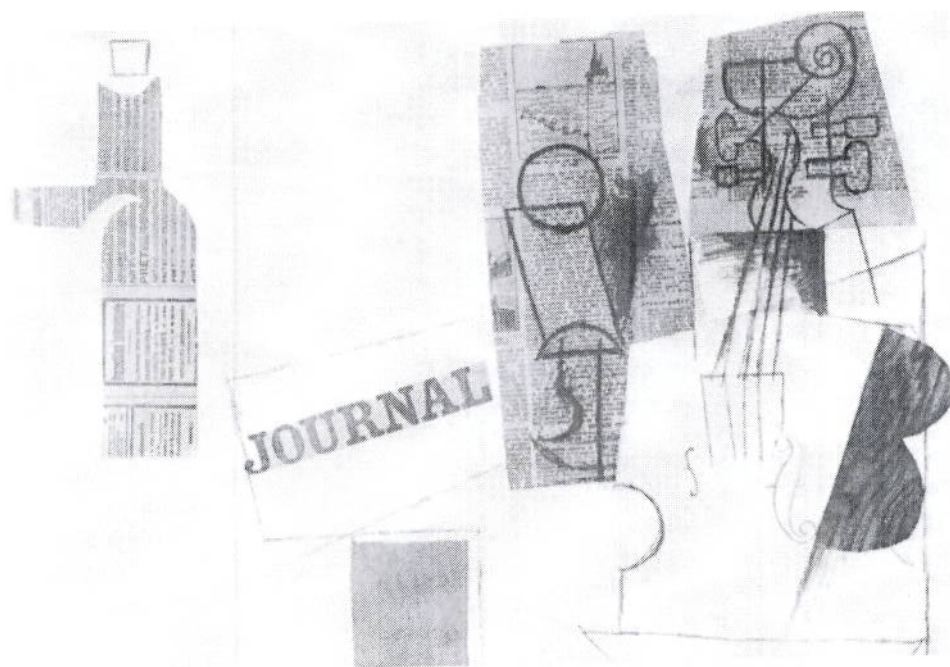




Pablo Picasso. *Glass and Violin*, 1912. (Daix cat. no. 529.)

Pablo Picas
Violin Hur
(Right.)

If one of the formal strategies that develops from collage, first into synthetic and then into late cubism, is the insistence of figure/ground reversal and the continual transposition between negative and positive form, this formal resource derives from collage's command of the structure of signification: no positive sign without the eclipse or negation of its material referent. The extraordinary contribution of collage is that it is the first instance within the pictorial arts of anything like a systematic exploration of the conditions of representability entailed by the sign.

From this notion of absence as one of the preconditions of the sign, one can begin to see the objections to the kind of game that literalizes the labels of cubist collages, giving us the "real" name of the wine marked by EAU or the newspaper by JOUR. Because the use of word-fragments is not the sprinkling of nicknames on the surfaces of these works, but rather the marking of the name itself with that condition of incompleteness or absence which secures for the sign its status as representation.

The second of Saussure's conditions for the operation of the sign turns not so much on absence as on difference. "*In language there are only differences,*"