

Pablo

PICASSO

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Anatoli Podoksik

Pablo Picasso

1881-1973

Raphael's great superiority is the result of his capacity to feel deeply which, in his case, destroys form. The form in his works is what it should be in ours: only a pretext for the transmission of ideas, sensations, diverse poesies.

Honoré de Balzac. *Le Chef-d'œuvre inc...*

Contents

Life and Work	7
Notes	142
Chronology of the Artist's Life	144
Bibliography	156
Index	158

À mes chers amis
Suzanne et Henri
Picasso
1904



Life and Work

Although, as Picasso himself put it, he “led the life of a painter” from very early childhood, and although he expressed himself through the plastic arts for eighty uninterrupted years, the essence of Picasso’s creative genius differs from that usually associated with the notion of “*artiste-peintre*”. It might be more correct to consider him an artist-poet because his lyricism, his psyche, unfettered by mundane reality, his gift for the metaphoric transformation of reality are no less inherent in his visual art than they are in the mental imagery of a poet. According to Pierre Daix, “Picasso always considered himself a poet who was more prone to express himself through drawings, paintings and sculptures.”¹ Always? That calls for clarification. It certainly applies to the 1930s, when he wrote poetry, and to the 1940s and 1950s, when he turned to writing plays. There is, however, no doubt that from the outset Picasso was always “a painter among poets, a poet among painters”.²

Picasso had a craving for poetry and attracted poets like a magnet. When they first met, Guillaume Apollinaire was struck by the young Spaniard’s unerring ability “to straddle the lexical barrier” and grasp the fine points of recited poetry. One may say without fear of exaggeration that while Picasso’s close friendship with the poets Jacob, Apollinaire, Salmon, Cocteau, Reverdy, and Éluard left an imprint on each of the major periods of his work, it is no less true that his own innovative work had a strong influence on French (and not only French) twentieth-century poetry. And this assessment of Picasso’s art — so visual and obvious, yet at times so blinding, opaque and mysterious — as that of a poet, is dictated by the artist’s own view of his work. Picasso once said: “After all, the arts are all the same; you can write a picture in words just as you can paint sensations in a poem.”³ He even expressed the following thought: “If I had been born Chinese, I would not be a painter but a writer. I’d write my pictures.”⁴

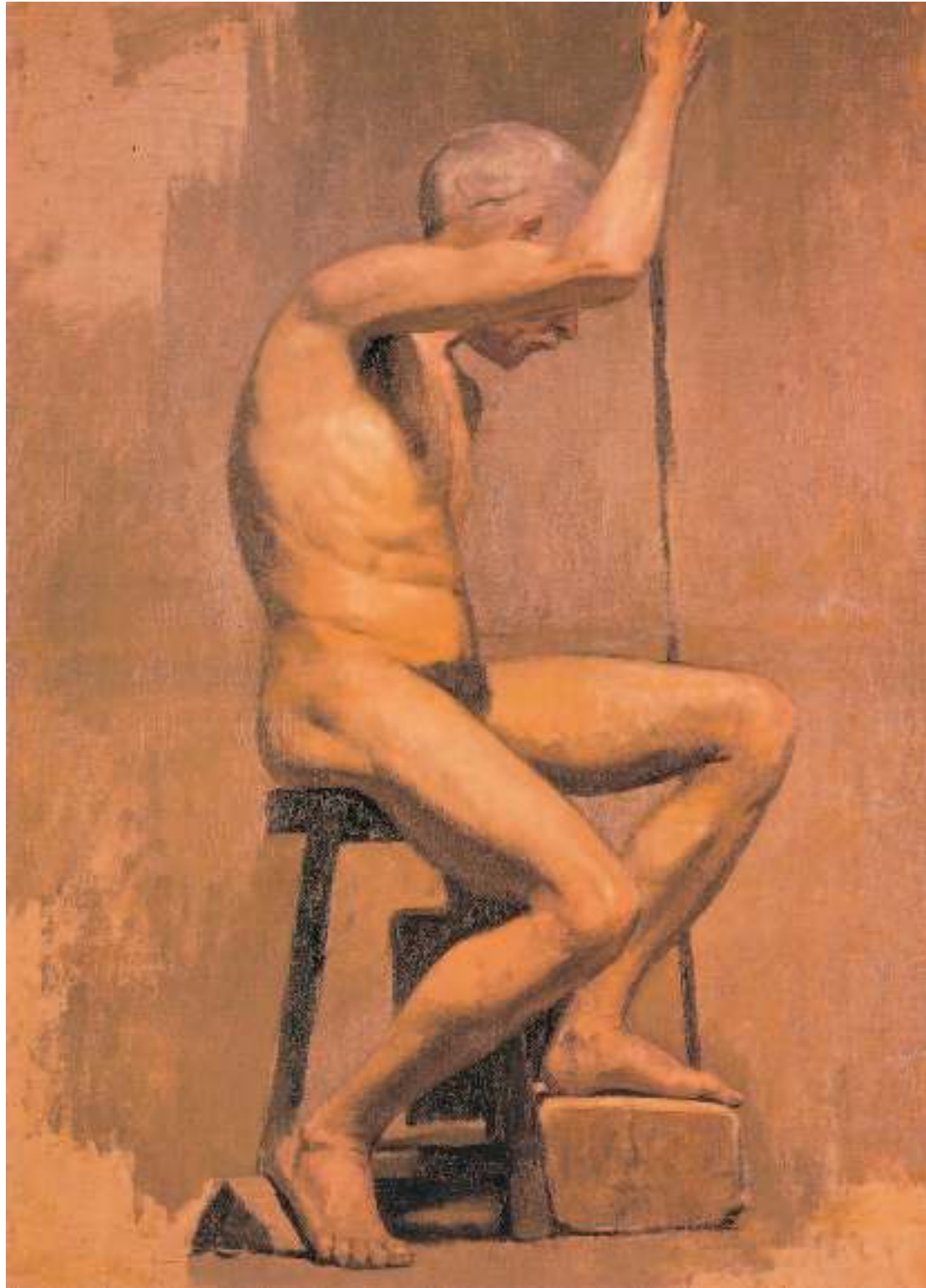
Picasso, however, was born a Spaniard and, so they say, began to draw before he could speak. As an infant he was instinctively attracted to the artist’s tools. In early childhood he could spend hours in happy concentration drawing spirals with a sense and meaning known only to himself; or, shunning children’s games, trace his first pictures in the sand. This early self-expression held out promise of a rare gift.

The first phase of life, preverbal, preconscious, knows neither dates nor facts. It is a dream-like state dominated by the body’s rhythms and external sensations. The rhythms of the heart and lungs, the caresses of warm hands, the rocking of the cradle, the intonation of voices — that is what it consists of. Now the memory awakens, and two black eyes follow the movements of things in space, master desired objects, express emotions. Sight, that great gift, begins to discern objects, imbues ever new shapes, captures ever-broader horizons. Millions of as yet meaningless visual images enter the infantile world of internal sight where they strike



Pablo Picasso, Photograph, 1904.
Dedicated to Suzanne and Henri Bloch.

Portrait of the Artist's Father, 1896.
Oil on canvas and cardboard, 42.3 x 30.8
Museo Picasso, Barcelona.



Academic Study, 1895.
Oil on canvas, 82 x 61 cm,
Museo Picasso, Barcelona.

immanent powers of intuition, ancient voices, and strange caprices of instinct. The shock of purely sensual (visual-plastic) impressions is especially strong in the South, where the raging power of light sometimes blinds, sometimes etches each form with infinite clarity.

And the still mute, inexperienced perception of a child born in these parts responds to this shock with a certain inexplicable melancholy, an irrational sort of nostalgia for form. Such is the lyricism of the Iberian Mediterranean, a land of naked truths, of a dramatic “search for life for life’s sake”,⁵ in the words of Garcia Lorca, one who knew these sensations well. Not a shade of the Romantic here: there is

no room for sentimentality amid the sharp, exact contours and there exists only one physical world. “Like all Spanish artists, I am a realist”, Picasso would say later.

Gradually the child acquires words, fragments of speech, building blocks of language. Words are abstractions, creations of consciousness made to reflect the external world and express the internal. Words are the subjects of imagination, which endows them with images, reasons, meanings, and conveys to them a measure of infinity. Words are the instrument of learning and the instrument of poetry. They create the second, purely human, reality of mental abstractions.

In time, after having become friends with poets, Picasso would discover that the visual and verbal modes of expression are identical for the creative imagination. It was then that he began to introduce elements of poetic technique into his work: forms with multiple meanings, metaphors of shape and colour, quotations, rhymes, plays on words, paradoxes, and other tropes that allow the mental world to be made visible. Picasso’s visual poetry attained total fulfilment and concrete freedom by the mid-1940s in a series of paintings of nudes, portraits, and interiors executed with “singing” and “aromatic” colours; these qualities are also evident in a multitude of India ink drawings traced as if by gusts of wind.

“We are not executors; we live our work.”⁶ That is the way in which Picasso expressed how much his work was intertwined with his life; he also used the word “diary” with reference to his work. D.H. Kahnweiler, who knew Picasso for over sixty-five years, wrote: “It is true that I have described his œuvre as ‘fanatically autobiographical’. That is the same as saying that he depended only on himself, on his *Erlebnis*. He was always free, owing nothing to anyone but himself.”⁷ Jaime Sabartés, who knew Picasso most of his life, also stressed his complete independence from external conditions and situations. Indeed, everything convincingly shows that if Picasso depended on anything at all in his art, it was the constant need to express his inner state with the utmost fullness. One may, as Sabartés did, compare Picasso’s œuvre with therapy; one may, as Kahnweiler did, regard Picasso as a Romantic artist. However, it was precisely the need for self-expression through creativity that lent his art that universal quality that is inherent in such human documents as Rousseau’s *Confessions*, Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Rimbaud’s *A Season in Hell*. Let it also be noted that Picasso looked upon his art in a somewhat impersonal manner, took pleasure in the thought that the works, which he dated meticulously and helped scholars to catalogue, could serve as material for some future science. He imagined that branch of learning as being a “science of man — which will seek to learn about man in general through the study of the creative man.”⁸

But something akin to a scientific approach to Picasso’s œuvre has long been current in that it has been divided into periods, explained both by creative contacts (so-called influences, often only hypothetical) and reflections of biographical events (in 1980 a book called *Picasso: Art as Autobiography*⁹ appeared). If Picasso’s work has for us the general significance of universal human experience, this is due to its expressing, with the most exhaustive completeness, man’s internal life and all the laws of its development. Only by approaching his œuvre in this way can we hope to understand its rules, the logic of its evolution, and the transition from one putative period to another.

The works of Picasso published in the present volume — the entire collection in Russian museums — cover those early periods which, based on considerations of style (less often subject matter), have been classified as Steinlenian (or Lautrecian), Stained Glass, Blue, Circus, Rose, Classic, “African”, proto-Cubist, Cubist (analytic and synthetic)... the definitions



Study of a Nude, Seen from the Back, 1899
Oil on wood, 22.3 x 13.7 cm,
Museo Picasso, Barcelona.



Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1896.
Pastel on paper,
Museo Picasso, Barcelona.

could be even more detailed. However, from the viewpoint of the “science of man”, these periods correspond to the years 1900-1914, when Picasso was between nineteen and thirty-three, the time which saw the formation and flowering of his unique personality.

There is no question about the absolute significance of this stage in spiritual and psychological growth (as Goethe said, to create something, you must be something); the Russian collection’s extraordinarily monolithic and chronological concentration allows us to examine, through the logic of that inner process, those works which belong to possibly the least accessible phase of Picasso’s activity.

By 1900, the date of the earliest painting in the Russian collection, Picasso’s Spanish childhood and years of study belonged to the past. And yet certain cardinal points of his early life should not be ignored.

Málaga must be mentioned, for it was there, on 25 October 1881, that Pablo Ruiz Picasso was born and there that he spent the first ten years of his life. Although he never depicted that town on the Andalusian coast, Málaga was the cradle of his spirit, the land of his childhood, the soil in which many of the themes and images of his mature work are rooted. He first saw a picture of Hercules in Málaga’s municipal museum, witnessed bullfights on the Plaza de Toros, and at home watched the cooing doves that served as models for his father, a painter of “pictures for dining rooms”, as Picasso put it. The young Pablo drew all of this (see *Pigeons*) and by the age of eight took up brush and oils to paint a bullfight (see *The Picador*). His father allowed him to draw the feet of the doves in his pictures, for the boy did this well and with real knowledge. He had a favourite pigeon with which he refused to part, and when the time came for him to start school, he carried the bird in a cage to classes. School was a place that demanded obedience — Pablo hated it from the first day and opposed it furiously. And that was how it would always be: a revolt against everything that felt like school, that encroached upon originality and individual freedom, that dictated general rules, determined norms, imposed outlooks. He would never agree to adapt to his environment, to betray himself or, in psychological terms, to exchange the pleasure principle for reality.

The Ruiz Picasso family never lived an easy life. Financial difficulties forced them to move to La Coruña, where Pablo’s father was offered a position as teacher of drawing and painting in a secondary school. On the one hand, Málaga, with its voluptuous and gentle nature, “the bright star in the sky of Mauritanian Andalusia, the Orient without poison, the Occident without activity” (as Lorca put it); and, on the other, La Coruña on the northern tip of the Iberian peninsula with its stormy Atlantic Ocean, rains and billowing fog. The two towns are not only the geographical, but also the psychological poles of Spain. For Picasso they were stages in life: Málaga the cradle and La Coruña the port of departure.

When the Ruiz Picasso family moved to La Coruña in 1891 with the ten-year-old Pablo, a somewhat rural atmosphere reigned over the town; artistically speaking, it was far more provincial than Málaga, which had its own artistic milieu to which Picasso’s father belonged. La Coruña did, however, have a School of Fine Arts. There the young Pablo Ruiz began his systematic studies of drawing and with prodigious speed completed (by the age of thirteen!) the academic Plaster Cast and Nature Drawing Classes. What strikes one most in his works from this time is not so much the phenomenal accuracy and exactitude of execution (both of which are mandatory for classroom model exercises) as what the young artist introduced into this frankly boring material: a treatment of light and shade that transformed the plaster



torsos, hands and feet into living images of bodily perfection overflowing with poetic mystery.

He did not, however, limit his drawing to the classroom; he drew at home, all the time, using whatever subject matter came to hand: portraits of the family, genre scenes, romantic subjects, animals. In keeping with the times, he “published” his own journals — *La Coruña* and *Asul y Blanco* (*Blue and White*) — writing them by hand and illustrating them with cartoons. Let us note here that the young Picasso’s spontaneous drawings have a narrative, dramatic quality; for him the image and the word were

First Communion, 1896.
Oil on canvas,
Museo Picasso, Barcelona.



almost identical. Both of these points are extremely significant to the future development of Picasso's art.

At home, under his father's tutelage — the good man was so impressed by his son's achievements that he gave him his palette, brushes and paints — during his last year in La Coruña, Pablo began to paint live models in oils (see *Portrait of an Old Man* and *Beggar in a Cap*). These portraits and figures, free of academic slickness, speak not only of the early maturity of the thirteen-year-old painter, but also of the purely Spanish nature of his gift: a preoccupation with human beings, whom he treated with profound seriousness and strict realism, uncovering the monolithic and "cubic" character of these images. They look less like school studies than psychological portraits, less like portraits than universal human characters akin to the Biblical personages of Zurbarán and Ribera.

Kahnweiler testifies that in his old age Picasso spoke with greater approval of these early paintings than of those done in Barcelona, where the Ruiz Picasso family moved in the autumn of 1895 and where Pablo immediately enrolled as a student of painting in the School of Fine Arts called La Lonja. But the academic classes of Barcelona had little to offer in the way of developing the talent of the young creator of the La Coruña masterpieces; he could improve his craftsmanship on his own. However, it seemed at that time that "proper schooling" was the only way of becoming a painter. So as not to upset his father, Picasso spent two more years at La Lonja during which time he could not but fall, albeit temporarily, under the deadening influence of academism, inculcated by the official school along with certain professional skills. "I hate the period of my training at Barcelona," Picasso confessed to Kahnweiler.¹⁰

However, the studio which his father rented for him (when he was only fourteen) and which gave him a certain freedom from both school and the stifling atmosphere of family relations was a real support for his independence. "A studio for an adolescent who feels his vocation with overwhelming force is almost like a first love: all his illusions meet and crystallize in it," writes José Palau i Fabre.¹¹ It was here that Picasso summarized the achievements of his school years by executing his first large canvas: *The First Communion* (winter of 1895-1896) — an interior composition with figures, drapery and still life, displaying beautiful lighting effects — and *Science and Charity* (beginning of 1897) — a huge canvas



with larger-than-life figures, something akin to a real allegory. The latter received honourable mention at the national exhibition of fine arts in Madrid and was later awarded a gold medal at an exhibition in Málaga.

If one assesses the early Picasso's creative biography from the standpoint of a *Bildungsroman*, then his departure from home for Madrid in the autumn of 1897, supposedly to continue his formal education at the Royal Academy of San Fernando, in fact ushered in the period of post-study years — his years of wandering. Moving from place to place, Picasso began the haphazard travel that is typical of this period and corresponds to the inner uncertainty, the search for self-identity and the urge for independence that denote the forming of personality in a young man.

Self-Portrait, 1896.
Oil on canvas,
Museo Picasso, Barcelona.

Pablo Picasso's years of travel consisted of several phases within a seven-year period, from sixteen to twenty-three, from his initial departure to Madrid, the country's artistic capital, in 1897, to his final settling in Paris, artistic capital of the world, in the spring of 1904. As it had during his first visit, on his way to Barcelona in 1895, Madrid to Picasso meant first and foremost the Prado Museum, which he frequented more often than the Royal Academy of San Fernando in order to copy the Old Masters (he was particularly attracted by Velazquez). However, as Sabartés was to note, "Madrid left a minimal imprint on the development of his spirit."¹² It might be said that the most important events for Picasso in the Spanish capital were the harsh winter of 1897-1898 and the subsequent illness that symbolically marked the end of his "academic career".

In contrast, the time spent at Horta de Ebro — a village in the mountainous area of Catalonia, where he went to convalesce and where he remained for eight long months (until the spring of 1899) — was of such significance for Picasso that even decades later he would invariably repeat: "All that I know, I learnt in Palarés's village."¹³ Together with Manuel Palarés, a friend he had met in Barcelona, who invited him to live in the family home at Horta, Pablo carried his easel and sketchbook over all the mountain paths surrounding the village, which had preserved the harsh quality of a medieval town. With Palarés, Picasso scaled the mountains, spent much of the summer living in a cave, sleeping on beds of lavender, washing in mountain springs, and wandering along cliffs with the risk of plunging into the turbulent river far below. He experienced nature's power and came to know the eternal values of a simple life with its work and holidays.

Indeed, the months spent at Horta were significant not so much in the sense of artistic production (only a few studies and the sketchbooks have survived) as for their key role in the young Picasso's creative biography, with its long process of maturing. This basically short biographic period merits a special chapter in Picasso's *Bildungsroman*, a chapter portraying scenes of bucolic solitude spent amid pure, powerful and life-giving nature, reflecting feelings of freedom and fulfilment, offering a view of natural man and of life flowing in harmony with the epic rhythms of the seasons. But, as is always the case in Spain, this chapter also includes the brutal interplay of the forces of temptation, salvation and death — those "backstage players" in the drama of human existence.

Palau i Fabre, who described Picasso's first stay at Horta, notes: "It seems more than paradoxical — I nearly said providential — that Picasso should have been reborn, so to speak, at that time, when he left Madrid and the copying of the great masters of the past in order to strengthen his links with the primitive forces of the country."¹⁴

Another point: the value of the young Picasso's experience at Horta de Ebro is that it should provide scholars with food for thought, regarding both the question of his Mediterranean sources and Iberian archaism at a crucial moment of his formation in 1906 and his second trip to Horta ten years later (1909), which marked a new stage in his artistic development: Cubism. After his first stay at Horta de Ebro, a matured and renewed Picasso returned to Barcelona, which he now saw in a new light: as a centre of progressive trends and as a city open to modern ideas. Indeed, Barcelona's cultural atmosphere was, on the eve of the twentieth century, brimming with optimism. Calls for a Catalan regional renaissance, the agitation of anarchists, the latest technological wonders (the automobile, electricity, the phonograph, the cinema), and the novel idea of mass production served as a backdrop for the growing certainty in young minds that the



new century would usher in an unparalleled flowering of the arts. It was therefore not surprisingly in Barcelona, attracted to contemporary Europe, and not elsewhere in patriarchal, lethargic Spain, that Modernism appeared. The Catalan version of cosmopolitan, artistic *fin-de-siècle* tendencies combined a broad spectrum of ideological and aesthetic influences, from Scandinavian symbolism to Pre-Raphaelism, from Wagner and Nietzsche to French Impressionism and the style of popular Parisian journals.

Picasso, who was not yet eighteen, had reached the point of his greatest rebelliousness; he repudiated academia's anemic aesthetics along with realism's pedestrian prose and, quite naturally, joined those who called themselves modernists, that is, the non-conformist artists and writers, those whom Sabartés called "the élite of Catalan thought" and who were grouped around the artists' café Els Quatre Gats.

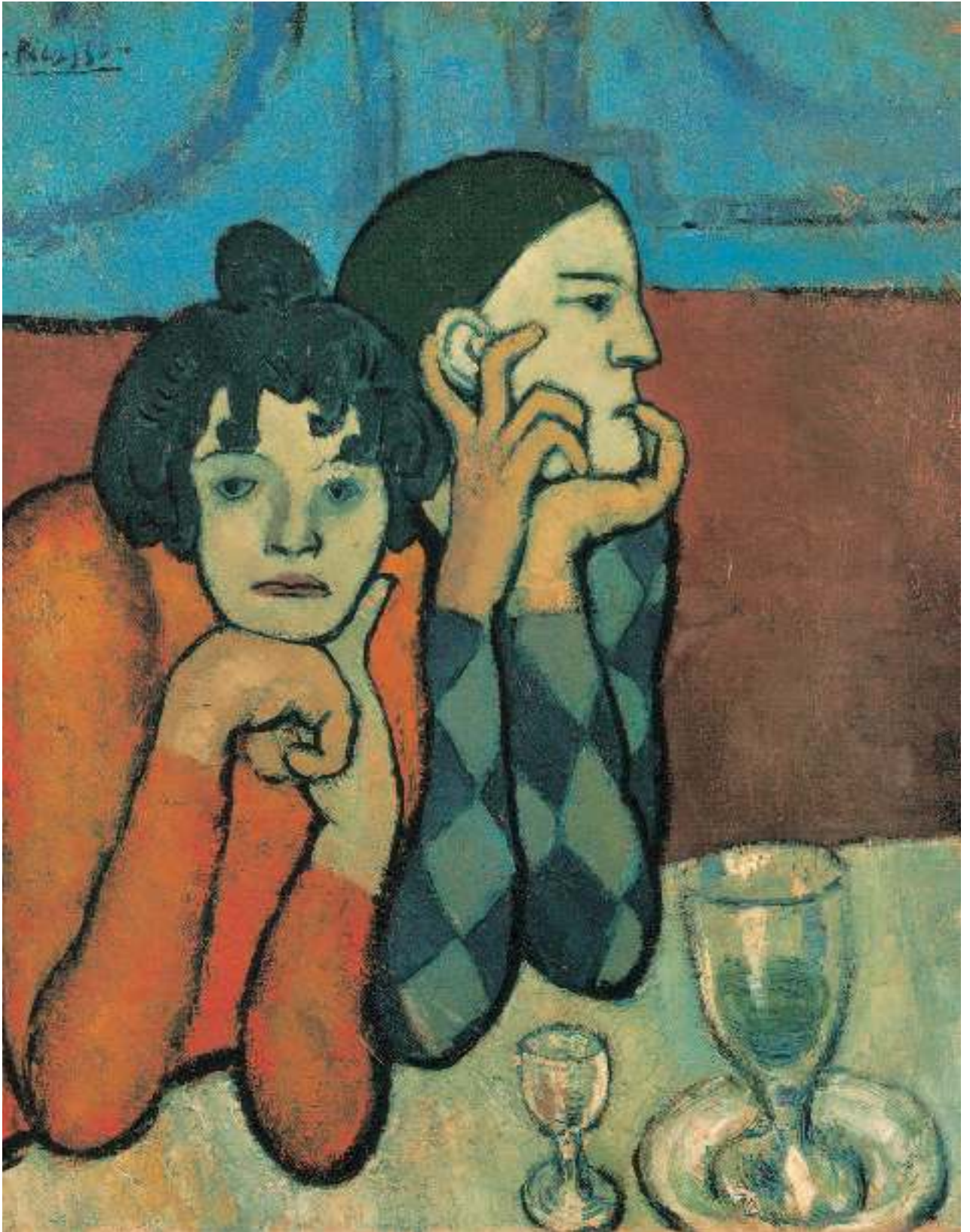
Rendez-Vous (The Embrace), 1900.

Oil on cardboard, 52 x 56 cm,

The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow



Reading Woman, 1900.
Oil on cardboard, 56 x 52 cm,
The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

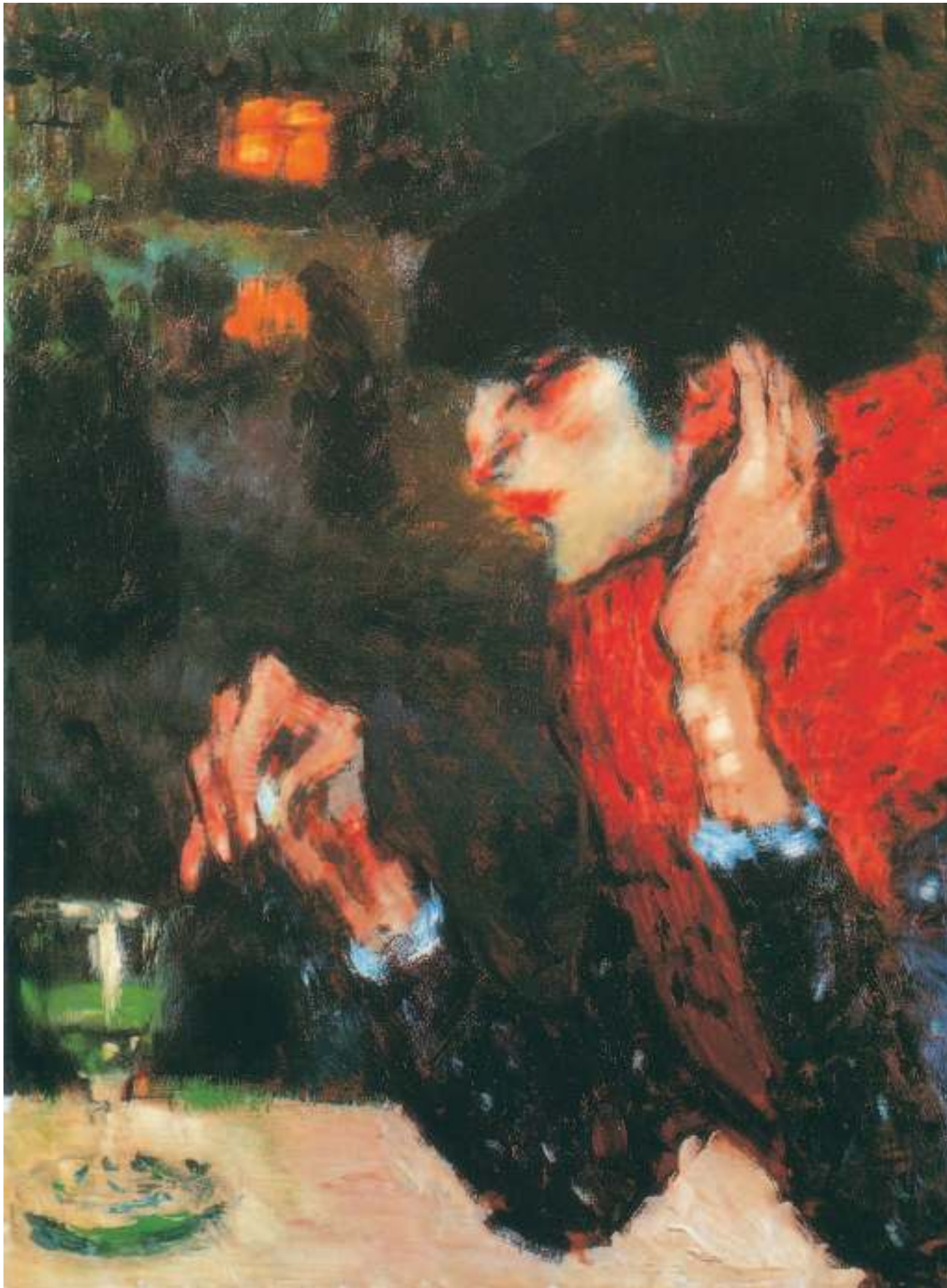


*Harlequin and his companion
(Two Performers), 1901.*
Oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm,
The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow



Pierrot and Dancer, 1900.
Oil on canvas, 38 x 46 cm,
Private Collection.

Much has been said concerning the influence of Barcelona modernism on Picasso's turn-of-the-century work, regarding which Cirlot notes: "Critics find it very useful to be able to talk about 'influences' because it enables them to explain something they do not understand by something they do, often completely erroneously and resulting in utter confusion."¹⁵ Indeed, the issue of temporary influences of style (Ramón Casas, Isidro Nonell, Hermenegildo Angladay Camarasa), which tends only to obscure the authentic, natural elements of Picasso's profound talent, should be eliminated from our consideration. Barcelona modernism served to give the young Picasso an avant-garde education and to liberate his artistic thinking from classroom clichés. But this avant-garde university was also merely the arena for his coming-to-be. Picasso, who in 1916 compared himself with a tenor who reaches a note higher than the one written in the score,¹⁶ was never the slave of what attracted him; in fact, Picasso invariably begins where influence ends. True, during those Barcelona years Picasso was much taken with the graphic "argot" practised by contemporary Parisian magazines (the style of Forain and Steinlen, who drew for *Gil Blas* and *La Vie Parisienne*, among others). He cultivated the same kind of sharp, trenchant style, which excludes the superfluous and yet, through the interplay of a few lines and dots, manages to give living



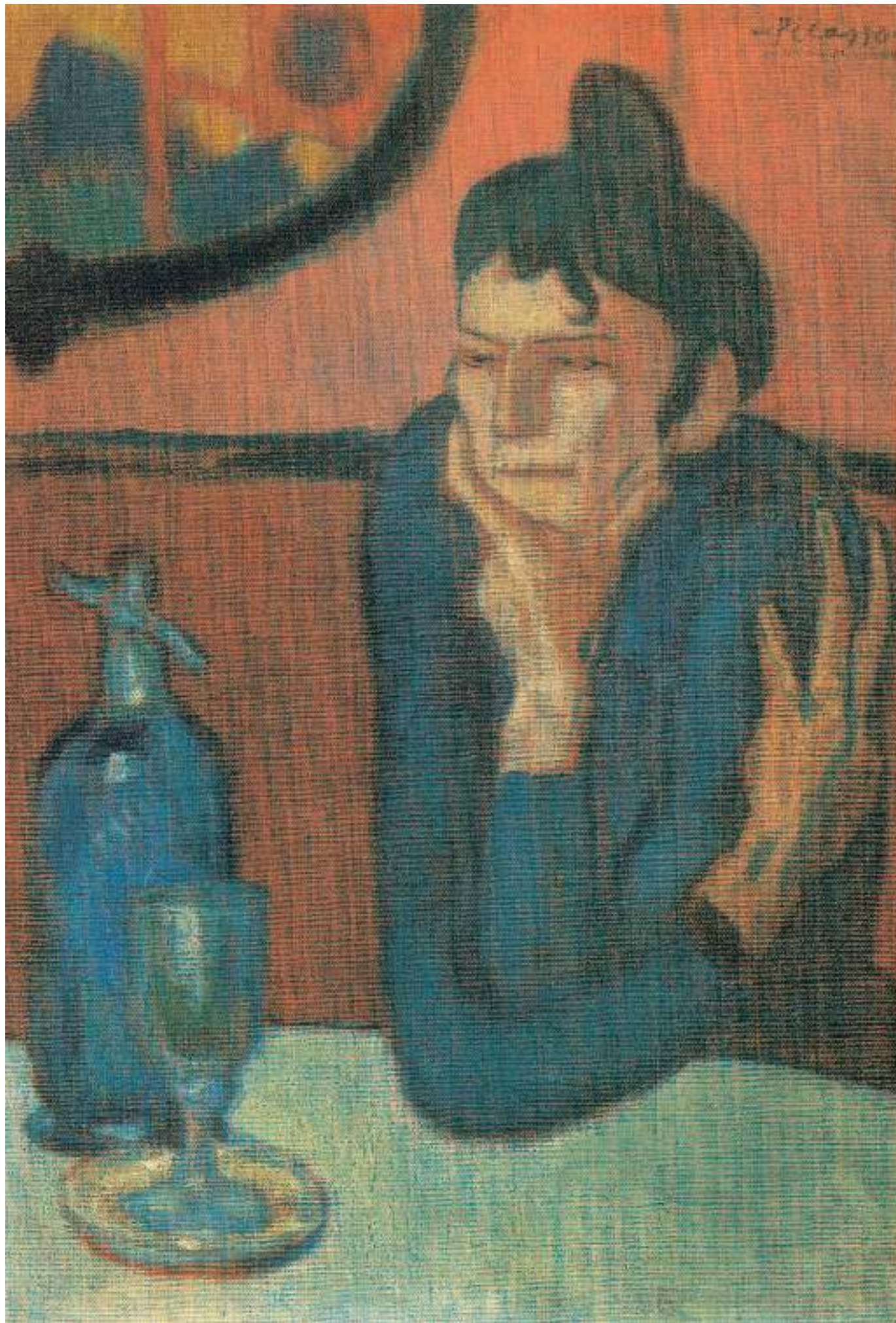
The Absinthe Drinker, 1901.
Oil on cardboard,
Melville Hall Collection, New York.

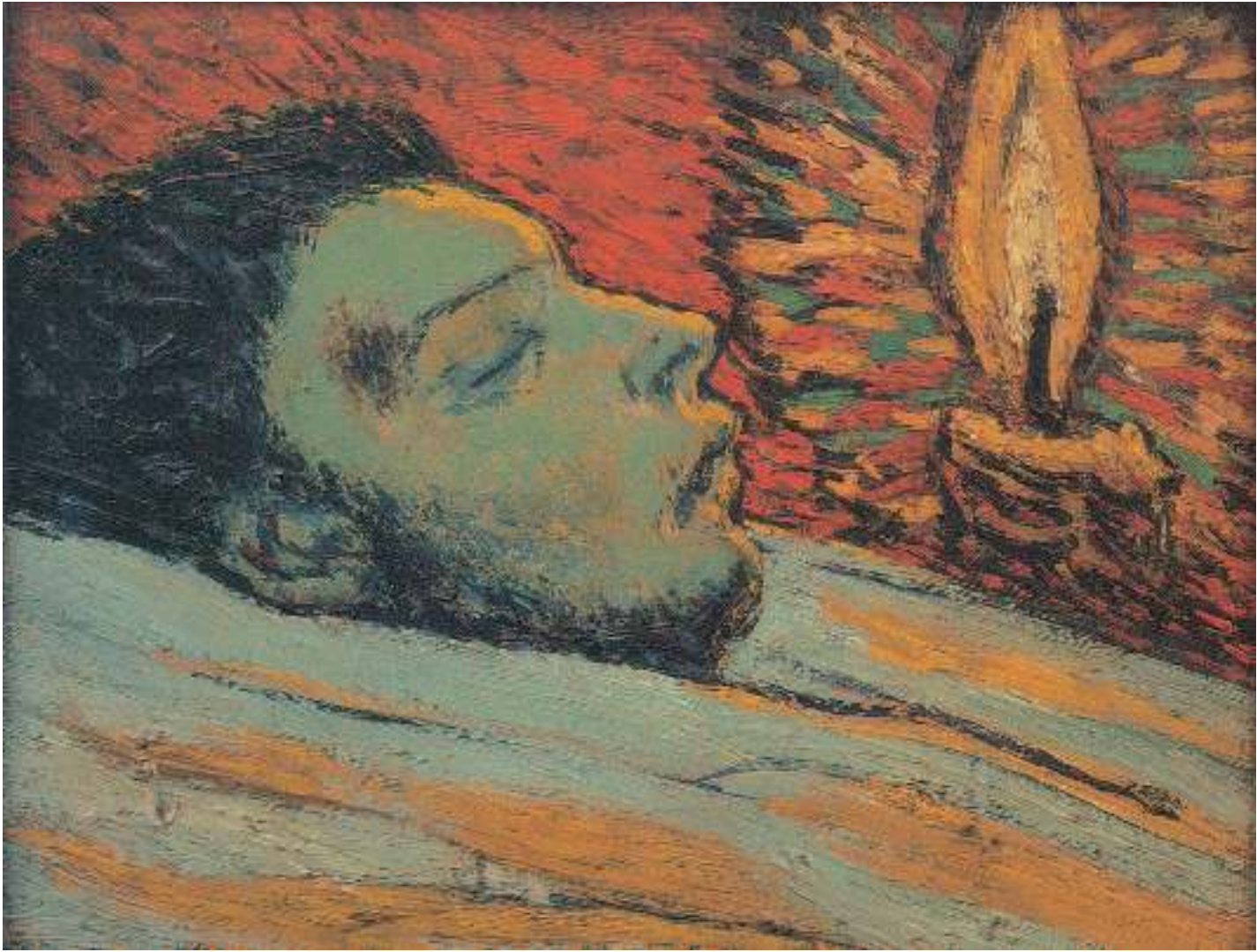
expression to any character or situation, depicted through ironic eyes. Much later, Picasso was to say that in essence all good portraits are caricatures; during his Barcelona years he drew a wealth of caricature portraits of his avant-garde friends — as if caught up in a frenzy of graphic inspiration. He seems to have been trying to conquer his model, to subject it to his artistic will, to force it into the confines of a graphic formula. It is also true, however, that the literary, narrative quality of the boy Pablo's handwritten and illustrated *La Coruña* journals find their way into this new, modernistic form.

During 1899 and 1900 the only subjects Picasso deemed worthy of painting were those which reflected the “final truth”: the transience of human life and the inevitability of death (see *The Kiss of Death*). Bidding the deceased farewell, a vigil by the coffin, a cripple's agony on a hospital bed, a scene in a death room or near a dying woman's bed: repentance of a ne'er-do-well husband... a long-haired poet steeped in sorrow... a lover on bended knee... a grief-stricken young monk. All these were versions of that same theme (the Museo Picasso in Barcelona has no less than twenty-five such graphic works and five painted sketches). Finally he executed a large composition called *The Last Moments*, which was shown in Barcelona at the beginning of 1900 and later that same year in Paris at the Exposition Universelle. Picasso then re-used the canvas for his famous Blue Period painting *La Vie* (the earlier work was only recently discovered thanks to X-ray examination).¹⁷ Everything in *The Last Moments* is theoretical: its morbid symbolism, its characters (the young priest standing at the dying woman's bedside) and even its style, which bespeaks the artist's affinity with the “spiritual” painting of El Greco, then considered the founding father of the anti-academic, modernist tradition. That painting belonged to Picasso only to the extent that he himself belonged to that period, the period of Maeterlinck, Munch, Ibsen, Carrière. The marked resemblance between the Symbolist *The Last Moments* and *Science and Charity* of Picasso's school days is not accidental. Notwithstanding the youthful preoccupation with the theme of death, its quasi-decadent embodiment here creates the impression of an abstract exercise, as do many of the works Picasso produced in the Catalan modernist style. Decadence was foreign to Picasso; he inevitably looked at it with an ironically raised eyebrow, as a manifestation of weakness and lifelessness. He passed too rapidly through modernism and, having exhausted it, found himself at a dead end, without a future. It was Paris that saved him, and after only two seasons there he wrote to his French friend Max Jacob in the summer of 1902 about how isolated he had felt in Barcelona among his friends, “local painters” (he sceptically underlined these words in his letter), who wrote “very bad books” and painted “idiotic pictures”.¹⁸

Picasso arrived in Paris in October 1900. He moved into a studio in Montparnasse, where he remained until the end of the year. Although his contacts were limited to the Spanish colony, and even though he involuntarily looked at his surroundings with the eyes of a highly curious foreigner, Picasso immediately and without hesitation found his subject, becoming a painter of Montparnasse.

A joint letter by Picasso and his inseparable friend, the artist and poet Carlos Casagemas, bears the date of his nineteenth birthday (25 October 1900). Written a few days after Pablo's arrival in Paris, it records their Parisian life; the pair inform a friend in Barcelona of their intensive work, of their intention to exhibit paintings at the Salon and in Spain, of their going to café-concerts and theatres in the evening; they describe their new acquaintances, their leisure activities, their studio. The letter exudes high spirits and reflects their intoxicating delight with life: “If you see Opisso, tell him to come, since it's good





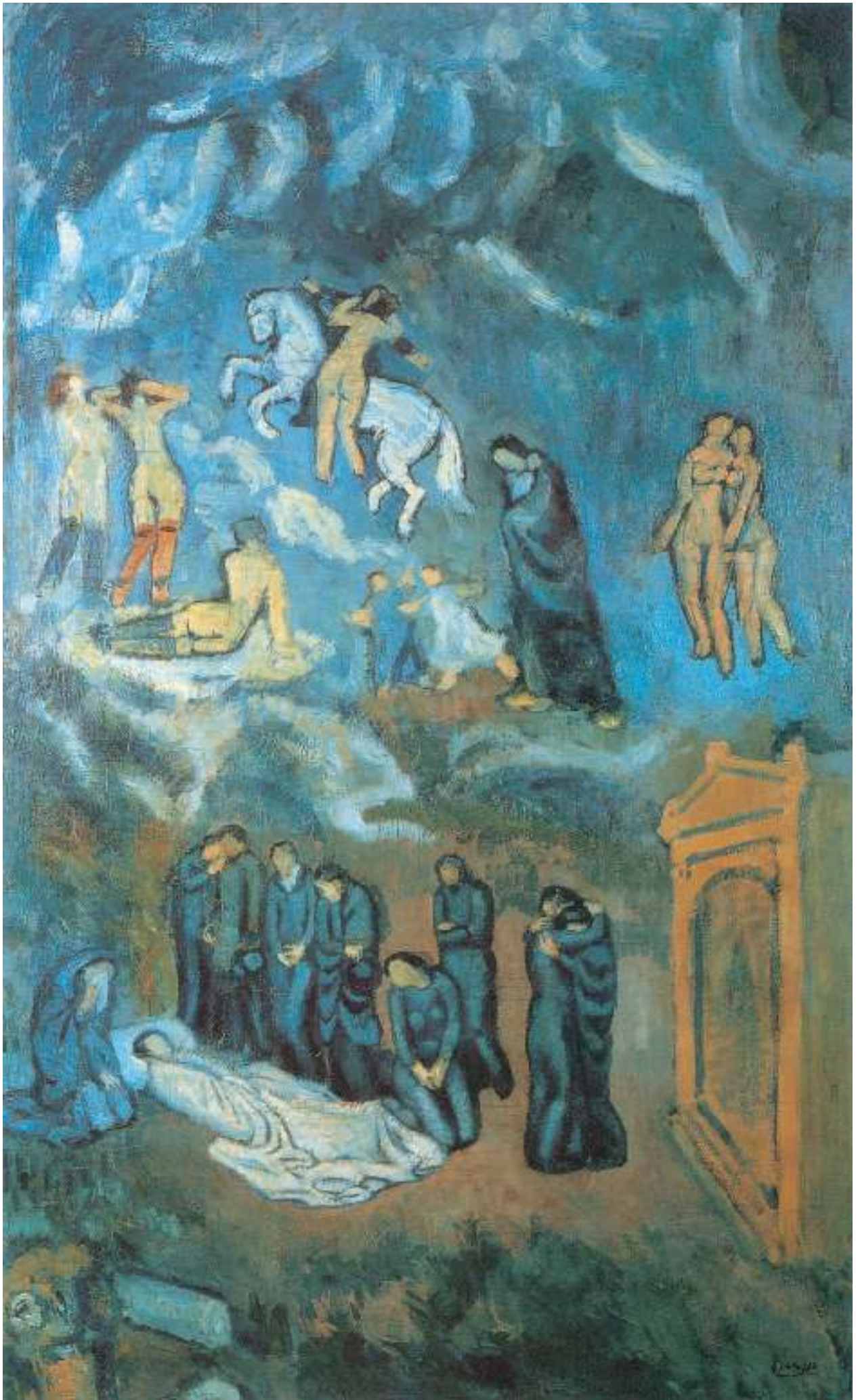
Death of Casagemas, 1901.
Oil on wood, 27 x 35 cm,
Musée Picasso, Paris.

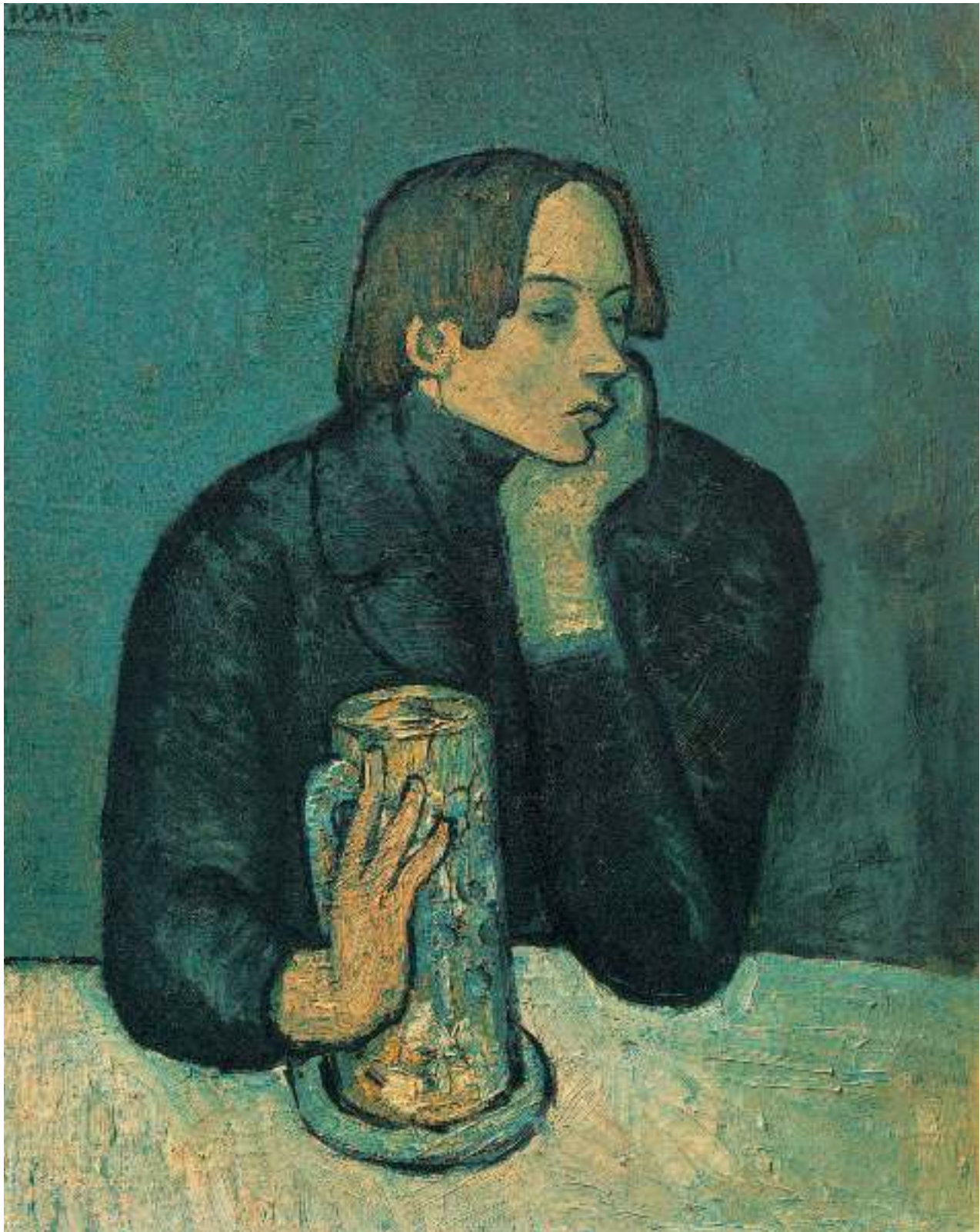
The Burial of Casagemas (Evocation), 1901.
Oil on canvas, 146 x 89 cm,
Petit Palais, Paris.

for saving the soul — tell him to send Gaudí and the Sagrada Família to hell... Here there are real teachers everywhere.”¹⁹

Vast exhibition halls of paintings at the Exposition Universelle (number 79 in the Spanish section was: Pablo Ruiz Picasso, *Les Derniers Moments*), the retrospective *Centennale* and *Décennale de l'art français*, great shows with paintings by Ingres and Delacroix, Courbet and the Impressionists, up to and including Cézanne; the gigantic Louvre with its endless halls of masterpieces and sculptures of ancient civilizations; whole streets of galleries and shops showing and dealing in new-style painting... “More than sixty years later,” recalls Pierre Daix, “he would tell me of his delight at what he then discovered. He suddenly took measure of the limits and stiffness of Barcelona, Spain. He did not expect it.”²⁰ He was staggered by the abundance of artistic impressions, by this new feeling of freedom, “not so much of customs,” noted Daix, “...as of human relations.”²¹

Picasso’s “real teachers” were the older painters of Montmartre, who helped him discover the broad spectrum of local subject matter: the popular dances, the café-concerts with their stars, the attractive and sinister world of nocturnal joys, electrified by the glow of feminine charms (Forain and Toulouse-Lautrec), but also the everyday melancholy and nostalgic atmosphere of small streets on the city outskirts, where the autumn darkness heightens the plaintive feeling of loneliness (Steinlen — with whom, Cirlot says, Picasso became personally acquainted). However, it was not because of Zola’s mystical appeal (which Anatole France said





Portrait of the poet Sabartés (Glass of Beer),
1901.

Oil on canvas, 82 x 66 cm,
The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

inspired Steinlen), nor due to a taste for bizarre lifestyles, nor due to the satirical impulse that Picasso entered his so-called Cabaret period. This subject matter attracted him because it afforded the possibility to express the view that life is a drama and that its heart is the sexual urge. And yet the direct, expressive and austere realistic treatment of these subjects reminds one not so much of French influences as of Goya's late period (for instance, such pictures as *Third of May, 1808*).

This is especially true of the Moscow canvas *The Embrace* — the absolute peak of the 1900 Paris period and undoubtedly one of the young

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