and body. The most troubling aspect is the asymmetry of the face, with its disjunctive gaze – the deeply shadowed right eye turns inward while the left eye gazes outward. The Budapest self-portrait (c. 1878–79), which exhibits a more complex system of parallel hatching, projects a very different psychological aura, thus undercutting Schniewind’s interpretation. The three-quarter view and fuller beard make the head appear more massive than in the Chicago portrait; the effect is confident and controlled rather than anxious.

Cézanne’s analytical technique is accentuated in two self-portrait drawings from the early 1880s in the Chicago Sketchbook (see Fig. 71), in which he introduces a faceting effect, especially in the rendering of the beard. The frontal and slightly three-quarter viewpoints in the two drawings create quite different expressive effects. The divergent readings they have elicited attest to the difficulty of distinguishing between formal idiosyncrasies and expressive content in Cézanne’s self-portraits and to the perils of psychological interpretation. Neumeyer, who notes the weary glance and joyless mouth in the second drawing, calls it “the one with the greatest inner and outer likeness.” Conversely, Chappuis attributes Cézanne’s distressed expression to a sty on his eye. As the asymmetrical depiction of the eyes and disequilibrium of the gaze are found in other self-portraits, Chappuis’s medical explanation is unconvincing. Although the physical traits and graphic technique are similar in the two portraits, in the frontal view Cézanne’s head appears more massive than in the slightly three-quarter foreshortened view, which emphasizes dissymmetry rather than regularity and balance. In Figure 71 the effect of volume is accentuated by the concentrated hatching along the nose and around the eyes. The variations in these contemporary drawings underscore their raison d’être as perceptual and artistic exercises in which Cézanne experimentally modified the mise en page and his use of shading and hatching to transform his own features. Indeed, Cézanne’s repetitive depictions of himself from these years suggest that the self-portraits functioned as a sort of mnemonic device, in which transcribing the volumes and contours of his own face became a means of reiterating his artistic identity.

During the 1880s, self-portrait drawings are often intermingled with other figure studies, as in Figure 71. Among the most intriguing examples are two sheets that juxtapose a self-portrait with an apple, which Schapiro has interpreted in terms of desire and friendship. One sheet (c. 1884–86) includes at the upper left a copy after Goya’s self-portrait from Los Caprichos, an apple, bathers, a
caricature after Goya, and a self-portrait at the lower left. Although the unfinished state of the self-portrait makes it difficult to date, the schematic treatment of physiognomic detail anticipates the synthetic period. Of particular significance is the juxtaposition of Goya’s self-portrait and a caricature after it with Cézanne’s self-portrait. The sketchy, frontal depiction, the gaze slightly decentered, contrasts with Goya’s assertive profile portrait crowned by a top hat. Here the act of self-portrayal is associated with Cézanne’s identification with past masters such as Goya. Around the same time, Cézanne copied Delacroix’s celebrated self-portrait in the Louvre, further attesting to his interest in self-portraiture as an art-historical phenomenon.  

The *Self-Portrait with Palette* (c. 1885–87; Fig. 72) is the only instance in which Cézanne portrayed himself at the easel in the act of painting. Taking up the theme of the artist in his studio, he represented himself in three-quarter view, standing rigidly, contemplating his canvas, in a disconcertingly impersonal self-portrait that contrasts dramatically with van Gogh’s contemporary *Self-Portrait at the Easel* (c. 1888; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam). The asymmetrical gaze (noted in other self-portraits), the blocking off of the left arm, and the catatonic rigidity dehumanize Cézanne and assimilate him to the easel and the painter’s palette, which literally becomes an extension of his body. The hands are never present in Cézanne’s self-portraits, whereas they are frequently thematized in depictions by other artists, such as Courbet. In terms of scale and compositional complexity, this is Cézanne’s most ambitious self-portrait, yet the result is profoundly alienating. The artist is barricaded and separated from the viewer by the nearly vertical canvas and the horizontal palette that cuts across his body. His strongly modeled head and shoulders stand out sharply against the indefinite, pale-green background, but the overall effect is flat rather than sculptural. Moreover, Cézanne’s gaze is distorted by inept foreshortening, so the two eyes appear to be staring in divergent directions, creating a disjunctive effect at the focal point of the composition. In its formal rigor and insistence upon the isolated world of the painter in his studio, the canvas recalls Poussin’s celebrated *Self-Portrait* (1650; Musée du Louvre, Paris), although it could also be read as a painted response to Zola’s devastating verbal portrait of the failed painter, Claude Lantier, in *L’OEuvre* (1886). In this compulsively structured self-portrait, Cézanne stubbornly asserted his dedication to the art of painting and distanced himself definitively from his childhood friend and his impressionist comrades. Two decades later, Picasso modeled his protocubist *Self-Portrait with Palette* (1906; Philadelphia Museum of Art) on this most impersonal and assertive of Cézanne’s self-portraits.  

The obsession with structure and control, so evident in the *Self-Portrait with Palette*, also permeates the earlier bust-length *Self-Portrait* (c. 1880–81; Fig. 73) in which Cézanne, his head turned slightly to his right, is silhouetted against a lozenge-patterned wall. The sculptural volumes of the artist’s bald
head and his right shoulder, which juts forcefully forward, stand out strongly in relief against the flat, decorative background. Yet at the same time Cézanne systematically employed the small, constructive brushstrokes characteristic of the late 1870s and early 1880s, creating a homogeneous, tapestrylike surface. The patterned wall, which flattens the picture space, is countered by the volu-

metric treatment of the figure. The London portrait closely resembles several others from the same period, notably the Self-Portrait (c. 1880–82; Pushkin Museum, Moscow). However, against a neutral background the effect is quite different. In particular, the plastic volumes and egglike form of the head appear more assertively sculptural, whereas in the London Self-Portrait the physiognomic specificity of the face is played off against the abstract patterning of the wall, creating a contrast between the living and the geometric. As in the Self-Portrait with Palette, Cézanne’s gaze is foreshortened and distorted, so that one eye turns inward and the other gazes outward. The fact that Cézanne represented himself half a dozen times at this critical juncture, when his constructive preoccupations were emerging, confirms the privileged position self-portraiture occupied as an site for artistic experimentation.

In the Bern Self-Portrait (c. 1879–82; Fig. 74), as in the Self-Portrait with Palette, Cézanne has constructed an elaborate spatial scaffolding to anchor his portrait. The glass panes and vertical lines of the red door at the left form a grid, which is played off against the rounded volumes of the figure’s face and shoulders and the bowler hat. Cézanne’s bushy beard and black suit and hat form an almost uniform dark mass interrupted only by a touch of white at his
neck and the iridescent flesh tones of his face. The reversal of color values undercuts the normal receding effect of the background, so that the red background comes forward while the bluish tones of the windows recede, creating a “push-pull” effect. Despite the strong contours that delineate the hat and the left arm and shoulder, figure and setting are thoroughly assimilated and conventional spatial distinctions between near and far are effaced, as in the views of the Mont Sainte-Victoire dating from the 1880s. The soft-brimmed hat plays a complex role in the composition: it accentuates the volume of the head, contributes to the overall pictorial unity, and creates the shadows and re-
lections that play across the artist’s face. Although Cézanne appears to have been primarily preoccupied with articulating spatial and color relationships, that does not preclude expression. Rather, the expression is distilled and reduced to its essential or degree zero, as André Lhote observed. Cézanne’s reductivist technique and objectification of the face create an indeterminate expression that has given rise to diverse readings, ranging from melancholic through confessional to forbidding. Cézanne’s minute analysis of the nuances of form and color creates ambiguity rather than certitude; the face becomes a recalcitrant screen that, despite its “objectness,” resists interpretation. That indeterminacy is reinforced by the dissonance of the gaze, which is at odds with the rest of the face.

In the self-portraits from the 1880s, Cézanne accentuated his analysis and simplification of form into geometrical volumes. The portraits, like his still lifes and landscapes from these years, become increasingly architectonic and static. In two virtually identical self-portraits from the mid-1880s, he represented himself wearing a bowler hat. Although analogous in pose and format, one version is much more finished than the other. In addition, there are two related self-portraits in the same pose, but hatless. The probing glance and self-assurance in the Self-Portrait in a Bowler (private collection), which recall Cézanne’s early palette-knife self-portrait (see Fig. 65), are particularly striking. In the two hatless self-portraits, the skull is elongated, which accentuates the impression of mass and counters the diagonal thrust of the shoulder. Cézanne’s forceful turn of the head gives these portraits an unusual quality of vivacity. The repetitive format and serial nature of these self-portraits suggest that they were primarily formal exercises, in which the subject increasingly became a pretext for the analysis of volumes in space. Increasingly isolated, Cézanne depicted himself less frequently in the 1890s and early 1900s. In the late portraits, the nature of representation evolved as he became increasingly preoccupied with the interpenetration of form and space and the conflation of artist and model.

“Puissant et solitaire”: Cézanne and the Paradox of Painting

The painter must devote himself entirely to the study of nature and try to produce paintings that are a lesson. Discussions about art are almost useless. Work which is realized as progress in its proper metier is sufficient indemnity against the incomprehension of imbeciles. The writer explains himself with abstractions, whereas the concrete painter, by means of drawing and color, [elucidates] his sensations, his perceptions.

— Cézanne

There is a rapport between Cézanne’s schizoid temperament and his work because the work reveals a metaphysical sense of the disease: a way of seeing the world reduced to the totality of frozen appearances, with all expressive
values suspended. Thus the illness ceases to be an absurd fact and a fate and becomes a general possibility of human existence. It becomes so when this existence bravely faces one of its paradoxes, the phenomenon of expression.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty

During the final synthetic period (c. 1888–1906), Cézanne represented himself just eight times. Although limited in number, the late self-portraits are varied in technique and medium, consisting of three oils, three drawings, a watercolor, and a lithograph. While old age and infirmity undoubtedly contributed to the decrease in self-portraits, the determining factor may well have been Cézanne’s deepening identification with his models, such that artist and sitter are conflated to an unprecedented degree in the late portraits. This empathetic identification with the model is especially evident in the portraits of his gardener Vallier dating from the early 1900s. The synthetic tendency is accentuated by the increasingly liberated painting technique and the more unified drawing style Cézanne formulated at the end of his life.

Representative of this reductivist phase are two self-portrait drawings dating from the late 1890s and a lithograph (c. 1898–1900). In the powerfully condensed Self-Portrait (c. 1896–1900; private collection) Cézanne radically simplified his drawing technique. The curving contours and sculptural effect recall the copies he made after baroque sculpture in the 1890s. Although unhinged, this self-portrait resembles the contemporary lithographic Portrait of Cézanne wearing a beret (c. 1898–1900), which Vollard commissioned for Les Peintres-Graveurs. Particularly notable in the late self-portraits are the fixity and lack of vitality of the gaze, suggesting absence or inwardness and detachment from the world. Cézanne suffered from diabetes, which affects vision, so this shift in the treatment of the gaze may be linked to his deteriorating vision. Moreover, the eyes (which Bernard described as prone to tears) appear oversized in Cézanne’s attenuated face, giving him an almost mystic or spiritual aura. The crisp contours and accentuated shading in the lithograph, which are not characteristic, suggest that he modified his technique for the lithographic medium. The lithograph is significant because it is the only self-portrait that had a commercial function and was intended to reach a larger public. Although only a few of Cézanne’s self-portraits were exhibited during his lifetime, the fact that self-portraits were included in the 1895 retrospective organized by Vollard and the 1904 Salon d’Automne attests to their importance for Cézanne as artistic manifestoes.

In the late watercolors Cézanne synthesized color and line, utilizing the white reserve of the paper to render the translucent effects of light and shade. In the luminous watercolor Self-Portrait (c. 1895; private collection), his practice as painter and draftsman coalesce. There is a related self-portrait in oil which displays the fluidity and mosaic-like quality that are hallmarks of Cézanne’s late style. Although similar in pose, in the watercolor portrait the head juts forward and the bust and shoulders are represented in
three-quarter rather than profile view. The sparkling surface and translucency of the late oils illustrate the influence that watercolor had on Cézanne’s painting technique during the final decade of his career.

*Self-Portrait with a Beret* (c. 1898–1900; Fig. 75) is probably Cézanne's last depiction of himself. He adopted the standard half-length format, with the face in three-quarter view, creating a static pyramid in space. In this carefully composed but detached portrait, the gaze appears fixed and vacant. The sharply angled, almost oriental eyebrows echo the shape of the beret and dominate the inscrutable eyes; the mouth is swallowed up in the mustache and goatee, creating an inexpressive mask. Pentimenti are clearly visible in the beret and the lines of the shoulders of this thinly painted canvas. Rewald was struck by the aloofness and almost total absence of expression verging on abstraction. This final self-portrait, with its fluidly painted, almost translucent surfaces, shares the freedom of execution and aloofness of the portraits of Gasquet, Geffroy, and Vollard painted during the final decade.

In extolling Cézanne's depictions of Vallier as the grandest of his portraits, Theodore Reff conceded that they were no longer portraits in the traditional sense. For Reff, the depictions of Vallier exemplify the profoundly spiritual
vision of Cézanne’s final years. In these indeterminate representations the distinction between image and referent or artist and model is effaced. Citing Cézanne as an example, Charles Taylor has discussed the modernist tendency to turn inward in an attempt to recover lived experience, which results in an indirect epiphany. In one of the portraits of Vallier (c. 1904–6; Fig. 76), the subject is seated, facing the viewer, his eyes deeply shadowed by a visored cap reminiscent of the one Cézanne himself wore in a self-portrait from the 1870s. His masklike face, eaten up by the black cavities of the eyes, appears to be void of expression and emotion. The unusually dark palette, dominated by dark-green and black, further obliterates the outlines of the figure. As Brion-Guerry perceptively noted, the problem of passage is more subtle in portraits than in other works because the image is situated in time as well as space. The late portraits, such as Old Woman with a Rosary (c. 1895–96; National Gallery, London) and the depictions of Vallier, like Cézanne’s still-life arrangements of skulls, are ultimately meditations about solitude, old age, and the inevitability of death, as well as attempts to “realize” his sensations. In the late period, as Bernard Dorival observed, “If Cézanne lapses into irreality, it is because he no longer represents Nature, but his nature as he perceives it.” Cézanne’s sensations become so powerful that he can no longer control them and no longer sees anything but his own face.

Cézanne’s late works are the culmination of his lifelong preoccupation with realizing his sensations, in other words, “thinking in paint.” In less flattering (and less philosophical) terms than Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne’s widow baldly asserted: “Cézanne didn’t know what he was doing. He didn’t know how to finish his pictures.” Although her remarks are generally interpreted as evidence of her incomprehension of her husband’s art, from a phenomenological viewpoint she was not entirely wide of the mark. Furst, it should be recalled, also attributed Cézanne’s revolutionary reformulation of representation to a lack of extraordinary skill or perfect control of hand. Moreover, as Shiff has demonstrated, particularly for symbolist critics, distortion and awkwardness, which were considered avatars of originality and sincerity, could function as a means of self-conscious artistic expression. Modern critics including Fry, Schapiro, and Merleau-Ponty have interpreted Cézanne’s unending quest and doubt in more positive terms as emblematic of the creative process itself, which is characterized by growth and change, constantly seeking and finding. T. J. Clark has recently argued that Cézanne’s relentless pursuit of questions of form and equivalence constitutes a complex epistemological model that, by forcing boundaries, hints at alternative systems of representation.

In this chapter I, too, have argued that the self-portraits Cézanne painted over a forty-year period constitute a perplexing epistemological narrative about seeking and finding, engagement and withdrawal from the world, in which perception and the process of representation are both reiterated and problematized. In particular, his relentlessly objective self-portraits, which register his confrontation with the world as other and his paradoxical quest
for self-perception, challenge the expressive parameters of modern portraiture.\(^{142}\) In works such as Self-Portrait with Palette (Fig. 72), that ambiguity (and Cézanne's anxiety) are embodied in the distortion and awkwardness of the gaze, which both confronts and retreats from the viewer. The fact that the face is painted so close to the picture plane makes the confrontation particularly disconcerting for the beholder. In his art Cézanne consistently avoided preexisting solutions, insisting (in the conversations transcribed by Bernard) that he wanted to make art and nature one and the same.\(^{143}\)

Merleau-Ponty has gone further, insisting that Cézanne's work ultimately reveals a sort of metaphysical schizophrenia in which all expressive values are suspended.\(^{144}\) In rejecting this extremist position, I would posit instead a both/and or two-track model, whereby Cézanne proceeded pragmatically, totally engaged in the ongoing creative (and concrete) process of “picture making” while simultaneously pursuing paradoxical (and unrealizable) artistic goals. The constant questioning, endless revision, and self-reflexivity that are at the heart of Cézanne's artistic démarche (especially the self-portraits) can also be considered paradigmatic of modern creativity in general. For Merleau-
Ponty, as well as Clement Greenberg, Cézanne’s metaphysical/painterly quest and resulting doubt are emblematic of the modern condition.\textsuperscript{145}

Although the self-portraits are autonomous artistic documents, taken together they provide a unique vantage point for considering Cézanne’s creative process, because they are situated at the intersection of image and referent, subjectivity and objectivity, artist/model and beholder. For Cézanne, the self-portraits provided a privileged site for exploring the dilemmas of perception and realization and thus functioned as a controlled laboratory experiment. They also underscore the complex relationship between form and content, which is accentuated by distortion and the problematic of the gaze. Finally, as I have attempted to show, Cézanne’s lifelong preoccupation with self-representation, like his countless copies after old masters, was also a means of asserting his identity as an artist and establishing his position within art history.

Despite their reticence, Cézanne’s self-portraits eloquently express the contradictions of his character and the dilemma of his art: timid yet self-confident, primitive yet classic, traditional yet revolutionary. As the relationship between image and referent became increasingly problematic at the end of the nineteenth century, the portrait was reformulated in new aesthetic and psychological terms. If Cézanne’s highly reductivist, oddly detached portraits and self-portraits appear to constitute a dead end in terms of expressive content, they can also be construed as signaling a new beginning in which the problematics of representation replaced the iconic function of the portrait, freeing the latter from the anchor of physical resemblance and tradition and suspending it in the pyrrhic realm of modern art.

When Cézanne died in 1906, his critical reputation was far from assured. As Pierre Weber, writing in the \textit{New York Herald}, observed: “Monsieur Cézanne has been called a ‘sublime ignoramus.’ But there is some little disagreement about the definition; some would omit the ‘sublime,’ and some would omit the ‘ignoramus.’”\textsuperscript{146} The following year Charles Morice, who compared Cézanne’s secluded existence in Aix to Gauguin’s Tahitian exile, characterized him as a modern primitive: “Cézanne, cloistered within the strict limits of the technique of his art, living by his eye and brain alone, strikes us as the prototype of the one-track mind, egotistically incurious about all that did not have to do with tones and the relations of tones – a magnificent monster.”\textsuperscript{147} Cézanne’s self-portraits, which both chronicle his changing appearance and elucidate his artistic development, are the most direct manifestation of the relentlessly probing gaze he tirelessly turned on the world and on himself. As he repeatedly drew and painted his own face over four decades, he laid bare the fundamentals of the artistic process and radically realigned the premises of the modern portrait, foregrounding the dual dilemmas of perception and representation in works that are the embodiment of thinking in paint.