The ultimate aim I have set myself in composing this study is to contribute to a more rigorous and nuanced reading of Modigliani's oeuvre, while carefully avoiding generalisations that might, from an exegetical standpoint, conflict with the practice of an artist inherently devoted to inquiry and, for that very reason, scarcely reducible to a comprehensive theoretical framework applicable to his entire production. Proceeding within this perspective, I came to believe that I had developed a body of reflections possessing a sufficient degree of coherence and intelligibility to warrant their being shared.

The structure I have adopted for the present essay is essentially bipartite. The first—and more substantial—section is devoted to the compositional process underlying Modigliani's work. The second addresses the sole historiographical reconstruction I have undertaken, focusing on Modigliani's residence at the Bateau-Lavoir, a circumstance that proves pivotal to the analysis and redating of several of his nudes, among which particular attention is accorded to what is arguably the most celebrated: the *Nu couché*.

The analysis of the principles governing the artist's complex creative process has, in my view, revealed a representational system structured upon three foundational pillars: space, volume, and form. A considerable portion of the scholarly literature has approached the genesis of his compositions through interpretative lenses that betray a certain degree of preconception. This has given rise to psychologically oriented readings in which some authors have proceeded on the assumption that Modigliani operated from an understanding of the unconscious clearly indebted to psychoanalytic theory. Others have discerned in his works primitivist inflections or echoes of Renaissance grandeur; at times, the aesthetic outcome distinctive to his art has been attributed exclusively to the direct influence of the Parisian avant-gardes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In my considered view—and I shall endeavour to demonstrate this—such factors did indeed contribute, at least in part, to shaping the distinctive spatial, volumetric, and formal conception elaborated by Modigliani. At the same time, however, I cannot refrain from observing that a fundamental misunderstanding lies latent within the dominant exegetical paradigms, the principal consequence of which has been the crystallisation—indeed, the ossification—of interpretative approaches to his work.

In order to overcome this interpretative rigidity, I have sought to redirect

the inquiry toward the foundational principles of Modigliani's compositional architecture. From a methodological standpoint, I have anchored my analysis in close engagement with the works themselves, producing a series of graphic elaborations intended to convey the underlying concepts with greater clarity and precision. I readily acknowledge that I set aside, from the outset, any ambition to examine every individual drawing or painting; my objective was not to compile a catalogue raisonné, but rather to formulate a coherent interpretative framework capable of illuminating the structural logic of his artistic production.

Pictorial Space, Volume, and Form in Modigliani's Creative Process

Amedeo Modigliani is undoubtedly one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century. He possesses the indisputable merit of having interpreted, in an original manner, the historical and artistic developments unfolding in early twentieth-century Paris—then the vital epicentre of a revolution that would permanently reshape the course of Art History.

Born in Livorno on 12 July 1884, he trained in the workshop of Guglielmo Micheli, a pupil of Giovanni Fattori, where he had the opportunity to refine his innate artistic inclination. Fattori himself was an extraordinary draughtsman, printmaker, and painter, the progenitor of a school that influenced and shaped entire generations of artists—among the most refined in the European panorama—yet for a long time inexplicably neglected by much of academic criticism.

It is to this formative experience that one must trace the development of the exceptional graphic and painterly line that distinguishes Modigliani's production. His was an innate talent that found fertile ground in the intellectual and artistic ferment of Livorno, further enriched by his sojourns in some of Italy's principal centres of artistic heritage: Naples, Rome, Florence, and Venice. In the latter cities he attended life-drawing schools, albeit, according to testimony, intermittently. There can be little doubt that the Italian artistic tradition exerted a profound influence upon him; in his management of space, he likely assimilated lessons from Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci. His distinctive conception of volume was certainly informed by direct knowledge of classical statuary, and

echoes of Egyptian art may also be discerned in his work. As for painterly technique and chromatic conception, he absorbed the teachings of the Macchiaioli and the colouristic research advanced by the great masters of the Venetian Renaissance—Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto. This substratum would later merge with the new formal languages offered by the Parisian avant-gardes, even though his aesthetic would ultimately retain a profoundly personal orientation.

He arrived in Paris in 1906, where he confronted the preceding generation of painters who had enacted the artistic revolution in France: Manet, Monet, Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Cézanne. From the master of Aix-en-Provence, Modigliani adopted, among other elements, a system of representing space and bodies through planes and volumes; these suggestions converged in certain paintings from his early Parisian period marked by strong Cézannian resonances. In my view, Modigliani never ceased his dialogue with the great French artist.

Modigliani expressed admiration for Soutine, and I surmise that this sentiment stemmed from an empathetic recognition of the sacrifice the Belarusian-born painter made in preserving his artistic vocation. Despite a marked idiosyncrasy between them, of his own generation Modigliani esteemed only Picasso, who—priest of the Cubist revolution—took up Cézanne's initial premises and brought them to fulfilment. Together with Braque, the Spanish painter introduced into the artwork the possibility for the viewer to apprehend volumes otherwise constrained by the limits of the single viewpoint imposed by Renaissance perspective.

In essence, what scholars commonly define as the "fourth dimension"—that of time—was introduced. (It is worth recalling that, in contrast to the Cubist conception of space, traditional three-dimensionality refers to the technical device necessary to render the volume of artistic objects and the sense of spatial depth through perspective and chiaroscuro. It remains a *fictio*, since the *corpus mechanicum* on which the work is executed remains fundamentally two-dimensional.)

Many consider Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), painted while he was a tenant at the Bateau-Lavoir, to be the manifesto of this research.

The theoretical premises of Cubism are now firmly established within the discipline of Art History; I shall therefore proceed with a simplified example for illustrative purposes. Let us imagine a solid three-dimensional figure—a cube. From a given viewpoint, at a given moment (t'), it is possible to see at most three of its six faces; the remaining three are concealed. To observe the hidden portion would

require a change in viewpoint and, consequently, a transition to another temporal moment (t''). Cubist decomposition allows, in summary, the synthesis within a single observational event (E), at a time (t), of the two temporal moments (t') and (t''), such that Et = t' + t''.

This theoretical process led to the development of various tendencies, conventionally divided into Proto-Cubism, Analytical Cubism, and Synthetic Cubism. The research, particularly in its initial phase under Cézanne, began with the reduction of figures and objects to elementary volumes. This was followed by a fragmentation of space: volumes and planes were rendered through juxtaposition, superimposition, and interpenetration. Thus multiple viewpoints were multiplied, and a compositional architecture emerged freed from constraints of perspective, proportion, and time. The process resulted in the near unrecognisability of the subject; consequently, to avert an excessively abstract drift, Braque and Picasso introduced typographic characters, signs, and forms recalling reality, thereby anchoring the composition to the visible world.

This device inaugurated Synthetic Cubism, essentially a tempering of the excessive fragmentation characteristic of the analytical phase. Braque, Picasso, and Juan Gris incorporated *papier collé* and *trompe-l'œil*, compositional artifices serving as bridges between painting and reality. Spatial indications became superfluous, and compositional structure evolved through the sliding and juxtaposition of planes. Colour was reintroduced—albeit in an anti-naturalistic key—in contrast to the restricted palette of Analytical Cubism.

Building upon the premises established by Cézanne and later by Cubism, Modigliani did not evade the imperative to rethink pictorial space in original terms. Yet he transcended traditional spatial construction in a wholly personal and independent manner, distinct from avant-garde currents.

Close observation of his works reveals that the segmentation into planes characteristic of classical spatial conception was reinterpreted by Modigliani in favour of an organic unity among figure, background, and space. Although his compositions engage multiple depth planes, they avoid the abrupt elisions typical of traditional spatial stratification. This originality arises, among other factors, from a three-dimensional articulation of line, enabling the artist to develop figures seamlessly within constructed space.

Moreover, I believe I have identified a further crucial element within Modigliani's

spatial conception: the systematic deployment of negative space. Drawing upon his sculptural experience, he often conceived pictorial space as a solid block from which figures were extracted. The immediate consequence was the emergence of a negative space in counterpoint to the figure. By orchestrating a dialogic relationship between figure (positive volume) and negative space (void volume), Modigliani generated the distinctive spatial depth characteristic of his compositions.

In one drawing dated 1914–15, a terse note referring to the relationship between full and empty appears. Though laconic, it may be read as a programmatic indication of research subsequently developed in later works.

Modigliani's commitment to conferring spatial depth is evident in the architecture of his paintings and drawings, structured through perspectival and compositional decisions oriented toward the creation of space tending toward infinity. In pursuit of this effect, many works exhibit a compression of space—responsible for the characteristic elongations and distortions—particularly in width. As a counterbalance, openings rendered through meticulous chromatic modulation alternate void and fullness, generating both compositional equilibrium and perceptual dynamism.

Thus, Modigliani arrived at a composite figurative system wherein the interplay of fullness and emptiness, geometric use of line, and original perspectival structures converge.

Regarding colour, Modigliani—an accomplished colourist—developed an original method of constructing volume through chromatic modulation, painterly gesture, and a carefully calibrated palette. In his conception, these elements embody a remarkable synthesis between traditional and modern approaches to the artistic object.

Brief mention must be made of the celebrated stylistic device of the "absence of eyes." In my view, the need to extend composition into depth, maintain plane interconnection, and achieve unity led Modigliani to devise a compositional model that visually reclaims the space behind the sitter. The hollow rendering of the eye sockets directs the viewer's gaze beyond the figure. This distinctive feature thus possesses a fundamentally spatial meaning. Often the eyes share the colour of the background; in other cases, tonal modulation corresponds to the depth assigned within the figurative structure.

Importantly, Modigliani's work does not entail the radical fragmentation of space and fusion of figure and background found in early Analytical Cubism. Although he pursued unity between figure and space, he preserved structural autonomy among compositional elements. To achieve this, he employed what I have termed "bridge-objects," devices linking figure, background, and space. In their absence, composition is conceived as a solid block from which the figure is carved, effectively producing a painted bas-relief.

Finally, I have identified another quality within certain works: the presence of anamorphic information requiring the painting to be viewed at a slight angle for proper interpretation. Through this device, the viewer's standpoint becomes integral to the recomposition and genesis of the work. The result is a compositional model in which figures function as spatial masks whose form—emerging from contextual volumes—becomes a geometric expression and symbol of the conceived architectural order.

In conclusion, I contend that Modigliani inaugurated, in a wholly original manner, a transformation in the plastic value of space, celebrating a masterful synthesis between avant-garde innovation and the legacy of classical spatial construction. Along this threshold, his legendary line reveals its full character as a spatial transformer, capable of ferrying tradition toward modernity.

Chapter Four

The Works

Portrait of Mario Varvoglis

For the concrete verification of the principles outlined above, I have taken as my initial point of reference what many scholars regard as Modigliani's final work, namely the *Portrait of Mario Varvoglis* (Fig. 1), a painting in which the pictorial apex and artistic maturity attained by the artist in the last months of his life are fully manifest. According to contemporary witnesses, the canvas was present in the atelier on Rue de la Grande-Chaumière when Modigliani was seized by illness and transported, in agony, to the Hôpital de la Charité.

In the graphic elaboration I propose (Fig. 2), one may observe, immediately above and behind the figure, a background element—apparently a section of wall and/or a door—characterised by a pronounced deformation. Volumetrically articulated through a masterful modulation of colour into prismatic forms, it appears at first glance devoid of specific compositional significance; one might suppose that Modigliani here indulged in a purely stylistic choice. In reality, however, we are confronted with a sophisticated construction that determines the physiognomy of the sitter. Given the inclination of the head, the points of convexity (indicated by blue lines) and concavity (indicated by red lines) of those solids, when geometrically projected, correspond with remarkable precision to the convex and concave areas of Mario's face, thereby defining its form (Fig. 3, detail).

Thus, in Mario's countenance we observe concretely realised the dialectical relationship between figure and space previously discussed—a nexus that will become progressively clearer as the present argument unfolds.

A further characteristic of Modigliani's compositions must be underscored, one that produces a dual effect in this and other works: although Mario's face indeed derives its form from the volumes situated behind the head, it nevertheless preserves—albeit transfigured into a new archetypal aesthetic entity—a minimal fidelity to the physical features of Mario Varvoglis (Figs. 4, 5, and 6).

Modigliani succeeded in safeguarding his figures from a radical deconstruction of their constituent volumes. This was made possible by a dynamic use of line which, on the one hand, ensured the figure's development in depth and, on the other, preserved its volumetric integrity. In my view, this constitutes the clearest expression of a profound respect for the sitter, who is thus not reduced to a mere pretext for an intellectual exercise in artistic construction but is elevated to a generative measure of visual poetry.

If the pursuit of spatial depth and the exaltation of volume represent two of the cornerstones upon which Modigliani's compositional architecture rests, a corollary of this premise lies in the positioning of figures within pictorial space: they frequently incline to the right or left of the painting's central axis. In the portrait of Mario, the tilt of the head enables Modigliani to initiate the development of the line defining the left side (from the viewer's perspective) of the face and hat from a plane set further back than the frontal one (Fig. 7). That same line subsequently articulates itself within the conceived space, traversing and engaging multiple planes (marked

A, B, C, and D in Fig. 7).

We are thus verifying the celebrated tridimensional quality of Modigliani's line, a feature noted by several scholars, among whom Lionello Venturi was the first to attempt a definition, later echoed by his pupil Nello Ponente.

In his 1930 article "Sulla linea di Modigliani," published in *Poligono*, Venturi observed that "the development of the line seems to bring onto the plane many elements created for depth, and thus one might suppose that he considers decorative value the aim of art. Yet one soon realises that this is not so, and that his lines never unfold upon a single plane, but realise, under the appearance of surface, a vision in three dimensions."

Ponente, in his monograph on Modigliani (Sedea/Sansoni, 1969), wrote: "Modigliani thus situates himself within a historical period—indeed still our own—in which the human condition seems unable to rely on any certainties. With full coherence he therefore spoke in the terms of a modern language, pursued—let it be specified—more rationally than instinctively. By means of line developed upon the plane, he was compelled to deform the place and dimension of the images he represented, even in order to propose more intimate truths and reveal an unknown world. In this way he posited artistic practice as a possibility for transcending everyday reality."

It is my belief that Lionello Venturi had keenly grasped the core of Modigliani's research. The only evident limitation of his interpretation lies in the absence of empirical demonstration. I have sought to remedy this by offering graphic elaborations—such as those already presented in relation to Mario's head—while acknowledging that the geometric properties of line do not exhaust the factors determining Modigliani's compositional outcomes.

Let us proceed further in the analysis.

The figure emerges from what may be described as a sculptural matrix rendered pictorially—dense with volumes—that plastically expresses the relationship between figure and conceived space. Consider the line defining the right side (from the viewer's perspective) of the head: it originates in depth, traverses space as it articulates itself across different planes, and terminates on the frontal plane, effectively bisecting the figure (Fig. 8; planes A, B, C).

Continuing the examination, one may observe, beginning at the height of the

right shoulder, the distinctive configuration assumed by the line that defines the volume and form of the right arm (from the viewer's perspective). Once again, the tridimensional articulation of line across multiple planes may be verified, in accordance with the figure's spatial development (Fig. 9: A, B, C, D, E, F).

The transformation of the contextual volumes marks the shifts between planes and establishes the depth relationship with the figure (Fig. 10). I also discern an opening (Fig. 10, letter B) which, together with the elements adduced, substantiates—at least in my view—the existence in Modigliani's compositions of a bidirectional relationship between fullness and void. As noted earlier, this opening also mitigates the risk of excessive closure within the pictorial space.

Taken as a whole, the painting's final aesthetic effect may be likened to a bas-relief rendered pictorially, betraying throughout Modigliani's artistic trajectory the enduring bond he maintained with sculpture.

I would now draw attention to a particular detail in Mario's portrait, which will allow us to appreciate more fully the degree of meticulousness with which Modigliani developed his works (Fig. 11). Consider the left arm (from the viewer's perspective): it appears suspended in mid-air, with no visible support to justify its position. Now observe the fingers of the same hand: the thumb and index finger converge at a single point (Fig. 11, red point and arrow). What we are witnessing is a symbolic gesture to which Modigliani has assigned a spatial function. From it we may derive the point of maximum concavity within the conceived space. If we project an imaginary line from the junction of the two fingers across the pictorial field, we reach the deepest point of the composition, situated behind the sitter (Fig. 11, yellow line indicating the maximum concavity).

The overcoming of traditional spatial structure was one of the principal achievements of Cubism, and Modigliani moved from similar premises while resolving pictorial space in a wholly independent manner.

I anticipate here that, in the Livornese artist's conception, the image is liberated from the constraints of its support and projected—through the agency of the observer—into a tridimensionality that is not merely fictive but real. This final concept will be examined more thoroughly in the analysis of the works that follow.

The Noble Lady

At this juncture, let us proceed with the analysis of a drawing entitled *La Noble Lady*, likely a portrait of Beatrice Hastings (Fig. 26), which will enable us to take a further step toward clarifying Modigliani's method of structuring pictorial space.

Behind the depicted subject, extending from top to bottom, one observes a volumetric body analogous to that identified in the portrait of Mario Varvoglis (Fig. 27).

I have therefore highlighted, by means of straight lines, the aforementioned volume, which I hypothesise to be morphologically composed of a series of triangular prisms. As in the portrait of Mario, each solid constituting this volumetric structure possesses points of convexity and concavity which, when geometrically projected, generate the corresponding convexities and concavities of Beatrice Hastings' face, thereby modelling her physiognomy.

More specifically, taking into account the particular perspectival choice adopted here, the volumetric body marked (A), in blue, positioned to the left (from the viewer's perspective), is responsible for shaping the left side of the face; volume (B), in green, confers form upon the nose; and the solid indicated as (C), in yellow, informs the right side of the face (Figs. 27 and 28).

We may also verify the meticulousness with which Modigliani executed this drawing: a small line, tangent to the left nostril (from the viewer's perspective), indicates a point of concavity in the face corresponding precisely to the concavity of the volume situated behind the sitter (Figs. 27 and 28, magenta line).

Further evidence of the high degree of elaboration to which Modigliani subjected his compositions emerges from a detail that might at first appear almost negligible: the eyebrow (the only one sketched and visible in the drawing) functions as a compositional device signalling the shift of plane between volume (B) and volume (C) (Fig. 29).

For the sole purpose of facilitating a clearer reading, I have also sought to emphasise the spatial construction underlying the drawing by superimposing a light-blue parallelepiped, as shown in Fig. 30.

Moreover, the insertion of the figure within ellipses of reduced semi-axes—represented by the armchair—imbues the composition with pronounced dynamism (Fig. 31).

In sum, the figure analysed here unfolds across multiple planes: the head occupies the deepest plane, while the body articulates forward until it reaches the plane closest to the observer. The composition clearly reveals the influence of space upon the formal outcome of the figure, to the extent that the latter may be regarded as a geometric property of the conceived space itself, from which it directly originates in order to assume the visible form before us.

Portrait of Beatrice Hastings

Further confirmation of the modus operandi adopted by Modigliani emerges from another probable portrait of Beatrice Hastings, likewise executed in 1915 (Fig. 34).

In conceiving and constructing the pictorial space of this work, Modigliani followed the same process identified in the works examined thus far.

The figure is situated within an interior setting; the face and neck are modelled upon a hollow volumetric structure which I identify as a window within the room occupied by the sitter. I have adjusted the contrast of the original drawing in order to facilitate the reading of my graphic intervention: it will be noted that the upper contour of the head and the left and right extremities of the face and neck are determined, respectively, by the arch of the window and by its vertical jambs (Fig. 35).

In particular, in the geometric projection that defines the right side of the neck and face, one observes a slight torsion toward the centre in the form derived from the right-hand jamb of the window—a device which, in my view, serves to confer a coherent and resolved form upon the figure.

Once again, this work makes manifest the importance of the relationship between figure and space, and the specific meaning attributed to that relationship in determining the final formal outcome of the composition.

The spatial context elaborated by Modigliani, as we have verified, is dense with volumes and objects—what I have termed “bridge-objects”—frequently positioned behind the sitters, as in this case. These elements are conceived so as to establish a connection between figure and background, thereby reducing the pictorial field to unity.

In my view, these are often elements genuinely present in the real environment, functionalised by Modigliani to link lived reality to the artistic composition, thus transcending mere representation. At times such objects—whether pictograms, inscriptions, signs, seemingly insignificant volumes, or dissimulated forms—constitute exercises in pure composition which, in addition to their spatial function, also operate as signatures. In other instances, the composition integrates both elements drawn from the real context and objects created solely in service of spatial architecture.

In this regard, I would propose a hypothesis concerning the possible origin of the window and, consequently, the contribution that the actual environment may have made to the determination of the final form of Beatrice Hastings' head and neck.

It is well established that the English poet and Modigliani shared, during their relationship between 1914 and 1915, a small cottage in Montmartre at 13 Rue Norvins. Photographs I have located online show the building in its present state (Fig. 36), and if, as I believe, its appearance has remained largely unchanged over the past century, it is highly probable that the window depicted in the drawing —contributing to the shaping of Beatrice's head and neck—is in fact one of the windows, or possibly the main entrance, still visible today (Figs. 36 and 37, comparison).

In other words, Modigliani may have synthesised the real spatial context and the sitter herself in order to derive the observable form of the drawing. In my elaboration (Fig. 35), I have identified, at the apex of the head, a square-section groove; for the reasons set forth, it is conceivable that this represents the imprint of the lower part of the keystone still visible in the arch of one of the windows or of the doorway at 13 Rue Norvins (Figs. 36 and 37). In this case, the real spatial context would assume the role of signifier within the imagined composition, and the artist would have indissolubly bound effigy, sitter, and environment into a new aesthetic entity endowed with autonomous formal identity.

Within this framework, one must also consider the spatial value of the window behind the sitter, through which opens a space tending toward infinity, evoked by the artist through modulation of the tonal values of graphite (Fig. 38). Indeed, the central portion of the face reflects the pictorial space articulated in the drawing.

Consider, in this regard, the further volumetric elaboration of the head (Fig. 38). Modigliani's intention is clearly to endow the face with significant depth

development, and not by chance is it modelled upon a hollow body: the line defining the eyebrow arches evokes the depth of the window, unfolding across multiple planes and levels of recession. The eyes themselves are placed upon a plane distinct from—and less recessed than—that of the brow ridges.

Let us pause briefly on the rendering of the nose. It is represented as a hollow volume: through the use of void, of negative space, the artist more effectively conveys the sense of depth of the figure, echoing the void that extends behind the face and establishing continuity with the window opening. Moreover, the slight inclination of head and neck further emphasises depth of field, reiterating the compositional model observed in the portrait of Mario Varvoglis (Fig. 38).

The inscriptions visible in the drawing—"La Vita Domestica," "Santa," enclosed within a parallelepiped—are conceived and inserted so as to reinforce the perspectival structure. The inscription in the upper right, "SOEURE CHARITABLE," unfolds across two planes: "SOEURE" (marked by a blue line) recedes into greater depth, while "CHARITABLE," aligned with a yellow line, appears closer to the observer (Figs. 39 and 40).

As already noted in relation to the surname of the Lipchitz couple in their portrait, every element in Modigliani's pictorial space—even the seemingly negligible—contributes to articulating spatial architecture and depth.

Let us again direct our attention to the sitter's right arm (from the viewer's perspective). One may observe how Modigliani constructs and defines the volume upon which this anatomical segment develops and takes form (Fig. 41, detail).

From this drawing emerges, yet again, Modigliani's distinctive conception of space and volume. All elements of the composition resonate in harmonic accord, meticulously conceived as a unison serving the overall compositional development.

In my view, we are here confronted with one of the crucial moments of Modigliani's artistic maturity. It is 1915, and after years devoted to sculpture, the artist brings to fruition the aesthetic for which he is universally recognised. It was certainly an annus mirabilis for him, both personally and artistically, owing in part to his relationship with Beatrice Hastings, which—despite periods of intense tension—appears to have provided a fertile creative impetus.

In discussing the portraits of Mario and of the Lipchitz couple, I referred to the tridimensionality of Modigliani's line, defined as its geometric capacity to articulate

itself across multiple planes.

Yet there is more.

The study of this remarkable drawing has enabled me to explore further a spatial conception present in Modigliani's work, to which I have already alluded.

His compositions contain tridimensional information insofar as they are conceived through anamorphosis—an optical phenomenon that produces image distortion through alteration of height–width ratios. The image must therefore be viewed from a specific, sharply inclined vantage point in order to be read correctly. Many painters have employed anamorphism; Leonardo himself mentions it in his notes, and numerous scholars have argued that the disproportion of the arm in his Annunciation (now in the Uffizi) derives from this technique. One of the most famous applications is found in Hans Holbein the Younger's The Ambassadors, housed in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 42), in which the concealed image of a skull becomes legible only when viewed from a dramatically oblique angle (Fig. 43).

When an oblique perspectival view, with the panel inclined, is applied to the present portrait, one observes an accentuated depth development of the figure and a plastic restitution of the composition's tridimensionality.

With meticulous precision, Modigliani also provides indications of the expansion of planes in space, modulating the figure in accordance both with the depth he intends to represent and with the perspective from which the work must be observed.

The acute angular rendering of the shoulders implies precisely this principle: when viewed in perspective, they recede to a greater depth than other parts of the body.

To emphasise the figure's depth development, the artist also signals changes of plane through segmentation of the torso. Note, in particular, the red lines traversing the sitter's bust, which indicate a shift of plane (Fig. 44).

Moreover, from the adopted perspective one more clearly perceives the description of a hollow volume at the centre of the torso (Fig. 44, yellow arrow), suggested by the shawl draped over the sitter's shoulders. Once again, the artist's primary intent is to confer depth upon the figure and to grant it a tridimensional, sculptural consistency.

It should be added that Modigliani consistently achieves a remarkable economy of

means: he attains his characteristic aesthetic results through restrained yet incisive use of pictorial and compositional devices.

A paradigmatic example of this principle lies in the rendering of the shoulders, whose distinctive form constitutes one of the recurring stylistic features of his portraits. As already verified in the present drawing, they wedge into space when viewed from below, evoking depth; in many other works they are merely suggested, and the depiction of only a minimal portion suffices to provide the necessary perspectival information and to render the painting's tridimensionality convincingly.

This principle will be examined more fully in the analysis of the next painting.

Portrait of Hanka Zborowska

Within Modigliani's oeuvre there exists a painting that encapsulates, with extraordinary efficacy, the decisive role played by space in determining the physiognomy of the depicted subject. I refer to the *Portrait of Hanka (Anna) Zborowska* (Fig. 66), companion of Modigliani's final dealer, Leopold Zborowski.

The composition is executed in the artist's characteristic style: the neck and head are elongated, while the shoulders are only faintly indicated.

In my view, Modigliani here enacted a compression of space and, consequently, of perspective; this operation necessarily entailed a deformation of proportions and an elongation of the sitter's head and neck.

At this point, the underlying cause of the celebrated stylistic hallmark of elongated faces and necks becomes clear: it is often the immediate result of a contraction of space and perspective that bears upon the form of faces, necks, and, more generally, figures, deforming them. Verification of this principle emerges when the painting is viewed from an oblique or accidental perspective: space dilates, and the sitter regains, even in this case, more canonical proportions (Fig. 67).

Through an intentional aberration of height–width ratios, Modigliani created a spatial construction whose tridimensionality is not merely fictive but real—provided, as I have already argued, that the observer actively seeks the appropriate vantage point and distance required for a correct reading of the work.

This painting, however, offers additional interpretative keys deserving further exploration.

In accordance with the principle previously articulated—namely, that the elements of context and space stand in a dialogical relationship with the effigy of the portrayed subject—the candlestick visible in this work functions as a semantic and formal metaphor of the portrait: a *maquette*, so to speak, of Hanka Zborowska's painted image.

If we examine Fig. 68 and begin from the uppermost point, we note that the candle's wick replicates the form of the parting at the apex of Hanka's head and geometrically reiterates the arc describing the upper contour of her skull.

Moreover, through the configuration of the candle and its holder, Modigliani retraces and suggests the shifts of plane, the depths, the alternation of fullness and void, the concavities and convexities of Hanka's face and neck.

Concerning the possible meaning of this highly original figurative arrangement, I believe a hypothesis may be advanced.

In earlier chapters I anticipated Modigliani's intention to achieve unity between figure and space. The insertion within the pictorial context of volumes, objects, or figurative elements—whether real or purely abstract—that confer or contribute to conferring form upon the effigy fulfils a decisive bridging function, establishing an interdependent linkage between figure and space.

One need only recall the works already discussed, in which the dialogical relationship between figure and space is consistently present.

Conversely—yet at the same time corroborating this interpretation—are those works in which such "bridge-objects" are absent. In those instances, in order to preserve the unity to which I have referred, Modigliani appears to have conceived the pictorial space as a compact, solid block from which he carved the figure, treating it—as observed in other examples—much like a bas-relief (an aspect to be examined more fully in the analysis of the portrait of Survage).

It seems evident, in my view, that this *modus operandi* reflects the profound influence exerted by sculpture upon Modigliani's pictorial conception and the formation of his distinctive aesthetic.

The principle of the bridge-object, moreover, is not unique to the Livornese master;

it finds a formal antecedent in a celebrated earlier work, albeit with fundamentally different meaning.

I refer to the so-called *Madonna dal collo lungo* by Parmigianino, housed in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, which Modigliani would almost certainly have seen (Fig. 69). In Parmigianino's painting, the colonnade behind the Madonna visually echoes her elongated neck. The relationship between colonnade and neck, however, carries a symbolic-theological significance, assimilating Mary to the supporting pillar of the Church. In the portrait of Hanka, by contrast, the relationship between candlestick and sitter serves a primarily spatial function: it creates a connective bond between the effigy and the constructed space, reducing them to unity.

A further characteristic of these symbolic devices—sometimes expressed in the form of enigmatic pictograms—present within Modigliani's spaces deserves emphasis. They frequently operate as a form of signature and may be understood as manifestations of the Jewish cultural substratum permeating Modigliani's work; indeed, as I am inclined to believe, they may reflect a conception of reality rooted in Kabbalistic tradition.

Nu Couché

We have now reached the final stage of a journey which I hope has restored to view the poetic vision of an artist endowed with a creative genius of indisputable artistic value—one who contributed to redefining the criteria by which we commonly approach the work of art.

With this concluding step, I turn to the observation and analysis of one last work, among the most emblematic of Modigliani's production, to which a substantial portion of the following chapter will be devoted.

The works examined thus far, as I have sought to demonstrate, constitute fundamental junctures within Modigliani's creative process and define, I believe unequivocally, a distinctive *modus operandi* in which extraordinary spatial elaboration, volume, colour, the purity of line, and a predilection for enigma coexist in dynamic equilibrium.

Nu Couché (Fig. 99), for its part, has achieved renown for having become one of the most expensive paintings ever sold and is widely regarded as one of the most

beautiful nudes in modern art.

Suffused with grace and formal balance, the painting redefined the canonical treatment of its subject. The need to investigate its composition in this chapter arises from the fact that it shares, with certain works already subjected to analytical scrutiny, a common denominator. Indeed, there is a particular detail that captured my attention, which I therefore isolated (Fig. 101). I sought to determine what this form might represent and excluded the possibility that it was a sheet, as might at first appear; it lacks both the softness and the aesthetic rendering of drapery (and Modigliani was certainly capable of depicting drapery).

I deduced that it might indicate—analogously to what we have observed in previously analysed works—the *maquette* of a matrix: a key for reading the painting, and perhaps a signature.

A comparison between this minute form and the remainder of the painting is necessary in order to comprehend the relationship between the two elements.

I therefore propose a graphic elaboration from which it is readily verifiable that the model's body reclines upon a bed saturated with volumes. By following the contours of the figure, one may discern the convexities and concavities produced by the body's weight upon the mattress—effects that Modigliani rendered pictorially through an extremely subtle, meticulous, and refined modulation of colour, producing a volumetric articulation that betrays the painting's sculptural essence. In particular, I believe that Modigliani, in this instance as well, conceived the bed—and the context within which the model is placed—as a solid block from which he carved the volume of the figure (Fig. 100).

If we now turn our attention to the small white form, we may observe that it is traversed by a line modulated in black. This line stands in close relationship to the one that would be obtained by drawing a longitudinal axis through the model's body; both define the shifts of plane within the work. Indeed, the function of this small white *maquette* is precisely to provide a key for identifying the planes and interpreting the spatial development of the composition. I have, in fact, identified three planes, indicated in Figs. 100 and 101 by the letters (A), (B), and (C).

In this case, given the overall spatial development of the painting, I do not believe that this element may be ascribed the function of mediating between figure and space; therefore, the considerations advanced earlier regarding the "bridge-object"

cannot be applied here.

It is probable that Modigliani's innate propensity for enigma led him to assign to this module as well the recurrent value of signature and cryptographic key that characterises such elements.

I now invite the reader to observe the small "stroke," marked in red, positioned to the left (from the viewer's perspective) and occupying plane (C) (Fig. 101), in order to assess whether this apparently negligible detail may also fulfil a spatial function within the compositional economy. If we accept—as I believe has been amply demonstrated—that Modigliani executed his works with meticulous care, then we may recognise in this singular pictorial sign a formal correspondence with the model's arm (specifically the elbow) (Fig. 100). This implies that we are not confronted with a mere accidental flourish, but rather with an element intended to indicate the additional plane—designated, as noted, by the letter (C)—situated along the edge of the bed.

Whether this is indeed a bed will be examined in the following chapter, where I shall also attempt to address the question of the place and time of execution of *Nu Couché*.

Chapter Five

The Nude in Modigliani's Oeuvre

The Particular Case of Nu Couché

The theme of the nude occupies a position of primacy within the corpus of works by Amedeo Modigliani. This is due principally to the exceptional pictorial quality that distinguishes certain of his canvases and to the artist's ability to forge a remarkable synthesis between what he absorbed, during his formative years, from the Italian artistic tradition and the wholly modern and original conception he bestowed upon his subjects. Indeed, his nudes have been regarded as precursors of that extraordinary season of auteur photography that developed from the 1930s through the end of the twentieth century.

The Livornese artist unquestionably merits recognition for having revitalised a

subject that had become exhausted, infusing it with a personality that constitutes one of the principal factors behind its success among collectors and the wider public. In Modigliani's case, moreover, one observes a phenomenon whereby popular and commercial acclaim was followed—perhaps belatedly—by renewed critical attention, initially hesitant in its reception of an artist resistant to facile categorisation.

For many scholars, Modigliani did not engage systematically with the nude until the transition from the patronage of Paul Guillaume to that of Leopold Zborowski. It was allegedly the Polish dealer who encouraged him to devote himself consistently to this theme, undoubtedly more appealing to the market. In truth, the artist had already produced certain "studies" of the nude during his early Parisian years; yet, lacking the regularity that implies sustained investigation, these must be considered occasional incursions (with the exception of the caryatids, which, unlike the nudes —properly understood as portraits—constitute, in my view, studies devoted to the construction of volume).

Setting aside those early experiments, I maintain—contrary to the prevailing view in the literature—that Modigliani executed at least one of his nudes, the most celebrated of them all, *Nu Couché*, prior to entering the orbit of Leopold Zborowski, and that the official dating to 1917 ought therefore to be reconsidered.

As is often the case with Modigliani's oeuvre, the chronology of the nudes remains a debated variable within the broader field of scholarship. Alongside carefully reasoned datings, one encounters others that are decidedly equivocal. In the case of the nudes in general, and of *Nu Couché* in particular, I believe the uncertainty has been fuelled above all by a specific circumstance: aside from a few early exhibition catalogues—almost always devoid of illustrations—and scattered eyewitness accounts, in the absence of documentary records containing accurate notes of successive changes of ownership, dating has frequently rested upon arbitrary attributions to one year or another. Provenance has often been reconstructed on the basis of an original ownership that is itself debatable, especially considering that certain paintings passed repeatedly from Paul Guillaume to Leopold Zborowski, and vice versa, without any detailed account of such transfers.

It should not be forgotten that relations between Modigliani and Paul Guillaume did not cease, even after the artist had formally joined Zborowski's circle. Evidence

of this emerges from a letter written by Modigliani to Zborowski, and from photographs taken during the artist's stay in the south of France, which show Paul Guillaume in Modigliani's company between April–May 1918 and the end of May 1919, when Zborowski was officially his patron. These attest that the two dealers collaborated, for a considerable period, in managing the artistic legacy of the Livornese painter.

In this regard, Marc Restellini has argued that the two gallerists—operating on the Rive Gauche and the Rive Droite respectively—should be regarded, albeit to different degrees, as the principal architects of Modigliani's posthumous success.

If provenance-based dating thus proves fertile ground for inextricable misunderstandings, my investigation necessarily shifted to more challenging terrain, justified—especially in the case of *Nu Couché*—by the discovery of a document that I deemed fundamental and deserving of thorough examination. For the productive development of this and the subsequent chapters, what proves decisive is the attempt to establish as precisely as possible the lodgings occupied by Modigliani between 1915 and 1917. It must be acknowledged, preliminarily, that reconstructing the full sequence of ateliers and dwellings inhabited by Modigliani is a formidable task, given contemporary testimonies indicating that he—like many artists in his milieu—lived in a state of near-constant displacement in Paris.

With Paul Guillaume's intervention, circumstances appeared destined to improve; yet the dealer's contribution, although it brought renewed prosperity, may require some qualification. A scientific analysis conducted by the consortium of French museums on the occasion of the exhibition at the LAM revealed that during the period of Guillaume's patronage, Modigliani frequently reused canvases—traces of earlier compositions being statistically more numerous in works from his early Parisian years and those produced under Guillaume's aegis. This may indicate that the dealer did not supply, beyond agreed purchase payments, the materials necessary for the execution of new works.

What is crucial for our purposes, however, is that Paul Guillaume secured for Modigliani a new studio at the Bateau-Lavoir.

As will become evident in what follows, the precise chronology of the (at least formally defined) transition from Guillaume to Zborowski serves as a watershed in the reconstruction proposed here, enabling a more accurate identification of Modigliani's lodgings between 1915 and 1917. In particular, delimiting the period

of his stay at the Bateau-Lavoir—indissolubly linked to Guillaume's patronage—opens the way, in my view, to a more precise dating of *Nu Couché* and to a circumscribed hypothesis concerning its place of execution. Consequently, I shall be able to formulate conjectures regarding the dating of several other nudes.

The Premise

Having left the Montparnasse district, Modigliani is said—according to his daughter—to have taken up residence as early as 1914 at 13 Rue Ravignan, within the celebrated structure known as the Bateau-Lavoir, a setting of auspicious days for the history of modern art. It remains unclear why Jeanne placed her father's settlement there in 1914; perhaps she inferred the date from the supposed year in which Paul Guillaume assumed responsibility for Modigliani's artistic production. I have, however, sufficient grounds to regard that chronology as imprecise. From Paul Guillaume's own testimonies, from a letter by Modigliani to his mother, and from the correspondence between Guillaume and his mentor Guillaume Apollinaire, one may infer with near certainty that 1915—most probably September—was the year in which Amedeo moved into the building.

In a letter addressed to Giovanni Scheiwiller, dated 6 April 1932, Paul Guillaume wrote:

> "… In 1914, throughout 1915 and part of 1916, I was the sole purchaser of Modigliani's paintings, and it was only in 1917 that Mr. Zborowski took charge of him. Modigliani had been introduced to me by Max Jacob. He was then living with Beatrice Hastings, working either at her place or at that of the painter Haviland, or else in a studio I had rented for him at 13 Rue Ravignan, or in the small Montmartre house he occupied for a time with Beatrice Hastings and where he painted my portrait…"

In this missive Guillaume does not specify the exact year in which Modigliani took up residence at the Bateau-Lavoir; moreover, it was written twelve years after the artist's death. He was more precise in an article published in *Les Arts à Paris* (no. 6, November 1920), only months after Modigliani's death and thus closer in time to the events described:

> "… it was in 1915 that he left Montparnasse to settle in a studio I rented for him at 13 Rue Ravignan, in that historic wooden building which had witnessed the difficult and epic hours of Picasso, Max Jacob, the Douanier Rousseau, and many painters now more or less celebrated…"

Guillaume's recollection is corroborated by a letter Modigliani addressed to his mother on Friday, 9 November 1915, informing her of his new address: "New address: 13 Place Émile Goudeau XVII…". Place Émile Goudeau is the square before the Bateau-Lavoir, formerly part of Rue Ravignan until 1911, when it was renamed. Modigliani was thus clearly communicating his relocation to the Bateau-Lavoir.

If he notified his mother in November 1915, Guillaume's 1920 recollection of having rented him the studio in that year gains credence. Further confirmation may be gleaned from the correspondence between Guillaume and Apollinaire, which marks the moment when the dealer began taking a serious interest in the Livornese artist. On 10 September 1915, Guillaume informed Apollinaire of his intention to make an offer to Modigliani; five days later came Apollinaire's laconic reply:

> "Modigliani—bind him, do not let yourself be bound. Do not argue with him. Take it or leave it. But above all sculpture, and very, very cheap."

It is difficult to imagine that Modigliani, once relocated to the Bateau-Lavoir, would have delayed in communicating his new address to his mother. Taken together, Guillaume's 1920 testimony, the Guillaume–Apollinaire correspondence, and Modigliani's letter of November 1915 converge in fixing his settlement at the Bateau-Lavoir between September and 9 November 1915.

A painting dated September 1915, portraying Paul Guillaume and previously analysed in this study, further strengthens this reconstruction.

What remains is to determine the duration of Modigliani's stay there. This biographical aspect has long been a vexata quaestio, yet it does not preclude careful reconstruction.

In his 1932 testimony, Guillaume claimed that Zborowski only assumed responsibility for Modigliani in 1917—a claim that aligns superficially with Hanka Zborowska's memoirs, in which she recounts an episode from the spring of that year involving a rupture between Modigliani and a dealer named Chéron, prompting the artist to ask Zborowski to represent him. However, the reliability of this recollection is questionable. Leopold himself stated that he met Modigliani in July 1916.

Marc Restellini has plausibly suggested that Guillaume's attempt to shift Zborowski's involvement to 1917 reflects a posthumous rivalry, aimed at prolonging retrospectively his own decisive role in the artist's career. Indeed, Lunia

Czechowska recounted that it was Zborowski who introduced her to Modigliani at La Rotonde in June 1916, after attending an exhibition in Rue Huyghens. Though her recollection of the exact date may be imprecise—the exhibition in question took place between 19 November and 5 December 1916—it nonetheless situates Zborowski's involvement firmly before 1917.

Whether the decisive meeting occurred in March, June–July, or November 1916, what matters for the purposes of this study is that we may establish, with reasonable approximation, a terminus ad quem for Modigliani's stay at the Bateau-Lavoir. With the formal transition to Zborowski's patronage, Modigliani changed lodgings, briefly passing through the Hôtel Sunny on Boulevard de Port-Royal before settling at 3 Rue Joseph Bara, where many of the nudes were executed.

It remains conceivable that some nudes were painted at the Hôtel Sunny; yet Modigliani's sojourn there was brief, and it seems unlikely that he could have recreated in that setting the atmosphere of intimacy he sought for the execution of such subjects.

Chapter Six

Modigliani's Studio

at the Bateau-Lavoir

Having established the chronological framework of Modigliani's stay at the Bateau-Lavoir, and subsequently with the Zborowskis, it is now necessary to examine the core issue of this chapter.

There exist several well-known photographs taken at No. 13 Rue Ravignan (or Place Émile Goudeau, as it was later designated) by Paul Guillaume himself. In one, Modigliani is seen standing as he affixes a drawing to the wall; in another, he is seated before a group of drawings and paintings depicting Beatrice Hastings and Raymond Radiguet. In the same position and within the same setting—indeed, even the sheets of paper scattered on the floor remain in identical arrangement, indicating that the photographs were taken in succession—two additional images portray Paul Guillaume seated on the very chair previously (or subsequently; in

any case, I believe the photographs were taken at the same sitting) occupied by Modigliani. Given the particular context and the striking similarity among these images, I am inclined to think that Paul Guillaume and Modigliani alternated behind the camera, photographing one another in sequence (Fig. 1).

It is in light of this practice that I consider the photograph presently under examination, preserved in the archives of Guillaume Apollinaire, likewise to have been taken in Modigliani's studio at No. 13 Rue Ravignan, at the Bateau-Lavoir, within a period that may reasonably be situated—on the basis of the evidence already discussed—between September–November 1915 and, at the latest, the end of 1916.

In this image we observe Paul Guillaume, impeccably dressed in his customary elegance, seated upon what I am convinced was Modigliani's bed in his studio at the Bateau-Lavoir (Fig. 2).

If we compare this photograph with the celebrated image of Modigliani affixing a drawing to the wall of his studio, the impression arises unmistakably that both depict the same interior (Fig. 3). The walls appear identical: poorly maintained, marked by visible traces of dampness. Although the presence of a coverlet upon the bed might suggest a degree of care, the studio was in reality likely modest and sparsely furnished, as was common for artists' ateliers of the period. On the walls framing and delimiting the bed hang several drawings, as was Modigliani's habit—specifically, a caryatid and a female figure.

While I have been unable to identify the caryatid among those known and published, the female figure appears, in my view, to correspond to a drawing formerly in Paul Guillaume's collection and dated 1916 (Fig. 4).

Beyond its undeniable documentary value, this extraordinary image has enabled me to establish a connection between *Nu Couché* and the bed visible in the photograph —and consequently with Modigliani's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir—by virtue of several unique and unequivocal details.

A careful observation of *Nu Couché* makes it clear that the model reclines upon a bed placed against the wall, covered with a red damask bedspread identical to that seen in the photograph with Paul Guillaume (Figs. 5, 6, and 7). I am persuaded that it is indeed the same textile, for several elements of exceptional significance may be discerned. Let us examine the floral damask motif highlighted in the photograph

and reproduced literally in Modigliani's celebrated painting.

As can be observed, the floral motifs running along the model's forearm correspond precisely to those visible in the photograph, occupying the same relative position. There is absolute concordance between photograph and painting, even in the spacing between the floral motif crossing the forearm and the one immediately below it (Figs. 5, 6, and 7).

Moreover, the damask motif under discussion is positioned along the upper ridge of the bed, and there is perfect superimposition between photograph and painting. Starting from the image of *Nu Couché*, one may reconstruct the position of the bed with complete coherence in relation to the placement observable in the photograph with Guillaume (Fig. 8).

A further drawing supports this thesis. It features a damask-like pattern—simplified in graphic execution yet reminiscent of that observed in *Nu Couché*. In my opinion, particularly in light of the drawing's general spatial configuration (which I believe represents the same studio environment), this work too was executed at the Bateau-Lavoir atelier (Fig. 9). Might it be a preparatory study for *Nu Couché*? (cf. Figs. 9 and 10).

Finally, attention should be directed to the detail between the model's legs in *Nu Couché*: a stem adorned with leaves. Although not visible in the photograph, it is entirely consistent with the decorative motifs present on the bedspread under consideration.

Before proceeding to a more thorough analysis of the reasons for which I believe the photograph to have been taken in Modigliani's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir, it is necessary to consider that other paintings also display a damask pattern. Is it identical to the one discernible in *Nu Couché* and in Fig. 2? Does this confirm that additional nudes, beyond *Nu Couché*, were painted at the Bateau-Lavoir, with models reclining upon that very bed? Or were they executed in the Zborowskis' apartment at the Hôtel Sunny? Are there sufficiently grounded elements to situate them instead within the context of the apartment at 3 Rue Joseph Bara, residence of the Zborowskis? (Modigliani, in all likelihood, did not paint nudes in the studio at Rue de la Grande-Chaumière, as it was uncomfortable and poorly heated; moreover, it seems improbable that Jeanne would have permitted him to produce nudes in what she surely regarded as their shared domestic refuge.)

I shall attempt to formulate a hypothesis addressing these questions in a chapter specifically devoted to them. I note, however, that this remains a field of inquiry still under exploration, and I express the hope that further contributions from other scholars of this noble artist may illuminate the matter more fully.

Chapter Seven
Modigliani's Studio
at the Bateau-Lavoir
II

As has been amply demonstrated, the photograph depicting Paul Guillaume seated upon Modigliani's bed, together with the perfect correspondence between the information contained in that image and the elements present in *Nu Couché*, as well as the concordance of time and place established in the foregoing reconstruction, all incline one toward the hypothesis that *Nu Couché* was executed, with reasonable certainty, in Modigliani's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir between September–November 1915 and, at the latest, the end of 1916.

Yet within this analytical and reconstructive process, one final piece of evidence was still lacking—a direct link capable of definitively connecting the photograph of Paul Guillaume to Modigliani's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir. Such a link was necessary to identify the studio beyond doubt and to bring my hypothesis to completion.

Here it is.

In 1958, INA France broadcast a documentary retracing Modigliani's footsteps in Paris. The film featured Blaise Cendrars as its guide. The poet had been among those closest to Modigliani and was himself the subject of several portraits. Having shared in the daily life of the Livornese artist, he knew intimately the places Modigliani frequented. He was thus able to revisit them with ease and proceeded to the Bateau-Lavoir, which at the time of filming still stood intact.

Before a fire destroyed the building in 1972, the studios were arranged on

two levels: one at the height of the entrance from Place Émile Goudeau (formerly Ravignan), and a second, lower level reached by descending a staircase immediately beyond the entrance.

In the frames capturing Cendrars at the Bateau-Lavoir, searching for what had once been Modigliani's studio, we see the poet descending the stairs and moving toward the lower-level ateliers. He walked a short distance inside the structure, entered a narrow corridor, turned left, and after only a few metres stopped before a door. He knocked and attempted to gain access to Modigliani's studio, but finding it locked, he retraced his steps.

If one compares the floor plan of the Bateau-Lavoir—on which I have identified the location of Modigliani's studio according to Cendrars's route in the documentary—with a historical photograph of the building, it becomes apparent that the door at which the poet knocks corresponds to the studio I have marked in red.

This reconstruction derives from an additional observation. At the end of the narrow corridor traversed by Cendrars lies a door (highlighted in yellow in the diagram) giving access to the final studio on the building's northern side. Consequently, Modigliani's studio must have been the one immediately preceding that last atelier. Having thus identified the studio and hypothesised that the photograph under discussion was taken precisely there, it remained only to establish the definitive connection.

Modigliani's studio possessed a distinctive feature. In the historical photographs of the Bateau-Lavoir reproduced here, I have highlighted a chimney flue—likely part of a smoke exhaust system running through the entire structure—situated along the boundary wall between Modigliani's atelier and the final studio on the north side. This flue is noticeably thicker than the others visible in the archival images and is compatible, in both shape and dimensions, with the recess observable in the photograph of Paul Guillaume.

Accordingly, the bed visible in the photograph must have been placed against the partition wall separating the two ateliers (to the right from the viewer's perspective), with its headboard resting against the volumetric protrusion created by the passage of the chimney flue within the studio.

Having thus identified Modigliani's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir and ascertained, with reasonable certainty, that the photograph of Paul Guillaume seated upon

Modigliani's bed was taken within that very space—and that upon this bed it is highly probable the model of *Nu Couché* was posed—together with the established fact that Modigliani resided at the Bateau-Lavoir between September–November 1915 and, at the latest, the end of 1916, it follows inexorably that the red nude (*Nu Couché*) must be dated to 1915 or, at the latest, 1916, and not to 1917.

Finally, I am persuaded that the lighting conditions visible in the photograph provide further corroboration of the thesis advanced here. Paul Guillaume, seated upon Modigliani's bed, is illuminated by a frontal light source compatible with the position of the windows observable in historical photographs of the Bateau-Lavoir. The celebrated image of Modigliani affixing a drawing to the wall of his studio yields the same significant information: the chair reflects light emanating from the same direction as that seen in the photograph with Guillaume.

Advancing one step further in this reconstruction, I have sought to imagine how the interior of that modest cell-like studio may have appeared; the result is the spatial elaboration presented on pages 81 to 86 (Figs. 15–26).