

# 1. Seeing through Cinema

## Projection in the Age of Cubism

In 1903, the French magazine *L'Universel*, an illustrated weekly of often humorously reported cultural *actualités*, published an article about the “*repas à surprises*” or “meal of surprises.”<sup>1</sup> It included a drawing of two diners depicted from behind. From their formal attire to the elegant glassware set before them, details in the small image in *L'Universel* cast these subjects as thoroughly bourgeois. Although we can't see their faces, they appear to be frozen, gripped in fascination for an image cast on the far side of the room by a projector placed within the scene. Served with “the help of electricity by an American millionaire” in early-twentieth-century Paris, moving-image projection was the surprising accompaniment of a dining practice that, the author suggests, dates back to ancient Rome. What our diners saw, however, was neither as fragrant nor as beautiful as the perfumed roses that fell from a half-parted ceiling to delight Heliogabalus's guests: “As the meal went on and the courses were served, a cinematograph of very large dimensions placed against the wall, allowed [the diners] to see the origin, provenance, and the preparation of the dishes. Thus, when the fish was served, the cinematograph represented the catching of this fish during a storm, then its sale at Les Halles market, then its cutting up by the chef, and then its cooking. The lamb dish permitted the showing of the slaughterhouses and the butchers, and what follows.”<sup>2</sup>

As the critic indicated, the host stepped beyond the bounds of French cultural propriety by showering his guests with images of the unseen, or the processes that lay invisibly behind the culinary delights that had been set before them. The sight of these images alone may have been enough to disturb our dignified spectators, who likely tended “to vegetate as far as possible from the slaughterhouse, to exile themselves, out of propriety, to a flabby world in which nothing fearful remains [ . . . ],” as Georges Bataille

wrote.<sup>3</sup> But the event of projection also created a symbolic, interspatial relay between the moving image and lived social space. It thereby challenged the diners' expectations regarding the traditionally safe parameters of detached spectatorship and the cultural practice of consuming images, remaking a scene of Roman-inspired decadence into a decidedly more modern, subversive encounter.

Considering its humorous tone and its references to the host, who was reportedly known in *Tout-Paris*, the article was likely an embellished account of an early encounter with the cinematograph's new technological display.<sup>4</sup> But it approximates what could have taken place between 1898 and 1903 in early Parisian cinema exhibition venues, including café-concerts (*café-conc'*, *café-chantant*) and music halls that began to program early films as an added attraction at this time. Even in so-called "film only" theaters before 1914, the moving image was one of many things to be consumed as part of the entertainment experience in prewar Paris. Parisians could have attended an "*apéritifs-cinéma*," which were reportedly on the rise in 1913 alongside other outdoor screenings that were similarly free of charge.<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, around 1910, spectators paid a 75-centime entry fee for a short film program and a free drink in the Cinéma-Brasserie de la Charmille, located near rue de Douai, where Max Jacob, André Salmon, and Picasso attended an outdoor cinema.<sup>6</sup> Even if Parisians, quite possibly Picasso and his gang, sought distraction at La Charmille for its promise of an outdoor cinema in the brasserie's garden—"covered in case of rain"—the chance remains that any one diner may have been enjoying (or had already enjoyed) a meal of fish when the short instructional film *La Pêche au Chalut* ("Fish Trawling") began one evening's cinematographic séance.<sup>7</sup>

Historiographic felicitousness aside, this imagined scene situates Picasso within the Parisian urban context at a time when "cinema was not simply in its earliest infancy: it was wailing," as Salmon put it.<sup>8</sup> It additionally recalls early mixed-use exhibition venues that have remained mostly invisible to the historian's gaze: the cinema-café, cinema-bar, cinema-restaurant, and cinema-brasserie.<sup>9</sup> In these everyday spaces, the spatiotemporal compendium of moving images could be discovered in step with the daily environment where crowds also smoked, dined, drank, and discussed current events. Whether projection was configured literally in these spaces, as in the meal of surprises or the Restaurant Bonvalet (figure 2), or set up as an adjacent, commercial extension of the establishment, "the cinematic" signaled not just the terms of filmic representation, but also those of the culture around it.



FIGURE 2. Postcard, Restaurant Bonvalet, 1910. Collection BNF, Arts du Spectacle. Image courtesy of Jean-Jacques Meusy.

Art historians such as Bernice Rose have come to consider how the early cinematic image provided a “whole new illusionist representation of figure to ground, a whole new temporal and spatial simulation of reality,” while at the same time “its dancing light suggested unlimited space and spilled over onto the audience, subverting the viewer into its space of experience.”<sup>10</sup> Insofar as films provided Picasso and his friends with “a popular, even *louche* world, an outlaw medium, comic violence, anti-naturalism, irony and biting humor,” aspects Natasha Staller argues reflect the aesthetics of Cubist paintings, their projected display also transformed the place and activity of spectatorship with the spatial terms of its address.<sup>11</sup> As Rose suggested, Picasso’s early cinema experiences were important for making *Les Femmes d’Alger* (figure 3), not simply because of the ubiquity of films before 1907. Far more than any film in isolation, it was rather how the cinema operated as a modern exhibition scenario—a “space of experience”—that reveled in the image’s and the spectator’s mutual conspicuousness and reflexive relativity, and in turn underscored the technological and cultural basis of modern knowledge and aesthetic experience.

In the introduction to this book, I categorized this mode of exhibitionist address and reception as cinematic horizontality, an inherent principle of the cinema of attractions that unseated the primacy of vision and nature for the reflexive epistemological registers of technology and culture. As a modern, interspatial system of relations between the image, the early viewing



FIGURE 3. Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)*, 1907. © 2014 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

scenario, and the spectator; cinematic horizontality works against the spectatorial detachment of classically organized representational experience, foregrounding instead the cultural and technological mediation of exhibition itself. In this chapter, I focus on the historical, formal, and phenomenological problems of cinematic horizontality that accompanied the introduction of projection into daily environments such as the brasserie, and in film-only theaters. The spatial and symbolic quotient of early cinematic horizontality not only describes the dynamics of modern spectatorial experience that Picasso depicted early on in *Couple at a Music Hall* (1902). It more precisely contains some of the formal and phenomenological aspects of exhibition that in a work such as *Les Femmes d'Alger* transform the repre-

sentational problems of modern painting into a reflexive study of mediation and beholding. Picasso repetitively elaborated on these themes and problems in works including *Nature Morte à la chaise cannée* (1912, Paris), *Bouteille de Pernod et verre* (1912, Paris and Céret), and in the grand installation that was destroyed upon completion, *Assemblage with Guitar Player* (1912–1913, Paris). In these as in other paintings, the artist not only returns to the figure of the table and the still-life motifs upon it. He also repetitively privileges it as a scene where a self-conscious confrontation between viewer and viewed could be reflexively waged, as well as depicted as a claim of painting and modern aesthetic experience in the age of cinema.

For example, we might compare the spectatorial scenario from the meal of surprises with a drawing made by Picasso in 1908 (figure 4), four years after he had made the French capital his home, and not long after finishing *Les Demoiselles*. Here, a group of spectators is similarly depicted from behind. This time, the spectators are sailors who gaze at cabaret performers, or, as in *Les Demoiselles*, at prostitutes in a brothel—a place that, William Rubin points out, was known in period vernacular as a “slaughterhouse.”<sup>12</sup> Following Leo Steinberg’s reading of a similar drawing called *Sailors on the Town* (1908), this scene signals a repetitive return to a formal problem and also its solution that Picasso posed most openly in *Les Demoiselles*: it “‘explains’ the kind of interspatial connection posed in [*Demoiselles*]” that transformed the painting’s viewer into a constituent factor of the painting and its effect.<sup>13</sup> Picasso’s foregrounded placement of a fruit-laden table in the *Demoiselles* is the pivotal move under scrutiny for how it worked as a strategic linking device between “discontinuous [spatial] systems,” whereby “space on this side of the picture couples with the depicted scene.”<sup>14</sup>

We can visualize how the foregrounding was developed if we take Steinberg’s suggestion to “imagin[e] a movie camera zooming in” over the shoulders of the sailor-spectators from the 1908 drawing.<sup>15</sup> Steinberg did not mean to imply that Picasso actually adopted a cinematographic technique. Rather, the cinematographic analogy makes Picasso’s “staging” of the *Demoiselles* apparent as a tactical and even aggressive operation. By moving the visual frame forward in a virtual tracking shot past the absorbed sailors, the artist removed the classical devices of pictorial mediation and, in turn, collapsed the distinction between representation and lived, spectatorial space. No longer conceived as a beholder of spectators viewing prostitutes, the beholder was instead implicated as the spectator in the “slaughterhouse” herself—a reframing that boldly stripped the viewer of her “educated detachment.”<sup>16</sup> By obliterating all classical mediating devices that would have maintained the painted scene at an allegorical remove,





FIGURE 4. Pablo Picasso, *Sailors on a Spree*, 1908 (black china ink, charcoal, pencil, and oil paint on paper; 64.2 × 49.0 cm). Musée Picasso, Paris (MP532). Photo by Thierry Le Mage. © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, New York. © 2014 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Picasso endowed the spectatorial gaze with a potent and erotic charge that constitutes the painting's power. To paraphrase Lisa Florman's acute reading of Steinberg, the great achievement of *Les Demoiselles* is in offering an experience whereby the meaning of the painting is its effect.<sup>17</sup> This effect was centered not within the painting but within the viewer.

As with Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), the perversion of the boundary between beholder and image has made *Les Demoiselles* a charged object in the history of modernist painting. Picasso's manner of exhibiting prostitutes in *Les Demoiselles* has long been the locus of a critical debate on the highly gendered (and racial) terms of modernist form, pictorial address, and the looking relations they structure. Anna Chave points out that for many scholars, such as Steinberg, the *Desmoiselles* nudes have the power of a fetishistic phallus in how they either stand up like a pillar or "arriv[e] like a projectile" out of the painting to meet the spectatorial gaze as a powerful threat.<sup>18</sup> Herein lies the painting's paradoxical power, insofar as the painting's self-consciously exhibitionist construction and protrusion can be read, according to Chave, "as the fiercest of warnings *not* to penetrate, but to stay at a safe, respectful remove." The warning of this picture is thus a revelation for the male viewers whom the painting purports to address so directly: "it seems to afford of a time and circumstance when the continued primacy, or even viability of their habitual modes of perceiving and knowing appears not merely doubtful, but also distinctly unwelcome."<sup>19</sup>

In this respect, Picasso's achievement lies in a deeply critical revision of, in Edward Fry's words, "classical, mediated representation" and the "relation between thought and experience" that "are so fundamental a part of Western representation that they are often accepted, at least unconsciously, as natural rather than cultural phenomena."<sup>20</sup> Even as Picasso deployed the conventions of perspectivalism, often by developing a "passage" between a figure and the background, he affirmed their inherent status as mediation, while also denying their mythically natural sovereignty over the epistemology of painting. Fry casts Picasso's simultaneous affirmation and denial of illusionist tradition as an encounter with Kantian reflexivity, which is defined as the "self-demonstration of any complex, unified system or entity, generated by a perturbation or change in any aspect of that system; and this change may be one of intensification, substitution, subtraction, or displacement."<sup>21</sup> By setting a critical dialectic between past and present regimes of representation into motion, Cubist reflexivity not only distinguishes the "difference between knowledge and conventions," but also points to the limits of stylistic academicization that confine any knowledge gained directly from experience to the regime of what is visually representable.<sup>22</sup>



FIGURE 5. Film still from the Lumière brothers' *Repas de bébé*, 1896.

I claim that the event of projection and the horizontal aesthetics of film exhibition supplied a sufficient perturbation or change to the classical systems of representation and beholding. As a significant form of new knowledge derived from experience of the modern world—knowledge that may not have always been representable—early cinematic scenarios share in, as well as engage with, the reflexive logic subtending Picasso's formal inquiry in *Les Femmes d'Alger*, and Cubism more broadly. While it could be said that the perceptual environment of early cinema venues in fact precedes the invention of Cubism by a short decade, the more important point lies in understanding how early cinema and *Les Femmes d'Alger* shared a system of relations that transformed a scenario of beholding into a confrontational, interspatial scene of mutual and self-conscious exhibition.

It is important to emphasize that the film image only plays one part in how early cinema achieves this effect. For example, *Les Femmes d'Alger* might be compared to the single-shot composition of the Lumière brothers' 1896 film *Repas de bébé* (figure 5). Attention should be placed on how the table in the film also operates as a device that bridges the spatial discontinuities between the lived and representational scenes. It is as if the Lumières also moved their camera over the shoulder of a figure sitting on the near side of the table (an impossible feat to achieve at that time), both to frame their subjects more closely and to fold the film spectator into the scene. The vis-



ual similarity of the table-devices is certainly important, and it goes without saying that cinematographic framing such as this worked to couple the disparate spatial scenarios of viewing and representation. But whereas Picasso's move is a pictorial device of supreme invention in part for its "intensity of address" that shocks for its "brutal immediacy," as Steinberg put it, early film (or photographic) framing is not the cinema's most inventive feature, but rather its most natural, alongside that of movement.<sup>23</sup> We find the cinema's more pronounced engagement with the spectatorial space and Kantian reflexivity that interested Picasso by looking not solely at the image, but rather at its emplacement within the spatial ensemble of exhibition and projection. Projected exhibition, after all, was the Lumière brothers' supreme invention that transformed moving, photographic images into the collective experience of cinema that was historically shocking for its "brutal immediacy" and the "intensity of address."

My study is built initially from the biographical details of Picasso's experience in early-twentieth-century Paris. As we know, Picasso was subject to the explosive growth of the cinema that enveloped the city's urban geography in the span of a few years. Before 1907, the cinema was often a spontaneous interjection into everyday spaces. According to pioneer film historian G.-Michel Coissac, the cinema of those days "strolled along with an [itinerant] exhibitor of popular spectacles, making its home for a few days or a season in a café, a courtyard, an empty shed. . . . One was always entering into any ordinary and even poorly run place [with] makeshift seats."<sup>24</sup> Between 1905 and 1910, the number of venues where films comprised more than half of the entertainment program grew exponentially, from eight to ninety-five, and then to 186 by 1914.<sup>25</sup> A reporter for the Catholic newspaper *Le Correspondant* offered a vibrant view of both the sensorial reality behind these numbers and the medium's heterogeneous dispersal on the cultural horizon in 1913:

In several years, its development has been prodigious; six years ago there were only two cinemas in Paris, and today there are 160. Day and night, the screenings follow fast on one another, and the cinemas are anything but empty. In every quarter of the big cities, we see a 'cinema-theater,' a 'cinema-concert,' or a 'cinema-brasserie' [ . . . ] This development, which is so extraordinary in its rapidity and extent, this profusion or 'invasion' of the cinema is a phenomenon which deserves the attention of the casual observer who loves to contemplate things [ . . . ] Unfortunately, many deconsecrated chapels are becoming cinema halls; and that is symbolic, if one realizes that, for an important segment of the working class, the cinema is already a 'religion of the people' or, rather, 'the irreligion of the future'!<sup>26</sup>

With these details, we can imagine how, for Picasso, the cinema located on the rue de Douai, mentioned so often by Salmon and others, was on equal symbolic footing with a brothel, a “slaughterhouse.” Before 1912, the only cinema on this street was, in fact, harbored in a convent chapel formerly occupied by the Dames Zélatrices de la Saint-Eucharistie, whom locals had named the “loose women of heaven” (*les cocottes du paradis*). According to Jean-Jacques Meusy, by the time it had become l’Artistic Cinéma-Théâtre in 1907, the exterior had been painted a vibrantly “infernal” crimson; on the inside, Picasso would have found posters depicting bull fights and scantily clad women.<sup>27</sup> In 1909, films depicting assassins, decapitations, bull fights, and the pre-execution rituals of condemned prisoners were shown to children in what might be described as an inverted mass where the sacred was transubstantiated into the profanity of popular culture, and where the boundary between spectator and spectacle was symbolically redrawn around the perversions of an exhibitionist display.<sup>28</sup> This also took place at the meal of surprises when, rather than edifying the beholders’ natural orientation to the world by way of vision, the projection scenario self-consciously exhibited their consumption of both images and the privileged cultural scene to which they belonged. As in *Les Demoiselles*, the effect on our purportedly heterosexual, bourgeois diners was one of fear or alarm that followed from the film image’s penetrating demand upon the viewer.

Throughout this chapter, I compare some of Picasso’s most canonical works of modern painting to early scenes of cinematic exhibition and projection in order to assess their similarly confrontational—revelatory and reflexive—aesthetics of exhibition and address. These scenes not only transformed the activity of the beholder before the image, but also posited an interspatial and fundamentally active relationship between the discontinuous systems of representation and spectatorial space. As a cinema historian, my approach to Picasso’s works differs from traditional modes of art-historical inquiry. On the one hand, I understand his paintings as fundamentally interested in the changing landscape and phenomenology of modern life, and hence as formally invested in the reflexive terms of exhibition and beholding generated in the age of cinema. Consequently, and on the other hand, I look at Picasso’s works not simply as pictures, but as formally rendered display techniques, or *dispositifs*, for addressing the spectator with images. In cinema studies, the dispositif (or apparatus) emphasizes the arrangement of spectator, machinery, and representation, including the “promotion-spectacle” of manufactured objects in order to foreground the “concepts that are linked to them—for example, the notions of the breaking

down of movement, temporal immediacy or deferred broadcasting."<sup>29</sup> Frank Kessler has made the point that Gunning's cinema of attractional display is, in fact, a claim for the historicity of the projective dispositif, and that it can be used as "a heuristic tool for the study of how the function and the functioning of media undergo historical changes."<sup>30</sup> The dispositif concept has also been used to explore how and why the place of the spectator became such a highly contested twentieth-century site. As also an epistemic schema, the dispositif concept allows us to examine how projection remapped the spectator-spectacle relation, and "assign[ed] a new position to those who view."<sup>31</sup>

I depict the pictorial devices in *Les Demoiselles*—those that couple spectatorial and representational space, and that construct its female figures as "projectiles" rising out of the picture—as conversant with the early cinematic dispositif, especially the nonclassic arrangement of *projection par transparence*. As I explained in the introduction, the spatial and material features of transparent projection introduced a horizontal axis to the field of display. While cinematic horizontality redrew spectator-spectacle relation in symbolic terms, transparent projection also literally revised this relation by placing the screen between the projector and at least one half of the audience. As opposed to the dominant projection paradigm that necessitated an opaque screen to reflect the image back to the audience like a "mirror" (incidentally a late-nineteenth-century English term for the screen),<sup>32</sup> transparent projection allowed light to be refracted within the screen such that the image passed "transparently" to the beholder. While the choice of projection method was largely dependent on the venue's architectural layout, in the transparent configuration the theater was literally defined as an interspatial horizon where audiences were variously positioned on one or both sides of a screen that divided the space in two. Aside from light, movement, and photographic realism, transparent projection posits horizontality, interspatiality, and transparency as some of the earliest terms with which the cinema, from its outset, claimed a self-demonstration of its formal, material, and sensory principles, and hence declared its modernist reflexivity as a mediating ensemble.

To understand what was so radical or surprising about early cinematic horizontality—the "force constantly active with the vertical field" of screened representation, to adopt Krauss's words—we must imagine the shock that our diners from 1903 felt when their viewing position was implicated within the composite field of the image's display.<sup>33</sup> We also have to imagine Picasso not simply attending the cinema on the rue Douai, but positioned within a complicated experiential and also symbolic domain

where an unsightly image did not simply appear, but instead emerged from behind and through a transparent screen that transformed a formerly sacred space into a modern interspatial horizon of technological display. These neglected cinema contexts and minor techniques allow another consideration of the early cinema's position within a lineage of modernism whose own formal aspirations upended the stable axes of space and representation with which the beholder traditionally maintained her distance and made meaning. Far more than simply a new spectacle within the field of cultural modernity, the horizontal aesthetics of early cinema challenged the hierarchies of cultural, representational, and epistemological order; it revised classic conceptions of space, surface, and representational illusionism tied to the natural appearance of things. Above all, its most profound achievement was in offering an experience whose meaning was its effect on the viewer. These were arguably some of the problems to which Picasso returned repeatedly, obsessively, just as he returned to the problems of the modern dispositif of Cubist painting.

#### THE TRANSPARENT HORIZON

Geometric signs—a geometry at once infinitesimal and cinematic—appeared as the principal element for a style of painting whose development nothing could stop from then on.

ANDRÉ SALMON

When Picasso first set foot in Paris in October, 1900, the Exposition Universelle was in its last months of operation.<sup>34</sup> He and his friend Carles Casagemas had been designated as Exposition correspondents for the Barcelona publication *Catalunya artística*, but they had also gone to witness the exhibition of Picasso's painting (*Last Moments*, lost) in the Spanish section of the Beaux Arts pavilion located in the Grand Palais.<sup>35</sup> Although neither apparently published their reports, the friends undoubtedly took in the attractions, quite possibly seeing performances by Loïe Fuller and Sada Yakko at the Théâtre Loïe Fuller.<sup>36</sup> They also would have witnessed a range of moving-image displays that that provided Picasso with not one formation for projective beholding, but many.

The Exposition was a highly condensed urban arena for reencountering perhaps familiar fin-de-siècle approaches to spectacular technological display. In 1899 in Madrid, for example, the Prado celebrated the opening of the Sala de Velázquez with an outdoor slide show of the artist's masterpieces, which were projected in an enormous scale on the museum's façade before approximately 10,000 spectators.<sup>37</sup> However, only relatively few

projective and moving-image dispositifs operated within the classic paradigm of reflective projection—the triangular formation between projector, screen or surface, and audience. Despite the scientific classification of moving-picture technology in the Palaces of Electricity and Optics, or in the Photography section of the Gallery of Machines, the “cinematic” in fact resisted containment, or any unitary designation at the Exposition.<sup>38</sup> It was instead interwoven into myriad attractions and their varied technological arrangements: from moving panoramas such as the Mareorama and the Stéréorama to the “talking” or sound cinema attractions of the Théâtroscope and the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre; from the Palace of the Tour du Monde to Raoul Grimoin-Sanson’s short-lived Cinéorama—where paying spectators took a simulated balloon-ride to Barcelona for *la corrida* or to Nice for *car-naval*.<sup>39</sup> As Emanuelle Toulet suggests, cinema at the Exposition was simultaneously visible and marginal among other spectacular technologies, “form[ing] part of a tradition of technical reproduction and of spectacles of illusion of which it seemed to be the industrial forerunner rather than the perfected replacement.”<sup>40</sup>

The appeal of both the cinema and these cinema-related attractions was simultaneously in generating real sensorial experience by way of illusion, and in displaying how they achieved illusions by way of projection, movement, and opaque, transparent, and moving surfaces. For example, the Exposition 1900’s moving Stéréorama or “Poème de la mer” (Poem of the Sea) was said to produce seasickness in some visitors. Symbolist poet Jean Lorrain extolled the three-dimensional spatial amalgam as one of the most beautiful things at the Exposition, describing it as a “haunted corner, visited by artists and painters, in a vision of art and reality that has never before been given [ . . . ], all the flight and sensation of departure, of the free life of crossings in melancholia and the gaiety of skies changing hour by hour on the wide and rowdy caress of the sea.” As one spectator beside Lorrain fell ill with nausea, a painter by the name of M. Gadan apparently expressed utter aesthetic satisfaction, exclaiming, “Amazing! There is no more painting: all these paintings can bugger off (*f\*\*\* le camp*) next to this!”<sup>41</sup> Antoine Gadan (1854–1934), a landscape painter who exhibited a work at the Exposition, patented the Stéréorama design with artist and inventor Auguste Fracovich, who also owned two amusement-device patents in the United States. Although Erkki Huhtamo points out that the Stéréorama’s final incarnation in the Algerian section fell short of the inventors’ original vision, it nevertheless won the Exposition jury’s Grand Prix.<sup>42</sup>

The Lumière brothers’ Cinématographe Géant, discussed in the introduction, attracted its audience instead with the spectacular scale of its



transparent-projection display system. In a voluminous circular amphitheater (6,300 square meters) in the Gallery of Machines' Salle de Fêtes, an enormous screen of about 400 square meters spanned the longitudinal axis of the hall.<sup>43</sup> Designed by M. Lachambre, balloon fabricator, the transparent screen was submerged in a bath of glycerin-infused water during the day. Thought to enhance the image's quality by absorbing the warm rays of electric projection, the solution arguably added a quotient of refraction that facilitated the light rays' passage through the screen.<sup>44</sup> In the evening, the screen was hoisted up from its specially built tank by a winch installed in a skylight. Once unfurled, the Cinématographe Géant became a complicated exhibition scenario in which spectators met the image on both sides of the screen, or more precisely, around the screen—facing each other and, for some, the projector, whose powerful lamp may have been perceived through the humid transparency of the screen's canvas material.<sup>45</sup>

The Cinématographe Géant, alongside the Exposition's range of contradictory sensations and technological displays, orients my discussion toward the sensory environment of film exhibition and transparent projection that Picasso reencountered once he settled permanently in Paris in 1904. In the years following the Exposition, the transparent dispositif was at times the preferred projection method. It was used in venues across Paris, such as the Plaisance Cinema, which opened in the Montparnasse neighborhood in 1907 before an audience of at least nine hundred spectators who occupied only one side of the screen.<sup>46</sup> The trade press did report a decline in the use of transparent projection after 1912, except "when the room is very long and narrow, for illuminated advertisements . . . in all cases where the front of the screen facing spectators is inaccessible or too far from the place of the projector."<sup>47</sup> However, later industrial and architectural sources in fact promoted it. For one author, transparent projection had its advantages in consuming less electricity, and in eliminating the projector's beam from the smoke-filled exhibition space. Cigarette smoke was thought not only to augment the appearance of the beam, but also to dissipate the projector's rays, leading to a less brilliant image.<sup>48</sup>

While there is evidence to suggest that the transparent method was used at the Cirque d'Hiver where Picasso often accompanied Fernande Olivier, the great, working-class department store Les Grands Magasins Dufayel used the transparent projection display in its in-store theater likely before 1905 until the beginning of the war.<sup>49</sup> Located near Montmartre in the thoroughly working-class Goutte d'Or neighborhood, which Brian Wemp points out remained unchanged by Haussmannian renovation, the Dufayel was unique for its use of the cinema and, for a time, free screenings to

attract shoppers. Wemp argues that the Dufayel, in turn, developed a “local prominence that the bourgeois stores [such as Le Bon Marché] never had,” operating as a significant public space in a neighborhood with few parks or other collective spaces beyond the street.<sup>50</sup>

Showing at least twenty-one regular cinema séances per week by 1903, with an average of 150 spectators per screening, as Meusy has shown, not only defined the Dufayel as one of the earliest stable cinemagoing venues in the city before 1905.<sup>51</sup> It also articulated the transparent projection method as one of the cinema’s natural display formats, so much so that its address went largely unnoticed as being significant, or significantly different from that of reflective projection. Soupault, among others, recalled seeing his first film projection in the store around 1907; however, the filmmaker Claude Autant-Lara remembered a screening there around 1912–1913, and the spatial features of transparent projection in detail: “I see it still, this great theater—SEPARATED—in two by the screen . . . they projected ‘in transparence’ for both sides of the theater on a translucent screen . . . everything surrounded by large green plants.”<sup>52</sup> Considering its proximity to his Montmartre studios, Picasso undoubtedly strolled the Dufayel on numerous occasions. Picasso and Braque, in fact, used the code words “Dufayel” and “Louvre” to talk about painting, and the formal and aesthetic values of vulgarity versus those of “art”: “One has to know how to be vulgar,” Picasso once said.<sup>53</sup>

The history of transparent projection sets the stage for a new look at familiar art-historical narratives that have served to explain Picasso’s development of the device of Cubist transparency, which Roland Penrose called the “desire to see behind the visible surface of objects.”<sup>54</sup> D.H. Kahnweiler, Picasso’s first important dealer, discussed transparency in relation to Picasso’s Cubist volumes in his post–World War II writings “Negro Art and Cubism” (1948) and *The Sculptures of Picasso* (1949). As a concept, however, transparency was neither simple nor precise. In his seminal essay “Kahnweiler’s Lesson,” Yve-Alain Bois suggests that at first glance, “transparency” might be incorrectly understood to mean “immediate communicability; an idealistic dream of an art without codes, without semantic opacity.”<sup>55</sup> On the contrary, it refers to the procedural solutions to illusionism that, as Kahnweiler suggested, Picasso and Georges Braque took from the discovery of Grebo art in the Musée d’Ethnologie du Trocadero around 1907. “Negro sculpture,” Kahnweiler writes, “permitted these painters to see clearly into the problems which had been confused by the evolution of European art, and to find a solution which, by avoiding every art of illusion, resulted in the liberty to which they aspired.”<sup>56</sup> By offering a system

for the creation of volumes in relief that “compelled the spectator to imagine the face whose ‘real’ shape these masks did not imitate,” sculptures from the Ivory Coast, for example, “allowed painting to create invented signs, freed sculpture from the mass, and led it to transparency.”<sup>57</sup> Applying this discovery to the projectile-like address of *Les Demoiselles*; to nonillusionistic volumes in analytic Cubist paintings; and, after 1912, to reliefs, papiers collés, and open constructions, Picasso and Braque “burst open ‘opaque’—so to speak—volumes.”<sup>58</sup>

Between the Cubist concept of transparency and the transparent cinematic dispositif, we find more than the same language for non-opacity. There is instead a shared system of relations for perceiving representation not simply as an image to be seen, but as a mediated address that, in a reversal of traditional perspectival conventions, emerged out toward the beholder and the real spectatorial space. I want to look closer at how transparency works as both a psychical address and as a spectatorial dispositif across such varied media as African masks, pre-cinematic and early-cinema displays, and several of Picasso’s works, including *Les Desmoiselles*, *Bouteille de Pernod et verre* (figure 6), and *Assemblage*. Although these examples represent different moments in the history of Cubism and its afterlife as Picasso moved to papiers collés and open constructions, in each circumstance, transparency works as a formal display technology. As with the Grebo masks and projective dispositifs, it redefines the classic, illusionistic terms of representation whereby the spectator’s share in the representational encounter is rediscovered according to the horizontal axis of real space and experience.<sup>59</sup>

Right before Picasso moved from Montmartre to the Montparnasse neighborhood across the Seine, he spent the summer of 1912 in Céret, where he began the synthetic Cubist painting *Bouteille de Pernod et verre*. In this coastal town near Perpignan, the cinema was likely still the affair of itinerant exhibitors who set up their attraction in cafés and public squares. Because itinerant exhibitors had to adapt to different spatial and material circumstances on a daily basis, the transparent dispositif was especially useful in its ability to accommodate different locales.<sup>60</sup> In fact, permanent film theaters took longer to be established in rural France than in Paris, as was the case in the town of Sorgues, located up the coast and north of Marseille in the department of the Vaucluse. Braque found himself there a few months later, when the town celebrated the opening of its first permanent cinema on November 1, 1913. Equipped with a lone piano, the Tivoli-Cinéma held between 520 and 700 spectators.<sup>60</sup> Braque’s papier collé works *Checkerboard: Tivoli Cinéma* and *Guitar and Program: “Statue d’épouvante”* were made quite literally out of this context, for among their compositional materials we find a film program



FIGURE 6. Pablo Picasso, *Bouteille de Pernod et verre*, 1912 (Paris and Céret)© 2014 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

from the Tivoli-Cinema's opening weeks, which lists films that survive in archives today, including *Cowboy Millionaire* (1913, Selig Polyscope Company, Library of Congress) and *Statue d'Epouvante* (1913, Eclipse, Bois d'Arcy). In papier collé, the circulations of signs form and reform in reference to the layers of the commodity culture from which they were built. As Krauss has demonstrated with regard to Picasso, this aspect informs papier collé's effect at the level of counter-discourse, such that the materials never function simply at the level of content. As fragments of text join together with hand-drawn marks, and as layers of paper are built up against the ground, the papiers-collés become a "constellation of the signified" that is also an "atmosphere of voices" lifted from headlines, gossip, *faits divers*, and, in Braque's case here, the cinema.<sup>61</sup> Adopting Krauss's words, Braque's works, in turn, evoke "the cinematic" as a "whirl of signifiers reforming in relation to each other and reorganizing their meanings seemingly out of nothing, in an almost magical disjunction from reality, this manipulation at the level of structure."<sup>62</sup> These papiers collés thus speak not to the experience of any one film, but to the perceptual effect that was structured by their projected exhibition.

*Bouteille de Pernod et verre* also convenes its dialogue with early cinema exhibition on the level of its structure, or its internal dispositif. In a letter to Kahnweiler, Picasso described the painting as "a still life Pernod on a round wooden table a glass with strainer and sugar and bottle written Pernod Fils with in the background posters mazagran café armagnac [sic]."<sup>63</sup> Interpretation may begin with this remark, but rather than appearing statically anchored in the "poster's" surface or ground, the angle of the stencil-like letters and their contrasting shades make them appear to hover above it. They performatively rise up off the "poster's" background and expand forward toward the still-life scenario, toward the beholder, while also indicating the spatial expanse both before and behind the letters themselves. In *The Rise of Cubism*, Kahnweiler described such an effect as perspectival reversal. While most of the articles comprising this collection of essays date from around 1915, some of which were published in *Die Weissen Blätter* and *Das Kunstblatt* between 1916 and 1918, Marilyn McCully indicates that this particular text, "On Cubism," dates from 1910.<sup>64</sup>

[I]nstead of beginning from a supposed foreground and going on from there to give an illusion of depth by means of perspective, the painter begins from a definite and clearly defined background. Starting from this background the painter now *works toward the front* by a sort of scheme of forms in which each object's position is clearly indicated, both in relation to the definite background and to other objects. Such an arrangement thus gives a clear and plastic view.<sup>65</sup>



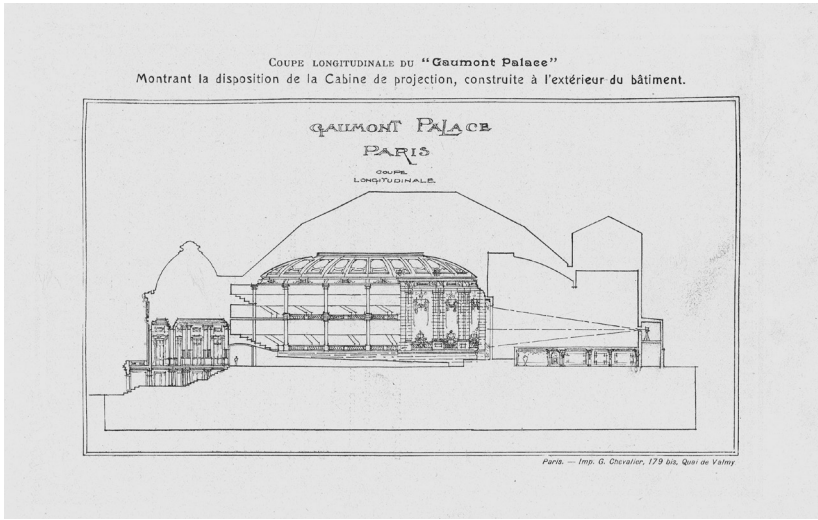


FIGURE 7. Architectural plan for the Gaumont-Palace (projection by transparency; no date). Collection of La Cinémathèque Française.

In opposition to traditional perspectival construction, Kahnweiler evokes a horizontal dispositif that spatially structures an "imaginative confrontation"<sup>66</sup> between the beholder and a far-flung vector that moves toward her, such as we find in the Grebo masks: rather than presenting the world as a mimetic reflection, they present a volumetric display of forms extending "transparently" in space toward the viewer, who thereby synthesizes their spatial absences into the "real 'shape' of the face" that "forms itself in front of the mask, at the end of the cylinder eyes," as Kahnweiler later wrote.<sup>67</sup>

A similar confrontation structures the transparent cinematic projection system, as we see in the sectional diagram of the Gaumont-Palace cinema (figure 7). In this particular configuration, the projection cabinet was placed on the outside of the theater, within a spatial volume behind the screen. The projector's beam first passed through this space, whereupon it was mediated by the screen itself, whose (im)materiality gave way to the image. As opposed to the vertical orientation of the triangular axis of reflection, which would have also been defined by the visibility of the beam within the theater, here projection unfolds laterally into the exhibition space. Running perpendicularly through the verticality of the screen, the horizontally dispersed axis of projection structures a confrontation between the spectator's gaze, the image, and the projector's beam. The emphasis ultimately falls on the beholder's position in relation to the image and within the dispositif

governing the whole, including spectatorial space. Beyond visual analogy, what is at stake here and in *Bouteille de Pernod et verre* is how we understand transparency as a system for constructing or displaying the image as an arranged confrontation with the real space of the beholder.

The Gaumont-Palace was in fact the most significant and longest-running implementation of transparent projection in Parisian history. Originally called the “Nouvel Hippodrome,” it was inaugurated during the early months of Exposition 1900 and first accommodated large-scale spectacles such as Bostock’s circus and *Vercingétorix*, which Jean Renoir saw during his childhood.<sup>68</sup> The monumental building stood on Place Clichy, near Picasso’s various dwellings in Montmartre, including the Hôtel du Nouvel Hippodrome (rue Caulaincourt) where Picasso and Casagemas stayed in 1900, and which some believed to be a *maison de passe*.<sup>70</sup> It also became the devastating backdrop of Casagemas’s suicide—on the terrace of the Café de l’Hippodrome in February 1901.<sup>69</sup>

When the Hippodrome became a venue for the cinema, it first accommodated the reflective projection method in 1907, when the short-lived *Compagnie des Cinéma-Halls* transformed it into “le Cinéma Géant.”<sup>70</sup> In 1909, according to Meusy, it passed into the hands of the Paris-Hippodrome-Skating-Rink Company, which promptly rented out the basement to the Royal Bio Hippodrome Cinematographic Theater, which charged thirty cents for entry. When receipts from the roller-skating venture flagged, the company hired Gaumont to project films in semidarkness upon a screen hung from a balcony.<sup>71</sup> The transparent dispositif was put in place when La Société Gaumont took over the property’s full lease and management in 1911, and it remained until the theater underwent a massive renovation to accommodate sound film technology in 1931.<sup>72</sup> The building was destroyed in 1972.

Renaming the Hippodrome the Gaumont-Palace, “The World’s Largest Cinema,” Gaumont effectively transformed it into the most advertised and most visible cinema in all of France, if not Europe (a subject I return to in depth in chapter 4). The screen was relatively large in dimension (approximately 7 × 9 m) and was framed by a vast Greco-Roman proscenium arch. It was also installed on a set of rails that permitted it to be moved around the space to accommodate variety and live spectacle. Later referred to as the “cathedral of the cinema,” Gaumont used the Palace’s boastful moniker to evoke the Cinématographe Géant and the Exposition Universelle more generally.<sup>73</sup> In one program from 1912, we can hear the discursive echo of the 1900 fair, and its draw of both electricity and architectural spectacle as the context for the moving image: “The grand spectacle room where 6000 spectators can be at ease, in constant communication with numerous foyers,

buffets, attraction halls, is completely surrounded by a vast circular promenade. . . . The lighting includes 10,000 incandescent lamps, and 50 arc lamps. The total luminescence is equal to 450,000 candles."<sup>74</sup>

As this description suggests, Gaumont initially conceived of the film experience in the Palace in explicit relation to the culture and space surrounding the film image and the event of projection. Such a conceptualization and promotion of film exhibition as a multifaceted attraction would change dramatically and rather quickly during the war as long feature films began to dominate film production, which I discuss at length in chapter 4. But the fact nevertheless remains that in 1911, Picasso could have taken a spot at variously sized tables found in the theater's ground-level buffet section reserved for eating and drinking during the film program. We can imagine Picasso there with Jacob and Salmon, perhaps sharing a bottle of Pernod while they commented on the amusing diversity of people who also sought inexpensive distraction while they took an aperitif. As in *Bouteille de Pernod et verre*, the Gaumont-Palace's transparent screen would have looked like an animated poster positioned beyond the table where they sat, out of which words and images emerged toward them in an address that originated from behind the screen's surface. Using this historical context to further reread *Bouteille de Pernod et verre* as a modern scene of exhibition, I would place emphasis on the heavily pigmented letters "CI" that dominate as a focal point in the "poster." While a potential linguistic reference to the "CInématographE" (the "E" on the painting's right edge should be noted), it more importantly works in tension with the bottle's "Pernod Fils" label, creating the painting's dominant visual axis. This axis not only structures the spatial relationship between the poster and the bottle, which appears to be "illuminated" from behind. It also liberates the foregrounded table space as an independent but related spatial zone where both real and depicted consumption seemingly take place in shared space and time.

In 1913, W. Stephen Bush wrote in the American trade journal *The Moving Picture World* that he had never seen anything "to surpass the projection in the Gaumont-Palace. Even the most critical eye could not help being delighted by this picture—steady, always steady, without even the faintest trace of a tremble or a flicker."<sup>75</sup> While such praise begs the question whether a spectator could in fact perceive any difference in the transparently projected image, its visual success was largely contingent on the spectator's position in the exhibition space, and hence in relation to the projector's own position behind the screen. Conceived in this period as an illuminant rather than as a simple surface, the transparent screen often encountered problems closely associated with its function as light source: a

"light stain" could appear on the screen when parts of it became overly saturated with light, an annoyance that was remedied by either rehumidifying the screen or repositioning the projector within the dispositif.<sup>76</sup> Meusy has noted that a former Gaumont employee by the name of M. Périn remarked upon the light stain effect while seeing films at the Dufayel, which stood out prominently amid the gray tones of the film image.<sup>77</sup> From certain angles, the spectator could even be confronted directly with the projector's light beam, temporarily damaging her vision. This was one risk of the transparent method, especially if a piece of frosted glass was employed as a screen—a more costly, but nonetheless suggested, material for early transparent projection.<sup>80</sup>

Risks aside, the more important point about transparent projection lies elsewhere, in the simultaneously literal and psychical address of its image and dispositif. As with *Bouteille de Pernod et verre*, the transparently projected image originates from the farthest plane—the background, or more precisely in the domain "behind" the image or screen—and proceeds forward, toward the perceptual and physical space of the beholder. Hence, the formal and also conceptual achievement of the transparent display is how the screen acted neither as a barrier between life and its representation, nor as a mirror reflecting nature or the world back to a passive spectatorial gaze. Rather, it functioned as an interspace between two clearly defined spatial zones behind and in front of the screen, and as a visual field where an interspatial status was conferred on representation itself. Throughout the French film trade press, early instructional manuals, books, and other industrial sources, the screen is discursively conceived as an illuminated interspace whenever transparent projection is concerned. In these sources, the function and type of screen furthermore remain central to discussion around both projection methods until well after World War I.

We might say that transparency's manner of display emphasized the conceptual conjuncture between what Bois elsewhere defines as the "visible (vertical) and the bodily (horizontal)"—or the "impossible caesura" that Picasso "covered over" in *Still Life with Chair-Caning* by tilting the table's horizontal plane ninety degrees, a feature echoed in the table in *Bouteille de Pernod et verre*.<sup>81</sup> Against the traditional conventions of perspective, whereby the vertical and horizontal axes appeared natural to the beholder—as, in Erwin Panofsky's words, "unambiguous and consistent spatial structure of infinite extension"—Picasso derived representation from the horizontal axis of both writing and the bodily domain.<sup>78</sup> This distinction becomes the political center of Bataille's theory of modern painting, including Cubism, as a rage against the "concealed architectural skeleton" of per-

spectival academicism, a point I evoke in chapter 4.<sup>79</sup> And whereas Walter Benjamin similarly considered the longitudinal space of painting and graphic horizontality to be a “a profound problem of art and its mythic roots,” Miriam Hansen has elaborated how he was equally attentive to the intervention of film and print advertising into modernist poetry to “forc[e] script from its quiet refuge, the book, into the ‘dictatorial perpendicular’ of the street and the movie screen. . . .”<sup>80</sup> Benjamin does not merely ask us to consider new technologies’ mimetic effect on the bodily sensorium and the classic arts. He urges a historical poetics of inscription that recognizes technology’s extension of sensation and representation according to its own structure as apparatus or dispositif.<sup>81</sup>

Transparent or horizontal projection’s implication of the bodily, graphical, and cultural domain remains an important point for the rest of this chapter. In the next section, however, I emphasize the spatial domain it created behind the screen, from which representation emerged within the interspace of the screen. This scenario of a concealed, spectatorial confrontation with a known, yet unseen, vector lying beyond the visible domain of representation was unique to the French, as opposed to the American cinemagoing experience before World War I.<sup>82</sup> While I will insist on the importance of this spatialized domain behind the image, it is equally important to recognize the extent to which it was known. Early film spectators, as we know, were ever conscious that representation did not spring magically from this unseen space or void. Like their predecessors who witnessed the Phantasmagoria’s ghostly illusions, early-twentieth-century spectators were knowing participants in the cinema’s astonishing aesthetic that drew on the tension between technology and sensation, belief and disbelief, as the crux of its effect. This dynamic led Picasso to formulate Cubist space and volumes as also an astonishing confrontation between the picture and the real space of the spectator. Picasso famously described the result of this process, which he achieved in *Les Femmes d’Alger*, as nothing less than an “exorcism.”<sup>83</sup>

#### APPARITIONS OF THE APPARATUS

Like angels who have bestial eyes  
 I’ll come again to your alcove  
 And guide in silence to your side  
 In shadows of the night, my love;  
 And I will give to my dark mate  
 Cold kisses, frigid as the moon,  
 And I’ll caress you like a snake



That slides and writhes around a tomb  
[...]

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, "The Ghost"

In 1912, Picasso definitively left Montmartre for the Montparnasse neighborhood across the Seine, where he settled for a time at 242 Boulevard Raspail (1912–1913).<sup>84</sup> If the full rationale behind his move remains as vague as it was complicated, one reason for his departure may have been Montmartre's increasing tourism and *embourgeoisement*, its transformation into an "artificial paradise" of illusionism, as Apollinaire once put it.<sup>85</sup> H.L. Mencken vividly described the change in 1914:

[G]one forever is the cabaret of Bruant, him of the line of François Villon—now become a place for the vulgar oglings of Cook's tourists taxicabbing along the Boulevard Rochechouart. Gone the wild loves, the bravuras, the *camaraderie* of warm night skies in the old Boulevard de Clichy, supplanted now with a strident concatenation of Coney Island sideshows: the "Cabaret de l'Enfer," with its ballyhoo made up as Satan, the "Cabaret du Ciel," with its "grotto" smelling of Sherwin-Williams' light blue paint, the "Cabaret du Néant" with its Atlantic City plate glass trick of metamorphosing the visiting doodle into a skeleton. . . .<sup>90</sup>

Although the Cabaret "sideshows" noted above existed before Montmartre's gradual gentrification by 1912 (Casagemas referred to them in a letter to Ramon Reventós in 1900), Picasso found a lively, tourist-free entertainment culture in Montparnasse.<sup>91</sup> Only a short distance from his studio across the Montparnasse cemetery, la rue de la Gaîté offered a dense cluster of mixed entertainment venues that drew a large part of their clientele from the working-class inhabitants employed at sugar, tanning, chocolate, and automobile factories nearby. Once he had settled in the Left Bank, Picasso's preferred spectacle may have been boxing as John Richardson suggests, but Fernande Olivier remembered frequenting the Gaîté-Montparnasse café-concert on that very street.<sup>86</sup> She recounted how Picasso played jokes on a local actor named either Olin or Bobino, a memory that likely refers to the Bobino Music Hall, located only several doors down, where for 60 centimes, workingmen dressed in overalls sat alongside the women "*ouvrières du quartier*."<sup>87</sup> Both the Bobino and the Gaîté-Montparnasse had been clients of the itinerant film exhibitor Georges Froissart, who installed his "American Vitograph" at the Cirque Médrano in 1903.<sup>88</sup>

Farther along rue de la Gaîté, Picasso would have found La Grande Brasserie de la Gaîté-Cinéma, which opened its doors in 1907, and that was known simply as Gaîté Cinéma by 1914. By walking just a bit beyond this

animated microcosm of *le quartier*, Picasso could have encountered other cinema-brasseries, including the Cinéma-Brasserie at place Vaugirard, and the Café-Restaurant-Cinématographe Palais-Montparnasse on Avenue du Maine.<sup>89</sup> Just south of the Gaîté enclave on rue Pernety sat the Plaisance Cinema (mentioned above). Located in a boarding school formerly occupied by the Catholic congregation of the Frères maristes, its transparent dispositif remained in place until 1955.<sup>90</sup> In general, these were not necessarily small spaces. Although most paled in comparison to the Gaumont-Palace, la Grande-Brasserie de la Gaîté could seat up to 1,000 diner-spectators, and the Bobino 1,200. Mencken went on to portray the entertainment zone around Picasso's new home as a wildly untamed landscape of unrefined cultural pleasure where audiences were seen and also heard:

Look with me into the Rue de la Gaîté, into the Gaîté-Montparnasse, still comparatively liberated from the intrusion of foreign devils, and say to me if there is not something of old Paris here. Not the Superba, Fantasma Paris of Anglo-Saxon Fictioneers, not the Broadwayed, Strandified, dandified Paris of the Folies-Bergère and the Alcazar, but the Paris still primitive in innocent and unbribed pleasure. And into the Bobino, its sister music hall of the common people. . . . I have heard many an audience applaud . . . but I have never heard applause like the applause of the audience in these drabber halls.<sup>91</sup>

Surrounded by this context, Picasso built and photographed the elaborate *mise-en-scène* *Assemblage with Guitar Player* (figure 8) in his Raspail studio in the late autumn and early winter of 1912–1913. He took not one but two photographs of this “open construction.” Placed side by side, Anne Baldassari suggests that they operate stereographically to convey the full volume of the built environment.<sup>92</sup> By masking the negative in two subsequent prints, Picasso used the printing process to transfer the realist vocation of photography, and the unity of the photographs’ representational space, to the new realm of pictorial order he had been developing throughout 1912, alongside Braque, in *papier collé*.

For Baldassari, the photographic medium is primarily at work in *Assemblage* insofar as it “orchestrates a complex confrontation between the real world, the imaginary space of the drawing on the canvas, manufactured objects (guitar, pedestal table, bottle, etc.), a three-dimensional construction (the violin), a figurative newspaper cutout (the arm), and stylized representation (the bottle of anisette).”<sup>93</sup> The technological work of photography was no doubt part of Picasso’s construction of the “imaginary” space within both his studio and in the photographic image. It also signals his pervasive interest in the iterative reproducibility of his works across media, whether by



FIGURE 8. Pablo Picasso, *Assemblage with Guitar Player*, spring–summer, 1913 (gelatin silver print photograph; assemblage [nonextant] mounted in Picasso's studio, Blvd. Raspail). © 2014 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

way of photography or through printmaking, such as we find in *Cliché Kahnweiler* (1914).<sup>100</sup> More important, however, is the spatial domain of (and around) what Baldassari calls the “canvas” that acts as the pivotal center of *Assemblage*, in front of which a table holds a casual still-life composition. Of primary concern is how space in this photograph is quite literally built forward from the canvas, first in the guitar player’s paper arm that reaches out from the pictorial surface to the real guitar that, suspended by ropes, extends into the space of the table positioned before it. Before this forward-moving vector reaches the utmost limits of the photograph’s frame, the space first extends from the table into the real-life *mise-en-scène* of Picasso’s studio. This domain of the lived world is literally signified by the graphic inscription “SO” found on the poster hanging in the upper left part of the image (and on the “real” wall of the studio), and by the table itself whose foregrounded placement functions as part of the composed scene and as part of Picasso’s lived environment. Notably, a large swath of paper appears to have slipped under its pedestal. Seemingly abandoned, or cast off, the paper looks like an accidental gesture that nonetheless links the table to the environment created by the giant canvas behind it.

This forward-moving vector that extends toward the viewer, structuring interdependent spatial and symbolic layers along the way, is animated in large part by the way Picasso positions the canvas within the frame of the image. As the eye travels from under the table, up and around the left side of the photograph, along the wall and over the posters pinned to it, the gaze halts at a taut, vertical line of rope extending upward beyond the edge of the photograph’s frame. At first glance, the rope appears to suspend the canvas itself, connecting as it does to a limp fold of material that defines the canvas’s upper left corner. Upon closer inspection, we find that the rope travels behind the edge of the canvas, and back down to the guitar’s head stock, helping to suspend it in air. Another string appears to be connected to the guitar’s body (where a paper arm is also placed) and extends diagonally across the canvas. This elaborate suspension technique designates the top edge of the canvas and also signals the wall and space behind it. In this way, Picasso does not define the canvas’s surface as the limit of the visible. Instead, he makes the canvas into one object among many, and one spatial and symbolic plane among many: it exists within a real environment, and it also divides it in two. The overtly implied but also concealed spatial vector behind the canvas is what simultaneously anchors and animates the forward-moving vector structuring the set of signs and transparent planes and volumes that terminate with the spectator: from the unseen space behind the canvas to the canvas’s surface and the drawings on it; to the paper arm



FIGURE 9. "La Fantasmagorie de l'Odéon," ou la Résurrection inopinée du fâcheux Jésuite (no date). "The dead, after 100 years, do they emerge from the tomb?" ("Les morts, après cent ans, sortent-ils du tombeau?"). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

attached to but extending from the canvas's flat surface, to the guitar to the table to the studio to the photograph and, finally, to the spectator.

I want to compare the canvas here to a transparent screen, and, further, to examine the scene itself as a dispositif that could have been found on la rue de la Gaité, where moving images continued to accompany live spectacle, and where bottles of Pernod were consumed before a screen of moving, projected images. Picasso's manner of revealing, while also concealing, the space behind the canvas is under scrutiny here, but so too is the way he structures the guitar player as an opaque volume burst open by the means of transparency. Part two-dimensional drawing, part three-dimensional volume, this figure is harbored in a dimensional interspace recalling the representational interspace of the transparent film image or screen. Even more, it evokes the multidimensional spectral illusions generated by the phantasmagoria that gained in popularity in the late eighteenth century (figure 9). Beyond visual similitude, my comparison once again pivots on the components of an apparatus that structure a forward-moving representational vector as also a declarative address to the beholder that challenges the boundary between spectator and spectacle.



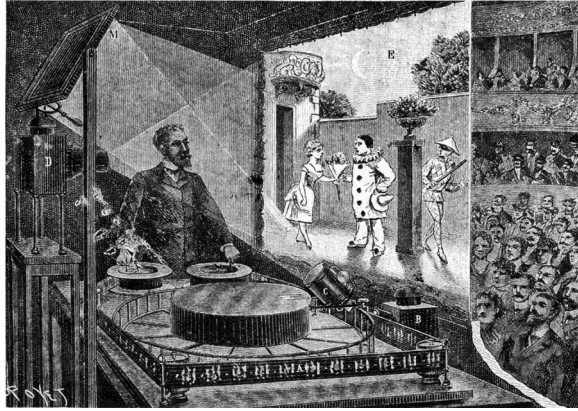


FIGURE 10. Charles-Émile Reynaud's Optical Theater. *La Nature*, July 23, 1892. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

For Gunning, the concealment of the phantasmagoria's mechanisms played an essential part in its philosophical function regarding "the nature of perception, the material bases of art works, the role of illusion, the stimulation of the senses, the convergence of realism and fantasy."<sup>101</sup> The phantasmagoria's transparent screen, for example, in some cases remained shrouded under black curtains to become utterly imperceptible within the darkened space, while the slide projector was always situated behind the screen. He makes the case that as an apparatus of total illusion aimed at overwhelming the senses, the phantasmagoria also openly pitted scientific Enlightenment against the more ancient impulses of superstition, becoming a model of willful self-delusion that Marx drew on with his use of the term.<sup>94</sup> As purveyors of both science and astonishment, French and English phantasmagoria practitioners form a coherent line in Gunning's argument with the fin-de-siècle avant-gardes, especially Rimbaud and the Symbolists, who offered "a direct and overwhelming address to the senses on the one hand, and the critique of illusion on the other."<sup>95</sup> Transparent projection continued throughout the nineteenth century in magic-lantern displays and in the optical theater of Emile Reynaud's *Pantomimes Lumineuses* (figure 10), about which one journalist wrote: "The spectator witnesses a truly mimed action, all the more curious and stimulating in that he knows it is only an optical illusion."<sup>96</sup>

In the case of magic-lantern practices, transparent projection remained a useful configuration for especially large exhibition spaces, but it was also

the necessary choice for achieving certain visual effects in the viewer.<sup>97</sup> According to late-nineteenth-century magic-lantern practitioner Henri Fourtier, the axis that ran from the projector through the screen to the audience was fundamental in achieving *tableaux fondant*, or “dissolving tableaux” that have their origins in the phantasmagoria.<sup>98</sup> Francis William Blagdon described this quality as follows: “The illusion which leads us to imagine that an object which increases in all its parts, is advancing towards us, is the basis of the *Phantasmagoria*.”<sup>99</sup> Key to the effect here was not solely in the invisibility of the projectionist, or the human being “behind” the projection. Rather, the confrontation between light source and spectator facilitated the screen’s transformation such that it could be perceived as a mediating, interspatial axis to the beyond—beyond the real or beyond the represented.<sup>100</sup> While the known quantity of the projector worked to define the horizontal axis through the exhibition space, its concealment worked to differentiate it from the image’s autonomy within the vertical plane of the visible.

Pointing out that Grebo art proffered Picasso’s understanding of semi-ological arbitrariness and the nonsubstantial character of the sign, Bois also makes a crucial inquiry into the term “transparency” by tracking its rhetorical origins in Carl Einstein’s *Negerplastik* (1915), which Kahnweiler would have read. While Bois’s revisionist goal is to posit that the formal logic of papier collé, synthetic cubism, and twentieth-century sculpture and abstraction rests inherently in a “collusion between the Grebo mask and the [1912] *Guitare*,” his point is built in part from Einstein’s and Kahnweiler’s critique of Adolf von Hildebrand’s 1893 *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*. Inasmuch as both identified the weakness of Western sculpture from its basis in frontality and pictorialism, Bois explains that “[w]hat Hildebrand’s theory enabled them to see was that frontality and pictorialism were aberrations resulting from *fear* of space, fear of seeing the sculptural *object* lose itself in the world of objects, fear of seeing the limits of art blur as real space invaded the imaginary space of art.”<sup>101</sup> *Assemblage* was built on the premise of such “blurring,” and so too was *Les Demoiselles*.

As Bois underscores, Hildebrand finds the threat of real space in all situations where there is, in Hildebrand’s words, “no definite line drawn between the monument and the public,” or where figures or other pictorial elements conspire a “direct transition to the observer and reality.”<sup>102</sup> Exemplified in everything from eighteenth-century tombs to nineteenth-century wax figures, the apogee of all such forms exhibiting the terrifying incursion of real space into the space of art was, for Hildebrand, the pano-

rama: "The panorama, which is made up of both mere painting of flat surfaces and real objects distributed over the foreground, attempts to convey the observer into reality. This effect it produces partly by means of the varying distances of these real objects, thus requiring him to use varying accommodations of the eye as he does when really viewing Nature. But the observer is deceived concerning the real distances which make necessary the varying accommodations."<sup>103</sup>

Hildebrand's condemnation of the panorama pivots around two primary issues related to formal and artistic value. The first, suggested above, is that an artwork cannot be achieved by deception. The innocence of old-fashioned panoramas, whose continuously presented picture did not mean to deceive but to amuse its primarily juvenile public, stands in contrast to the more nefarious type, such as the Stéréorama (discussed earlier in this chapter). Hildebrand singles out the latter's perversity for encouraging a "false feeling of reality," an effect incompatible with the Romantic achievement of art that "rises above the dissociated spatial effects of Nature [ . . . ] and is enabled to infuse into his image the force which makes it valuable in comparison with Nature."<sup>104</sup> English Romantic painter John Constable shared a similar, if less condemning, point of view. Upon attending a private showing of Daguerre's 1822 diorama, whose transparent method of colored projection centralized spectators within a revolving room, he wrote that "it's a transparence, the spectator is in a darkened room—it's very pleasant and produces a great illusion—it is not the domain of Art because its object is deception (*tromperie*)."<sup>105</sup>

The second issue arises from how the panorama's dispositif builds its deception by thwarting the frontal and pictorial conventions of art, which is doubly condemnable for the physical effects it has on the spectatorial body. Hildebrand continued:

Through an artificial perspective these distances are given a false spatial value which is greatly exaggerated toward the background. The brutality of such means lies in the fact that a sensitive observer discovers the lack of harmony between his muscular sensations of accommodation and convergence and his spatial judgments which are based on the purely visual part of his perception [ . . . ] This contradiction brings forth an unpleasant feeling, a sort of dizziness, instead of the satisfaction which attends a unitary spatial impression.<sup>106</sup>

Physical effects (such as seasickness) aside, Hildebrand's objection stems from the panorama's procedural reversal of the spatial laws governing Renaissance perspective, which classically proceeded "from the *vertical front plane* into the background"; eventually, "the background is pushed

away" and "a general depth movement aroused."<sup>107</sup> Subjugating the vertical plane of natural vision to the horizontal "projection" of the background toward the viewer, the attraction not only dispensed with classical frontality and pictorialism. It also obliterated the epistemic value of representation as an extension of "the mental process of 'seeing,'" whereby the image is conceived as a "pure visual projection" of the beholder's autonomous perspective on the world. Rejecting the idea that the artist's "task is to do the work in accordance with the laws governing these relations,"<sup>108</sup> Picasso subsumed the transparent dispositif's aberrant spatial complex into the formal laws governing *Assemblage*, *Bouteille de Pernod et verre*, and *Les Demoiselles*: "This mixing of real space and the space of art," Bois writes, "similar to what Hildebrand abhorred in the panorama . . . is at the heart of cubism, of the *objecthood* that it wishes to confer on the work of art. . . ." <sup>109</sup> Furthermore, reading Picasso's use of real space as also a mark, transformed into a sign, Bois cogently locates the positive, formal values of transparency that, in cubism's semiotic logic, demonstrates how "reality" works as a formal structure beyond the referential gesture of "real objects" such as we find in *Assemblage*.<sup>110</sup>

Thanks to Bois's important work on Hildebrand, we can return to the shared system of relations between Grebo masks, panoramas, transparent projection, and Cubist form with additional clarity. However, long before Kahnweiler conceptualized Picasso's formal operations as transparency, he situated the cinema within its lineage. In the last chapter of *The Rise of Cubism*, he discussed cinematographic movement as the perception of a nonsubstantial sign. He also referred to a transparent process of display to transfer cinematic movement to painting, which he discussed with Picasso around 1912, as Lawder first suggested.<sup>111</sup>

Regarding the representation of movement in painting, "there exist two possibilities," Kahnweiler wrote. "The first corresponds to the actual movement of the body. This would involve imparting movement to the work of art by means of a clock mechanism, and could be accomplished with statues as well as paintings—in paintings as with targets in shooting booths which are set into motion by the marksmen's direct hits."<sup>112</sup> To some degree, Kahnweiler's description here evokes the old-fashioned, nonillusory panorama that Hildebrand found inoffensive. It also recalls the Tir Cinématographique, or "cinematic firing range," that was introduced into the Gaumont-Palace in 1914 but that existed in 1908 as the *Fusils électriques* (electric shotguns), which were located in the building's *promenoir* when the venue was still under the management of the Compagnie des Cinéma-Halls.<sup>113</sup> I return to this subject in chapter 4.

Regarding the second possibility he mentions, it contains (to my knowledge) the first mention of transparency in Kahnweiler's early criticism, and thus supplies perhaps the earliest indication of his—as well as Picasso's—awareness of transparency's contemporary logic as *dispositif* or display technique related to cinema. Kahnweiler writes:

There is still another way of bringing about the impression of movement in the mind of the spectator—the stroboscopic method, upon which the cinematograph is based. If images differing to a small enough extent in their spatial definitions are shown in rapid enough succession, an illusion of one object in movement results. All these visual impressions are then related to an object, to the first image perceived, that therefore appears to be moving. In this way, which is already being used for humorous drawings, *the painting of the different images on a piece of transparent cloth [Stoff] and their presentation by means of a film projector, would open up a new path for painting with immense possibilities.*<sup>114</sup>

The perceptual continuity of cinematic movement described here “is in no degree described in [a form's] continuity; continuity arises only in the creative imagination of the spectator,” as Kahnweiler said of Picasso's volumes in 1949.<sup>115</sup> This particular feat—the perception of the virtual or non-substantial—is related to Bois's definition of transparency. It is found, in this case, in the “stroboscopic,” or what was understood at the time as the phenomenon of persistence of vision: after having perceived the unity of the object's form in space, movement arises as an additional, virtual quality in the mind—or, more precisely, in the eyes of the beholder. Similar to how color and tactility were merely suggested in analytic Cubism, “leaving their incorporation into the object to the mind of the spectator,” the transference of cinema's nonsubstantial sign of movement to painting falls initially into Locke's “secondary” epistemological category, as Kahnweiler conceived of it.<sup>116</sup>

Standish Lawder originally interpreted the passage above as a reference to the filmmaking process, whereby drawings on transparent celluloid material could be “show[n] through a cinematograph projector” (as the original translation reads). In the first English version of Kahnweiler's text, the word *Stoff* was not translated as “cloth”—whose literal sense implies what is “woven”—but more generally as “material.” “The *painting* of different images upon a *transparent cloth*” (rather than “material”) not only suggests that painterly activity was a central component of this transfer as a process, but that it may also occur on a transparent canvas, in which case it finds itself reduced to woven fibers, or cloth.<sup>125</sup> Kahnweiler's process remains vague, but in either case the important point lies in transparency's

different manner of facilitating painting's internal logic of display, and whose presentation by means of a cinematograph projector would liberate painting beyond "one single impression . . . [calling] into participation those emotions heretofore aroused in us only by music, which extends in time."<sup>117</sup> In other words, transparency would permit us to "to see duration itself," to encounter the "passage from the gross approximations of the discontinuous to the temporal realism of a continuous vision."<sup>118</sup> This was André Bazin's description of Georges Clouzot's "Bergsonian" film, *Les Mystères de Picasso* (1956), which displays the temporality of Picasso's painterly action first by filming it through a transparent, glass canvas, and then by presenting it "by means of a projector."

Whether Kahnweiler in fact described a process for filming painting through a transparent canvas, or even using a transparent projection technique, the point remains that transparency has everything to do with the transformation of painting as medium—not simply one individual work (as the original translation has it). Hence, in the passage above, Kahnweiler places the cinema's various means of transparency into dialogue with the African dance masks, which he described in the preceding sections of *The Rise of Cubism* as "a scheme of forms and 'real details' as stimuli" whose "result in the mind of the spectator, the desired effect, is a human face."<sup>119</sup> Not unlike the panorama, or the phantasmagoria whose dispositif allowed figures to rise up from the beyond as if from nowhere, the Grebo masks and the cinema declare transparency both as the "substance" of nonsubstantial sign, and as the dispositif that permitted its recognition. Thus, the provocative claim made in 1916 by Gaston de Pawlowski, Picasso's friend and the editor of *Comoedia*, suddenly seems more transparent, so to speak: "Cubism, in effect, is nothing but the *application* of the cinematograph to painting."<sup>120</sup>

As we know, Picasso increasingly literalized the formal expression of transparency in open sculptures such as *Glass of Absinthe* (1914), and in later works such as *Wire Construction* (1928). He also explicitly returned to the concept during the late 1940s and 1950s in collaborative projects with the photographers Brassai and André Villiers, as Baldassari notes. For the former, Picasso made miniature paper sculptures that he intended to be photographed; when held up to light, they "were as transparent as alabaster." For the latter, he made elaborate cutouts in order to experiment with transparent forms in combination with drawing and photographic emulation. As Villiers explained in a letter to Baldassari, Picasso called the resulting figural works "apparitions."<sup>121</sup>

Potently describing the world and material of phantoms, "alabaster" and "apparition" also recall Oskar Meester's spectacle *Alabastra* (c. 1910),



whose process began by filming actors wearing white makeup and attire against a black backdrop. The film was then projected within a transparent dispositif and reflected back to the audience in a mirror, a process similar to how the nineteenth-century attraction *Pepper's Ghost* produced its "apparitions."<sup>122</sup> While these particular spectacles were likely not part of the logic surrounding Picasso's 1940s transparencies, it was nevertheless in this later period, 1937, that he vividly recalled his 1907 encounter with the African masks. In conversation with André Malraux, he called them supernatural "*intercessors*, mediators. . . . They were against everything—against unknown, threatening spirits. . . . They were weapons. To help people avoid coming under the influence of spirits again, to help them become independent. They're tools. If we give spirits a form, we become independent."<sup>123</sup> Eric Michaud points out that Picasso recounted this story once again to Françoise Gilot, in 1949:

When I went for the first time . . . to the Trocadéro museum, the smell of dampness and rot there stuck in my throat [but . . . ] I stayed and studied. Men had made those masks and other objects for a sacred purpose, a magic purpose, as a kind of mediation between themselves and the unknown hostile forces that surround them, in order to overcome their fear and horror by giving it a form and an image. At that moment I realized that this was what painting was all about. Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange, hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires.<sup>124</sup>

Michaud draws out the "apotropaic" dimension of Picasso's account in order to place the artist in an avant-garde lineage that "[made] art a constant reminder of the Fall [as opposed to Redemption], denouncing a world made uninhabitable and making it understandable by reminding the viewer that the image itself is uninhabitable."<sup>125</sup> Thus, Picasso's remarks also tell us something about transparency, beyond the role that it played in the formal and semiotic procedures of Cubism that nevertheless allowed Kahnweiler to link Picasso's paintings to Mallarmé's poetic "incantations."<sup>126</sup> More specifically, the artist's words return us to transparency's psychical address as a horizontal and interspatial display—its mode of imaginative confrontation that permitted him to see the image as a mediator, and art as an explicitly designed form of mediation.

On the one hand, in Picasso's recollections, the Grebo masks seem to have provoked an encounter of such astounding immediacy that we might again compare it to the experience of the phantasmagoria. It was also a magic mediator between the logical faculties rooted in scientific knowledge

and the long-standing belief in superstition or myth. By effacing the boundary between the supernatural and the real, this transparent dispositif similarly gained its power by giving form to terrors and desires, and by making what simply *cannot be*—ghosts, phantasms, apparitions—appear within the beholder's spatial domain. On the other hand, Picasso's scene of initiation by shock at the Trocadero, as Michaud calls it, begs a comparison to accounts describing cinematographic "primal scenes," as when Jules Claretie, director of the Théâtre-Français, wrote in response to seeing the Lumière's projections for the first time at the Grand Café: "And this marvelous cinematograph, which gives us the specter of the living, will it give us, in permitting us to conserve in it the phantom, and the gestures, and even the voice, the sweetness and the caress of our dear departed?"<sup>127</sup> In Maxim Gorky's famous account, he did not simply see a world reflected on a screen. He experienced an embodied, otherworldly domain that rushed toward him, blurring the boundary between the real space of objects and the "imaginary space of art":

[It] is not motion but its soundless specter [ . . . ] Carriages coming from somewhere in the perspective of the picture are moving straight at you, into the darkness in which you sit; somewhere from afar people appear and loom larger as they come closer to you [ . . . ] Curses and ghosts [ . . . ] Suddenly something clicks, everything vanishes and a train appears on the screen. It speeds straight at you—watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones. . . .<sup>128</sup>

Although we do not know whether Gorky witnessed the films in transparent projection, the point lies in the profound recognition that was unleashed in him when forms burst out from the frontal confines of pictorial space to meet his gaze in a critical confrontation. Like Picasso's experience at the ethnological museum, this is a scene of initiation that rewrites the myth of experience and the "natural" image according to the laws of cultural mediation and display. Picasso turned this knowledge of classical perspective into a tool by giving it a form, perhaps to ward off the influence of unknown, threatening spirits from the art-historical past. In so doing, he was free to believe "that the lie of art could give access to that truth of myth as a lie."<sup>129</sup>

Picasso processes this recognition again in *Assemblage*: the canvas takes on the role of transparent intercessor, mediator, or, better yet, medium whose incantatory function first calls an image forward in the mind of the beholder as a series of geometrically dispersed lines on its surface. Then, the image rises up off the canvas's surface to appear as if from nowhere. Like a

phantom standing before us with guitar in hand, it moves straight out into the still-life space of the table, straddling the figural domain of representation and the real world of Picasso's studio. As an apparition from the past, quite possibly the ghost of another painting, the figure of *Assemblage* sways before the imaginary spectator sitting in the *mise-en-scène*. It also sways before the beholder of the photograph who witnesses not only this apparition, but also the cultural, artistic—if apotropaic—dispositif that produced it.

Picasso's goal in *Assemblage* may have been to denounce an uninhabitable world by reminding viewers of the image's uninhabitable quality. Yet the work's explicitness as a display technology (including photography) also seems to declare that the image is contingent on our cultural world, and the beholder's epistemological grounding within it. Transparency thus works like Rimbaud's postulate as Adorno conceived of it, declaring that "the radically modern is that of an art that moves in the tension between *spleen et idéal*, between spiritualization and obsession with what is most distant from spirit."<sup>130</sup> In Hansen's words, Adorno's claim concerns "art's engagement with irrevocably changed modes of experience (*Erfahrung*) that are marked as much by the social relations of production as by the advance of the productive forces."<sup>131</sup> Whether it manifested its effects directly in the body, as we find in the Stéréorama, or in the confrontational address of cinematic horizontality, or in the pure "shock of an encounter with Art itself" as Steinberg said of *Les Demoiselles*, transparency shores up the eminently social, and thus critical and cultural, import of the modern image's psychical address.<sup>132</sup> In Adorno's words, it "points up art's unconscious self-consciousness in its participation in what is contrary to it; this self-consciousness motivated art's culture-critical turn that cast off the illusion of its purely spiritual being."<sup>133</sup>

In closing, recall that transparency haunts Steinberg's seminal essay "The Philosophic Brothel." Reproducing James Gillray's 1805 satirical drawing *Ci-devant Occupations* (figure 11), Steinberg used it to comment on the well-worn sexual motif of the bottle that stands in for the statesman's excitement as he gazes at two nude, dancing women. Steinberg points out that Picasso had previously used a Spanish *porrón* vessel in preparatory studies for the *Demoiselles*, but in the final picture he replaced it with a slice of "horny" melon. What Steinberg does not comment on is that for the beholder of this humorous drawing, the statesman appears in full view, while the two dancers are perceived through a transparent curtain illuminated from behind. Insofar as the curtain does not permit our gaze to take on the same titillated fascination as the statesman, it nevertheless highlights



FIGURE 11. James Gillray, *Ci-devant Occupations*, 1805 (hand-colored etching, 12 7/16 × 18 inches [31.6 × 45.7 cm]). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1917. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York ([www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)).

the statesman's spectatorial privilege, and hence calls his arousal into the foreground of the image's message alongside our own voyeurism. But whereas the statesman sees the dancers as life, the beholder of Gillray's image sees them only as life's shadow, stripped as they are of color and, arguably, their full sexual potency. The veil's transparency mediates our attitude such that, despite their nudity, we read the women as prostitutes only by way of our view of the lascivious spectator sitting before them.

In Gillray's illustration, transparency is a motif, what Adorno would call a "topic" that allegorically points to our own gaze as veiled. In *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Picasso did not allow our view to be mediated by a veil or by the presence of another beholder in the scene. Not only is the cloth curtain held—ripped—open by the demoiselles themselves, but as we know from Steinberg and others, Picasso also evicted the sailor and medical student who previously occupied the center of preparatory drawings. In this way, Picasso forced the table into the foreground and strategically mediated discontinuous spatial systems between spectacle and spectator. Transparency was thus dislodged as an allegorical "topic," and arguably harnessed as the painting's underlying, formal dispositif. Let us imagine for a moment that

rather than “zooming in” like a camera over a spectator’s shoulder seated at the table, Picasso might have conjured the *Demoiselles* up from behind and through a transparent “cloth,” such that their presence loomed as large and immediate as a phantasmagoric or cinematic projection. In so doing, might these women recall *les cocottes du paradis*—or those so-called whorey nuns who once lived in what became a red-laquered cinema on rue Douai, where Picasso attended cinematic projections around 1907? Such an imaginative exercise may be the only way to fully comprehend Salmon’s essay about the “sorcerer’s apprentice” who “created atmosphere through a dynamic decomposition of luminous power . . . a geometry at once infinitesimal and cinematic,” to recall the epigraph above.<sup>134</sup> But in the end, such an exercise may find its precedent in cinema history, for it is there that we find another, earlier philosophical brothel. As we know, Charles Aumont’s Moscow-based Théâtre-Concert Parisien was reportedly a “slaughterhouse,” and Gorky’s fellow cinemagoers, likely prostitutes—spleen et idéal.<sup>135</sup>