reinforces the *Espagnole's* connotation as a *femme fatale*. While the skeletons are merely dead, the living *Espagnole* might be Death incarnate. Visually at least, her central position and increased stature mean that she dominates the picture, a pictorial organisation that implies a hierarchy in which she leads the skeletons rather than the other

[482] This logic traced back further to *Spanish Night*, which again pairs male and female figures on either side of a strong, central dividing line.

way round. Moreover, within the tradition of the *danse macabre*, the reaper frequently assumes the appearance of his victims. Carrying a flag instead of a scythe, which still carries connotations of natural life-cycles, this provides a more topical signifier for impending death.

Ultimately, any reading of *The Spanish Revolution* remains equivocal. The painting's much-touted ambivalence is an intentional part of its signification, Picabia deliberately configuring *The Spanish Revolution* to avoid semantic closure. His apparent referencing of exhumation photographs, overwhelmingly connected with the 'Red Terror', should tip *The Spanish Revolution* decisively into the realm of anti-republican critique. However, his invocation of bullfighting, strongly associated with conservative politics in France, carries connotations of the Badajoz massacre, which pulls the painting towards an anti-nationalist position. The two references cancel each other out. The newspaper *La Révolution Espagnole* presented the Spanish dilemma as a simple choice: Fascism or Socialism (fig. 5.11). Picabia says no to both. At its best, the painting's ambiguity might offer an acknowledgement of the complexity of the political situation and a stark refusal of the false choice of such binary thinking. More likely it is simply the expression of confusion. The ambivalence of *The Spanish Revolution* largely mirrors that of France itself. When the Spanish Republic requested France send her arms, Blum initially agreed, then equivocated before finally capitulating to the doctrine of non-intervention.[483] *The Spanish Revolution* both reflects and constitutes a wider attitude of uncertainty about how to deal with the Spanish Question.

For some, ambivalence in matters of this severity will be tantamount to complicity. Reticence in painting and politics, however, are of different orders and magnitudes. Critics of Picabia's realist paintings have made much of his

[483] Sympathetic to the cause, Blum intially approved a twenty million francs order for planes and munitions. This decision divided his cabinet, who leaked it to an outraged right-wing press. Fearing the collapse of the government and potential civil war in France, Blum hesitated. Finally, under pressure from Great Britain, for whom Fascism in Spain was preferable to the risk of provoking a continental war, Blum reneged.

politics, and I do not dispute that he held some repugnant views. But his critics rarely get either his politics or his paintings quite right. Even when they come close, I am not convinced the former provides quite enough rope on which to hang the latter. Off-the-peg condemnations of Late Picabia as a formal and political reactionary are problematic.[484] The persistent problem with such denunciations is that aesthetics and politics remain at the level of generalisable abstractions. Accusations of fascism or kitsch are unrevealing and inadequate if not situated historically. Aesthetic form has no intrinsic political meaning outside of the wider social totality in which it is deployed. Fascism is subject to historical and national variations, inflexions and motivations. With a handful of exceptions, however, the formal particularities and structural mechanism of Picabia's realist paintings are ignored by his critics and the historical conjuncture they are part of rendered schematically, the rise of totalitarianism providing a vague background.[485]

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[484] The narrative arch associated with notions of 'late style' is itself is a problem but I have chosen not to address this issue here. As previously noted, Late Picabia is an expansive category, which includes distinct bodies of work in different styles. Consequently, Late Picabia cannot be conflated with late or final style, which for Picabia would be his abstract paintings of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

[485] Robert Pincus-Witten describes Picabia as the 'court painter to collaborationist stage stars in the French "Free Zone"' but makes no attempt to situate his beliefs on the spectrum of French fascism, which in the 1930s was split into two broad factions: an old guard who subscribed to a Maurrassian nationalism, Catholicism and monarchism centred around the journal *Combat* and the *Jeune Droite* (Young Right), associated with the publications *Je Suis Partout* and *Esprit*. Instead, Picabia's critics typically conflate fascism with Nazism. Exhibiting an Adornoesque belief in the direct continuity of the cultural industries and totalitarianism, Schudalt fancifully notes that in Picabia's painting 'the studio lighting on the film–set has turned into the spotlight in a Gestapo interrogation'. Meanwhile, Trevor Stark claims that 'one cannot avoid the fact that during the Nazi occupation of France Picabia busied himself rendering Aryan *Körperkultur* as a lurid pornotopia'. Given Picabia's longstanding links to the sunbathing culture of Cannes, this reference to German *Körperkultur* strikes me as somewhat incongruent. Likewise, Michèle C. Cone compares Picabia's female nudes to Leni Riefenstahl and Nazi propaganda despite reproducing his actual source: *Paris Sex Appeal*. Notably, under Vichy pornography was subject to increasing restriction. Concerned with declining birth-rates, Vichy introduced a series of pro-natalist measures designed to promote early marriage and childbirth. Picabia's images of non-reproductive, non-heteronormative relationships, such as

As Picabia's most overtly political painting, *The Spanish Revolution* provides a potent site to challenge the clichés and limitations of existing interpretations of his late career. Certainly, the painting does not contribute to an emancipatory politics, but it remains a strong testament of how vernacular imagery can be utilised in the service of formal and iconographic complexity. The painting also problematises the notion of two Picabias: the good, nihilistic Dadaist and the bad, hedonistic playboy responsible for the late nudes. The preoccupations of *The Spanish Revolution* – aesthetic dissent, black humour, meticulously rendered banalities, the critique of war and religion, and the resistance to the closure of meaning – are direct continuations of Picabia's Dada concerns. *The Spanish Revolution* is *The Spanish Night's* distant twin (fig. 1.2 and 5.0). Although they were painted seventeen years apart, they share the same DNA. Cold graphics may have given way to crass realism, but thematic and compositional symmetries remain. Structured around a central, vertical axis, both paintings have a Spanish male on the left and an *Espagnole* on the right. In each case, she is configured as an object of violent eroticism, the crotch level target in *The Spanish Night* substituted for a penetrated pelvis in *The Spanish Revolution*. In the following Conclusion, I will continue to develop this theme, showing how the *Espagnoles* are an integral part of Picabia's practice.

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the bizarre ménage-à-trois *Women and Bulldog* (1941-42), therefore arguably work against the very logic they are said to reproduce. The sexual politics of such paintings is highly questionable, but they are also incompatible with the cult of motherhood and family championed by Vichy's official cultural politics. At the very least, it suggests that more research into these paintings needs to be done. See Robert Pincus-Witten, "Preservation Society: Two Views on 'Chaos and Classism'", *Artforum* (January 2011): 182. Schudalt cited by Robert Ohrt in *Francis Picabia: The Late Works 1933-1953*, ed. Zdenek, 16; Trevor Stark, "Francis Picabia: Zürich and New York, Exhibtion Review", *The Burlington Magazine* 159, no. 1370 (May 2017); Michèle C. Cone, "Francis Picabia's 'War'" in *Our Heads are Round*, 224-230. For a detailed consideration of the cultural politics of the French Far Right during this period, see, Sandrine Sanos, *The Aesthetics of Hate: Far-Right Intellectuals, Antisemitism, and Gender in 1930s France* (California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

Conclusion

Spain, sex, religion, death: these themes come together in *The Woman on the Cross*, a small drawing that Picabia produced sometime in the mid-1920s (fig. 6.0). The drawing lacks subtlety. Its technique is crude, its imagery crass, but this throwaway sketch of a naked señorita nailed to a cross is arguably the most revealing *Espagnole* the artist ever produced. In its lack of moderation, *The Woman on the Cross* provides the most explicit confirmation that Picabia always associated Spain with Catholicism, sex and death.

The themes of *The Woman on the Cross* have been the recurrent motifs of this thesis. I will now summarise its arguments, bring out the links between the various chapters, and between the *Espagnoles* and the rest of Picabia's work. Then, having situated the *Espagnoles* within his oeuvre, I will briefly discuss how my arguments intersect with the most recent scholarship.

Thesis Summary

In Chapter 3, I argued that Picabia is not painting Spanish women at all, but the signifiers of Spanishness. Making no attempt to picture actual individuals, Picabia effectively highlights the extent to which Spanish identity is conferred upon the subject by a set of disposable signifiers. His serial production of near-identical *Espagnoles* in the early 1920s foregrounds the repetitive nature of the stereotype, underscoring this point.

Picabia, however, remains complicit with what he critiques. The *Espagnoles* are a form of second-order signification, parasitic on pre-existing signs. Based on Spanish postcards, many of which are identified here for the first time, the *Espagnoles* perpetuate the souvenirs' clichéd stereotypes even as they work to undo them. Aware of the limitations of his postcard sources but unable to surpass them, Picabia preserves something of their original signification, his romanticised representations of Spain reductively shaped by period attitudes.

Normative ideas about Spanish women prevalent within turn-of-the-century French culture inform the *Espagnoles'* construction. Emblematised by the figure of Carmen, the stereotypical señorita was configured as erotically available if potentially deadly. The widespread trope of the Spanish *femme fatal* is more than a socio-historical background or discursive context, though. It is something the paintings themselves produce and perpetuate.

My identification of this libidinal current within the *Espagnoles* finds common ground with George Baker's latest work on Picabia. In a recent article, Baker notes that far from abandoning figuration for abstraction, Picabia consistently abstracted the figure during his Cubist period.[486] *Dance at the Spring* (1912), for example, derives from the artist's memories of a young shepherdess dancing in Italy or Spain, while *The Procession of Seville* (1912) invokes Spain's most famous religious parade.[487] 'Mediterranean tropes', Baker, therefore, concludes, 'provide *access* to the body for the painter, underlining a place for the carnal within modernism'.[488]

Baker may have little time for the historicist approach shaping this thesis, but my discussion of Carmen provides the necessary contextual weight to his hypothesis, unpacking the discursive currents informing this erotic impulse. Independently of Baker's analysis, if more in line with his methodological preferences, my thesis also substantiates his idea formally. Drawing a line between *Young Girl*, a Hispanicised Cubist painting of 1912, *Young Girl,* a 1920 Dada work, and *The Gypsy*, a conventional figurative painting of c.1927, I traced a sublimated eroticism at play within the *Espagnoles'* formal evolution. In *The Woman on the Cross* this eroticism comes to the surface. This drawing provides the most explicit confirmation of Picabia's libidinal investment in the *Espagnole*.

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[486] George Baker, "The Body after Cubism", *October* 157 (Summer 2016): 34-62.

[487] For a summary of *Dance at the Spring's* conflicting origin stories, see Camfield et al., *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. I, 72.*

[488] Baker, "The Body after Cubism", 41.

Eroticism, though, is just one of the recurrent themes discernible behind the *Espagnoles'* evolving contexts and significations. Consequently, Picabia's oeuvre, and what I am arguing for is the central place of the *Espagnoles* within it, has been ill-served by formal-minded narratives of his career premised on a succession of stylistic breaks. This matter is compounded by a tendency to think about these formal shifts in terms of antithetical binaries: figuration and abstraction, avant-garde and kitsch, originality and repetition. Such conventional oppositions, which explicitly or implicitly structure much thinking about Picabia's work, have only served to obscure the significance and centrality of the *Espagnoles*. A narrative of pre-war radicalism and post-war reaction has also been unhelpful, ignoring as it does the simultaneous production of the *Espagnoles* with works like *The Virgin Saint*. The former are not simply mawkish kitsch to the latter's radical abstraction. Rather both works broach common themes – Nationalism, Catholicism, corporeality – through highly divergent formal languages. As Baker makes clear, abstraction for Picabia is always 'something that *happens* to the body'.[489]

Consequently, the story of Picabia's lapse back into figuration following a period of abstraction is misleading. Like the machine images before them, the *Espagnoles* are an assemblage of pre-existing signs. Rather than representing a retreat from Dada machine portraits, the *Espagnoles* actually carry the logic of the readymade over into painting. Anticipating the strategies of Pop, 'which does not oppose painting and photography, the manual and the mechanical, so much as it confounds them', Picabia collapses these categories in the production of handmade readymades and original copies.[490]

This tension between painting and mechanical reproduction is central to both Picabia's production and his hand-tinted postcard sources. Picabia's

[489] ibid., 41.

[490] Hal Foster, *The First Pop Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 7. The formulation 'handmade readymade' cited by Foster is taken from Brian O'Doherty, "Doubtful but Definitive Triumph of the Banal", *New York Times*, 27 October 1963.

mobilisation of postcard iconography in his serially produced *Espagnoles* of the 1920s creates a paradoxical effect. Repetition serves to undermine the *Espagnoles'* artistic value, at least as understood by the conventional criteria of originality and technical skill. However, repetition simultaneously works to recoup value, transforming the *Espagnole* into an icon. Picabia's compulsive production of *Espagnoles* borders on veneration. Like so many near-identical paintings of the Madonna, Picabia imbues the *Espagnoles* with a provisional sainthood.

Chapter 4 expanded upon the *Espagnoles'* previously under-considered religious dimension. Here, I found common ground with the work of David Hopkins and emerging Picabia scholar Hannah Wong, both of whom have attended to the Catholic dimension of Picabia's art, though not the *Espagnoles* themselves. Arguing against a spot-the-source iconography and a free-play of the signifier postmodernism, I demonstrated that the Spanish Transparencies constitute a specific body of work with a unique internal logic. Recurrent compositional strategies, iconographic references and metaphorical connotations indicate that the *Espagnole* underwent a shift in signification in the late 1920s, drifting from *femme fatale* to Holy Virgin. In reality, though, the Madonna and the Magdalen remain dialectically related. *The Woman on the Cross* condenses both poles of this antinomy into a single image.

Duchamp can help explain this strange intermingling of religion and eroticism. Eroticism, he once quipped, was the only -ism that mattered.[491] Its value, he contended, was to bring to light things kept repressed 'because of Catholic Religion, because of social rules'.[492] The Spanish Transparencies evidence a sustained dialogue with the Duchampian theme of the Bride and the Bachelors. By foregrounding the *Espagnoles'* religious connotations in conjunction with notions of transparency and an erotic of overlaying and penetrative light, Chapter 4 helped corroborate the frequently intuited but never systematically investigated claim that the *Espagnoles* function as an

[491] Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (London: Da Capo Press, 1979), 88.

[492] ibid., 88.

analogue to the Duchampian Bride. In particular, it corroborated Arnauld Pierre's recent speculative remark that Duchamp may have detected in the Transparencies 'a distant echo of his own Virgin Mary, hanging in the translucent plane of his *Large Glass*'.[493]

If Picabia's enduring dialogue with Duchamp is central to the *Espagnoles'* developing signification, the Hispanic inflexion remains uniquely his own. In the Introduction, I made the obvious point that Picabia's interest in Spain was a result of his parentage. The significance of Spain for his work, though, transcends biography. As outlined above, the Carmen fantasies are not specific to Picabia but symptomatic of a collective myth. Likewise, Picabia's identification with Spain is as much the result of a structural relation as a biographical one. Spanishness provided Picabia with a counterweight to the uncomfortable demands of an essentialist French Nationalism. In Chapter 2, I re-read *The Virgin Saint* in light of the cultural politics of the Return to Order, arguing that Joan of Arc should be considered a pertinent contender for the titular role.

A background of rising nationalism also formed the context for Chapter 5, on *The Spanish Revolution*, an undervalued painting which complicates our current understanding of artistic responses to the Spanish Civil War. In this painting, the *Espagnoles* take on a new political valence, yet one that I argued remained more rooted in the political situation in France than in Spain.

Like *The Woman on the Cross*, the postcard-derived *Spanish Revolution* is pointedly tasteless. In Chapter 3, I argued that Picabia turned to such postcard sources partly because this ephemeral, low-brow material was antithetical to the normative values of fine art and high culture. Feasibly, for Picabia, Spain amplified the postcard's transgression. Writing in *The Gay Science,* a book Picabia admired above all others, Nietzsche asserts

[493] Pierre, "Calder and Picabia", 12.

> There is vulgarity in everything that pleases southern Europe [...] but it does not offend me. […] Bad taste has rights like good taste, and even a prerogative over the latter when it is the great requisite, the sure satisfaction, and as it a universal language, an immediately intelligible mask and attitude; the excellent, select taste on the other hand always has something of seeking, tentative character, not fully certain that it understands – it is never, and never has been popular![494]

Throughout his writings, Nietzsche positively opposes southern Europe to the North. Pitching Bizet's Carmen against Wagner, whom he associates with *völkisch* one-body nationalism, the philosopher mobilises the French composer against the German. So too, in the early 1920s, Picabia wielded Spain against the French Return to Order and a disintegrating Paris Dada.

Mocking the political allegiances of his former Dada colleagues, Picabia produced a drawing that seems intended to function as a pendant to *The Woman on the Cross*. Known as *Surrealism Crucified,* this drawing depicts Breton and Aragon standing piously beside a crucified figure (fig. 6.1). The word 'surrealism' is inscribed over the martyred man's face and 'communism' over his inadequate loincloth. At the top of the cross, the traditional inscription INRI – Jesus, King of the Jews – has been replaced by the numbers *391,* a reference to Picabia's journal.

Where *The Woman on the Cross* intractably plaits together Spain, eroticism and Catholicism, *Surrealism Crucified* inseparably entwines politics, religion, and art. Throughout his career, Picabia conflated art and religion. 'Art=God=bullshit + mercantilism' runs one of his more memorable formulations.[495] This Nietzschean assault on values, however, inevitably tended to wheel back round to the sexual. 'Virginity has no taste', Picabia jibes,

[494] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2008), §77.

[495] Picabia, "Manifesto Pierced from Behind" in *Beautiful Monster*, 255.

'that's why you all have it!'[496] Elsewhere, in an 'interview' he conducts with himself, Picabia compares the fabrication of artistic geniuses with the sellers of plaster virgins before asking himself: 'You don't believe in the Holy Virgin?'/ 'I believe in her only on the day I lost my virginity!'/ 'You do not believe in Art?'/ 'For me art is dead like religion…' [497]

A perennial theme of Picabia's writing, the equation of art and religion reoccurs in a statement published in *Littérature* in 1920. 'We do not believe in *God* any more than we believe in *Art'*, Picabia writes, 'we find no nourishment in the worship of souvenirs'.[498] Written shortly before the debut exhibition of *Espagnoles*, this statement circles us back to the equation of art and the souvenir.

The *Espagnoles* are tied into, and to some extent, tie together, this constellation of themes. Something of a floating signifier, they are subject to changing inflexions, gaining different weights and acquiring new valencies throughout Picabia's career. But it is this flexibility that makes them a nodal point in his practice. Able to mediate, or at least accommodate themselves with, other impulses and themes, the *Espagnoles* intersect and interact with Picabia's core concerns.

Recognising such continuities should not mean blinding ourselves to the contradictions. It would be inimical to the spirit of Picabia's provocative eclecticism to impose a spurious coherence on his oeuvre. Conversely, any account of Picabia that contents itself with carving his career up into stylistic chunks or 'progressive' and 'reactionary' strands will also be unconvincing. It is precisely the strange cohabitation of these impulses that must be accounted for. The longevity of *Espagnoles* and their simultaneous production with works

[496] Picabia, "Tombs and Brothels" in *Beautiful Monster*, 178.

[497] *Paris-Journal*, 23 May 1924, 4 cited by Camfield, *Picabia: His Art, Life and Times*, 203, n.24.

[498] Picabia 'L'art' in *Littérature*, vol. 2, no. 13 (February 1920) reproduced in Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, 167.

like *The Virgin Saint* puts paid to such simplified fiction and the reductive narrative of reactionary decline.

Situating the *Espagnoles*

How then do the *Espagnoles* fit? Locating the *Espagnoles* with regards to other aspects of Picabia's career is a timely problem. As noted in the Introduction, both the recent MoMA retrospective and the ongoing catalogue raisonné – an enterprise that by its very nature implies a claim to comprehensive totality – have struggled to know quite how to situate the *Espagnoles*.[499] More recently the path-breaking exhibition *Picasso-Picabia* (2018-19) included several *Espagnoles* in a space dedicated to the theme of '*Hispanicités'.* While this inclusion is indicative of a growing interest in the *Espagnoles,* the exhibition's curatorial remit, which naturally favoured a compare-and-contrast approach, allowed it to sidestep the question of how the *Espagnoles* relate to other aspects of Picabia work. Nonetheless, I was asked to provide a catalogue essay for this exhibition, which drew heavily on the analysis given here.[500] The recently published third volume of the Picabia catalogue raisonné also reports on my research, reproducing the source for *The Spanish Revolution*.[501] The interest shown in my research by the individuals involved in these exhibitions and publications is symptomatic of the growing attentiveness to the *Espagnoles* and, hopefully, of the extent to which the current inquiry answers some of the questions they raise.

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[499] As noted in the Introduction, the problems the catalogue raisonné faces stem in part from uncertainties in dating. Resolving the conundrum of 1902/1920 *Espagnoles* is important, but, as my discussion of the *Young Girl* pair hopefully makes clear, straight chronology may not be the best way to grasp how the *Espagnoles* are imbricated with Picabia's other works.

[500] Simon Marginson, "Francis Picabia est un Espagnol!" in Musée Gernet, *Picasso-Picabia: La peinture au défi,* ed. Aurélie Verdier (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2018), Exhibition catalogue, 47-53.

[501] The catalogue also notes my sources for *Subtlety* and generously mentions my 'major unpublished study' of *The Spanish Revolution*. See William Camfield, Candace Clements and Arnauld Pierre, *Francis Picabia: Catalogue Raisonné Volume III, 1927-1939*, (New Haven: Mercatorfonds, 2019), 104,183 and 360.

On the specific question of how the *Espagnoles* relate to the rest of Picabia's practice, Wilson's advocacy of a dialectical Picabia strikes me as correct.[502] Albeit on the proviso that 'dialectic' identifies the ceaseless intercession of antagonistic parts rather than their resolution into a seamless totality. Put another way, the *Espagnoles* function like Derrida's *supplément.*[503] The *supplément*, Derrida tells us, 'is neither a more nor a less, neither outside nor the complement of an inside, neither an accident nor an essence'.[504] Disrupting all binaries, the *supplément* helps constitute that to which it is deemed to be an addition.[505] Neither periphery nor core, it is at once an unnecessary surplus and the supplier of what is missing elsewhere.

Likewise, the *Espagnoles* are paradoxically both tangential to Picabia's core practice and integral to it, a necessary component to that which they are deemed to have contaminated. The *Young Girl* pair makes this clear. The minor Spanish work empirically comes first, but its logic only emerges retroactively when read back through the Dada work it in turn anticipates. The same goes for *Flamenca* the machine and *Flamenca* the woman; the two bodies of work reciprocally illuminate one another while maintaining their independent identities. Like *The Spanish Night* and *The Spanish Revolution*, these stylistically antithetical pairs are thematically and formally linked. It is only the most superficial formalism that continues to oppose Picabia the acceptable avant-gardist to Picabia the painter of detestable kitsch.[506]

Picabia, himself, had no time for such distinctions. He refused to distinguish between Dada and the *Espagnoles*. 'They told me that I was a painter', he wrote in 1927, 'I know nothing of it; as a child I made use of colours, these

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[502] Wilson, "The Late Picabia", 29.

[503] Derrida outlines the logic of supplementarity in *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 141-157.

[504] Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 59.

[505] This is at least true in the negative sense that the *Espagnoles* exclusion has been necessary to the construction of avant-garde Picabia.

[506] In certain quarters this evaluation is inverted, with the apologists of Bad Painting holding Picabia's late works in higher esteem than his long-domesticated Dada output.

colours formed a picture, then another one, and still others, but it has always been the same one. […] It's *Udine*, it's *Dada*, it's *Oliviers*, it's *Spanish Women'.*[507]

There is, Picabia tells us, a concealed parity lurking within his work. This thesis concurs. Behind the stylistic eclecticism, subterranean threads bind the *Espagnoles* to Picabia's other concerns. Consequently, these paintings cannot be ignored. The *Espagnoles* are not a superficial side-line but an integral part of Picabia's practice and they deserve to be recognised as such. For ultimately, it is not Dada that 'looks Spanish' but the *Espagnoles* that look like Dada.[508]

[507] Picabia, "Cold Light", *Le Journal des hivernants* (January 1927), 20-21 reproduced in Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 324-25.

[508] Picabia, *Beautiful Monster*, 214.

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