· 16 ·

THE FAILURE AND SUCCESS OF CÉZANNE

SYMBOLISM *IN EXTREMIS*

THE ART OF PAUL GAUGUIN WAS PAINTED ON A canvas as large as the French *imperium*. Enacting the modern roles of tourist and colonialist, Gauguin traveled from Paris to Pont-Aven, Quimper, Arles, Martinique, Papeete, and the Marquesas, seeking consolation for the loss of a bourgeois and masculine prerogative in the metropolis. In so doing, Gauguin, like many avant-gardists before him, was also fleeing modernization and indeed history itself—fleeing, that is, those forces of "universalizing civilization" that left the artist victim to the caprice of the market during a period of economic depression. For the most part, we have seen, Gauguin brought along as baggage on his travels the various hierarchies that generally sustained Europeans of his gender and class. In Tahiti he dreamed of rape (if he did not actually commit it) and he swaggered and patronized, at first, like any colonialist bureaucrat. Yet in the end, it was clear to him (as it was to his Surrealist descendants) that the dynamics of flight and retrospection also propelled an unallayed radicalism and utopianism. In his extreme retreat from metropolitan culture, Classical painting, and mimesis, Gauguin also mapped the contours of a future cultural realm of sensual gratification and human freedom; in his masculinism and primitivism, he charted an expressive terrain more truly androgynous and internationalist than any that had been imagined in Europe before; in his retreat from modernity and partisan politics, he also explored the radical political potential of an autonomous art that intransigently refused the blandishments of a deplored contemporaneity.

Gauguin's art was thus an extremist and a dialectical response to the alienation and despair that wracked the Symbolist generation. Yet there was at least one other achieved artistic response during the *fin de siècle*, equally vehement in disdaining what Kahn called "the near at hand and the compulsorily contemporaneous," but very different from what has been considered here thus far. Where Gauguin was internationalist in his perspective, Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) was almost parochial in his. He nevertheless created a body of work that, like Gauguin's, announced the modernist conception of art as (in Herbert Marcuse's later words) "the Great Refusal to accept the rules of a game in which the dice are loaded." The game in question is played to enshrine Western progress, power, modernization, and instrumental reason; the Great Refusal is a contrary celebration of traditional culture, erotic surrender, and utopia. These critical values may be detected in the art of Cézanne. For the young Cézanne, painting was a bomb, set to detonate beneath the Ecole, the Academy, and the Salon. Undoubtedly the wild child of Impressionism, Cézanne stimulated critical apoplexies during the 1860's and '70's. Yet he also attained a maturity during which he created a manner of painting and drawing that can be called nothing less than dialectical in its complexity and its critical logic. It was an art of sensual liberation as much as one of formal rigor and it thus laid a foundation for much of the artistic accomplishment of the twentieth century.

PAUL CÉZANNE AND THE END OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART

The art and career of Paul Cézanne is the logical endpoint of a book devoted to the critical examination of nineteenth-century art. The reason is simple: no artist was more critical than he himself in exploring both the cognitive and perceptual mechanisms of seeing and representing; indeed, his art reveals more clearly than any before it the inseparability of these two

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19c Art: A Critical History

meanings of the word "seeing." Though Cézanne benefited greatly from the artistic insights of Delacroix, Courbet, Manet, and Pissarro, he alone risked the destruction of mimesis in the quest for a manner of representation that was true to both individual apperception and the facts of material reality. To achieve this dialectical seeing, all previous artistic paradigms had to be suspended and a wholly new formal vocabulary devised. The task was daunting, and at times even debilitating. "Cézanne's doubt," as the existentialist philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty described it, was a primal uncertainty, the doubt of a first utterance. "I am the primitive of the way that I discovered," Cézanne told Emile Bernard at the end of his life. Yet the new language he spoke was so articulate and compelling that few afterwards could even remember, much less speak, the old.

What therefore emerges as most salient from a survey of Cézanne's art is the aspect of search, invention, discovery, and critical synthesis. Indeed, in the course of his long career, Cézanne changed from a Romantic rebel to a cultural revolutionary. From an artist who, like Delacroix, saw himself in heroic antagonism to a corrupt world, he became an artist who was in his words, "submissive to nature." From an artist who, like Ingres before and the Symbolists after, dreamed of a future based upon the moral verities of the past, he became an artist who devised a means through which a new cultural order could be represented and understood. Yet his artistic revolutionism assumed a form different from any that preceded it. Unlike the work of his much admired Courbet, Cézanne's radical art was not the product of an insurgent content: though artists and critics alike called him "communard," "intransigent," and "anarchist," he mostly eschewed politically charged subject matter. Unlike the painting of his almost equally admired Manet, Cézanne's revolutionary work was not the result of unprecedented esthetic effects: though he was judged incompetent and insolent by most contemporary critics, he understood, respected, and made extensive use of the greatest masterpieces of the past.

The radical newness of Cézanne's paintings was instead a matter of, in Adorno's phrase, their "inherent structure. They are knowledge as nonconceptual objects." The best works by Cézanne, according to this formulation, do not represent the world, they are themselves worlds. "In front of a work by Cézanne," wrote Maurice Denis in 1907, "we think only of the picture; neither the object represented nor the artist's personality holds our attention. . . . And if at once we say: this is a picture and a classic picture, the word begins to take on a precise meaning, that, namely, of an equilibrium, a reconciliation of the objective and the subjective."

The mature works of Cézanne may then fairly be seen as instances of what the twentieth century has termed "autonomous" creation. These refrain from the expression of ameliorative social or political solutions in the name of that human "free space" that we saw was only glimpsed by the Impressionists in their years of greatest achievement. The autonomous artwork, as Adorno writes, "is mediated through nothing other than the form of the work itself. . . . As eminently constructed and produced objects, such works of art . . . point to a practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life." By virtue of their intellectual rigor and sensual desirability, such works exist in silent opposition to a degraded political sphere and a Western society "suffocated in the cultivation of kitsch." Cézanne's art thus becomes the signal instance of that modernist paradigm, the revolutionary artwork that is at the same time apolitical. For this reason, the usual terms of art historical analysis—stylistic sources and influences, literary iconography, biographical references, and critical reception—are stretched beyond their limits in attempts to describe the works produced after about 1885. Formal analysis and dialectics provide the only vocabularies that make any sense for understanding the mature paintings of Cézanne. "A man, a tree, an apple, are not *represented*," wrote the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) in "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" (1912), "but used by Cézanne in building up a painterly thing called a 'picture'."

CEZANNE'S DEVELOPMENT: THE QUEST FOR TOTALITY

Cézanne began his career by embracing the cultural revivalism that dominated his native region. Born in 1839 in Aix-en-Provence, he read the vernacular Provençal poetry of Frédéric Mistral (1830–1914), and attended the local Corpus Christi and other religious and secular festivals that flourished during the middle years of the century. In addition, the young Cézanne admired and emulated in early paintings, such as *Sorrow, or Mary Magdalen* (ca. 1867) and *Pastoral Scene* (ca. 1870), the work of native Baroque and early nineteenth-century artists, such as the Neoclassical history painter and landscapist François-Marius Granet (1775–1849), in an effort to uphold or revive regional Aixois traditions of religious and landscape art. In fact, it may be argued that Cézanne remained a Provençal artist his whole life; even in his final two decades, after having come to know and share in the fervid, international artistic life of the French capital, Cézanne was drawn back to Aix as to a magnet—its scenery, its architectural monuments, its legends, and traditions. In the last two years before his death, he devoted more time than ever before to the depiction of Mont Sainte-Victoire, site of the ancient Roman victory over an army of invading Teutons and the fabled origin of Aix. He also concentrated upon the theme of bathing, perhaps partially in homage to the Roman *Aquae Sextiae*

354

354 PAUL CÉZANNE *Pastoral Scene* ca. 1870. 25¾ × 31¾ (65 × 81)

(Waters of Sextius) that gave the town its name. Cézanne thus began and concluded his career desiring to be the natural product of his beloved land; he would surely have wished it said of him, as the poet Max Buchon did of Courbet, that he "produced his paintings as simply as an apple-tree produced apples."

As a youth, Cézanne roamed the Provençal countryside with his friend Emile Zola, and rhapsodized in French and Latin about the hills, brooks, and clouds he saw, and the panpipes, shepherds, and maidens' love of which he dreamed. But a darker romantic vision also accompanied him on his rambles, and from this the innovative artist emerged. In letters written to Zola in Paris after 1858, Cézanne frequently assumed a tone of Baudelairean irony and spleen in describing his sadistic and misogynist fantasies. In one letter of 1859 to the future Naturalist writer, Cézanne enclosed a verse allegory entitled "A Terrible Story," which concludes: ". . . and the woman in my arms who had been so pink and rosy suddenly disappeared and turned into a pale cadaver with angular body and rattling bones, and dull empty eyes." This is the Cézanne who painted the deathly *Self-Portrait* (ca. 1861–2), the violent *The Rape* (ca. 1867), the tormented *Pastoral Scene*, and the 356
Temptation of Saint Antony (ca. 1870). These works, and others depicting murders, orgies, and an autopsy, are passionate, violent, and expressionistic, invested with the energy and vehemence of an unresolved Oedipal nightmare.

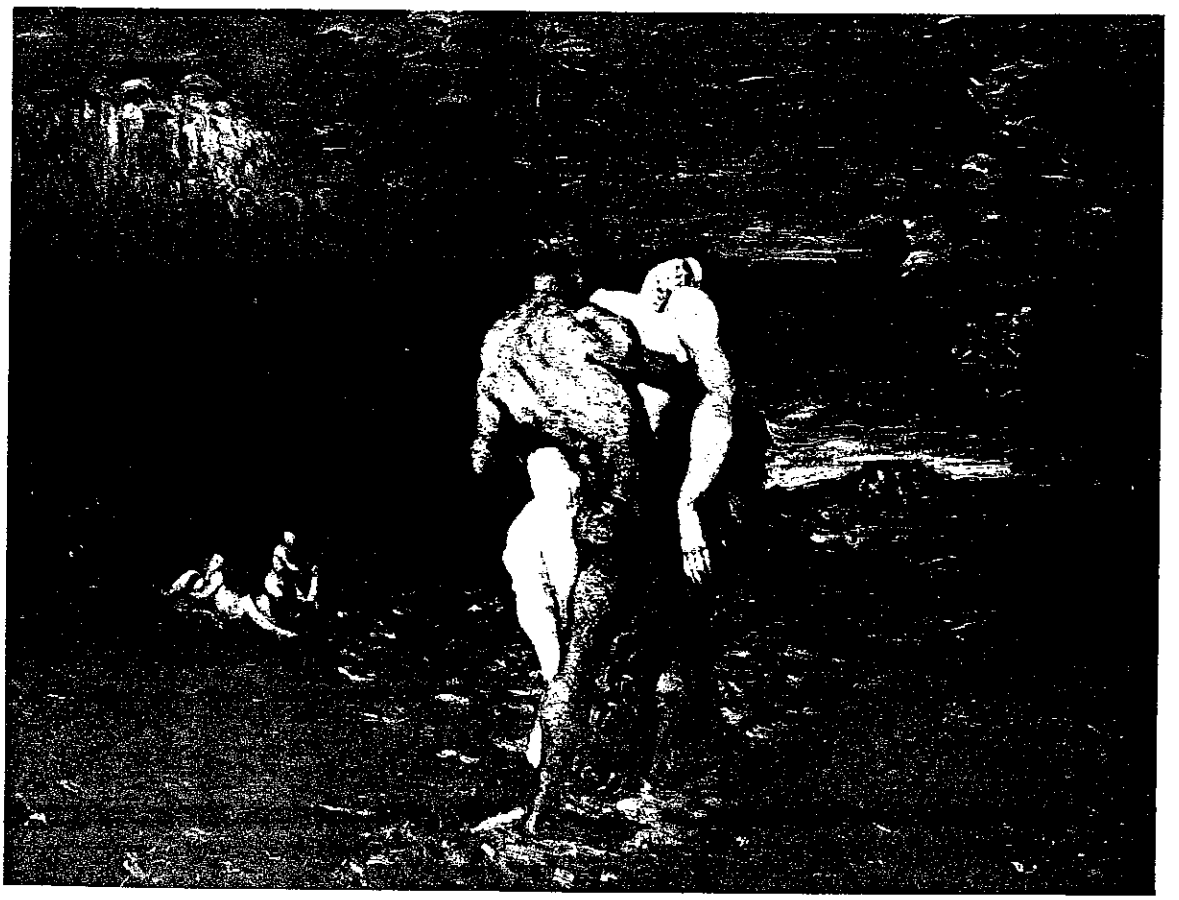
In the *Temptation*, young Paul (prematurely bald) appears in the guise of the tempted and tormented Saint Antony; in *Pastoral Scene*, he sits uncomfortably in the foreground of his own version of Manet's *Déjeuner*; in *A Modern Olympia* (ca. 355

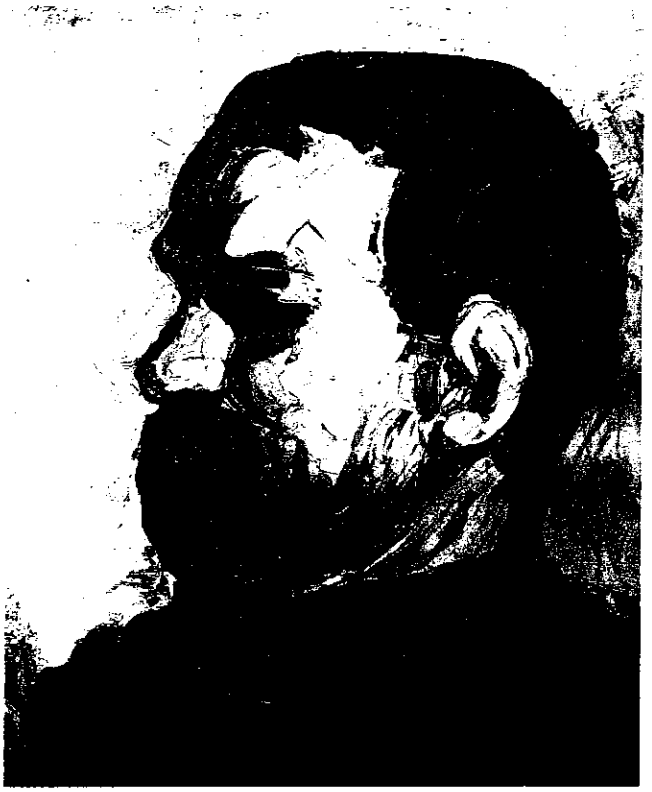
355 PAUL CÉZANNE *A Modern Olympia* ca. 1869–70. 22 × 21⅛ (56 × 55)

356 PAUL CÉZANNE *The Rape* ca. 1867. 35½ × 46 (90.5 × 117)

1869–70), he is a pasha seated stiffly before his concubine. Even the portraits of his father are painted in a high emotional timbre. In the *Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cézanne, Father of the Artist, Reading L'Evénement* (1866), the sitter's torso is awkwardly separated from his crossed legs by the bottom edge of the newspaper slicing across his groin. The erect right arm is similarly cut off from his body by the newspaper, and is set in front of an ominous shadow of gray/orange on the high-backed easy chair. In each of these works, Cézanne demonstrates a willingness to flout moral proprieties and artistic conventions. The violence, eroticism, confessional character, and purposeful awkwardness of these early paintings led observers to characterize them as childish and naive. 359

Throughout these years, Cézanne repeatedly submitted his works to the Salon with the knowledge that they would never be accepted. He even had the temerity in 1866 to write to the eminent Nieuwerkerke, Superintendent of Fine Arts, demanding a second Salon des Refusés and, in effect, an apology for past injuries. In a reprise of Courbet's words in 1853 to the same Nieuwerkerke, Cézanne wrote: "I am unable to accept the unauthorized judgment of colleagues whom I have not myself appointed to evaluate my work." Thus rejecting the cultural authority of the state, as he did his





357 PAUL CÉZANNE *Portrait of Uncle Dominique* 1866. 15½ × 12 (39.5 × 30.5)

father's career wishes for him (Louis-Auguste would have preferred his son to be a banker or lawyer, like himself), Cézanne became a romantic and an intransigent. Despising the person and rule of Napoleon III, and approving the character and politics of Jacques Vingtras (from Jules Vallé's anarchist novel of the same name), the young artist was a rebel but not yet a revolutionary. Jean-Paul Sartre described the difference: "The revolutionary wants to change the world; he transcends it and moves toward the future, toward an order of values which he himself invents. The rebel is careful to preserve the abuses from which he suffers so that he can go on rebelling against them. He always shows signs of a bad conscience and of something resembling a feeling of guilt. He does not want to destroy or transcend the existing order; he simply wants to rise up against it."

Indications of the future revolutionary temperament are, however, also visible in the early, expressionistic paintings. Their stark contrasts of tonality, shrill juxtapositions of hue, and dense coagulations of paint (often applied with variously shaped palette knives) are new and noteworthy. But what is most important in Cézanne's pictures from before about 1873 is their pictorial clarity and sense of expressive *totality*. All
357 parts of, for example, the *Portrait of Uncle Dominique* (1866) are equally dense, worked, and elaborated. The black outlining of nose and brow serves both to establish the contour of the face and to flatten it against the background plane. This quality of pictorial consistency or totality—at once naive and monumental—is unlike anything found in the work of Cézanne's Romantic, Realist, and Impressionist predecessors and foreshadows the achievements of the mature artist.

In *The Rape* (probably representing Pluto's abduction of Persephone), Cézanne focuses equally upon the nude foreground figures, the female attendants in the left middleground, and the truncated Mont Sainte-Victoire in the background. Painted with looping and undulating strokes of paint, the riverbank, water, foliage, mountain, and sky are given nearly equal visual weight, suggesting an all-over two-dimensional structure and balance that act as a counterforce to the emotional depth and expressiveness of the narrative. In other words, even though the picture represents a misogynist dream, its style suggests detachment, abstractness, and objectivity. Even as the young Cézanne indulged his obsessional fears and hatreds of modern woman, he struggled to overcome them in order to re-order vision and design into a single unified procedure.

358 PAUL CÉZANNE *Portrait of the Painter, Achille Emperaire* ca. 1868–70. 78¾ × 48 (200 × 122)

Lawrence Gowing, the art historian and painter, has summarized Cézanne's achievement in works such as *The Rape* and *Portrait of the Painter, Achille Emperaire* (ca. 1868–70) as nothing less than "the invention of *forme* in the French modernist sense—meaning the condition of paint that constitutes a pictorial structure. It is the discovery of an intrinsic structure inherent in the medium and the material." What Gowing refers to as *forme* may be seen, for example, in the tectonic armature created by the insistent verticality of the *Achille Emperaire*: notice the parallels formed by the sides of the chair, the sitter's spindly legs, the pleats in his dressing-gown, the black line running from his red collar to his slippers, and the attenuated Bodoni-style stenciling at the top of the canvas. These parallel lines create a feeling of architectural stability at the same time that they evince a sense of *picturality*—a perception, that is, of the painting as a self-sufficient two-dimensional structure built from vertical and horizontal wooden ribs, covered with canvas, and painted with a viscous colored medium.

358

The 1867 correspondence of Cézanne's friend A. F. Marion offers some confirmation of the artist's totalizing intentions: "Paul is really very much stronger than [Courbet and Manet]. He is convinced of being able, by a more skillful execution and perception, to admit details while retaining breadth. Thus he would achieve his aims, and his works would become more complete." Fifteen years later, the artist's intention was the same, as Gauguin revealed in a mocking letter to Cézanne's friend Pissarro: "Has M. Césanne [sic] discovered the exact *formula* for a work that would be accepted by everyone? If he should find the recipe for concentrating the full expression of all his sensations into a single and unique procedure, try, I beg you, to get him to talk about it in his sleep by administering one of those mysterious homeopathic drugs and come directly to Paris to share it with us." At the end of his life, Cézanne almost believed he had found his formula; he told Bernard in 1904: "I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you."

CÉZANNE'S ARTISTIC MATURITY

Although Cézanne's quest for artistic totality is visible from the beginning, there can be no question that it changed and grew over the four decades of his career. The paintings of the 1860's and early '70's possess an unprecedented formal consistency and tectonic structure, but they are still dominated by the Baroque drama of chiaroscuro and tonal contrast. Color is not yet fully integrated into their pictorial fabric. In the paintings considered above, color functions primarily to express moods or strong feelings and only partially to indicate mass, volume, depth, and pictorial unity. The "intrinsic structure" of *Uncle Dominique* and *Achille Emperaire* is for the most part the product of paint density, composition, and tonal contrast and not the result of choice of colors or modulation. It is as if the colorless genre of melodrama, as the art historian and curator John Elderfield has written, was fully adequate to express the violent dreams and Oedipal longings of the youthful artist. But as Cézanne gradually attained psychological maturity (perhaps hastened by his liaison, beginning in 1869, with Hortense Fiquet), his artistic vision became richer and more inclusive. As he gradually dismissed from his art the clichéd, adolescent roster of *femmes fatales,* he increasingly explored the dynamics of hue. Impressionism, and especially the art and instruction of Pissarro, would be the most important instrument of Cézanne's totalization of subjective experience and objective reality.

In early 1872, during the bleak dawn following the dark night of the Commune's destruction, Cézanne was living beside Pissarro at Pontoise in the Ile de France, and learning from him the decisive lessons of Impressionism. Cézanne shared with his anarchist friend and mentor a love of landscape and a faith in the healing capacity of rural life. Together they discovered a method for representing their feelings about the plenitude of nature; for Pissarro this meant the depiction of peasant laborers in worked fields, and the creation of textural and coloristic unities of figure and ground. For Cézanne, this method meant the fashioning of a pictorial universe sufficiently complete and nuanced that it could approximate both the motif itself and the powerful and complex sensations he felt before his subject. "I paint as I see, as I feel," he told a critic in 1870, "and I have very strong sensations."

Cézanne used the narrowed tonal range and prismatic hues of Impressionism as a means both of capturing the effects of light and air and of disciplining his sometimes violent and disordered imagination. Indeed, Impressionism, we have seen, was precisely an art of social and psychological distance; it was the artistic expression of a subculture that disdained alienated work and celebrated the implicit freedom of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois leisure. Cézanne accepted Impressionism's principled rejection of instrumentality, but he could not accept its frequent emotional and intellectual shallowness. By the end of the 1870's, he had outstripped his Impressionist teacher by creating works that are both convincing semblances of physical objects and figures and records of the artist's own shifting perceptions over time.

Compared with Pissarro's *Village Near Pontoise* (1873), Cézanne's *House of the Hanged Man, Auvers-sur-Oise* (ca. 1873) possesses an unusually dense and clotted surface. Its color is more uniformly warm than Pissarro's work (note the latter's cool blues alternating with the red roofs in the middle-ground) and its tonality is more even. Unlike his friend and teacher, moreover, Cézanne marks the contours and

362
363

359 PAUL CÉZANNE *Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cézanne, Father of the Artist, Reading L'Evénement* 1866.
$78\frac{1}{2} \times 47\frac{1}{8}$ (200 × 120)

360 PAUL CÉZANNE *Still Life With Apples* ca. 1895–8. 27 × 36¼ (68.6 × 92.7)

361 PAUL CÉZANNE *The Large Bathers* 1900–06. 67⅞ × 77½ (172.2 × 196.1)

boundaries of objects with broad lines (compare the treatment of tree-trunks in each), and clearly anchors trees and buildings in the earth. Cézanne's landscape, in sum, suggests a greater planarity and pictorality than Pissarro's, together with a greater mass and solidity.

365 Beside Pissarro's *The Côte des Boeufs at L'Hermitage, Near*
364 *Pontoise* (1877), Cézanne's *L'Estaque* (1876–8) appears balanced and calm. Both works employ divided and multidirectional brushstrokes of brown, green, and blue, but Cézanne's strokes are broader than Pissarro's and manage to evoke the shape, density, and surface texture of the objects they describe. In addition, Cézanne has chosen to highlight and explore, rather than obscure, all the areas in his landscape motif that are physically and visually complex or ambiguous; thus he lavishes attention on the intersection of roof hips and cornices, the convex edges of buildings, the joinings of leaf to branch, the lines where mountains meet the sea, and the places where chimneys (or masts?) break the horizon.

Comparison of these landscapes suggests that while Cézanne may have believed that the energy and ephemerality of Pissarro's Impressionism were appropriate to the depiction of transient atmospheric effects, he found the style to be too unstable, intangible, and inexpressive for the convincing representation of the countryside and its people. But while Cézanne judged Impressionism to be flawed by insubstantiality and emotional remove, he also definitively determined that traditional academic technique, which he thoroughly understood—linear drawing, single-point perspective, Classical anatomy, tonal modeling, and chiaroscuro—was equally flawed by its very procrusteanism; these stolid formal tricks were wholly inadequate to the artist's shifting perceptions of the world as he moved through it, and besides, they were the remnant of an old and discredited order. Thus Cézanne, beginning in the late 1870's, devised an art that employed the faceted, mosaic surface of Impressionism without its evasiveness. Put another way, he marshaled the dynamic, kinesthetic features of Impressionist art, with the architectonic tangibility and expressiveness of his early works. Cézanne wanted monumentality and emotional resolve in his art; he wished, he told Bernard, "to make of Impressionism something solid, like the art in the museums."

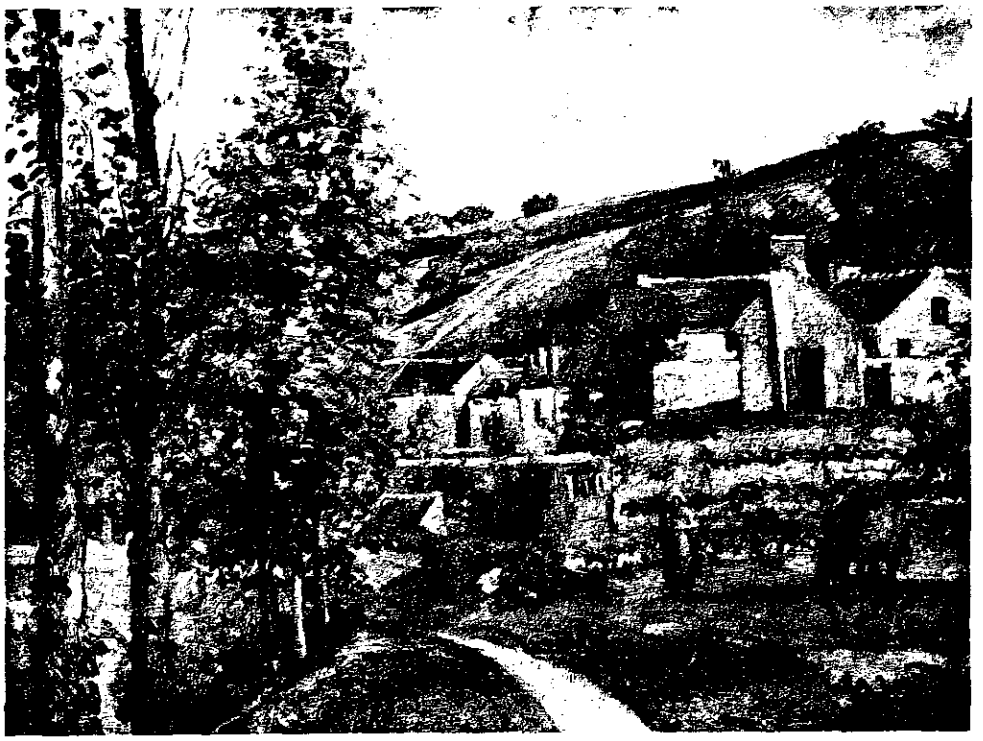
THE FAILURE AND SUCCESS OF CÉZANNE

After exhibiting with the Impressionists in their third group exhibition in 1877, Cézanne essentially struck off on his own. Though he kept in occasional contact with members of the group (especially Renoir) he needed no further lessons from them. Nor did he try to exhibit with them; for seven out of the next eight years he tried in vain to show at the Salon, his only success coming in 1882 when he was admitted as a "pupil" of the charitable juror Antoine Guillemet. His few press notices were as uncomprehending and patronizing as they had been when he first exhibited with the Impressionists nearly a decade earlier; the *Portrait of L. A.* (present whereabouts unknown) was described by the critic of the *Dictionnaire Véron* as "a beginner's work painted at great expense of color." Increasingly melancholic and reclusive, Cézanne was fast fading from public view and becoming legendary. In 1885, Gauguin professed admiration for his art but called him "that misunderstood man, whose nature is essentially mystical . . . he spends whole days on the tops of mountains reading Virgil and gazing at the sky."

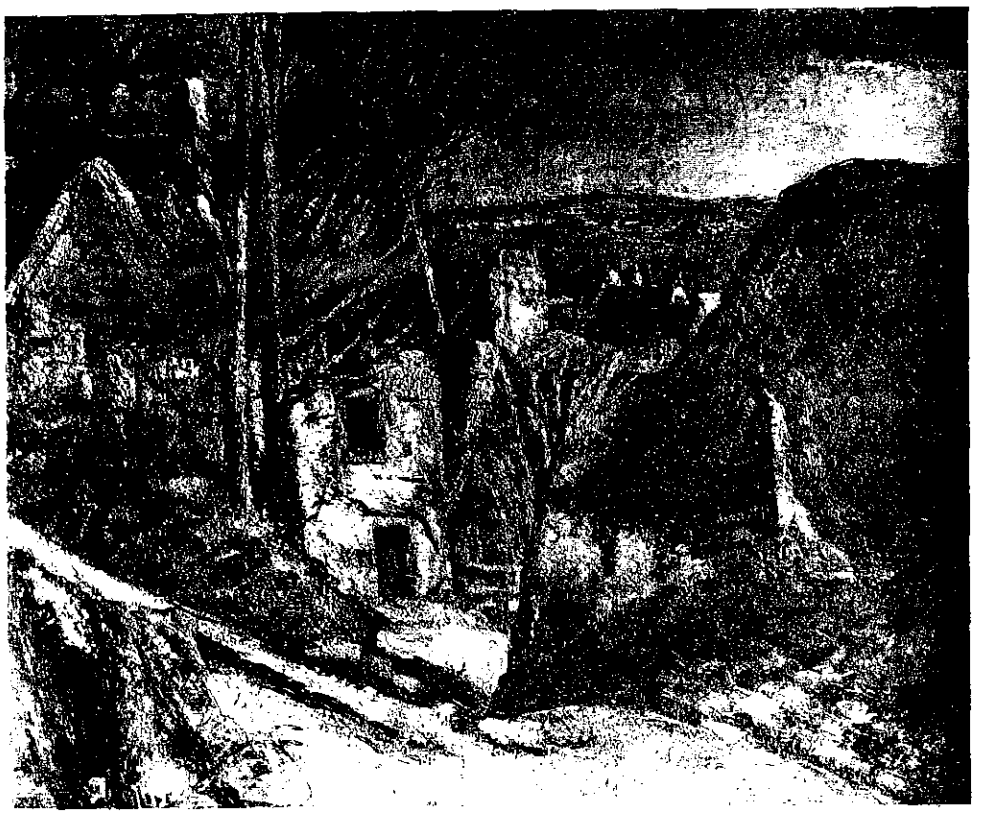
At the same time that he was suffering alienation from both avant-garde and academic Paris, Cézanne suffered a number of personal blows that further affected his art. In 1885, an unconsummated passion for a maid from his parent's house at Aix left him angry and confused. The same year, Zola's cruel portrayal of him in *L'Oeuvre* ended the only friendship he ever had. In April 1886, Cézanne grudgingly married Hortense Fiquet (they were already living apart), and six months later attended his father's funeral. This latter event secured him financially but exhausted him emotionally. Convinced by all that had transpired of the futility of human intercourse, and certain that his own death was at hand, Cézanne now worked ceaselessly and with unprecedented dedication. His landscapes, still lifes, and figure paintings progressed apace, and his style quickly achieved the complexity and resolve that a later generation would see as the foundation for its own modern and abstract art.

The twenty years between 1886 and the artist's death in 1906 spanned the careers of Van Gogh, Seurat, Gauguin, and the Symbolists. They witnessed the last Impressionist exhibition (1886), the Eiffel Tower Exposition in Paris (1889), the Dreyfus Affair (1894–1902), the deaths of Zola (1902) and Pissarro (1903), and the exhibition of the Fauves at the Salon d'Automne (1905). None of this had any discernible impact on Cézanne's art; by virtue of his unusual powers of concentration or his paranoia, he devised an autonomous art of extraordinary formal rigor. Generalizations about this art, as Elderfield has observed, are difficult to make because of Cézanne's always different responses to the specific motifs before him, but three basic principles of pictorial invention may be extrapolated through examination of selected works.

1) Holding illusionism at bay—in *Houses in Provence* 366
(1879–82), a perverse humor results from the purposeful avoidance of linear clarity and perspectival exactness. Cézanne lines up the vertical edges of the two largest houses without clarifying their exact spatial locations. He both reveals and obscures the underside of roof eaves and the flat tops of rocks



362 CAMILLE PISSARRO *Village Near Pontoise* 1873. 24 × 31⅞ (61 × 81)



363 PAUL CÉZANNE *House of the Hanged Man, Auvers-sur-Oise* ca. 1873. 21⅝ × 26 (54.9 × 66)

364 PAUL CÉZANNE *L'Estaque* ca. 1876. 16½ × 23¼ (41.9 × 59)

in order to hide the artist's point of view. This game of illusionistic cat-and-mouse helps to preserve the complexity and ambiguity of perception in time and space, and to preserve the integrated surface which is a record of that perception.

2) Use of tectonic facture, or *passage*—in *Mont Sainte-*
367 *Victoire Seen From Bibémus* (ca. 1898–1900), the brushstroke shape, size, boundary, and direction is independent of the structure and texture of the objects that are represented. This painterly freedom may be considered another example of the resistance to mimesis described above, but in fact a kind of alternative illusionism is involved. The so-called *passage* brushstrokes on the rocks in the middle-ground are like colored gemstone facets, roof shingles or overlapping *affiches*; they are themselves planes that cling to the picture surface yet which constitute the tectonic authenticity of the rock. Once again, the two-dimensional authority of the pictorial support is reconciled with the depth and breadth of nature.

3) A consistent concentration upon the edges of things—in
360 *Still Life With Apples* (ca. 1895–8), the most important parts of the picture are where objects meet—lemon, tablecloth, lime, peach, and goblet; pitcher, tabletop, tablecloth, shadow, peach, apple, peach, tablecloth. At these junctions, colors are juxtaposed and the drama of surface and depth—sensation and understanding—is enacted. For the picture to represent totality, it had to comprise fugitive sensations and unanticipated interactions, not merely independent objects. Colors had to be adjusted across the boundaries of things, and hierarchies between absence and presence eliminated.

365 CAMILLE PISSARRO *The Côte des Boeufs at L'Hermitage, Near Pontoise* ca. 1873. 45¼ × 34½ (115 × 87.5)

366 PAUL CÉZANNE *Houses in Provence (Vicinity of L'Estaque)* ca. 1879–82. 25¼ × 32 (64.7 × 81.2)

367 PAUL CÉZANNE *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen From Bibémus* ca. 1898–1900. 25½ × 31½ (65 × 80)

368

Physical objects in *Still Life With Apples* are formed from the collision of one color with another. "One should not say model," Cézanne told Bernard, "one should say modulate." What the artist undoubtedly meant was that in order to attend to the depth as well as the surface appearance of things, he must reject traditional modeling with light and dark and instead modulate with warm and cool hues. The *point culminant* of the nearest lemon, for example, is not created by a white highlight but by a subtle array of cooler (receding) greens and yellows against a warmer (advancing) mustard. Indeed, the entire gamut of objects in this monumental painting—fruits, goblet, pitcher, tureen, curtains, table, and cloth—are constituted not by tonal modeling and local color but by color modulation.

Cézanne's art, Merleau-Ponty has written, was paradoxical: "He was pursuing reality without giving up the sensuous surface, with no other guide than the immediate impression of nature, without following the contours, with no outline to enclose the color, with no perspectival or pictorial arrangement. This is Cézanne's suicide: aiming for reality while denying himself the means to attain it." His art was contradictory, as Gauguin described it: "Has Cézanne discovered the prescription for compressing the intense expression of all his sensations into a single and unique procedure?" His art was abstract, as Cézanne himself told Denis: "I wished to copy nature, but I could not. I was only satisfied when I discovered that the sun, for instance, could not be *reproduced,* but that it must be *represented* by something else . . . by color."

Paradoxical, contradictory, and abstract, Cézanne's late paintings might also be called utopian. Though they recall, unlike Ensor's, no fabled past of popular enchantment, and though they imagine, unlike Seurat's, no future of sensual harmony, they are nevertheless themselves dreams of con-
362 cord, cooperation, and totality. In *The Large Bathers* (1900–06), one of three monumental paintings on this subject made in the artist's last half-decade, the boundaries between earth, plant, and human are elided while the autonomy of each is assured. The ten bathers, irregularly outlined in blue (their sex is mostly undetermined), the three large, blue-black trees that strain upward at left and right, and the yellow-brown earth below, share the task of composing the base, sides, and mass of a single great pyramid or mountain, like Mont Sainte-Victoire itself. Yet each of the three elements possess at the same time a purposiveness and formal rigor not present in contemporary works by the Symbolists Munch, Redon, Vrubel, and Hodler. Those artists expressed a vitalistic longing for the subordination of humans before nature. Cézanne expressed—through a subtle balance of facture, tonality, color, volume, and mass—the desire for the simultaneous independence and cooperation of each.

Mont Sainte-Victoire (1902–06), like the *Large Bathers,* is 368
not only a depiction of a cherished subject—one that recalled the painter's youth amid the hills and waters of Provence—it is also a symphony of color modulation, orchestrated with at once balanced and variegated *passage*. Dozens of tints of blue, gray, and brown, applied with discrete oblong brushstrokes, create an up-and-down and side-to-side jostling; warm browns and yellows and cooler blues and greens instigate a constant shuttling between surface and depth. The mountain peak itself is outlined in blue—once, twice, three times—in order both to record the kinesthesia of the painter's eye, hand, arm, and body and to assert the clarity of that vaunted architecture. Both of these paintings, therefore, one focused on the human and one on the natural—by their unmistakable inscription of the drama of self and environment—express the utopian longing for a reconciliation. That image of concord, which had earlier been dreamed (though somewhat less elementally) by Constable, Courbet, and Van Gogh among others, was one of the most salient critical legacies of the nineteenth century.

"As eminently constructed and produced objects," Adorno writes, "[autonomous artworks] point to a practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life." To combine perception and apperception, the sensual and the cognitive, the intellectual and the emotional within a single work of art—so Adorno argues—is to betoken a totality that is absent in a world scarred and fragmented by modernization and an exclusive reliance upon reason. Cézanne strove to achieve totality in his art, and in so doing insinuated his criticism of society in the very form of the artwork itself. That formal insinuation—the achievement both of a single artist and of the generations that labored before—may be judged, however, a failure as well as a success. During Cézanne's last years, and especially in the decades that followed, the embedding of criticism in form came more and more to resemble a hibernation of criticism. Indeed, by the time Cézanne was rediscovered by a public familiar with Cubism and abstraction, art and cultural criticism inhabited wholly separate spheres. The story of that fateful segregation cannot be told here; the effort of the present book has been only to show that in the nineteenth century things were different, and that the best art was critical.