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THE ESSAY ON CÉZANNE

Part Two: The Purposeful Amateur

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Near the end of his life, he thinks of Moses. He writes in a letter that he has made progress, but late and with difficulty. Though the promised land is in view, he, like "the great Hebrew leader," may be unable to enter. Prematurely aged by diabetes, wholly occupied with his monumental, daily task, he is simultaneously adulated, notorious, and unknown, and has retreated from mankind: "As for me, I must remain alone." Yet a younger colleague, a member of the small band of cognoscenti, comes to seek him out. Receiving this pilgrim who hopes for guidance, who wants to hear him speak his commandments, he is moved to mention Baudelaire. Without making a single mistake, he recites *The Carcass*.[1]

> Remember, my soul, the thing we saw
> That lovely summer day?
> On a pile of stones where the path turned off,
> the hideous carrion —
>
> legs in the air, like a whore -- displayed,
> indifferent to the last,
> a belly slick with lethal sweat
> and swollen with foul gas.[2]

His copy of *Fleurs du Mal* is thumbed to tatters. He knows each sardonic verse by heart. To a previous pilgrim, also wanting him to speak wisdom, he has handed, as a gift, a paint-smeared example of the 1899 edition. Listed in the back by Roman numeral are his eight favorites: *Beacons*, *Don Juan in Hell*, *The Giantess*, *Sed Non Satiata*, *The Carcass*, *Cats*, *The Happy Corpse, The taste for Nothingness*.[3]

Poetry is not a fresh interest. Years earlier, in 1858, raining letters on his best friend, who has moved to Paris, he sends verses that imitate those of Baudelaire and other poets he and his companions admire, for Hugo and Musset are idols of the age. Some of his lines resemble Baudelaire's in that they are extravagant and unquiet, differ from

Baudelaire’s in that they are careless. He is nineteen. At poetry, he is a beginner, an amateur, dispelling his adolescent anxieties by voicing them, ostensibly as a lark. Yet the anxieties shine through the antic cover as light shines through gauze. One example compares sexual initiation to a fall through space.

Our soul still pure
Walking with a timid step,
Has not yet struck
The edge of the precipice
Where so often one stumbles
In this corrupt age
I have not yet raised
To my innocent lips
The bowl of voluptuousness
From which souls in love
Drink to Satiety.[4]

Stumbling over a precipice, one becomes helpless, a plummeting body only, stripped of autonomy, assured an outcome more or less dire. The poet thinks he would be thus endangered by a fall into voluptuousness, though sexually rewarded. To be endangered and rewarded could be nearly the same. His fear of compromising with a woman his integrity and his longing for release are at war in his mind. An imagery of forbearance, temptations, succumbing to temptations, and hurtling into a hell complete with flames and demons, has long held sway over the minds and observances of his Catholic forbearers. Often in his letters to his friend he alludes to his precariousness, his stumbles, his thirst for and dread of women, behind which lurks the symbolism of the Roman faith. Not infrequently, he juxtaposes words on falling and words on the opposite sex. Then he alludes often to a boyhood idyll with the two other “inseparables,” representing a lost happiness. Such are his themes, rising into view, sinking, and reappearing in a verbal tide. In one letter the upcoming baccalaureate examination is the cause of his fright. "As for me, I sit on the 4th of August; may the all-powerful Gods preserve me from breaking my nose in my fall, which is, alas, to come.” Yet in a lengthy, digressive verse included in another letter he speaks of love as a worse illness, a heart devoured, a pinch of torment, and once more arrives at the fateful cliff, this time with a definitive outcome. The speaker loses his virginity while paradoxically remaining inviolate, though this helps him not at, for the drop-off is the edge of a grave.

Unceasing time gnaws
Our life; our days decline; the tomb is there,
Voracious abyss, ghastly, insatiable,
With ever open jaws. Deflowered, but chaste,
When our day comes, then innocent or guilty,
We'll pay the tribute to inescapable fate.[5]

Playing the clown, aping literary celebrities, he faces the sobering professional and romantic challenges of adult life. Regarding a profession, his father to his alarm insists he become a lawyer and enrolls him in the local law school. Regarding love, by 1850 Baudelaire displays tertiary symptoms of syphilis, the bacillus attacking his central nervous system. In seventeen years he will die of it, half-paralyzed, in agony. Manet, too, suffers the indignities of locomotor ataxia, dies miserably, his leg amputated. Not infrequently in this period are lust and terror partnered in the image of death most hideous advancing itself as a tempting female.[6]

> The woman, meanwhile, writhing like a snake
> across hot coals and hiking up her breasts
> over her corset-stays, began to speak
> as if her mouth had steeped each word in musk:

Thus splenetic Baudelaire in the first stanza of "Metamorphoses of the Vampire," the final stanza of which offers little encouragement to a would-be Lothario in Aix.

> When she had sucked the marrow from my bones,
> and I leaned toward her listlessly
> to return her loving kisses, all I saw
> was a kind of slimy wineskin brimming with pus!
> I closed my eyes in a spasm of cold fear,
> and when I opened them to the light of day,
> beside me, instead of the potent mannequin
> who seemed to have drunk so deeply of my blood,
> there trembled the wreckage of a skeleton
> which grated with the cry of a weathervane
> or a rusty signboard hanging from a pole,
> battered by the wind on winter nights.[7]

As if vibrating in harmony with a poem he could not have seen, for it had been suppressed, the fledgling versifier, sending still another letter to Paris, writes in a similar vein, and again concludes with a fall. The speaker finds himself out in a stormy night, about to be eaten by Satan and his band of sprites, demons, ghouls and vampires. A coach approaches and stops, the apparitions vanish, and he enters the coach at the behest of its occupant, a ravishing beauty.

> I set a kiss upon her heaving breast.
> Immediately the cold of death engulfs me.
> The woman I hold, the rosy-tinted woman,
> Is suddenly gone, is metamorphosed there
> To a wan corpse with angular sharp contours.
> Its bones all knock together, its eyes are hollow.
> It clasps me tight, O horror. A ghastly shock
> Wakes me. I see the hearse go turning over,
> The hearse toppling. I go, I don't know where,

But very probably I'll break my neck.[8]

It’s unlikely this novice both of literature and of dealing with the opposite sex will use the customary prostitute. Yet he also shies away from proper young ladies, is unable to adore a local girl other than in silence, from afar. A letter dated June 20, 1859 describes his "passionate love for a certain Justine," whom he evidently has not met, of whose attention he dreams and despairs. His next letter opens with lines on a female demon that has upset his brain. [9] But lust and alarm are not the only ingredients bubbling in his stew. If the letters are dotted with poems, they are also salted with pictures. He goes from verbal constructions to pictorial and back again, for he is experimenting with the two arts. One letter offers a rebus, a drawing of several objects meant to convey the phrase, "One should love women." Another is accompanied by a watercolor and offers an ekphrasis, some words said to paint a picture:

Admire the force of language, my dear friend,
Wielded by Cicero blasting this bad person.
Admire too Cicero, whose burning eyes
Throw out those glances venomous with hate
Which bear down Statius hatching out his plots
And stupefy his foul accomplices.

Though I am the one who made this famous picture
I shudder at such an excellent spectacle . . . . [10]

He who plays with verbal and pictorial images is mostly called Paul by his friends. Paul’s friend in Paris is named Emile. Trading a verse back and forth, the two game at *bout-rimés*. A mutual comrade, Baptiste, meaning a compliment, says the bizarre originality of their correspondence is quite in keeping with their characters. Paul’s mind is active to a fault but of a type uncomfortable with the study of law. He translates the scandalous *Second Eclogue* of Virgil,[11] works up a type of puzzle-verse called a charade, boldly mixes his metaphors, coins words that blend Latin, Greek and French,[12] offers a ribald song in which the narrator has his way with a fainting charmer,[13] and fires off drawings and watercolors. An ode lauds its subject, a tallow candle, pauses to compliment the poet on his zeal, throws in lubricious mention of greased thighs, ends with the army of Austria (a country then at war with France), and is accompanied by two pages of sketches, including one of a man and headless woman obscurely engaged, perhaps violently, possibly in a rape.[14]

Emile, thinking Paul has a literary gift, wants him to liberate himself by coming to Paris, and scolds him for not knuckling down to work. Yet Paul remains the poet manqué. Though his letters include forty-three poems, though he is somewhat a student of poetics, for he asks Emile to set a list of rhymes in alexandrines, himself sets the verses on a tallow candle in the elevated style of the ode, and, in one letter, says he hunts for rhymes richer and more distorted, these efforts, like the letters themselves, are parodistic, im-

petuous, striving for the outré, perfectly self-indulgent. Rather than respond to the news and opinions Emile has sent, Paul levitates from the correspondence as from a springboard, using the exchange to caper and cavort. Then he breaks off his apostrophes to admit he keeps rambling, doesn't understand how he can be so stupid, ends as stupidly as he has begun, heaps stupidity on absurdity and has written a "ludicrous digression" that is "totally misshapen."[15]

This in contrast to drawings he is doing under a master at the local Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Joseph Gibert (C. 76, 99).[16] They are of an arid, convention-bound kind that little allow—that are not meant to allow—the individual personality to appear. Equaling in the pictorial realm the scales instrumentalists practice for the sake of agility and control, they are appropriately dutiful and free of any taint of inspiration. Painted copies or paraphrases after engravings from or actual works by Frillé, Dubufe, Prud'hon, Lancret, Granet and an unidentified artist obey another respectable procedure, that of following, with hand and eye, the compositions of others (R. 9, 13, 15, 22, 23, 27).[17] The novice poet and novice painter both take notice of accepted forms and methods, but the novice poet romps on summer vacation while the novice painter sits attentively in class.

Paul is the scion of a newly and proudly bourgeois merchant and banking family. He riles this hard-won status by threatening to become an artist of some sort. Stalled in Aix by the opposition of his father and the drawing master, Gibert, and by his own irresolution, he remains separated from the city he professes to long for. Though his letters to Emile from late 1859 to 1862 are lost, report of them survives in Emile's replies, which Paul keeps. Thus we know Paul is disheartened when his friend writes back to him, on April 16, 1861, "Another phrase in your letter has also touched me painfully. It is this: 'Painting, which I love, although I don't succeed, etc.' You! Not succeeding? I believe that you deceive yourself."[18] Soon afterward, on April 22,[19] Paul lands on the streets of the capital. Escaping Gibert and the father who badgers him, he avoids being further told what to do. He works at the atelier of Joseph-François Villevielle, an acquaintance from Aix, rather than that of a famous teacher, and at the *Académie Suisse*, where painters informally band together to study anatomy and work from the model.[20] There he meets Camille Pissarro, who is kind to him and quicker than others to perceive his unusual gifts.[21] His volatility, startling intensity, southern accent and outlandish extremes of effort make him, among his follow students, the butt of jokes. Such is the state of his nerves that their nickname for him, taken from that fixture of the studios, the "écorché", a plaster cast of a figure with exposed anatomy, is "the flayed man."[22]

The two friends, rejoined, are embarked each in their own way on becoming Paul Cézanne and Emile Zola, with all the worldwide weight those surnames will one day muster, but Cézanne is a tortoise to Zola's hare. During this first visit he is only an anonymous young man from the provinces sent reeling by his first encounter with the big city. To Joseph Huot, a friend from home, he writes that he fritters away his petty existence, works at the *Academy Suisse* six hours a morning, has brought his boredom with

him from Aix, and roams about aimlessly all day. His own comments are “naïve,” he has seen “stunning, shocking potboilers," and is not “becoming Parisian.” Then, to convey his impressions of the Salon, he breaks into an ekphrasis in verse. Such is his innocence that praise is reserved for the Meissoniers and a Doré, which are nothing less than "magnificent."[23]

"Hardly had he arrived here," Zola announces by letter to Baptiste Baille, who remains in Aix,

> when he talked about returning to Aix; to have battled for three years for this voyage and then not to care a straw! With such a character, faced with changes of behavior so little foreseeable and so little reasonable, I admit that I remain speechless and pack up my logic. To prove something to Cézanne would be like trying to persuade the towers of Notre-Dame to dance a quadrille. He would perhaps say yes, but not budge an inch. He is made of one single piece, obstinate and hard in the hand . . . .[24]

Zola stops Cézanne from running away by proposing to sit, but after two starts and a near completion he discovers his friend with dark face, "pushing things around and shoving them without any order into a trunk," the portrait crushed. "Paul may have the genius of a great painter," writes Zola to Baille, "he'll never have the genius to become one. The slightest obstacle makes him despair."[25] To his temporary misfortune, the young man has decided which art he will pursue. Now he is serious. The offhand tossing about of poetry has become a strained, effortful lofting of hope and towering ambition followed abruptly, excruciatingly, by collapse. His dread of tumbling into an abyss, reiterated in his antic letters to Zola, is all too vividly borne out. The novice poet truly had foresight, his fears were not unfounded, for the now-committed painter falls often, and he falls hard.

2

Sometime before or after his four-month stay in Paris he decorates, with a cycle of the four seasons, the walls of a semi-ovular alcove at the new-bought family estate, the Jas de Bouffan (R. 4, 5, 6, 7).[26] As *The Four Seasons* are neither copies nor paraphrases, they are a step above the imitative protocols of a rank beginner. No direct source for them has yet been found. Though they are studied, stiff, and of juvenile character, they also show Cézanne taking up and re-casting a large-scale, decorative manner with considerable élan. In an ornamental screen for his father's study, "a rather free adaptation of eighteenth-century French tapestries depicting pastoral subjects," as John Rewald describes it,[27] in the drawings he does under Gibert, in the several copies and paraphrases, and in the more independent *Four Seasons*, he submits to the established approach. He seems to be learning how to paint. Yet he must be skeptical. Just as he undercut his verse with deprecatory asides, so does he likewise undercut the *Four Seasons* by signing them "Ingres." The false signature points to either a supranominal author or to a culprit, and the year 1811, added to "Winter," points to the local museum, where Ingre's *Jupiter and Thetis* of

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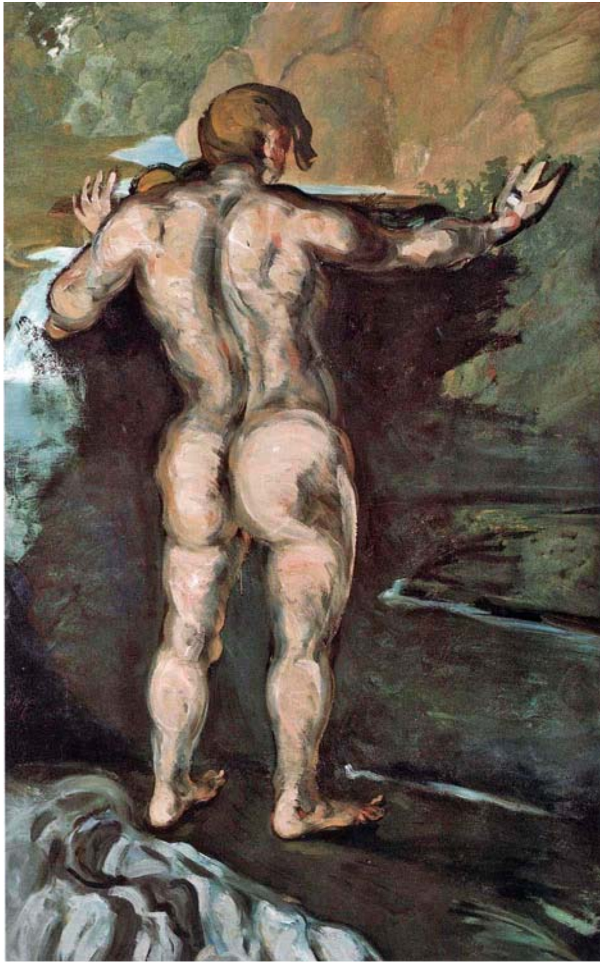
that date hangs. By these complex signs Cézanne ties his project to an immense reputation he may already question while also mocking his own pretensions.[28]

Interposed between *Summer* and *Winter* is a drastically unlike intruder, the portrait of Cézanne's father (R. 95). The determined and resourceful man who rose from peasant stock is made to address the *Four Seasons* by virtue of the style in which he is painted.[29] The crashing, to-hell-with-it handling answers all painters of routine or admirable skill and refinement, whose spirit hovers over the *Seasons*. Cézanne has shown himself to be an at least moderately apt student, his copies and *academies* have conventionally rendered hands, and each of the four *Seasons* has simple but clearly delineated hands, with five fingers each. Yet the near hand in the portrait, propping up the newspaper, is like an ax-scarred block of wood. Abilities already worked for and demonstrated are thrust aside. Cézanne renounces a prescriptive way of rendering a jointed appendage. As to painting a hand, he opts to not know how.[30]

Unbounded vitality springs from these rehearsals of an agreeable manner as an irrepressible member springs from a gentleman's pants. Consider that quasi-pornographic diversion, the inflamed *Lot and his Daughters* (R. 76), thought to be painted around 1865 or earlier; the numerous stormy drawings of women threatened or attacked; the first, monstrously hacked-out painting of the plaster cupid he would return to as a still-life object in mature paintings (R. 33); the equally crude picture of a devil in chains (R. 32); or the strange religious paintings, one with an ecstatic sunburst, the other with a head of Beelzebub (R. 11; R 20). Most telling of burgeoning power is a massive, buttocky nude (R. 29), slapped down by Cézanne on a delicately picturesque scene he had previously fashioned on a wall of the Jas. Here he literally obliterates his dutiful self, the Cézanne who would bow to ordinary expectations, please rather than offend.

Think of the situation faced by beginning painters at mid-century, invited to open their minds to studio discourse and the painting culture. Drawing from engravings of paintings and sculptures and at last from the living model, submitting to the corrections of the master making his rounds, imbibing in general what teachers and critics writing in the popular press have to offer, they take from the accumulated wisdom of the atelier and the massive exhibitions typical of the period what they require if they are to grow their own practice. Their horizon broadens, their capacities deepen, they are enlarged by new-



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found potential. They find out who they are as artists, and what they are able to do. But with the gain comes a risk. Between example and copy, teacher and taught, the elaborated genius of a civilization and the individual, nascent talent, there is an exchange. Profiting from the accepted way painting is done, beginners are shaped by the way it is done. Like espaliered trees, carefully pruned and trained, pinned to the wall that supports them, they adapt to the edifice that makes them what they are.

Most aspirants follow, or try to, the path laid down for them by ruling institutions and procedures. Signing on with a recognized master, a Cabanel or a Gérôme, they agree to a curriculum that, in the artistic realm, is the equivalent of becoming a lawyer. There are rigid rules of picture-making to obey, steps in one's progress to unvaryingly follow, daunting exams to pass if one is to be admitted to the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, much to lose if one fails at any stop on the way. Liberal teachers such as Thomas Couture are only relatively so, and even the least advantaged student must acknowledge a triumphant hegemony if only by complaining about it. The prevalent goal is to master the craft, dream up acceptable subjects, and render them with skill and polish, in the manner of painters sanctioned by acclaim, of whom Bouguereau is a vapid but flourishing example, Ingres a *Napoleon Enthroned*. Successfully running the gantlet can lead to a Prix de Rome, a favorable hanging position in the Salons, commissions and sales; yet to prevail one must survive with a sense of oneself intact. One must bend to the correct approach while retaining one's individuality, one's temperament, in the lingo of the day. A vigorous talent could wither in the shade of so many "stunning, shocking potboilers." A brilliant pupil could end as a follower, his personality subsumed to that of an overweening master.

Official French painting is a gilded Minerva who both menaces and beckons. To avoid her is to ensure you will be ignored. To approach her is to risk that she will hurl you aside or accept you provided you are wholly subservient. The novice must negotiate her attentions as best he can. He glimpses beyond her the possible fulfillment of his ambition, the full bloom of his talents, not to mention his ability to make a living. As he is unable to discern from his present position what his future position will be, has no way of knowing now, at the start of his career, either what sort of artist he will be in ten years or the extent of his success, his inner sense of rightness is his only reliable guide.

By painting the *Four Seasons*, signing and dating them falsely and mockingly, and placing between them the iron portrait of his father, Cézanne appears to explore these very issues. And much later, in 1891, Numa Coste writes to Zola, "How to explain that a grasping and obdurate banker could give birth to a being like our poor Cézanne, whom I saw recently. He feels well and physically he's in no jeopardy. But he's become timid and primitive and younger than ever."[31] It seems the undisciplined youth who fires letters to Zola is, willy-nilly, the fifty-year-old who never grows up. Well into mid-life he is cosseted by his family but dictated to, outwardly submissive yet bent on doing exactly as he wants, as mulish as a thwarted four-year old, "made of one single piece, obstinate and hard in the hand," certain to do mischief, afraid of being caught. His lasting fear of his father produces comic-opera absurdities as he scrambles to conceal an established liaison. This, his only amorous adventure, barely alters the vestal author of missives who writes of being deflowered while remaining chaste. Yet his naiveté hardens with time, becomes crabbed, soured with increasing mistrust. He departs mankind and the affairs of mankind, lives in near-isolation, develops a phobic horror of being touched.[32] Frequently, confidingly, as if the risk were too obvious to require explanation, he mentions "the grapnel," the pincher of intrusive ideas or demanding individuals that might snatch at his vital core. Any person, institution or dogma that could gain a hold on him is viewed as a dire threat.

On April 30, 1896, he writes to Joachim Gasquet,

> I met you this evening at the bottom of the cours, you were accompanied by Madame Gasquet. If I am not mistaken, you appeared angry with me.
>
> Could you see inside me, the man within, you would be so no longer. You don't see then to what a sad state I am reduced. Not master of myself, a man who does not exist . . . . You are young, and I can understand that you wish to succeed. But for me, what is there left . . . only to sing small; and were it not that I am deeply in love with the landscape of my country, I should not be here.[33]

Yet this curious individual breaks into a political discussion at a dinner party to say, "There are two thousand politicians in every legislature but there is a Cézanne only every two centuries."[34] To his son he writes in the month of his death, “All my compatriots are assholes beside me.”[35]

He is a giant at zero, assembled from contraries, shaken by unnamed emotions, registering at seismic magnitudes but with minute adjustments the faintest tap on his senses. In that every mood is urgent, sweeping him along, every mood urgently cries for its opposite, as if to assert a precarious balance. This harrowing receptivity, these gusting thoughts and feelings, this propensity to exaltation and despair, are housed in a robust body topped by an equally robust mind. He douses himself in the river Arc, commands the Roman authors, recites from memory poets living and dead, devours periodicals on art and literature, tramps the countryside with shotgun and game bag, revels in the outdoor life, talks rough, sings loud, and is attacked by his own extremes. Tossed here and there by many an upheaval, he bursts with good health. This is the dramatically varied,

unstable mix he calls his "unique temperament." Posited as a distinct sub-being, a virtual agent of himself, his temperament is his most valued possession. To protect it is the same as protecting Cézanne, the flayed man, on whom the outsider might painfully grate, in whom society might sink its controlling claw.[36] To painter Charles Camoin he writes, in 1903, "Nothing but primary force, id est temperament, can bring a person to the end he should attain."[37]

Young Paul, alternating poems and sketches and nagged by the ambitious and well-organized Emile, cannot forever put off doing what he finds most difficult, that is, make decisions. To better shape his words he must put aside pranks, diligently tend to meter and rhyme, rehearse the ballade, elegy, sonnet, become his own severest critic, weigh himself against the great, carve his position among them—in short, assume the burden of the maturing poet who situates himself within a circle of poets and the long history of song, of which he and his circle are an extension. As a beginning versifier Paul wishes to stay half-baked. His stanzas are an improvised display of fireworks that go off without much forethought, and that must inevitably peter out. As for the other art, "It is now nearly a month since Lombard came back to Paris," he writes to Coste at age 24, during his second stay in Paris.

> I learned, not without sorrow, that he attends the Signol studio. This worthy gentleman makes them learn a certain hackneyed style which leads to doing just what he does himself; that's all very well, but not admirable. To think that a young intelligent man had to come to Paris to lose himself.[38]

The beginning painter, shouldering the weight of his would-be vocation, negotiating similar terrain, tends for some years in a similar direction. His anxiety in respect to the unsullied state of his temperament is like that for the unsullied state of his body. He does not "come to Paris to lose himself." The youthful poem on the theme of, "Our soul still pure/ Walking with a timid step . . . ," expressing desire for but fear of initiation, relates his lasting dilemma, presented in a metaphor of damnation, that one cannot attain knowledge, sexual or artistic, without a fall from grace.

Across the alcove at the Jas de Bouffan the five pictures speak to one another but in different tongues. They tell of competing impulses and a tentative resolution. Many aspiring painters fail the entrance exam to the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*; Cézanne will twice succeed at doing so, as though clarifying a crucial matter he has taken up with himself. He will not paint *tartines* like those he finds at the Louvre, the Luxembourg and Versailles, as described in his 1861 letter to Huot; nor will he become what many years later he warns Charles Camoin against becoming, a *pasticheur*.[39] He rejects a magisterial but stultifying example, one he suspects will deaden him. "That fellow Dominique (Ingres) is damnably good," Vollard will hear him mutter, "but he gives me a pain!"[40] The *Seasons* nod ironically to the great man while the portrait of the father predicts an unguided exploration into art and the uncharted self. The *Seasons* are somewhat accomplished but chilly,

the portrait shockingly inept and volcanic. Cézanne rejects the politesse of the *Seasons* and abandons the heedless games of his versification, but retains a tendency to free-associate and the outlandish transgression of those schoolboy contributions. To the prevailing standards he will be not a partner but a rogue. Hence the impasse in which he finds himself. How can he search out the painter he would become while forebearing to learn from the culture more than the little he knows? How can he receive while remaining inviolate? Little surprise that for a full ten years he heaves and thrashes like a powerful, downed animal, a wounded stag or overthrown war horse struggling to gain its feet.

His letters to Zola attest his frequent upsets, but also his subversive force. In September of 1858, Zola writes to Cézanne that he has been jeered by fellow students on account of an ode sent to the Empress Eugénie. Cézanne replies with an irrelevant poem that is an erotic fantasy but continues with another that defends Zola from his detractors. Ostensibly cheering his friend on, it seems rather to speak for Cézanne himself, for it reads, in part,

> Lyceén Myrmidons, you forced admirers
> Of sad flat verses Virgil has bequeathed,
> True herd of swine that march beneath the aegis
> Of a rotten pedant who's your stupid guide
> Compelling you to admire, not knowing why,
> Verses considered good on his sole word,
> When in your midst there rises up like lava
> An uncurbed poet breaking every fetter . . . . [41]

3

The early paintings can usefully be sorted into two directions he is already taking and will always follow, painting from observation, but also from reverie and the inner eye. Copying the *Barque of Dante* (R. 172), he ties his storms of emotion to a Romantic master; the month before his death will find him reading Baudelaire on Delacroix.[42] A group of sober landscape sketches of the mid-sixties (R. 53, 54, 57, 79, 96) are distant cousins to those of Courbet and the Barbizon painters, though sufficiently buttered with pigment to make them Cézanne's own. Related to these in handling is a subsequent self-portrait and similar portraits of an uncle (R. 116, R. 102-111). Their paint heavily troweled on with a palette-knife, they are a still-astounding tribute to the conviction that thickness can equal mass. Somewhat later are brushed portraits of friends Antony Valabrègue, Gustave Boyer and Antoine-Fortuné Marion (R. 147, 176, 177), in which Cézanne finds more nuance. These articulate, muscular landscapes and portraits, demonstrating what Cézanne is capable of, are flashes of light in a gathering murk.

Also wonderful beyond all reckoning are any number of drawings, including studies of Achille Emperaire (C. 229, 230) that prepare for an oil of his longtime friend. The oil is one of two portraits that are a summation and a challenge, executed on an epic scale, sure to rest hard on narrow minds. For during these years Cézanne punctiliously

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submits his pictures to juries, wanting acceptance, anticipating rejection, making of the ritual a demonstration of his advance-guard status.[43] The 1866 picture of Cézanne's father (R. 101) is a congratulatory handshake to Zola, for the father is made to read the short-lived newspaper that prints Zola's articles, rather than his preferred *Le Siècle*. Then the 1867-68 picture of Emperaire (R. 139) has the profane, height-cheated artist perch in the banker's own seat, as if usurping the father's place. If "*L'Evenement*" and "*Achille Emperaire, Pientre*" are stenciled upon them, "*Epater les Bourgeois!*" might be their common banner.

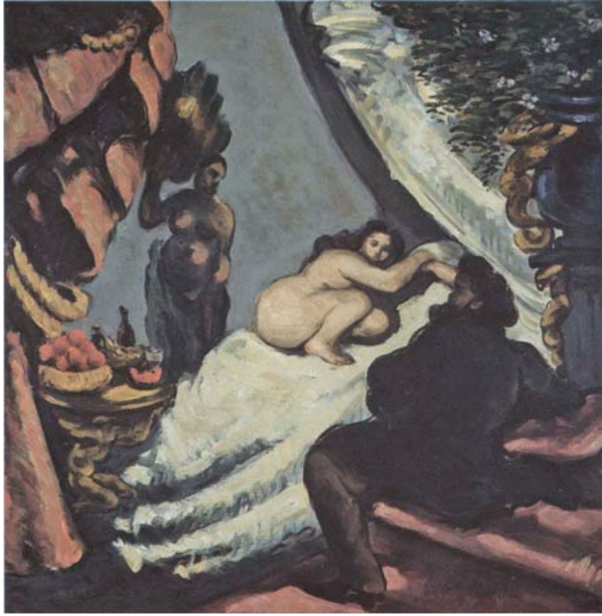
Sunday painter and naturalist by profession, sitter for Cézanne to paint, Antoine-Fortuné Marion numbers among Cézanne's boyhood acquaintances. Writing in 1868 to a mutual friend and fellow Wagnerite, Heinrich Morstatt, Marion reports of Cézanne that

> (he) keeps on working violently and with all his might to regulate his temperament and to impose upon it the control of cold science. If he succeeds, my friend, there'll be some powerful and perfect works for us to admire.[44]

Though Cézanne has already made works powerful and perfect on the terms he has rather haphazardly set for them, to other minds they are indigestible, hopeless, beyond comprehension. He is not yet able or willing to regulate his temperament and impose on it cold science. Instead of the works his friends hope for, that will fall somewhere on a scale of the familiar, there are outlandish phantasmagorias. Rising from dim soups of paint, as if from an inner weather dark and stormy, they join the more sensational literary and musical imaginings of the period.

"No musician excels as Wagner does in painting space and depth, both material and spiritual," writes Baudelaire in an article on Wagner appearing in the month of Cézanne's first arrival in Paris.

> He possesses the art of translating, by means of the subtlest shades, all that is excessive, immense and ambitious in spiritual and natural man. One seems sometimes, when listening to this fiery and peremptory music, to recapture the dizzy perceptions of an opium—dream, painted upon a backcloth of darkness.[45]



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Over such works as *The Abduction*, *The Autopsy*, *The Robbers and the Ass*, The Murder and an embryonic *Bathers* (R. 121, 142, 163, 165,159), a clouded spirit hovers, a range of feeling that lurches from grandiloquence to negation. These are opium-dreams painted on backcloths of darkness. The air is heavy with a lust gone stale, a self-involvement profound, agitated and claustrophobic, a fascination with and horror of the body, like that of adolescents surprised by unwelcome bloomings of the flesh. The cave-like landscape settings more closely resemble the inside of a stomach or bowel than an outdoors airy and receding, such as frequent works by Sisley, Monet and Pissarro from around the same time, and the propulsive laying-on of material is less a sign of boldness than of uncertainty overcome. Taking heart, Cézanne leaps in a fury of decision over his endless equivocations. Nor is his application of the material inexpressive of what he most conspicuously lacks. Obsessive thrustings, claspings and jettings are bent into images of grapple and release, as in the rucked up, blatantly erectile or downpouring skirts of the women in *Luncheon on the Grass* (R. 164),[46] the suggestively lifted and flailing smock of the stabber and assault of his knee on the victim's groin in *The Murder*, or the bedding that both levitates from and cascades whitely past Cézanne's own bulging knee in the first version of *A Modern Olympia* (R. 171), though he portrays himself as passive and apart. Mentioning a burden of fantasy, Lawrence Gowing cites a recurrent, pendulous looping of drapery, as in *Sorrow, or Mary Magdalen* (R. 146), that signals, in his view, a near hysteria.[47]

Forms that swell, receive or gush occasionally appear in the work of beginning art students today, investing awkward still-lives and studies of the model with an unspoken hope for sexual fulfillment, all quite unconscious and either disappearing in time or morphing into forms less subliminal and private. Cézanne's paintings of the sixties and early seventies involuntary express his frustration persistently and intrusively. As late as c. 1877, in *The Eternal Feminine* (R. 299), with what degree of awareness on Cézanne's part it is impossible to say, the naked woman is a clitoris resting within the spread labia of the parted curtains, as if for a medical examination, a lover's exploration or savaging by the crowd. The gathered individuals fill a variety of roles and responses to a display of available nakedness they condemn, record or trumpet, yet they unite in a configuration that leans toward a manifestation of the female in a way that is jagged and menacing.

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In *Pastorale* (R. 166), dated by the artist 1870 and thought by Mary Tompkins Lewis to improvise on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*,[48] there are a penile tree and a bottle open to the reflection of same, then fleshy shirts, clouds and foliage, splotched by the pink glow called for in the stage directions. The punning of forms is as contrived and jokey as is the word-play of the early verse, yet thunderously driven. The abandoned pairing-off with which the opera commences could be nigh, could be over. If over, we find the titular knight reclining in modern dress, depleted and repentant, about to ask the Virgin Mary to intercede, as in the opera, though he lacks the Venus in whose lap Wagner would have his head loll. The verdant nature the scenario requires him to be nostalgic for, and that belongs to his home country, is present around him, as in his scripted dreams. Alternately, it is not *Tannhäuser* we see but another, a witness, who contemplates the grotto and its lake, the revelers, the past or coming couplings suggested by the tableau; for this is balding Cézanne himself, possibly joined by Zola and Baille, who is stretched on the sod, thinking about an orgy rather than celebrating one.

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For his subjects, Cézanne turns to the grand tradition in painting, or to contemporary literature and opera, a then much more popular art. To render these subjects, he tries to invent a method nearly from scratch, attempting to extract it from his gargantuan potential like a magician extracting a rabbit from an empty hat. *The Abduction* (R. 121), a picture signed and dated 1868, is likely not a wholesale invention, as once was supposed, but an audacious take-off on a "machine." Distantly connected, it may be, to a Niccolò Dell'abbate in the Louvre on the same subject, the rape of Persephone, it assails in a made-up idiom the heights of an officially vaunted category, that of the "history." In contrast to its worldly subject and aims, the handling stumbles bluntly along, skirting disaster. Though the near figures have as a foil to their enormous size the distant, tiny ones and the intervening water, though the foliage to the right, standing closest to hand, has as its foil the far-off mountain, the means of advancing into depth are so rudimentary as to be more signaled than built. Evoking in his choice of antique subject a highly elaborated means of establishing depth, namely, that triumph of European thought running from Mantegna through Claude to David, geometric perspective

and a commensurate unfolding of planes in retreat to a horizon, he is hobbled by his inability to find an analogous spatial logic, suitable to his *repoussoir*. He is fiercely himself, but with a poignant stoppage. The marks pushed onto the surface are like wingbeats of a bird fluttering against a pane of glass. If the primary drama of *The Abduction* is that Pluto takes rather than courts his prize, consistent with Cézanne's hopeless erotic fancies, an ancillary drama that he repeatedly stabs his brush at a barrier he is cannot get past.[49]

An advantage of being ordinary is that you travel in convoy with your fellows, holding a well-charted course, sleeping soundly at night. Cézanne veers from the Couture or Gleyre who could give him normative painting ideas and methods, plus a re-enforcing milieu, and sails toward self-indulgence tending to mere eccentricity. His paintings are courageous yet over-reaching, prodigiously original yet frequently underdeveloped, literary and ambitious in a way both worldly and homemade yet steeped in anxiety. In the density of their ramifications, they shout an inner life of remarkable dynamism and complexity. In their rhetoric, they are utterances from a soul embattled and alone. Traveling far from Ingres and the scratchings of an ordinary art student, Cézanne lands on a strange shore. He is too much alone with his imaginings. Armed with brush and palette, emblems of those whose thoughts become deeds, and who know themselves by virtue of the pictures they paint, he strives to shape his identity in opposition to painters, dead and living, who have power or prestige. For this temerity, he is punished. From heights of uncouth bluster, of roaring Cézanne-ness, of crying the "uncurbed poet breaking every fetter," he plunges to impotence. His persona annihilated, he becomes a nothing, paralyzed, incapable of action — "a man who does not exist." Yet he is a man who returns to the fray.

At the age of thirty, he suffers many an inner storm. His studio in Paris is a marvel of disorder.[50] He has developed a nervous shudder that will become habitual. His dislike of being touched even accidentally is already pronounced. Swaggering into the Cafe Guerbois like "a zinc worker" drunk on the evaporative poison of his craft, he silently listens to the talk, leaping up to swiftly depart on hearing words with which he especially disagrees.[51] Introduced there to Manet, he famously declines to shake hands, saying, perhaps honestly, that he has not washed for a week. When fellow Aixians deprecate his efforts, his response is to say, "I shit on you."[52] In his dealings with those who in his later life wish to be friends and supporters, the garrulous effusions of a lonely man are followed by outbursts of rage and sudden flight. Caricatured in the press as *farouche*, vilified by critics,[53] his suspicion of people can only deepen, and does. As to sex and gender identity, he will tell Renoir that women models frighten him, as they are sluts always trying to catch one off guard,[54] and will say to Gasquet, as the two look at one of Cézanne's pictures of bathers,

> I have tried, when the soldiers are bathing, going along the Arc and observing the contrasts, the colors of the flesh against the greens . . . But wait, good heavens! what a mannish look this one has . . . They're still in my eye, those recruits.
>
> Oh, the bitches! the bitches! [55]

A painter whose shaping of paint is driven headlong by fantasies and confusions of which he is unaware is a painter unable to own his intentions and state what he means. So entwined are his selfhood and the way he paints that he can no more reflect on one than on the other. His art approaches that of people clinically disturbed, who can't anchor themselves in external circumstances, or that of children, who are all unaware, and know not what they do. It is an art of compulsion rather than of choice, an art without self-mastery, without self-knowledge, objectivity, or inner freedom. When Theodore Duret writes to Zola expressing a wish to meet Cézanne, Zola replies,

> I cannot give you the address of the painter of whom you speak. He shuts himself in a great deal; he is going through a period of groping. And to my mind, he is right not to allow anyone in his studio. Wait until he has found himself.[56]

4

Wait until he has found himself? A decade as lapsed since Cézanne was a student of law who jotted verses and sketches while longing to escape the family and town to which he nonetheless clung. No longer twenty but thirty, he darts from the capitol to his native ground and back again, carrying wherever he goes the weight of inner turmoil, ridicule both from his fellow townsmen and the French press, and disappointment in what he has so far accomplished. Then he meets, in Paris, in 1869, the nineteen-year old Hortense Fiquet, who works at the disreputable profession of model. In May of 1870, Zola, already wondering privately if his boyhood companion is a lost cause, prevents Duret, who has championed Manet and the Impressionists, from seeing work in which he has no faith; and in September of that year Paul and Hortense are together at L'Estaque, for they have become a couple.[57] While at L'Estaque he paints regularly outdoors, from the motif. [58]

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The relationship with Hortense may raise rather than lower the temperature of his ambivalence, for of marriage he is wary, and the first version of the *Temptation of St. Anthony* (R. 167), dated to this time, inspired most likely by Flaubert, is very much in the Baudelairan backcloth-of-darkness, unwitting confession mode. Temptresses with mannish heads stand for the demons of earlier pictures by other artists, or for Flaubert's Queen of Sheba. The cajoled or repudiated saint retreats toward or advances from his corner, diagonally opposite that of hell's fire. By thrusting her body forward a naked woman incites him, frightens him away, blocks his entrance to the center. He who stands for the artist and waits on the favors of the courtesan in the first *Modern Olympia* is also he who is tugged this way and that by appetites of

the flesh in the *Temptation*.[59] Yet a son, born on January 4, 1872, provides an outlet for tenderness. The man who will send himself to exile within his own country and become an anchorite of art is happy to have his offspring scribble in his notebooks. This child, Paul Jr., he loves greatly, with no discernable reservations, now and always.

Whatever the tensions of life with and without Hortense, with and without females (he will not always tolerate living with her; a letter of 1885 to Zola mentions a visit to a brothel),[60] the glowering locales and ejaculatory cascades and loopings that haunt his thoughts begin to dissipate. The change does not take place overnight, nor does it especially modify his alarming behavior. Agitated letters written by Emperaire about his stay with Paul and Hortense in Paris after Hortense gives birth report a Cézanne no less difficult than before. It may be the noise Emperaire complains of, “which would awaken the dead,” is that of a baby crying. Emperaire writes that Cézanne “hasn’t got a single intelligent or close friend left,” which is possibly even true. Yet the artist isn’t entirely removed from contact with others, for he hovers near a vital business, the care his mistress gives to an infant human being.[61]

Whether from sexual relief, or from conceiving a child, or from having in his son another person to whom he can devote affection selfless and unqualified, or from some combination of these, along with his simply growing older and calmer, it now seems he can direct his attention to more outward goals. For in September of 1872, that pivotal year, Pissarro writes in a letter, "Our friend, Cézanne, raises our expectations, and I have seen and have at home a painting of remarkable vigor and power. If, as I hope, he stays some time in Auvers, where he is going to live, he will astonish a lot of the artists who were too hasty in condemning him."[62] Equipped with a family of his own, Cézanne has settled in Auvers-sur-Oise, not far from Pissarro and his family, who live at Pontoise. The two men have begun painting together in the vicinity, and continue periodically to do so. This marks the great turn, away from an art of the self-absorbed, for which the prior ten years of wandering have been a hidden preparation. Slowly Cézanne wheels round to aim his forces at that which stands outside himself. He will drill on village streets and in surrounding fields, and is ready for a colleague from whom he can learn a method of painting that also offers a concomitant way of life. Socialist Pissarro, kind, generous, modest, quite uninterested in dominating others, is not only a man without a single grapnel about him but the perfect medium for transmitting ideas Cézanne will now permit himself to acquire. Cézanne pays his respects by copying one of his mentor's pictures, and in later years says, "He was like a father to me. You could always ask him questions; he was something like the good God."[63]

It is Pissarro's procedure for locating a motif in external actuality, searching again and again for what the fabric of nature can yield to painting, that Cézanne eagerly participates in. He models himself on Pissarro's way of shuttling between a motif, seen as a web of particles, and the marks he sets to canvas, fixing those particles. This back-and-forth process of looking and marking, weaving the picture, is tokened by the "sensation," at

once a perceived attribute of the motif, an attribute of vision (or so it is thought), and an attribute of the painting, a material dab of pigment. In that nature's appearances are mutable rather than eternal, "sensations" derived from nature are potential rather than categorical. To render appearances by means of "sensations" is to engage in an activity of endless possible variation, all while in some sense being faithful to the actual objects one sees. Pissarro's method is by some definition realistic, but it is not prescriptive. The end is not ordained in the means. One may avoid standardized methods and received styles, hooks more threatening to Cézanne's vulnerable temperament than that of tying the knot with his female companion. One may paint methodically but freely, for the conclusion of a painting is not predicated in its beginning. Yet this freedom is guided and limited rather than random and limitless. The play of appearances, and of derivative "sensations," directly tethers one to the facts of things in all their phenomenal manifestations, implacable and marvelous.

Here are lessons Cézanne never forgets, indeed lives by the rest of his days, as by a convert's oath. His motive is not hard to discern. If "sensations" organize his perceptions of external actuality, they also organize him. The syntax of looking and marking, proposing and responding, signified by "sensations," confers pictorial structure on a still-life, sitter or outdoor view, but also, reciprocally, on he who does the looking and responding. By means of his process — by means of the individual mark —, Cézanne constantly and very specifically calibrates his inward state to the objective situation. "Sensations" plot a map of the phenomenal world, a set of marks on a surface, and upon its quadrants he locates who he is and where he is going. In this mapping of "sensations" he finds mental clarity and visual order, a solace and life-long guide. Thus thirty years later he writes to Camoin, "Everything, especially in art, is theory developed and applied in contact with nature." Shortly before his death, in a letter to his son, he declares, in reference to a "poor devil" imitating him (probably Bernard), "As sensations form the basis of everything for me, I am, I believe, impervious." "(My method) - and I've never had a different one -" he remarks to Gasquet (or so Gasquet says), "is hatred of the imaginary."[64]

In 1874 Jules-Antoine Castagnary reviews the first Impressionist exhibit. Discussing Cézanne's second *Modern Olympia* (R. 225),[65] thought to have been painted either that year or the year before, the critic speaks to what the artist may already be pondering when he mentions a degree of

> unbridled romanticism where nature is merely a pretext for dreams and where the imagination becomes powerless to formulate anything but personal, subjective fantasies without any echo in general reason, because they are without control and without possible verification in reality.[66]

For around this time Cézanne makes a picture that is a signpost in his evolving outlook, a long view of Auvers from a hill (R. 221). The awkward handling reveals Cézanne's

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ongoing search for ways of bringing reality and pictorial form together, but also an unexpected valor. The impatient, protean, sometimes hapless man of the early paintings is replaced here by he who is stubborn, thoughtful, alert to any sensible message falling to him from without. The picture's structure of sweeping planes and ponderous masses, interrupted by the ranging fretwork of village buildings, is the outward sign of a rare quality of attention, steadfast and resilient. Richard Wollheim comments on what a triumph it is for Cézanne to allow himself to be tentative, and Meyer Schapiro writes that, "This open, dispersed world offers a great freedom to the eye."[67] Other paintings from the Auvers period with like virtues, however, still resemble some of the early works in that they are much more surface-bound, less with the positive associations that will attach to flatness in the work of the Fauves, Matisse, and the Cubists than claustrophobically, as though the surface were impeding instead of releasing Cézanne's thought (R. 198, 201). Rather than concerned with what subsequently will be termed the picture-plane, he is acutely aware of and pushing against the surface in the intensity of his effort to overcome it. In *View of Auvers* he begins the task that long will occupy him, and that will convert a life of chronic turmoil into one of steadily mounting triumph. From this time forward he will dedicate himself to the conquest of distance.

The meaning of distance, to Cézanne, is that his gaze is attached to the beyond, carrying him, in spirit, with it, so that he becomes a surrogate presence among outward objects, intimately attending to them. Fixing his gaze on positions in space that are apart from him, he fixes his own position in space. A distinctness of here, inside himself, in the current moment of being Cézanne, is stated in a distinctness of there, outside himself, for he cannot see this or that specific position other than from his own. By sallying forth with his gaze, by identifying with the rock outcrop, the pine, the olive jar, the peach, and by constructing an image that describes his relation to them, he stands away from his superficial emotions and perpetual crises. Distance means detachment. It means sublimation of the self to surroundings that include but greatly exceed the self. From a new-found willingness to build on what he already knows before going to Auvers, and from Pissarro while at Auvers, he gains the lever he needs to pry the entrapping surface back, and go beyond his frights and obsessions.

Before Auvers, Cézanne, the man and the painter, is something of a spiritual vagabond, a tinker of curiosities in many respects exceptional but too often abortive. His future could be that of an incomplete soul, his canvases slashed by him or hurled into the bushes (as he was sometimes wont to do), or thrown out by his heirs, a pile of used materials representing little more than a failed gift, just as Zola foresaw.[68] After Auvers, Cé-

zanne can't yet see the promised land, but he knows in which direction it lies. Before Auvers, his most ardent and personal works can hardly be separated from the emotional life to which they testify. After Auvers, his immediate emotions, in their bearing on his work, fade to near insignificance. The tribulations of spirit he continues to endure become increasingly moot as he sets foot on the path he will follow until, at age 67, he is caught out in a rainstorm, collapses, gets up next day to work again, takes to his bed, and dies.

To adequately convey his perceptions of external actuality: this is the way of Cézanne. In the attempt, he will ward off the Baudelairan mire of flesh and passions in which the beast in us flounders, only to end as carrion. What he gains from his stay in Auvers becomes his salvation. Looking beyond himself, he is able to more calmly and clearly measure himself. He can characterize this business of being Paul Cézanne as a lasting coherence, an order surmounting the daily roil that is Paul Cézanne's lot. It is an order defining the man by giving objective substance to what he sees. Nature is the abiding corrective, the impersonal standard, the surpassing infinite helping him to surmount mere anxiety and despair. To say that by scrupulously nailing down with painted marks his observations of what lies before him Cézanne discovers who he can be, discovering his more able self and his volition, is to understand the process of an individual finding himself and his purpose by establishing them in relation to the world.

5

Once we grasp all this, to the extent it is available to our grasp, we can note how sincere Cézanne is, and how truthful, when he writes to Bernard of nature as the real and immense study to be undertaken, and of how painters must render the image of what they see. And we can likewise note how Erle Loran, Clement Greenberg and William Rubin, attributing to Cézanne an entirely pictorial, extra-perceptual motive, a willful bending of form for the sake of art, reflect a distortion other than the one they meant in calling his work by that word, namely, the one warned against by no less a formalist than Roger Fry, who writes of, "the risk that the needs of our own personal expression may so far have distorted our conception of his nature, that we see not so much his expression as the distorted image of it which has gradually taken its place in our minds."[69] Cézanne has his life and no other, his character and no other, his influences and no other influences. The paintings he makes express this life, this character, these influences, and little can he know of ideas not yet born.

Without including in our idea of him his family background, his youth in Provence, his education in Latin, his enthusiasm for Baudelaire, his lively interest in the other arts of his time, his place in the vanguard fringe of the eighteen-sixties, his troubled view of his body and its longings, his poignant extremes of ambition and abnegation, the Platonic love between him and Zola, their gradual then sudden estrangement, and, finally, his need for a method of painting that grounds him in the exterior world even as it shapes

his inner life,[70] we cannot grasp the larger meaning of a body of work that leaps from its base in these particulars.

When Erle Loran writes that, "Cézanne leaves the subject far behind as he penetrates ahead into the world of abstract space that has by now become so widespread in international art," and, ". . . I have never been able to correlate Cézanne's statements . . . into any pattern that would fit the interpretation I now give to his work;" when Clement Greenberg writes that the real problem for Cézanne is how to relate, "every part of the illusion in depth to a surface pattern endowed with even superior pictorial rights," and, "The firmer binding of the three-dimensional illusion to a decorative surface effect; this was Cézanne's true object, whether he said so or not;" when William Rubin writes that, "the majority of the so-called 'distortions' . . . have no connection with perception . . . ," and, "These alternations of nature . . . in favor of the picture's compositional structure constitute collectively a sophisticated form of conceptualizing that challenges many of Cézanne's own dicta. . . .", these three state only part of the case, and that imperfectly.[71] Isolating Cézanne's formal motives from their derivation in the particulars of the life, art and view of nature of which they were comprised, construing those motives in light of their own evangelical belief in the redemptive power of "pure form," these three misconstrue what the paintings are concerned with. What they miss is that for Cézanne penetrating the world of abstract space, pace Loran, is a *corollary* of penetrating the perceived subject; that the illusion in depth, pace Greenberg, is a *reciprocal function* of the surface pattern; that sophisticated conceptualization and the perception of nature, pace Rubin, are *mutual aspects* of Cézanne's experience while painting from observation. Failing to understand the deeper import of Ernst Cassirer's neo-Kantian proposition, that "forms are not imitations, but *organs* of reality, since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension and as such is made visible to us," they stop short of understanding the relation between form and appearances as did Cézanne, though intuitively. To him, a picture was but a mold, fitted to nature, into which nature, with one and the same gesture, was poured.

In his letters to Zola, Cézanne's verse is impulsively thrown together. Stimulated by the act of writing, his mind jumps, the verse follows. Yet in its very luridness of imperfection the verse tells of an extraordinarily wincing but energetic temperament, one needing above all to assemble and build. Then the abraded nerves and urgency of creation carry to those operatic pictorial extensions of the verse, many of the early paintings. But these rambunctious creations have two aspects that depart from the verse — and carry over to the paintings of the Auvers period and beyond. First, whether he paints from his head with little to guide him but his imaginings, or paints from observation with a motif and Pissarro's example to hone his thought, Cézanne is able always to weld the part to the whole. For all the groping of many of the early paintings, he lets no corner fall away from the totality. So infallibly does he seize the ensemble that each "opium dream on a backcloth of darkness" congregates as a solid mass. Second, this ability to derive the whole

from its parts has less to do with what he learns from studio discourse and the painting culture than with a remarkable gift for syncretism. Multiple perceptions, relevant to art and to nature, he can sweep into the single. Thus in Cézanne's development there are demarcated or gradual shifts, from the irresponsible pictures and verses of the letters to Zola, to the early, troubled paintings, to the studious if clumsy Auvers paintings, to the constructivist painting of the eighties, to the exalted release of the later paintings, but there is also continuity. The uneven, trapped beating on the surface of *The Abduction* becomes the regularized, tensile structuring of the surface in the *Chateau de Médan* (R. 437). Out of the beginner who leans on himself for help, who constantly gropes and fumbles, who guards his fledgling abilities from all who might interfere with them, who drinks of other art while remaining an amateur by design, grows the remarkable creator who, to some extent, is self-made.

From the production of the sixties and early seventies it is already clear no ordinary fellow is at work. But Cézanne has still a long way to go. He will acknowledge his debts but insist on his singularity. "Monet and Pissarro," he will declaim late in life to some visitors, "the two great masters, the only ones." But the painter Francis Jourdain will hear him say, "Impressionism, it's no longer necessary. It's nonsense!" By the late eighteen-seventies the way of painting Pissarro threw Cézanne by way of rescue, and that Cézanne gratefully seized, Cézanne has begun to change.[72]

Notes

1. "Moses" and "alone," Paul Cézanne, *Letters*, ed., John Rewald (Hacker Art Books, 1976), pp. 293, 333; "recites," Emile Bernard, "Memories of Paul Cézanne," *Conversations with Cézanne*, ed. by Michael Doran; trans. by Julie Lawrence Cochran, intro. by Richard Schiff (University of California Press, 2001) p. 71.

2. Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, trans. Richard Howard (David R. Godine, 1982), p. 35.

3. "Tatters," Joachim Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations*, trans. by Christopher Pemberton, preface by John Rewald, intro. by Richard Shiff (Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 125; "favorites," Leo Larguier, "Sunday with Paul Cézanne," *Conversations with Cézanne*, pp.15-16.

4. To speculate that Baudelaire's poems influenced Cézanne's is not far-fetched, but requires digging. The first edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, published in 1857, was never available to the general public. Of 1300 hundred copies printed, some were sent to literary figures while 1000 were seized, still unbound, by the public prosecutor, so it's highly unlikely Cézanne saw one. The second edition of 1500 copies, with thirty-five new poems, was published in January of 1861, two months before Cézanne first arrived in Paris, by which time Baudelaire the art critic was well established, Baudelaire the poet, notorious. That Cézanne knew of Baudelaire and acquired his first copy of the *Fleurs* at this time is plausible, but places his first acquaintance with Baudelaire's poems after instead of before he wrote his own, at least those that survive, which were sent to Zola between April, 1858, and December, 1859. However, eighteen poems eventually to appear in the

Fleurs were published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1855, when Cézanne was sixteen, so he could have seen them there, though no evidence has so far been found of his exposure to this publication. The most certain source of his early awareness of Baudelaire as a poet was *L'Artiste*, subscribed to by his mother between 1838 and 1858. Lithographed or engraved reproductions of paintings were printed in *L'Artiste* as a regular feature. From these, as has been documented by Giula Ballas, a number of Cézanne's early works derive. And fifteen of Baudelaire's poems appeared in *L'Artiste* between 1838 and 1860. It can reasonably be assumed that Cézanne saw some or all of them. Compare Cézanne's poem, dated July 9, 1858, to the opening stanza of Baudelaire's "The Irremediable," a poem that first appeared in the *L'Artiste* of May 10, 1857:

A Form, an Idea, a Being
out of the Blue -- and fallen
into a Stygian morass
far from the eye of heaven . . .

See Cézanne, Letters, pp. 27, 348; Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, trans. Richard Howard, p. 80; Giula Ballas, "Paul Cézanne et la revue *L'Artiste*," *Gazette des beaux-arts* sér. 6, 98 (December 1981), pp. 223-232; Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Édition critique, Jacques Crépet and Georges Blin; refondue, Georges Blin et Claude Pichois (Libraire José Corti, 1968), pp 569-579.

5. Ibid, pp. 36-37, 355-357. Translation from Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art* (New York Graphic Society, 1969), p. 41. Prose translations respectful of the originals are in Paul Cézanne, *Letters*, revised and augmented edition, ed., John Rewald, trans., Seymour Hacker (Hacker Art Books, 1984). Lindsay's translations mimic with their cadence the spirit more than the letter.

6 . "Venereal anxiety is openly invoked in the recounting of the many nightmares and fantasies that mark (J. K.) Huysman's novels: one remembers the character of des Esseintes terrorized in a dream by the invasion of the "great pox" or fascinated by plants of a chancrous appearance. Woman, with her gaping sex, is often identified with death-carrying pox; all those female bodies whose beauty dissolves, whose eyes burst, are evidence of this same anxiety, as is the attraction for the works of (artist) Félicien Rops, which also reflect the grip that the venereal danger held over men's minds." Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 251.

7. Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, pp. 133-134. One of the six poems banned from the edition of 1861.

8. Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 44, 363-365. Translation from Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art*, p. 51-52.

9. Even later in life to love was to be greatly perturbed, as is attested by the agitated fragment of a letter to an unknown woman dated spring, 1885. See Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 37-40, 214.

10. Cahn says Rewald's date for this letter, Aix, 29 . . . 1858, is incorrect. See Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 21, 345-346; Isabelle Cahn, "Chronology," *Cézanne* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1996), p. 529. Translation from Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art*, p. 27.

11. "As you have translated Virgil's Second Eclogue, why not send it to me? Thank God, I am not a young girl and I shall not be shocked . . :" Zola to Cézanne, December 30, 1859, in Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 47. In the second eclogue Corydon expresses his unrequited love for Alexis by de-

claiming: "How wonderful it would be to live together in these/ rough fields, in a homely cottage . . ," "Who are you running from, you crazy man?" and "The wanton goat goes after the flowering clover, and I/ go after you, Alexis - each towed by his own fancy." Considering the intensity of the friendship, and that Zola and Cézanne had recently been parted, it is tempting to think Cézanne coyly pleaded a homosexual attachment. The temptation should be resisted, or at least qualified. If there were homoerotic overtones to the boyhood friendship, as there may well have been, that was then, as it is now, not so very remarkable; and also Cézanne, relishing provocations, might have chosen the second eclogue simply from bravado. Evidence of his heterosexual leaning is fairly abundant, though usually tinged with hostility, fear and confusion (see notes 8, 13,14, 54 and 55). The translation is from "The Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil," translated by C. Day Lewis (Doubleday, 1964), pp. 13-17.

12. See Rewald, *Letters*, p. 43.

13. Thanks to my flattery, pat,
She swoons on the forest floor,
And while she's lying flat
Her pipe I well explore,
O sweet pipe etc.

And when our pleasure dies,
It's not 'enough' she cries.
Feeling me re-begin,
She says, 'Go deeper in'.
Gentle pipe etc.

Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 17-18, 342-344. Translation from Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art*, pp. 23-24. The "pipe" in question is not for smoking but a pipe of Pan -- a reed pipe. The fantasy is one of sex with an unconscious victim, with whom Cézanne need not engage other than physically, but who turns out to welcome his possession of her helpless body.

14. Ibid, pp. 41-42, 359. Translation from Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art*, p. 47. The drawing in question is C.27. A protrusion pointing from the man to where the woman's face would be if she had been given one might - or might not - be a penis.

15. As a daring diver
Ploughing through the liquid waters
of the Arc
And in this limpid stream
Catch the fish chance offers me.
Amen! Amen! These verses are stupid
They are not in good taste
But they are stupid
And worth nothing
Good-by, Zola, Goodby.

Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 22.

[16]. Drawings are denoted with Chappius catalogue numbers. (See Adrien Chappius, *The Drawings of Paul Cézanne: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York Graphic Society, 1973).

[17]. Paintings are denoted with Rewald catalogue numbers. See John Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne: a Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 volumes, in collaboration with Walter Feilchenfeld and Jayne Warman (Harry N. Abrams, 1996). Rewald dates the copies as follows: R. 9, c.1860; R.13, c. 1860; R. 15, c.1860; R. 22, 1862-64; R. 23, 1862-64; R. 27, 1863-65. "Peaches on a Plate," R. 22, is from a painting first attributed to an Axois painter, Laurent Fauchier, and then to Aelbert Cuyp, but is now said to be of uncertain provenance. Other paintings possibly derived from engravings or actual paintings are R. 12, 14, 16 and 26.

[18]. Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 58. See also (pp. 73-74), "Another passage of your letter grieved me. Sometimes, so you tell me, you throw your brushes at the ceiling when your results do not come up to your ideas. Why this discouragement, this impatience?"

[19]. "I have seen Paul!, I have seen Paul! do you understand? do you? He came this morning, Sunday, and several times called my name from the staircase." Zola's letter to Baille dated Paris, 22 April, 1861, in Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 83.

[20]. On the *Académie Suisse*, see John Rewald, The History of Impressionism (The Museum of Modern Art, 1973), p. 49.

[21]. There he also met Antoine Guillaumin, Francisco Oller, Achille Emperaire and Claude Monet. For these friendships, see Cahn, "Chronology," *Cézanne*, p. 531. For Guillaumin in particular see John Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism*, ed. Irene Gordon and Frances Witzenhoffer (Harry N. Abrams, 1985), p. 103f.

[22]. The nickname is mentioned in Roger Fry, *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 7, but without attribution.

[23]. Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 84-86.

[24]. Ibid, pp. 87-88

[25]. Ibid, p. 92. The letter continues, "In spite of his excellent nature and his rich natural gifts, Paul cannot bear any criticism, however gentle it may be. I leave him to his dreams, putting my hope in heaven . . . " Here Zola's faith in Cézanne first wavers, to increase and reach a published crescendo in *L'OEuvre*.

[26]. A letter to Cézanne from Zola, dated June 13, 1860, refers to the "big panels such as you want to do at home." So the decorations Cézanne was planning for the Jas had presumably not yet been started.

[27]. Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne*, vol. 1., p. 66.

[28]. The *Jupiter and Thetis*, signed and dated 1811, was in the Musée Granet in Aix, where Cézanne was able to study it.

[29]. “Take the type of C . . . ‘s father, mocking, republican, bourgeois, cold, meticulous, stingy . . . doesn’t care a rap for anyone or anything.” Thus Zola in his notes for *La Conquête de Plassans*. See Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism*, p. 69.

[30]. As Gowing points out, "Summer" and "Winter" were evidently painted first, with "Spring" and "Fall" added later, which explains why the seasons aren’t in temporal order. Gowing dates the *Seasons* c.1860-62, the portrait c. 1862; Rewald dates the *Seasons* 1860-61, the portrait c. 1862. Might Cézanne have written"1811" on *Winter* because he painted it fifty years after Ingre's *Jupiter and Thetis*, that is, in 1861? Rather than enter the murky waters of Cézanne chronology, it’s only necessary in the context of this discussion to point out that Cézanne was painting conventional hands before he painted either the *Seasons* or the portrait, and that consciously or not the portrait addresses the *Seasons* by being placed among them. See Lawrence Gowing, Catalogue, *Cézanne: The Early Years 1859-1872* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1988), pp. 6, 70, 76); Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne*.

[31]. Cahn, “Chronology,” *Cézanne*, p. 549.

[32]. "I am a shy person, a bohemian, no one gives a damn about what I want. I'm too weak to fight back. I should be a hermit. At least that way no one could get their hooks into me," Bernard reports him as saying; and then: "No one is allowed to touch me . . . no one will get their claws into me! Never! Never!" See "Emile Bernard," *Conversations with Cézanne*, pp. 58, 70-71.

[33]. Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 244-45.

[34]. John Rewald, *Cézanne: a Biography* (Harry N. Abrams, 1990), p. 251.

[35]. Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 336.

[36]. “Withdrawn and shy, (the young) Paul was at the same time romantic and boisterous, exuberant and unstable, overconfident and moody, hesitant and stubborn, proud and melancholy, sensitive and insecure, suspicious and irascible.” Thus Rewald puts it in *Studies in Impressionism*, p. 72. But in a boasting mood, "Pissarro is an old beast, Monet a slyboots, they have no guts . . . . I'm the only one who has any temperament, I'm the only one who knows how to do red!" This from a letter Pissarro wrote to his son in a January, 1896, reporting something Cézanne supposedly said to Oller. See Cahn, “Chronology,” *Cézanne*, p. 553.

[37]. Ibid p. 309.

[38]. Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 98.

[39]. Ibid, p. 309.

[40]. Ambroise Vollard, *Cézanne*, trans., Harold L. van Doren (Dover Publications, 1984), p. 78. To Bernard Cézanne wrote in 1904, "Ingres in spite of his "estyle" (Aixian pronunciation) and his admirers, is only a very small painter." See Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 305.

[41]. Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 40-41. Translation from Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art*, p. 46. Zola was a student at the Lycée Saint-Louis in Paris when France intervened in the matter of Italian unification by declaring war on Austria. Stimulated by the general patriotic fervor, Zola composed with the aid of a classmate and sent to the Empress an ode extravagantly praising French participation. Evidently this earned from his classmates more ragging than praise. See Frederick Brown, *Zola: A Life* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1995), pp. 60-61.

[42]. Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 333.

[43]. "On Saturday we are going to the barrack of the Champs-Elyées to bring our canvases, which will make the Institute blush with rage and despair." Cézanne to Pissarro, in Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 102.

[44]. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Cézanne: In the Letters of Marion to Morstatt," trans., Margaret Scolari, *Magazine of Art* 31 (Feb., Apr., May, 1938) pp. 288-291.

[45]. Charles Baudelaire, "Wagner and Tannhäuser in Paris," *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (Phaidon Press, 1964), p. 117.

[46]. For one interpretation of the *Luncheon*, see Mary Louise Krumrine, "Parisian Writers and the Early Work of Cézanne," *Cézanne: The Early Years* (Harry N. Abrams, 1988), pp. 25, 27; for another see Mary Tompkins Lewis *Cézanne's Early Imagery*. (University of California Press, 1989), pp. 100-107; and for a third see Meyer Schapiro, *Cézanne* (Harry N. Abrams, 1962), p. 34. Krumrine argues that the *Luncheon* is a guessing game like the verbal guessing games Cézanne played with Zola. It narrates Cézanne's choice of mate. Tompkins Lewis argues, persuasively, that it illustrates a scene from Zola's novel, *Madeleine Ferat*. Schapiro's more reticent and guarded reading is proportionate to what one can be reasonably sure of from looking at the picture. Shapiro speaks of the standing woman as holding an orange, Krumrine, an apple. If two scholars and close observers cannot tell apples from oranges we are duly warned of the hazards of deciding what Cézanne's early subjects are about.

[47]. Gowing, "The Early Works of Paul Cézanne," *Cézanne: The Early Years*, pp. 11,12.

[48]. *Tannhäuser* was performed in Paris on the 13th, 18th and 24th of March, 1861, provoking an outcry from members of the Jockey Club, followed by Baudelaire's heated defense, which appeared in April (see n. 44). Cézanne, arriving in Paris on April 22, could hardly have missed the hubub. Zola fictionalized the enthusiasm for Wagner among radical painters in *L'OEuvre*, wherein Gagnière enthuses to Claude: "Oh, Wagner! The God, the incarnation of centuries of music! What an onslaught on conventions, what wholesale destruction of ineffectual theories it stands for, the revolution, the breaking down of barriers to infinity! . . . The overture to *Tannhäuser*, what is it but the mighty hallelujah of the new age!" See Emile Zola, *The Masterpiece*, trans. Thomas Walton (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 229. For remarks on Wagner in letters between Cézanne and his friends, see Paul Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 103, 121; see also Mary Tompkins Lewis, "Literature, Music and Cézanne's Early Subjects," *Cézanne: The Early Years*. (Harry N. Abrams, 1988), p. 36f, where she first published the connection between the opera and Cézanne's painting; and, for a comprehensive synopsis of Cézanne, Wagner, Baudelaire and Tannhäuser, with a bibliography, see John Rewald *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne*, pp. 124-125.

[49]. For a convincing interpretation of *The Abduction*, see Mary Tompkins Lewis, *Cézanne's Early Imagery*, (University of California Press, 1989), pp. 156-162, 182. As with the *Luncheon*, the subject of this painting is attributed differently by different authors. For an overview with citations see Cachin, et. al., *Cézanne*, pp. 101-102.

[50]. See Rewald, *Cézanne: a Biography*, p. 62.

[51]. Ibid, pp. 72-73. See also Cahn, "Chronology," *Cézanne*, p. 534.

[52]. Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 118.

[53]. See Rewald, *Paul Cézanne: A Biography*, pp. 85, 142, for but two of the times Cézanne was ridiculed or attacked.

[54]. Jean Renoir, *Renoir: My Father*, trans. Randolph and Dorothy Weaver (Little Brown, 1962), p. 106.

[55]. See Gasquet, *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne,* p. 78.

[56]. Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, p. 75.

[57]. For tracking Cézanne's whereabouts and activities at this time, see, again, the invaluable Cahn "Chronology," *Cézanne*, p.536, complete with citations.

[58]. "Listen, Monsieur Vollard, I worked a lot out of doors at Estaque. I divided my time between the field and the studio." Vollard, *Cézanne*, pp. 31-32.

[59]. "Three major fragments from the second version of (*The Temptation of St. Anthony*) . . . had appeared serially in the popular journal *L'Artiste* in the years 1856 and 1857. The excerpts described the monk's temptation by the Queen of Sheba, the visit of the heretic Apollonius, and the extravagant feast of Nebuchadnezzar . . . ." Mary Tompkins Lewis, *Cézanne's Early Imagery*, p. 183. She discusses the first *Temptation* on page 185. For a discussion of Cézanne and *L'Artiste*, see n. 3.

[60]. "The brothel in town, or something like that, but nothing more. I pay, the word is dirty, but I need rest, and at that price I ought to get it." Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 221.

[61]. See "Woman with Infant Son" (R. 216), a painting of Hortense nursing Paul junior, in Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne*, vol. 2. For Emperaire's unhappy stay with Cézanne see Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 135-136; also Rewald, *Studies in Impressionism*, pp. 58-63.

[62]. See Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, p. 292

[63]. Quoted in "Jules Borély," *Conversations with Cézanne*, p. 22. See also, on page 35 in the same volume, Bernard's opinion: "At Auvers he began the stunning creation of that honest and ingenuously wise art that has since given us."

[64]. “Everything . . ." and “As sensations form . . ,” Cézanne, *Letters*, pp. 294, 336; "Hatred . . ," Gasquet, *Gasquet's Cézanne*, p. 170. About Cézanne moving from the *noire* paintings to disciplined observation, Fry writes, "It is true that the inner vision and the ambition to create *a priori* constructions corresponding to the demands of his subjective imaginative life never ceased to haunt him, but from this moment the 'motif,' the idea accepted from the visible world, claimed an ever greater proportion of his indefatigable energy." (Fry, *Cézanne*, p. 34.)

[65]. "According to Dr. Gachet's son, this picture was painted as the result of a discussion on the subject of Manet's *Olympia*. A strange work, perhaps improvised, done almost as if on a wager, it has given rise to many interpretations." Even less sympathetic was the review calling Cézanne "only a maniac, agitated, painting in a *delirium tremens*." See Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne*, pp. 164-165.

[66]. Quoted in Rewald, History of Impressionism, p. 330.

[67]. Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 29; Meyer Schapiro, *Cézanne* (Harry N. Abrams, 1962), p. 44.

[68]. See Vollard on his visit to Cézanne in Vollard, *Cézanne*, pp. 62-63.

[69]. Fry, *Cézanne*, p. 1.

[70]. "If that distinguished aesthete (Gustave Moreau) paints nothing but rubbish, it is because his dreams of art are suggested not by the inspiration of Nature, but by what he has seen in the museums, and still more by a philosophical cast of mind derived from too close an acquaintance with the masters whom he admires. I should like to have that good man under my wing, to point out to him the doctrine of a development of art by contact with Nature. It's so sane, so comforting, the only just conception of art." See Vollard, *Cézanne*, p. 64.

[71]. Erle Loran, *Cézanne's Composition: Analysis of His Form with Diagrams and Photographs of His Motifs* (University of California Press, 1985), pp. 117, 8; Clement Greenberg, "Cézanne," *Art and Culture* (Beacon Press, 1961) p. 54; William Rubin, "Cézannisme and the Beginnings of Cubism," *Cézanne: The Late Work* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), pp. 162-165, 198 (n. 66).

[72]. Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, pp. 222, 221.

Notes on the Images

R. 95. Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cezanne, Father of the Artist. C. 1865. The Trustees of the National Gallery.

R. 29. Bather and Rocks. C. 1867-69 (possibly earlier). The Chrysler Museum.

C. 230. Portrait of Achille Emperaire. C. 1869-70. Musée d’Orsay.

R. 171. Pastoral. 1870. Musée d’Orsay.

R. 299. The Eternal Feminine. C. 1877. J. Paul Getty Museum.

R. 166. Pastorale. 1870. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

R. 121. The Abduction. 1867. On loan to the Fitzwilliam Museum.

R. 167. The Temptation of Saint Anthony. C. 1870. Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection.

R. 221. View of Auvers-sur-Oise. C. 1873. Art Institute of Chicago.