

of three reds) and thereby to secure the original object. In this certainty about word-world connection there is realism indeed.

But are the labels EAU and JOU a set of transparent signifiers, the nicknames of a group of objects (the newspaper, the winebottle) whose real names (*Journal*, *Beaujolais*) form the basis for this labor of the cubist pun? Is the structure of cubist collage itself supportive of the semantic positivism that will allow it to be thus assimilated to the art history of the proper name? Or are the word-fragments that gather on the surfaces of Picasso's collages instead a function of a rather more exacting notion of reference, representation, and signification?

This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so.
—Robert Rauschenberg

The most recent major addition to the scholarly inquiry on cubism is Pierre Daix's catalogue raisonné, *Picasso: 1907–1916*. Daix's suggestive text expands the somewhat limited art-historical vocabulary for describing what transpires with the advent of collage, for Daix insists on characterizing collage-elements as signs—not simply in the loose way that had occurred earlier on in the Picasso literature—but in a way that announces its connection to structural linguistics.¹⁹

Daix is careful to subdivide the sign into signifier and signified—the first being the affixed collage-bit or element of schematic drawing itself; the second being the referent of this signifier: newspaper, bottle, violin.²⁰ Though this is rare in his discussion, Daix does occasionally indicate that the signified may not be an object at all but rather a free-floating property, like a texture—for example, wood, signified by a bit of wood-grained wallpaper—or a formal element such as verticality or roundness—although this element is usually shown to function as the property of an object: of the round, vertical winebottle, for example.²¹ Again and again Daix hammers away at the lesson that cubist collage exchanges the natural visual world of things for the artificial, codified language of signs.

But there is, nowhere in Daix's exposition, a rigorous presentation of the concept of the sign. Because of this, and the manner in which much of Daix's own discussion proceeds, it is extremely easy to convert the issue of the collage-sign into a question of semantics, that is, the sign's transparent connection to a given

19. Daix's relation to structuralism and an analysis of the sign is documented as being through Lévi-Strauss, to whom he refers at points throughout his text.

20. Because Daix seems, indeed, to equate the *signified* with the *referent*, he deviates in the most crucial way from Saussure's characterization of the signified as the *concept* or *idea* or *meaning* of the sign. Saussure is careful to distinguish between the concept evoked by the sign and any real-world, physical object to which the signifier could be attached as a label. It is to the former that the designation *signified* belongs. Daix, who never mentions Saussure's name, seems likewise unaware of the major import of Saussure's analysis.

21. See Pierre Daix, *Picasso: The Cubist Years 1907–1916*, New York, New York Graphic Society/Little, Brown, 1980, p. 123.