

PAUL
CEZANNE

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ALEXIS READING TO ZOLA (oil on canvas, about 1869)

Museu de Arte, São Paulo, Brazil

PAUL CÉZANNE

by MEYER SCHAPIRO

THE MATURE PAINTINGS OF CÉZANNE offer at first sight little of human interest in their subjects. We are led at once to his art as a colorist and composer. He has treated the forms and tones of his mute apples, faces, and trees with the same seriousness that the old masters brought to a grandiose subject in order to dramatize it for the eye. His little touches build up a picture-world in which we feel great forces at play; here stability and movement, opposition and accord are strongly weighted aspects of things. At the same time the best qualities of his own nature speak in Cézanne's

works: the conviction and integrity of a sensitive, meditating, robust mind.

It is the art of a man who dwells with his perceptions, steeping himself serenely in this world of the eye, though he is often stirred. Because this art demands of us a long concentrated vision, it is like music as a mode of experience—not as an art of time, however, but as an art of grave attention, an attitude called out only by certain works of the great composers.

Cézanne's art, now so familiar, was a strange novelty in his time. It lies between the old kind of

picture, faithful to a striking or beautiful object, and the modern "abstract" kind of painting, a moving harmony of colored touches representing nothing. Photographs of the sites he painted show how firmly he was attached to his subject; whatever liberties he took with details, the broad aspect of any of his landscapes is clearly an image of the place he painted and preserves its undefinable spirit. But the visible world is not simply represented on Cézanne's canvas. It is re-created through strokes of color among which are many that we cannot identify with an object and yet are necessary for the harmony of the whole. If his touch of pigment is a bit of nature (a tree, a fruit) and a bit of sensation (green, red), it is also an element of construction which binds sensations or objects. The whole presents itself to us on the one hand as an object-world that is colorful, varied, and harmonious, and on the other hand as the minutely ordered creation of an observant, inventive mind intensely concerned with its own process. The apple looks solid, weighty, and round as it would feel to a blind man; but these properties are realized through tangible touches of color each of which, while rendering a visual sensation, makes us aware of a decision of the mind and an operation of the hand. In this complex process, which in our poor description appears too intellectual, like the effort of a philosopher to grasp both the external and the subjective in our experience of things, the self is always present, poised between sensing and knowing, or between its perceptions and a practical ordering activity, mastering its inner world by mastering something beyond itself.

To accomplish this fusion of nature and self, Cézanne had to create a new method of painting. The strokes of high-keyed color which in the Impressionist paintings dissolved objects into atmosphere and sunlight, forming a crust of twinkling points, Cézanne applied to the building of solid forms. He loosened the perspective system of traditional art and gave to the space of the image the aspect of a world created free-hand and put together piecemeal from successive perceptions, rather than offered complete to the eye in one coordinating glance as in the ready-made geometrical perspective of Renaissance art. The tilting of vertical objects, the discontinuities in the shifting levels of the segments of an interrupted horizontal edge (page 91), contribute to the effect of a perpetual searching and balancing of forms. Freely and subtly

Cézanne introduced besides these nice variations many parallel lines, connectives, contacts, and breaks which help to unite in a common pattern elements that represent things lying on the different planes in depth. A line of a wall is prolonged in the line of a tree which stands further back in space; the curve of a tree in the foreground parallels closely the outline of a distant mountain just below it on the surface of the canvas (page 75). By such means the web of colored forms becomes more cohesive and palpable, without sacrifice of the depth and weight of objects. These devices are the starting point of later abstract art, which proceeds from the constructive function of Cézanne's stroke, more than from his color. But however severely abstracted his forms may seem, the strokes are never schematic, never an ornament or a formula. The painting is finally an image and one that gives a new splendor to the represented objects.

Cézanne's method was not a foreseen goal which, once reached, permitted him to create masterpieces easily. His art is a model of steadfast searching and growth. He struggled with himself as well as his medium, and if in the most classical works we suspect that Cézanne's detachment is a heroically achieved ideal, an order arising from mastery over chaotic impulses, in other works the conflicts are admitted in the turbulence of lines and colors. In his first pictures, painted in the 1860's in his native Aix and in Paris, he is often moody and violent, crude but powerful, and always inventive—to such a degree that in his immaturity he anticipates Expressionist effects of the twentieth century. This early art is permeated by a great restlessness. Impressionism released the young Cézanne from troubling fancies by directing him to nature; it brought him a discipline of representation, together with the joys of light and color which replaced the gloomy tones of his vehement, rebellious phase. Yet his Impressionist pictures, compared to those of his friend, Pissarro, or to Monet's, are generally graver, more troweled, more charged with contrasts. Unlike these men, he was always deeply concerned with composition, for which he showed since his youth an extraordinary gift—he was a born composer, with an affinity to the great masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the largeness of his forms, in his delight in balancing and varying the massive counterposed elements. The order he creates is no cool, habitual calculation; it bears evident signs of spontaneity and the bias im-



Monet THE BEACH AT SAINTE-ADRESSE (oil on canvas, 1867)

The Art Institute of Chicago

posed by a dominant mood, whether directed towards tranquillity or drama. Some of his last works are as passionate as the romantic pictures of his youth; only they are not images of sensuality or human violence, but of nature in a chaos or solitariness responding to his mood. A great exaltation breaks through at times in his later work (page 125) and there is an earlier picture with struggling nudes (page 49) that tells us—more directly than the paintings of skulls and muted faces—of the burden of emotion in this shy and anguished, powerful spirit. Still more, the late works allow us to see the range of his art which transposes in magnificent images so vast a world of feeling.

THIS, IN SHORT, is how Cézanne appears to us today. It is a broad account which says too little about the intimate character of his art. For that we must consider individual works and especially their color in a more attentive way.

It is instructive to see his *View of L'Estaque* (page 63) beside an early painting by Monet, *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse* (above), which is also di-

vided into land, sea, distant shore, and sky. In Monet's work the colors of these great zones are close to each other in relative brightness and strength. The blue-green of the sea is a delicate tint, the sky is a bluish grey with faintly pink clouds, and the sandy beach a warm grey with pale yellowish tones. A peculiar diluteness or grey-ness prevails in all these colors; it is subtle and the source of the airy charm of the work.

In Cézanne's picture, the large divisions of the landscape are re-enforced by tones of a great span of intensity and hue. The sea is a full blue robustly paired with orange in the foreground land and with a lighter green-blue tint in the sky; the lightness of this sky tint points up the intense greens on the red and orange shore. These great differences of intensity also suggest depth. The pairing of the blue and orange of the water and land, or of the green and orange within the land, is a much stronger contrast than the pairing of the sky and the distant blue and violet shore.

In Monet's painting there is little range of intensity between the foreground beach and the sky.

The differences between large fields are more delicate; the few intense tones are small scattered spots and the strongest single color is the blue of the boat beached at the right. The large areas around it look all the more neutral and pale. When, in later pictures, Monet uses brighter colors throughout, the contrast of the great zones is still restricted in span: strong blues are set beside strong greens. His principle remains in general the same: the sharpest contrasts of color are in small touches from point to point, and the colors of large adjacent fields are neighboring tones of the scale, with relatively little span. In a later version of a scene like *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse*, the four fields would be even less distinct.

To this difference in color corresponds a different treatment of the forms. In Cézanne's painting we feel at once the cohesion of the sea and earth as engaged counterpart shapes. Broadly similar, these inverted complementary forms are accented by the powerful contrasts in their colors. In Monet's picture, these triangles are less strongly defined and less firmly joined. Their bond is loosened not only by the dilute tones and the varying textures of the water and sand, but by stronger episodic contrasts with the small objects lying across them—the dark reddish sails on the pale green sea, and the blue and brown boats on the sand. In the *View of L'Estaque*, the major contrast of water and earth along a common sloping line is strengthened through the soft gradations beyond; the sky and the farther shore, together forming a rectangle like the sea and the foreground earth, are parallel horizontal masses with colors less sharply opposed.

Cézanne's colors, one might say, have more weight than Monet's. This is also true of his forms. He divides the surface of the canvas so that earth and sea leave little room for the filmy sky which continues their recession and seems to lie on their upward tilted plane; whereas Monet's more substantial sky, with its mottled clouds, high above the observer, dominates the scene. Cézanne's earth and sea are a larger part of the whole; the diagonal is stronger, and the equilibrium of the painting has more suspense, a deeper drama of forms. His water is heavy; it cuts into the land, pressing downward into the hollow line of the shore. Monet's sea is translucent, bland and light; the boat on the shore cuts into the shallow water, which is carried easily, lifted up by the convex line of the beach.

To the use of these maximal forces of color and

shape, Cézanne's painting owes its greater power and its air of permanence; from the attenuated contrasts, Monet's work acquires its delicacy and momentariness. His vision is directed towards small things which break up or interrupt the large continuous forms, like the passive eye that delights in the distractions of the unexpected and piquant. Hence the scattering of parts and the taste for the subtle surfaces of formless sand and cloud. Cézanne, no less attentive to nuance and detail, is more concentrated and absorbed, and more deeply moved by the grandeur of the scene.

It is often said that Monet is concerned with the flux of appearances, while Cézanne paints the timeless aspect of things. But Cézanne's picture is also an image of the landscape at a certain time of day, and renders with great truth the beautiful light and atmosphere of the Mediterranean coast. Both men seek out the flicker of tones; but Monet chooses a moment when atmosphere or light becomes an independent force imposing its own filminess or vibrancy upon the entire scene, reducing objects to vague condensations within the medium of air and light, while Cézanne discovers in air and light the conditions for the clearness and density of things. Monet and Cézanne proceed alike from a conception of the medium; for Monet it is the source or counterpart of an all-enveloping mood; Cézanne sees light as the eternal ground of the sensations through which he can reconstitute a stable and richly colored world of things.

THOUGH PAINTING DIRECTLY from nature, like the Impressionists, Cézanne thought often of the more formal art he admired in the Louvre. He wished to create works of a noble harmony like those of the old masters; in his talk about painting the name of Poussin comes up more than once as a model of great art. Not the method of seventeenth-century composition, but its completeness and order attracted Cézanne; in his own words, he wished to re-do Poussin from nature, that is, to find the forms of the painting in the landscape before him and to render the whole in a more natural coloring based on direct perception of tones and light. In a story by Duranty, the novelist and defender of the Impressionists, published posthumously in 1881, there is an Impressionist—undoubtedly Cézanne—who copies a Poussin in the Louvre in scandalously bright tones.

What we call classic in a Poussin landscape



Poussin POLYPHEMUS (oil on canvas, about 1649)

The Hermitage, Leningrad

proceeds in part from a concept of drama, while Cézanne would have us contemplate the stillness of a purely visual world from which all human action has been banished. In Poussin's *Polyphemus* (above) the mythical inhabitants of the landscape recline in the foreground, some watching the action like spectators in a theater. Placing ourselves among them, our eyes are led from their rocky seats to the mountain from whose peak the giant prepares to hurl a boulder at the fleeing Odysseus and his men. Cézanne, too, offers in his painting of Mont Sainte-Victoire (page 75) a vision of a central peak, flanked by trees. But while Poussin has arranged his scene like a dramatic spectacle focused on a dominant figure and enclosed by the landscape that forms its natural setting, Cézanne's open vista has been singled out by a moving observer from a unique or momentary point of view outside the scene. His landscape includes the foreground trees which are incomplete forms, cut by the spectator's framing eye. At the right, great branches sweep across the sky, parallel to the curve of the horizon. Yet in this view which unites in contrast and accord things near and far—the ob-

jects at the spectator's standpoint and those on which he fixes his eye—there is no path between foreground and distance. The spectator does not dwell in this landscape, and nothing that happens in it concerns him; he is suspended above the foreground, a pure contemplator for whom all nature is one—here the duality of action and contemplation hardly exists. If the superb mountain in the distance has an ideal balanced energy and repose—the opposite of the foreground trees—it is not accented as a focal object through light and dark or the broad symmetry of surrounding forms, as in the painting by Poussin, who even marks the axis of his giant by the luminous edge of a cloud, a beautiful echo of the trees. In Poussin's canvas the ideal spectator is closer to the objects he looks at; the landscape is a grandiose setting for man, his natural home in which he is both actor and observer. Here man with his laurel crown is assimilated to the trees, while the blinded sub-human giant is likened to the rocks. Cézanne's landscape is external to the solitary spectator, who is more self-consciously contemplative, seeking a vantage point where he can remain outside his vision. Yet

his space is finally part of the landscape; his contemplation is, so to speak, comprised in the contemplated whole through the incomplete, marginal forms of the foreground trees which, in their restlessness, convey something of the turmoil of the observer who finds in the serenity of the distant view a resolution of his own conflicts.

IN THIS COMPARISON with Poussin I have considered mainly the vision of the landscape, rather than the more intimate artistic aspects. Some will object that the themes of a painter have little to do with the value or character of his art. But I believe it is revealing to consider Cézanne's paintings as images of the real world—in doing so we have the support of his letters in which he often speaks of his joy in the sites he paints and the importance of his sensations and emotions before the bit of nature he selects for painting. The kind of objects that attract him, his point of view in representing them, count for something in the final aspect of the pictures and bring us nearer to his feelings.

His landscapes rarely contain human figures. They are not the countryside of the promenade, the vacationist, and the picnicking groups, as in Impressionist painting; the occasional roads are empty, and most often the vistas or smaller segments of nature have no paths at all. In many pictures the landscape, seen from an elevation, is cut off from the spectator by a foreground of parallel bands or by some obstacle of rocks or trees. We are invited to look, but not to enter or traverse the space. Cézanne has given us an ideal model in the painting of a path to a house which is blocked by a barrier in the foreground (page 81). Elsewhere a deep pit or quarry (page 111) lies between us and the main motive; or steep rocks obstruct the way inward (page 79). The ground itself, extending into the far distance, is often broken and difficult, without the neat roads, marked by trees and buildings, that carry us through the breadth and depth of the land in the earliest Western landscapes. The nature admired and isolated by Cézanne exists mainly for the eye; it has little provision for our desires or curiosity. Unlike the nature in traditional landscape, it is often inaccessible and intraversable. This does not mean that we have no impulse to explore the entire space; but we explore it in vision alone. The choice of landscape sites by Cézanne is a living and personal choice; it is a space in which he can satisfy his need for a de-

tached, contemplative relation to the world. Hence the extraordinary calm in so many of his views—a true suspension of desire.

The same—or a similar—attitude governs also his choice of still life. This may seem paradoxical, for the idea of still life—an intimate theme—implies another point of view than landscape. Indeed, Cézanne is unique among painters in that he gives almost equal attention to both types of subject. We can hardly imagine Poussin as a painter of still life or Chardin as a landscapist. Yet common to both themes is their relative inertness, their non-human essence. That Cézanne was able to represent still life and landscape alike shows how deeply he was possessed by this need for painting what is external to man. But in the still life, as in the landscape, it is the choice of objects and his relation to them that are important. Here again we discover a unique attitude which is significant for his art as a whole.

Still life in older painting consists mainly of isolated objects on the table conceived as food or decoration or as symbols of the convivial and domestic, or as the instruments of a profession or avocation; less common are the emblems of moral ideas, like vanity. Things that we manipulate and that owe their positions to our handling, small artificial things that are subordinate to ourselves, that serve us and delight us: still life is an extension of our being as masters of nature, as artisans and tool users. Its development coincides with the growth of landscape; both belong to the common process of the humanizing of culture through the discovery of nature's all-inclusiveness and man's power of transforming his environment.

Cézanne's still life is distinctive through its distance from every appetite but the aesthetic-contemplative. The fruit on the table, the dishes and bottles, are never chosen or set for a meal; they have nothing of the formality of a human purpose; they are scattered in a random fashion, and the tablecloth that often accompanies them lies rumpled in accidental folds. Rarely, if ever, do we find in his paintings, as in Chardin's, the fruit peeled or cut; rarely are there choice *objets d'art* or instruments of a profession or hobby. The fruit in his canvases are no longer parts of nature, but though often beautiful in themselves are not yet humanized as elements of a meal or decoration of the home. (Only in his early works, under Manet's influence, does he set up still lifes with eggs,

bread, a knife, and a jug of wine.) The world of proximate things, like the distant landscape, exists for Cézanne as something to be contemplated rather than used, and it exists in a kind of pre-human, natural disorder which has first to be mastered by the artist's method of construction.

The qualities of Cézanne's landscapes and still lifes are also present in his human themes, at least after 1880.

Many writers have remarked on the mask-like character of Cézanne's portraits. The subject seems to have been reduced to a still life. He does not communicate with us; the features show little expression and the posture tends to be rigid. It is as if the painter has no access to the interior world of the sitter, but can only see him from outside. Even in representing himself, Cézanne often assumes an attitude of extreme detachment, immobilized and distant in contemplating his own mirror image. The suspended palette in his hand is a significant barrier between the observer and the artist-subject (page 65).

This impersonal aspect of the portraits is less constant than appears from our description. If their abstractness determines the mood of some portraits, there are others of a more pathetic, responsive humanity.

The idea of painting portraits, foreign to Poussin, is already an avowal of interest in a living individual. We must admit that Cézanne's contemplative position varies with his objects (and with his mood at the moment); some draw him nearer than others, involving him in a current of emotion.

But as we turn from the isolated human figure to the group, entering the domain of the social, his detachment becomes even more marked than in the landscapes. His bathers, and especially the women, are among the least "natural" of all his subjects. Except for secondary distant figures in a few versions, there is little sportiveness among these idyllic nudes in the open air. Most often they neither bathe nor play, but are set in constrained, self-isolating, thoughtful postures. They belong together as bathing figures, but like his still life objects their relations are indeterminate and we can imagine other groupings of their bodies which will not change their meaning. Transpositions of older images of mythical nudes, which expressed a dream of happiness in nature (still vivid in Renoir's pictures), Cézanne's bathers are without grace or erotic charm and retain in their unidealized nakedness the awkward forms of everyday, burdened humanity. The great statuesque nude (page 69) in the Museum of Modern Art stands



HOUSE AMONG TREES (water color, 1890-1900)

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Lillie P. Bliss Collection



CARD PLAYER (water color, 1890-92) *Collection Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey McCormick, Chicago*

for all the bathers in the strange combination of walking and pensiveness, with contrasted qualities of the upper and lower body.

The *Card Players* (page 89) is perhaps the clearest example of Cézanne's attitude in interpreting a theme. It is a subject that has been rendered in the past as an occasion of sociability, distraction, and pure pastime; of greed, deception, and anxiety in gambling; and the drama of rival expectations. In Cézanne's five paintings of the theme we find none of these familiar aspects of the card game. He has chosen instead to represent a moment of pure meditation—the players all concentrate on their cards without show of feeling. They are grouped in a symmetry natural to the game; and the shifting relation between rules, possibility, and chance, which is the objective root of card playing, is intimated only in the silent thought of the men. Cézanne might have observed in an actual game just such a moment of uniform concentration; but it is hardly characteristic of the peasants of his Provence—their play is convivial and loud. In selecting this intellectual phase of the game—a kind of collective *solitaire*—he created a model of his own activity as an artist. For Cézanne, painting was a process outside the historical stream

of social life, a closed personal action in which the artist, viewing nature as a world of variable colors and forms, selected from it in slow succession, after deliberating the consequence of each choice for the whole, the elements of his picture. (In a letter to Pissarro he has likened the landscape of L'Estaque to playing cards, but what he had in mind were the stark contrasts of the colors of the bright Provençal scene, as in the flat primitive designs on the cards.) The painting is an ordered whole in which, as Cézanne said, sensations are bound together logically, but it is an order that preserves also the aspect of chance in the appearance of directly encountered things.

Observation of his subjects shows then a fairly uniform or dominant attitude. Within the broad range of themes—and no other artist of his time produced this variety, at least in these proportions—Cézanne preserves a characteristic meditativeness and detachment from desire. His tendency coincides with what philosophers have defined as the aesthetic attitude in general: the experience of the qualities of things without regard to their use or cause or consequence. But since other painters and writers have responded to the religious, the moral, the erotic, the dramatic, and practical, cre-

ating for aesthetic contemplation works in which the entire scope of everyday life is imaged, it is clear that the aesthetic attitude to the work of art does not exclude a subject matter of action or desire, and that Cézanne's singular choice represents an individual viewpoint rather than the necessary approach of artists. The aesthetic as a way of seeing has become a property of the objects he looks at; in most of his pictures, aesthetic contemplation meets nothing that will awaken curiosity or desire. But in this far-reaching restriction, which has become a principle in modern art, Cézanne differs from his successors in the twentieth century in that he is attached to the directly seen world as his sole object for meditation. He believes—as most inventive artists after him cannot do without some difficulty or doubt—that the vision of nature is a necessary ground for art.

TURNING NOW TO THE PROCESS of painting, let us see how the content of his imagery is related to the artistic substance of his work.

We will begin with his drawing, which was perhaps the most disturbing feature to his contemporaries. His many deviations from correctness have

been explained as the result of a defect of the eye. But they are not so uniform that one can attribute them to an anomaly of vision; besides, we judge from many works, early and late, that Cézanne knew how to draw "correctly." On the other hand, it is unlikely that all his modifications of perspective and of the familiar shapes of objects were due to a rigorous ideal of unity. The great painters of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, masters of composition with highly unified styles, were able to harmonize natural forms in a strict perspective. If Cézanne gave up both the perspective system and the precise natural form, it was because he had a new conception of painting with which these could not be reconciled.

In his landscapes and still lifes, the convergence of foreshortened lines tends to be blunted and the movement inward is slowed up (pages 61, 81); an extreme example is the side of a house drawn as if in the same plane as the front that faces us, much as in a child's drawing (page 71). To understand this blunting of the convergence, let us imagine Cézanne's painting of a table top re-done in correct perspective form.

Considered as a shape, Cézanne's version looks



THE ORCHARD (water color, 1885-86)

Collection Mr. and Mrs. David M. Heyman, New York



SELF-PORTRAIT (pencil, 1886?)

The Art Institute of Chicago

somewhat fuller and more solid. We are not pulled inward with the same intensity; the outline, approaching the form of the actual table, is also more like the rectangle of the canvas. If the depth is less marked and the dramatic movement to a vanishing point very much reduced, the whole seems nearer to us; we feel more strongly both the table and the canvas as objects. Finally, we observe that Cézanne's table, more irregular than both the real table and the apparent perspective form, is a unique piece-meal construction; we see it as something put together rather than as a single whole.

Among the curved forms, the "squaring" of the ellipses of pots and dishes agrees with the blunting of foreshortened lines of the table (pages 55, 61). Like the latter, it does not arise from a particular position of the eye, arbitrarily chosen by Cézanne, but is a pattern that satisfies the same needs as the pattern of the table. The flattening of the curve arrests the intensity of recession; it is also an approach to the real object-form, the fullness of the circular opening, and assimilates the latter to the

rectangle of the canvas. It is, besides, more stable than the correct ellipse would be, and is often set above a simple horizontal line at the base of the vessel, contrary to perspective laws. The composite character of the ellipse as a drawn shape is even more pronounced than the same aspect of the table's outline. The free variations of the ellipse within the same picture increase this effect.

This last aspect reappears in the surprising discontinuities of edges. The horizontal line of a table, interrupted by falling draperies and other objects, emerges again at another level (page 61). (The distortion usually does not interfere with our perception of the table; we see the table top as a continuous surface underneath the overlapping objects.) This peculiarity has been explained as the result of a frequent shifting of Cézanne's viewpoint while looking at the objects; but it occurs also in his vertical lines, in walls and tree trunks and bottles, and is often so marked that we must ask why he shifted his eye or accepted the result of such shifting, if that is indeed the cause.

If we are to look for the source of such breaks of alignment in direct perception, we shall find it more readily perhaps in the minute changes that occur in the apparent size and shape of an object (or a part of an object) when it is brought close to another, as in the optical illusions which have been explained as phenomena of figural contrast. But such odd perceptions have first to be accepted as eligible for painting, and this requires a special attitude to the visual, different from the customary one which admits only what is constant in the form of an object and its perspective foreshortenings. It may be that just as the Impressionist painters introduced into their pictures the so-called simultaneous contrasts of color, for example, the fugitive sensation of red induced in vision by a bright green—what had once been described as "ghost colors" and studiously subtracted from perception by the artist as a perturbing factor in his effort to capture the true local color of an object—so Cézanne was attentive to the induced contrast effects in his perception of neighboring forms and represented the resulting apparent deformations, with more or less intensity, on the canvas. For the Impressionists, who wished to overcome the bareness and inertness of local color, it was precisely these volatile, "subjective" contrast colors that gave to the painting a greater vibrancy and truth to sensation, the evidence of the artist's live sensibility. But Cézanne,

unlike the Impressionists, was much concerned with the constant object-form and with local color; and unlike the older artists, he built up this object-form and local color out of his immediate impressions, including the most subtle and unstable effects of contrast. The subjective in his perceptions has then a quite different role than in these other styles. Yet we are not sure that the shifting alignments and other distortions in Cézanne's work can be explained by such visual facts alone, although he might have been encouraged to draw more freely because of his experience of the fine inconstancy of forms in perception. We must also take into account their expressive aspect, the new qualities they contribute to the picture, just as the deformations of his perspective produce an effect of stability and reduced tension.

Compared with the normal broken line of an interrupted and re-emerging edge, Cézanne's shifting form is more varied and interesting; by multiplying discontinuities and asymmetry, it increases the effect of freedom and randomness in the whole. It is a free-hand construction through which his activity in sensing and shaping the edge of the table is as clear to us as the objective form of the original table. We see the object in the painting as formed by strokes, each of which corresponds to a distinct perception and operation. It is as if there is no independent, closed, pre-existing object, given once and for all to the painter's eye for representation, but only a multiplicity of successively probed sensations—sources and points of reference for a constructed form which possesses in a remarkable way the object-traits of the thing represented: its local color, weight, solidity, and extension.

The strokes which build up the objects in all their compactness are open forms. The edge of an apple is shaped by innumerable touches that overlap each other, but also slip into the surrounding objects. The outline sometimes lies paradoxically outside the apple (page 77). Yet its discontinuous strokes are no different finally from those that model the continuous solid mass of the fruit.

Cézanne once expressed the wish to paint nature in complete naiveté of sensation, as if no one had painted it before. Given this radically empirical standpoint, we can understand better his deformations of perspective and all those strange distortions, swellings, elongations, and tiltings of objects which remind us sometimes of the works of artists of a more primitive style who have not yet acquired

a systematic knowledge of natural forms, but draw from memory and feeling. We cannot say how much in Cézanne's distortions arises from odd perceptions, influenced by feeling, and how much depends on calculations for harmony or balance of forms. In either case there is an expressive sense in the deformation, which will become apparent if we try to substitute the correct form. Some accent or quality of expression will be lost, as well as the coherence of the composition which has been built around this element. In general, one may say that for Cézanne a strict perspective would be too impersonal and abstract a form. The lines converging precisely to a vanishing point, the objects in the distance becoming smaller at a fixed rate, would constitute too rigid a skeleton of vision, a complete projective system which precedes the act of painting and limits the artist. But with his desire for freshness of sensation, he could retain those space-building devices which are not bound to a fixed armature of converging lines: the overlapping of objects and the variation of contrast of tones from



HARLEQUIN (water color, 1888-90)

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Ira Haupt, New York

the foreground to the distance. The loosening of perspective had already been prepared by the Impressionists and older artists who were more attentive to color, light, and atmosphere than to the outlines of things and painted directly from nature, without a preliminary guiding framework. But Cézanne's deviations, which are accompanied by a restoration of objects, have other roots.

HOW ARE THESE PECULIARITIES of form related to Cézanne's conception of the objects? We have observed that just as he often selects themes which have little attraction for desire, he represents objects in space so as to reduce the pull of perspective to the horizon; the distant world is brought closer to the eye, but the things nearest to us in the landscape are rendered with few details—there is little difference between the textures of the near and far objects, as if all were beheld from the same distance. To his detached attitude correspond also those distortions and breaks that reduce the thrust of dominant axes and effect a cooler expression. Cézanne's vision is of a world more stable and object-filled and more accessible to prolonged medi-



LOUIS-AUGUSTE CÉZANNE (oil on canvas, 1860-63)
Collection Raymond Pitcairn, Bryn Athyn, Pa.

tation than the Impressionist one; but the stability of the whole is the resultant of opposed stable and unstable elements, including the arbitrary tiltings of vertical objects which involve us more deeply in his striving for equilibrium. In the composition, too, our passions are stilled or excluded; only rarely is there a dramatic focus or climax in the grouping of objects and their rich colors. The composition lacks in most cases—the *Women Bathers* and the *Card Players* are exceptions—an evident framework of design, an ideal schema to which the elements have been adapted and that can be disengaged like the embracing triangle in older art. The bond between the elements, the principle of grouping, is a more complex relationship emerging slowly in the course of work. The form is in constant making and contributes an aspect of the encountered and random to the final appearance of the scene, inviting us to an endless exploration. The qualities of the represented things, simple as they appear, are effected by means which make us conscious of the artist's sensations and meditative process of work; the well-defined, closed objects are built up by a play of open, continuous and discontinuous, touches of color. The coming into being of these objects through Cézanne's perceptions and constructive operations is more compelling to us than their meanings or relation to our desires, and evokes in us a deeper attention to the substance of the painting.

The marvel of Cézanne's classicism is that he is able to make his sensing, probing, doubting, finding activity a visible part of the painting and to endow this intimate, personal aspect with the same qualities of noble order as the world that he has imaged. He externalizes his sensations without strong bias or self-assertion. The sensory element is equally vivid throughout and each stroke carries something of the freshness of a new sensation of nature. The subjective in his art is therefore no isolated, capricious thing, but a manifestation of the same purity as the beautiful earth, mountains, fruit, and human forms he represents.

IT HAS BEEN SAID that a classic artist is a repressed romantic. Although this hardly applies to all classic artists, it seems particularly true for Cézanne, who grew up during a period of romantic art. His earliest works contain many themes of sensuality and violence. They are pictures of murder, rape, orgy, temptation, and stormy nature, painted with



THE MURDER (oil on canvas, 1870)

Museu de Arte, São Paulo, Brazil

a wild energy and conviction. It is a tenebrous, melodramatic art; powerful, even savage; unconstrained in conception and force of contrast; executed with a heavily loaded brush or with the troweled strokes of the palette knife; but always harmonious in color and with many striking inventions in the forms. If Cézanne had died in 1870 before he matured as a painter, we would surely notice these works and be astonished by their freedom. It is the art of a solitary spirit, a refractory being who works naively from impulse, almost a madman. Yet some of the forms anticipate basic devices of his later, slowly deliberated art; and there is a virile largeness of conception which is a permanent character of his style.

When in the later 1860's, under the influence of Manet and the new taste for scenes of picnics and boating parties—the weekend pastorals of the middle class of the cities—he undertakes to represent this gayer world, he transforms it into an atmos-

phere of dream or a haunted imagery of desire (page 35). In a version of the *Luncheon on the Grass* (page 22), he outdoes Manet by painting three nude women and three clothed men. One of the latter, like Cézanne in appearance, lies on the bank in an attitude of grave thought. The trees, with their projecting shapes, are more pronounced than the human beings and echo their forms; and near the center of the space, Cézanne has designed an exotic symmetrical pattern of a tall tree and its reflection in the water, which terminates below near an analogous bottle and wine glass, the counterparts of the paired men and women. Such activation of the landscape through vaguely human forms is rare in the painting of the time. The background of Manet's *Luncheon* (page 23) is an almost shapeless foliage in keeping with the indifference of the conversing figures. Cézanne approaches the pastoral theme in a more passionate spirit; where the Impressionist blurs the elements of the land-

scape, Cézanne over-interprets them, endowing them with the feelings or relationships insufficiently expressed in the human figures. The picture abounds in odd parallelisms and contrasts, independent of nature and probably issuing from unconscious impulses, as in psychotic art.

The character of his early work agrees with what we learn of the young Cézanne from his letters and the accounts left by his friends. He appears in these documents an unsociable, moody, passionate youth who is given to compulsive acts which are followed by fits of despair. He is one of those ardent temperaments tormented by profound feelings of inadequacy, whose shyness does not constrain their imagination but stirs it to more urgent and inspired expression. The fact of his illegitimate birth—repaired by the later marriage of his parents—and the humble origin of his devoted mother, who had been a worker in his father's shop, tell us nothing certain about the formation of his character. But we know of a prolonged struggle with his powerful father whom he feared greatly and who destined him, as the only son, for the family bank, sending

him to law school against his wishes. Since his boyhood in Aix, in the company of his fatherless schoolmate, Émile Zola, he had filled his mind with dreams of literature, art, and the vague freedom of a bohemian existence. His youthful letters alternate between ironical self-disparagement and fulsome verses on the joys of nature and imaginary loves. The one mention of a real woman concerns a working-girl in Aix whom he dares not approach and who, he discovers, is already loved. These letters contain also fancies of a macabre violence in prose and verse, centering on women and the family. They have been ignored as immature effusions, but they are worth considering for the light they throw on Cézanne's personality and his relations to his parents. With ferocious humor, he describes and illustrates in a Dantesque hell a family at table devouring a severed human head offered by the father. (Elsewhere he rhymes "Cézanne" with "crâne"—skull.) In a visionary poem, we see him beset in a dark forest on a stormy night by Satan and his demons; at the sound of a coach drawn by four horses, the devils disperse; within the coach he dis-



LUNCHEON ON THE GRASS (oil on canvas, 1870)

Collection J.-V. Pellerin, Paris



Manet LUNCHEON ON THE GRASS (oil on canvas, 1863)

The Louvre, Paris

covers a beautiful woman whose breast he kisses—she instantly turns into a horrid skeleton which embraces him. In still another poem, “The Dream of Hannibal,” written in mock-classical style, the young hero, after a drunken bout in which he has spilled the wine on the tablecloth and fallen asleep under the table, dreams of his terrible father who arrives in a chariot drawn by four white horses. He takes his debauched son by the ear, shakes him angrily, and scolds him for his drunkenness and wasteful life and for staining his clothes with sauce, wine, and rum. These fantasies convey something of the anxiety of the young Cézanne under the strict regime of his father. They lead us to ask whether in his lifelong preoccupation with still life there is not perhaps an unconscious impulse to restore harmony to the family table, the scene and symbol of Cézanne’s conflict with his father.

With all this emotional tumult, there is in the young Cézanne an irrepressible will to achievement, a devotion to art more stubborn than Zola’s. He finally won his father’s consent, more by his tenacity than because of any obvious promise as a

painter. The family’s support—at first modest and conditional and later, at his father’s death, enough to free him from all economic cares—was indispensable for the maturing of his work; helpless in practical matters, he could hardly have survived otherwise. In twin photographs of the painter and his father we recognize an evident opposition of temperament in the faces of the tense, introspective artist and the old, self-made merchant and provincial banker, with his shrewd, confident air of the French bourgeois of the old style launched by the Revolution; but the son has his own certitude, too, an obstinate concern with *his* affair which is perhaps not unconnected with the example of the strong-willed and severe philistine father.

Whatever the roots of his character and of his call to art, Cézanne as a painter begins with the ideas and possibilities of his time. Born in Aix in 1839, he grows up in a province where the teaching of art is of the old-fashioned academic kind, but where the Romantic poets and painters awaken the young to ideas of liberty. In 1860, Delacroix was still alive, a heroic model of revolt in art. For over

thirty years painting in France had been a field of great insurgent movements. The concept of modernity—the notion that art has to advance constantly, in step with a changing contemporary outlook independent of the past—was well established. To become a painter then was to take a stand among contending schools and to anticipate an original personal style. It was, above all, to be an individual. Courbet said at this time that he was a painter in order to win his freedom, and that he recognized no authority other than himself—“I too am a government. . .”.

This sentiment of personal independence stimulated by the revolutions in France made artistic life tense with combat and self-assertion. The Romantic movement had left a powerful heritage in the rebellious attitude of artists, and the sober middle class in turn looked down on the advanced painters and poets as a disorderly crowd of doubtful morality and use. The existence of a caste of academic artists who decided the purchase of paintings by the State and excluded the new forms from the Salon, provoked violent reactions among the young independent painters. These formed loose groups united by a common interest against the officials of art; many were anarchist or vaguely radical in thought, although their art was unpolitical in theme. So strong was this opposition in 1863 that the Emperor Louis Napoleon, who had suppressed the Republic by force twelve years before and had now to face a growing political unrest, was compelled to grant a special showing of the works rejected by the jury of the Salon.

Cézanne was one of those who exhibited in this Salon des Refusés. He had come to Paris in 1861 just after the battle over Realism, a turning point in art. From the very first, he declared himself a Realist, although in practice his art hardly conformed to the Realist approach. As a young man in conflict with his strict bourgeois father and restless from unsatisfied dreams of love, he was attracted by the advanced artistic milieu in Paris with its freer life and rebelliousness against authority. Courbet's Realism had been connected at first with democratic ideas; to the public his *Stone-Breakers* and his *Burial at Ornans* were a continuation of the radicalism of 1848. The painting of “Reality”—as opposed to the imaginary or exotic scenes of Romantic and Neo-Classical art—meant, among other things, the picturing of the lower classes, and had a tendentious sense. The assertion that direct ex-

perience was superior to imagination implied also a criticism of traditional beliefs.

But by 1860, the defense of Realism, while insisting that the contemporary, everyday world was the only matter for a modern art, had lost much of its earlier political suggestiveness. It was more concerned with temperament and tones and with the charm of nature sincerely observed than with the realities of lower class life. A general concept of modernity as new experience, movement, and self-reliance replaced the social awareness of 1848. If Realism did away with the Romantic scenes of pathos, the art of Manet and the young Impressionists preserved something of Romantic color and sensibility in their new themes of performers, spectacle, traffic, and holiday pleasure. Instead of *The Barque of Dante* and *The Raft of the Medusa*, they painted the boating parties on the Seine. What is striking in the 1850's and 1860's is precisely this change from a painting of action to a painting of movement without drama in the landscape and human milieu.

Thus Realism, at first ambitious to represent society as a whole, became a purely lyrical art. Courbet himself was to say that he painted from nature according to his sensations of color without knowing what it was he represented. Such subtle naiveté was an ideal of the artists of the 1860's who admired Courbet chiefly for his tones. It is at this time that arises the practical concept of “pure painting” of which Manet is the great exemplar. Pure painting meant the dedication to the visual as a complete world grasped directly as a structure of tones, without intervention of ideas or feelings about the represented objects; the objects are seen, but not interpreted (although we recognize, today, how much this pure painting depends on the taste for a particular world of pleasurable objects and a passive attitude to things).

The young Cézanne responded to this new state of French art in an original way. “Reality” meant to him, as to Zola, the courageous experience of life, as opposed to the tormenting futility of adolescent dreams. But a career of art was itself an uncertain dream, and the decision to become a painter, instead of resolving Cézanne's self-doubt, created a new source of anguish. He took over the direct approach of Courbet and Manet, but he could not assimilate their art fully, since painting was for him a release of the passions. He lacked Manet's cool virtuoso spirit and was incapable of the young Im-



Cézanne (seated) and Pissarro (standing at right), 1877
Collection John Rewald, New York

pressionists' delicate, unsentimental enjoyment of nature. His brush strokes were an assault on the canvas, which he sometimes destroyed in despair, and the palette knife was for a while his chief instrument. For rendering his dark moods, he found congenial models in the realistic Baroque paintings of the old Spaniards and Italians, with their dramatic contrasts of light and deep shadow, and in the French Romantic tradition. Although he painted some mythical themes, Cézanne's fantasies should not be mistaken for the Romantic imagination which represented ideal episodes of the past, admitting the contemporary only in remote scenes or great events. It was in opposition to this now declining taste for the borrowed and idealized image that Cézanne could regard his own impassioned pictures as realistic. Delacroix, too, imagined scenes of violence and despair—because of the frequent massacres, Baudelaire called his art a “molechism”—but the figures, inspired by his reading, were set in a distant time or place. Cézanne's painting is a more direct instrument of the self and represents a violence in everyday life, with figures in contemporary dress. A similar violence colors the first writings of his closest friend, Zola, whose

stories are passionate in tone and deal with extreme situations: murder, suicide, horror, and hallucination. Even in avowing an exact, dispassionate realism as his aim, Zola uses a macabre image; in the preface to *Thérèse Raquin* (1868), he writes of his characters that he wishes “to note scrupulously their sensations and actions: I have simply performed on these two living bodies the job of analysis that surgeons do on cadavers.”

In 1869 Cézanne formed a stable union with a beautiful young girl, Hortense Fiquet, who was later to become his wife. How this affected his art, one can hardly say. But in the following years it develops toward refinement; he is inspired by Manet, whom he now appreciates more for his tones and exquisite execution than for his startling contrasts. The remarkable still life *The Black Clock* (page 37), the great unfinished *Portrait of Alexis and Zola* (page 9), are examples of this new absorption of Manet. The first looks studied—it is an accumulation of brilliant painterly effects—yet retains some traces of his earlier passionateness. The second, based on Manet's portrait of Zola, is simpler and exceedingly subtle in tones—a beautiful scale of black, blue, and grey; in its breadth and harmony of spacing, it surpasses Manet.

Nevertheless, during this period his original



Photograph of Cézanne, about 1871
Collection John Rewald, New York

vehemence persists, as in the views of L'Estaque, painted in the winter of 1870-71.

THE DECISIVE CHANGE came through Impressionism. Cézanne had known the Impressionists and especially Pissarro in the 1860's. As early as 1866 he avowed to Zola his desire to work only in the open air and to capture the "true and original aspect of nature" which he missed in the old masters. But this program, which was also that of the Realists, had to wait until 1872 when he apprenticed himself to Pissarro and worked with him directly from nature in the country around Pontoise and Auvers. His outdoor pictures before this time are, with a few exceptions, still governed by the tonalities of studio painting.

Pissarro's personality was surely important for the change. He was more than a teacher and friend to Cézanne; he was a second father. Cézanne spoke of him with veneration—thirty years afterwards he called him "the humble and colossal Pissarro"; "he is a man to consult, and something like the good Lord." Cézanne had left Paris to live near Pissarro shortly after the birth of his child, whom he loved dearly but could not reveal to his own father in Aix; his common-law marriage was still a secret. Looking at the photograph of the two men, taken at the time they worked together (page 25), we are surprised to learn that the white-bearded Pissarro (born in 1830) was only nine years older than his pupil. Both had aged prematurely. Their heads are similarly bowed, and we sense a spiritual accord between them which we do not feel in the twin photographs of Cézanne and his father. Pissarro, too, had come to painting against the wishes of his family after having abandoned a business career. The fact that he was something of an outsider, a Jew, was significant perhaps to the rebellious young Cézanne. All through his life, Pissarro was faithful to his generous anarchist convictions. In the Impressionist circle he stood out as the most ethical personality, the head of a large family, and the most seriously concerned about others; his fine letters are impressive for their sympathy and gentle wisdom. Among the painters of his advanced group, he was the most eager to learn from others and the most appreciative of their varied genius. Although he painted some admirable pictures of Paris and Rouen, there is little of the urban rococo feeling of the time in his art—the scenes of picnics and boating parties and holi-

day crowds and the charm of modern costumes, which today give an historical interest to so many Impressionist pictures. A disciple of Corot, he is perhaps the most idyllic of the Impressionists, the only painter of peasants in that group.

Pissarro taught Cézanne a method of slow, patient painting directly from nature. It was a discipline in seeing, which led him to replace by fresh colors all those conventional gradations and brusque passages of light and dark that had served him as modeling or as dramatic accents. The Impressionist approach thus made painting for Cézanne more purely visual, freeing him from his too impulsive imagination without sacrificing his need for a vigorous style. It evoked in him a receptive, aesthetic attitude, awakening him to the intimate charm of landscape after it had possessed him through its power and dark moods. His first flower pieces date from this time. Under the new teaching, Cézanne reduced the stress of contrasts in favor of a soft harmony. The rhythm of the brush stroke shifted from the great drive of impulse to the steadier flicker of sensations; the stimulus came more from outside than from within. The big forms were broken up or interrupted by little touches; composition lost its dramatic sweep, becoming more decorative and minute through variations of color from point to point (page 45). Even in the most casual sketches we feel that Cézanne is now very conscious of the canvas as well as of nature. He has a new habit of studying the smallest units of the painting.

Cézanne's art for a few years after 1872 is Impressionist in spirit and method. But his paintings are no less clearly those of a unique artist of a different inclination than the other Impressionists. No other member of that group was so disposed to tangible forms and to the order of responding lines. Even in works of a loosened, delicate play of colored spots, like the *View of Auvers*, we recognize a will to construction in the vertical and horizontal strokes. With all its luminosity and atmosphere, *The Suicidé's House* (page 43) is severe and grave, an anchored form rare in the Impressionist painting of the time. When shown beside those of the other Impressionists in 1877, Cézanne's pictures stood out already as works of a classic spirit. The critic, Rivière, described them as Greek, comparing them with the art of the greatest period of antiquity. It is astonishing that he should have written this, for what we regard today as Cézanne's



TWO STUDIES OF THE ARTIST'S SON (pencil, 1876?)

The Art Institute of Chicago

classic or constructive phase had barely begun.

The characteristics of this later phase have already been described. I cannot analyze in detail the interesting process of its development, which may be followed broadly in the color plates from the *Seated Chocquet* (page 51) and the *Comptoir* (page 55) through the pictures of the mid-eighties (pages 67, 73), although some important stages and variants are not represented in the plates. This development is not uniform; it looks somewhat different if we attend to the landscapes rather than the still lifes or figure pieces.

Much has been written about Cézanne's new rigor of composition and plastic use of color; but I would emphasize the importance of the object for this new style. There is here a kind of naive, deeply sincere, empiricism, which is a necessary condition of the new art. In reconstituting the object out of his sensations, Cézanne submits humbly to the object, as if in atonement for the violence of his early paintings. The object has for him the same indispensable role that the devotion to the human body had for the Greeks in creating their classic sculpture. The cohesiveness, stability, and individual character that Cézanne strove for in the painting as a whole he also sought in realizing on the canvas the object before him. It is true that he had always been a studious painter of objects, and even in his Impressionist phase he rarely carried the dissolu-

tion of things in atmosphere and sunlight as far as did the other Impressionists. But compared to his older painting, the new weight and clearness of the object are a true reform of his art. Just before 1875 we observe in his landscapes and still lifes much unstable spotting, a rich, picturesque blur of color; the composition, though unified, is not as legible through the contours of things, and lacks the noble simplicity of the later works. The closer scrutiny of the object goes hand in hand with a firmer consolidation of the canvas as a whole. I should add, however, that the new feeling for the object is anticipated on the margin of the Impressionist style, in the early 1870's, in his careful studies of still life which are like exercises—little paintings of a few apples, precious for the purity of vision of the roundness and color of the fruit. In the 1880's, Cézanne presents objects very simply and frankly, often in centered arrangements like the primitives, but with an aspect of chance in the varied positions and overlappings, which are balanced with a powerful ingenuity. Cézanne had been thinking seriously about the grouping as well as the appearance of objects, and had no doubt learned much from the masters in the Louvre.

ALTHOUGH CÉZANNE BECOMES more conservative in his thinking as he grows older, he never becomes settled in his art. The years from 1890 to his

death in 1906 are a period of magnificent growth. The still lifes of the 1890's include works of an imposing complexity and sumptuousness; the formerly simple background is filled with richly ornamented drapes, the table and its surroundings are often cut oddly by the frame and are set at an angle in space; the tilting of objects is more pronounced. The Louvre *Still Life with Apples* (page 103), the *Still Life with the Cupid* (page 99), and the *Portrait of Geffroy* (page 95) are great examples of this new elaboration of the canvas, which is more than an assertion of mastery. The abundant colors and forms, a luxury of the senses, awaken ideas of pleasure, and through the odd perspectives involve the observer more intimately in the space of the objects. In their open and unstable forms, these paintings may be compared to the Baroque style that followed the art of the classic Renaissance.

This development of Cézanne does not exclude, however, his practice of the other pole. While creating these baroque still lifes, he produced also the series of *Card Players* and the *Women Bathers* in Philadelphia (page 117)—works in the classic mode, with an ideal compactness and stability. They show that for Cézanne the broad conceptions and even the single features which are called classic and baroque, were not a final goal of his art, but only single possibilities which he explored for what they were worth, as ideas of form suited to different demands of his nature. Already in the 1880's, he produced a work like *The Blue Vase* in the Louvre (page 77) in which the main grouping is a simple parallel alignment of objects, yet the angle of the background and the bottle cut by the frame belong to a more baroque approach, which we feel also in details of the sketchy execution. The polarity of styles that had become evident since the seventeenth century in the divergence between the followers of Rubens and Poussin in France and in the nineteenth century between Ingres and Delacroix, was for Cézanne no longer an artistic problem. Both poles were available to him as equally valid conceptions which he discovered within his own experience in looking at nature as well as in the museums. The alternative constructions of depth by parallel or diagonal receding planes were familiar to him very early. As an Impressionist in the 1870's, he painted many views of landscapes with sharply receding houses and roads at the same time that he set up still lifes of a simple formality before a wall parallel to the plane of the canvas. As a

youth, he adored Delacroix; but he also painted for the family salon in a linear style a series of panels of the Four Seasons which he signed in mock-heroic spirit with the name of Ingres (perhaps to please the taste of his father whose portrait was in the central field). But unlike those who in admiring both artists supposed that Classic and Romantic were incompatible kinds of art—the art of the colorist and the art of the pure draftsman—Cézanne discovered a standpoint in which important values of both could co-exist within one work. (This was also the goal of the mad Frenhofer, the tormented hero of Balzac's moving story, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, in whom Cézanne once recognized himself.) The fact that his classic style, stable and clarified as any work of Raphael, was built upon color and the directly given space of nature already freed him from the narrow partisan views. Firmly dedicated though he was to color and to nature, he filled his notebooks in his journeys through the Louvre with drawings after sculptures of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. In his thought, the essence of style was no longer sufficiently defined by the categories of classic and romantic. These were only modes in which a personal style was realized, more concrete than either. In this new relation to the old historical alternatives, Cézanne anticipates the twentieth century in which the two poles of form have lost their distinctness and necessity. Since then, in Cubism and Abstraction, we have seen linear forms that are open and painterly that are closed, and the simultaneous practice of both by the same artist, Picasso.

But the baroque aspect is only a part of the originality of his late works. What strikes us most of all in the 1890's is the resurgence of intense feeling—it may be related to the new tendencies of the forms with their greater movement and intricacy. The work of his last years offers effects of ecstasy and pathos which cannot be comprised within the account of Cézanne's art as constructive and serene. The emotionality of his early pictures returns in a new form.

The truth is that it had never died out. When Cézanne in the 1870's was converted to the Impressionist method, he repudiated romantic art in ironical sketches of a *Homage to Woman* in which the painter, the poet, the musician, and the priest all celebrate the Eternal Feminine who poses in shameless nudity before them. He continued to paint the



ROCKY RIDGE (water color, 1895–1900)

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Lillie P. Bliss Collection

nude, at first in versions of Saint Anthony's temptation, then in groups of bathers who recall in their postures the nude women of the hermit's imagination. But later there are bacchanals, scenes of violent passion, and copies of Delacroix's *Medea Slaying Her Children* and *The Abandoned Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness*. These fanciful themes are only a small part of Cézanne's later work and had little effect on the main course of his art after 1880. Yet it is worth noting these exceptional pictures—they permit us to see more clearly how the new art rests on a deliberate repression of a part of himself which breaks through from time to time. The will to order and objectivity has the upper hand in the 1880's, although he does not exclude his feelings altogether. He understands the emotional root of his need for order and can speak of "an exciting serenity." Besides that strangely impersonal self-portrait in which the artist is assimilated to his canvas, easel, and palette (page 65), there is another, now in Bern, in which Cézanne, without signs of his profession, gazes at us in sadness and self-concern, a figure of delicate frame, painted with a feeling half-Gothic, half-Rembrandtesque. The inner world of solitude, despair and exaltation penetrates also some landscapes of

this time. One of them, *The Great Tree* (page 109), a work of tumultuous feeling, with swaying form and tall crown of foliage silhouetted against the deep blue sky, revives the sentiment of verses about a tree that he had composed as a boy thirty years before, under the spell of the Romantic poets.

In the last years of his life he often seeks out themes of grandiose solitude. He loves the secluded, shadowy interiors of the woods, rocky ledges, unused quarries, ruined buildings—sites where man is no longer at home and which are marked by the violence of nature. He recreates on his canvases a space, still detached, but even farther from humanity, in which his old aggressive impulses have been transposed to nature itself. For the early scenes of murder and rape and gloomy introspection, he substitutes an abandoned catastrophic landscape. It is the world of a hermit who is still occupied with his own impurity and guilt but can feel, too, in the stony or overgrown solitude some ecstasies of sense. He alternates between the dimness of the forest and the dry, burning heat of the sun in the silence of the quarry. Ideas of death are never far away. Returning to his studio, he delights in painting skulls upon the table where he had recently piled the red fruit and adjusted the folds

of cloth. Among the great works of this time is the portrait of a young man meditating before a skull, like another hermit Jerome. (Is there here some identification with himself—the son remembering the father whom he had once pictured ironically with a skull at table?)

These ideas of solitude and death and nature's violence are not in themselves the ground of the baroque tendency in his forms, although it would be hard to imagine certain of these late scenes in the calm style of the 1880's. The angular view and greater depth of the still lifes, their new elaborateness, can hardly come from the same sentiment as the pictures of pathos. Yet, considered together beside the earlier phase, they are alike in their aspect of movement and intensity. The emotions of the contemplating mind have begun to have their say and stamp the painting with their mood, whether of melancholy or exaltation. We have from this time a number of pictures in which a single note of color or accent of form dominates the whole, unlike the more tempered, balanced works of the preceding period. The old Cézanne paints the peak of Mont Sainte-Victoire isolated from its base and the surrounding valley and plain as a striving, culminating object, all in blue like the sky; the forest scenes are sometimes suffused with a violet haze, and the redness of the Provençal rocks imposes itself on the whole canvas. There is here a willing abandonment of measure, but without loss of control. In other landscapes the pathos of solitude and obstacles gives way to a visionary mood, a mystical immersion in nature's hidden depths—the *Pines and Rocks* in the Museum of Modern Art is a beautiful example.

In still other works, particularly in the forest scenes, but also in the open landscapes (page 125), the formless vegetation is translated into large mottled patches of pulsing color, so large and yet so unconfined by contours, that they approach the state of a pure painting without objects, in which the density of things has been transferred to the

•single chords of color—great elemental forces. In the continuous play of spectral tones, in the passionate dissolution of objects, this late art seems a revived Impressionism, but of incomparably greater weight and conviction than the earlier phase. It is altogether unlike any Impressionist work in the daring extremity of its idea; the color is independent of sunlight and seems to owe its force to intense local colors released in a climactic decomposition of the solid material objects. In such paintings Cézanne belongs to the twentieth century, anticipating by a few years the art of the Fauves and Expressionists. Here again, he is not completely held by one emotion, and in the same years he produces works in which this explosion of color is only an element of a whole conceived with a more constrained fervor, as in the noble portrait of his gardener, Vallier (page 127).

CÉZANNE'S ACCOMPLISHMENT has a unique importance for our thinking about art. His work is a living proof that a painter can achieve a profound expression by giving form to his perceptions of the world around him without recourse to a guiding religion or myth or any explicit social aims. If there is an ideology in his work, it is hidden within unconscious attitudes and is never directly asserted, as in much of traditional art. In Cézanne's painting, the purely human and personal, fragmentary and limited as they seem beside the grandeur of the old content, are a sufficient matter for the noblest qualities of art. We see through his work that the secular culture of the nineteenth century, without cathedrals and without the grace of the old anonymous craftsmanship, was no less capable of providing a ground for great art than the authoritative cultures of the past. And this was possible, in spite of the artist's solitude, because the conception of a personal art rested upon a more general ideal of individual liberty in the social body and drew from the latter its ultimate confidence that an art of personal expression has a universal sense.

Indispensable for the study of Cézanne is the catalogue of his works by Lionello Venturi, Cézanne, son art, son oeuvre, 2 volumes, Paris, Paul Rosenberg, 1936, with 1600 illustrations. I have followed Venturi's datings of almost all the pictures reproduced here. For the criticism and interpretation of Cézanne, I have received the greatest stimulus from Roger Fry, Cézanne, a Study of his Development, New York, Macmillan, 1927, and Fritz Novotny, Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive, Vienna, Schroll, 1938. For the biography, see Gerstle Mack, Paul Cézanne, New York, Knopf, 1935. The translation of a letter of Cézanne on page 48 is taken from this book.