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## Making Matter Make Sense in Cézanne's Still Lifes with Plaster Cupid

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Abstract:

The author examines two of Cézanne's paintings from the 1890s, both entitled *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, and their relationship to late eighteenth-century empiricist "thought experiments" involving a "Statue Man". The paintings are shown to be Cézanne's stoic late-in-life reflections on the philosophical nature of mortality—illustrating life and death as but part of the sensationist /materialist metabolism of *being* in which matter endlessly recycles itself around and through *things*.

## Making Matter Make Sense in Cézanne's Still Lifes with Plaster Cupid

by Joni Spigler

The master painter Frenhofer, in Honoré de Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1832), instructs the lesser painter Porbus in the secrets of artistic creation. He proposes that the dream of the artist is the dream of creation—of creating life from inanimate matter—and he speaks of the intense perseverance and sensitivity required to achieve this aim.

“Hm” said the old man, “Quite good? Well, yes and no. Your good woman is not badly got up, but there’s no life in her. You all think you’ve done what needs to be done when you’ve drawn a face correctly and put everything in the proper place according to the laws of anatomy! You colour this or that feature with a flesh tone mixed in advance on your palette, taking care to make one side darker than the other; and because from time to time you look at a naked woman standing on a table you think you’ve succeeded in copying nature, you imagine yourselves to be painters and you fancy you have stolen God’s secret from him!...Ha! To be a great poet it is not enough to know your syntax to perfection and to avoid grammatical errors. Look at your saint, Porbus. At first glance she seems wonderful. But a second look reveals that she is stuck to the background of the painting and that one couldn’t walk around her. She is a silhouette with one side to her only, a figure cut out, an image which cannot turn around, cannot change position. I am not conscious of any air between that arm and the ground of the picture; space and depth are lacking; yet the perspective is correctly done and the gradation of light and shade exactly observed: but despite these praiseworthy efforts I find it impossible to believe that the warm breath of life animates this beautiful body. It seems to me that if I were to place my hand on that firmly rounded throat, I would find it as cold as marble! No, my friend, blood does not flow beneath this ivory skin, the crimson dew of life does not swell the network of veins and capillaries intertwined beneath the amber transparency of her temples and breast. Here is life, movement—there only stillness; in every piece life and death struggle with each other: here is a woman, there is a statue, there again a corpse. Your creation is unfinished. You were able to breathe only a portion of your soul into your cherished work. The torch of Prometheus has gone out more than once in your hands, and many parts of your picture have not been touched by the celestial flame.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Balzac was not the only writer in the nineteenth century to entertain the notion that art, in its most ideal form, imbued the inanimate with life, thus aligning artists with the Supreme Creator. A brief list of novels and short stories published in the century reveals that writers were apt to describe the artist’s practice as situated on the tenuous boundary between the inanimate and animate: E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *The Sandman* (1815) features Olympia, an automaton with whom the protagonist falls in love; Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) was itself subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*; Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Oval Portrait* (1842) tells of a painting that became real even as life was drained from its sitter; Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Drowne’s Wooden Image* (1846) recounts the story of a wood carver who, by both sculpting and painting her, “liberates” a real woman imprisoned in an oak log, and his *The Artist of the Beautiful* (1844–46) narrates the story of a solitary tinkerer who creates a real butterfly from

mechanical parts; Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) reflects on the fate of a man who does not age because his soul has been encased in a painting that ages in his place. [2] In the same century in which Nietzsche pronounced God "dead," writers were lending their pages to descriptions of artists and scientists who could, like God, bring life to dead or inert matter. It is clear from this list too, that the idea had international appeal—perhaps serving as some psychological solace to those on continents so recently ravaged by the bloodshed and death of Revolutions and also faced with hopes in, and fears of modern science. Writers returned to those ancient myths of Pygmalion and Prometheus *plasticator*: Pygmalion wedding the sculpture of Aphrodite he had so lovingly formed, and to which Aphrodite herself had brought life in answer to his prayer, and Prometheus creating and animating mankind out of clay and fire. In a convention dating to the eighteenth century, if not earlier, Prometheus had been a symbol for the creating artist. [3]

Because writers use words as their "matter," because they create with language, it is easy to understand with what ease they set such impossible tasks for plastic artists of paint and stone. Writers never have to *produce* what they describe—Balzac's story is the perfect example. Writers "paint" for the mind's eye alone—that the reader might envision for him- or herself the perfect *life-like* painting or imagine the statue coming *to life*. Yet, the mere proposal of such an ideal for art must have held some challenge for certain artists. About 1896, in a middle-class parlor game probably inspired by the nineteenth-century vogue for the "interview" format, Paul Cézanne *filis* designed a survey to be answered by his father. The questionnaire requested responses on a variety of topics. In answer to the question of which character from a novel or the theatre he most admired Cézanne responded "Frenhofer" [*sic*]. [4] Readers familiar with the end of Balzac's tale might equate this identification with Cézanne's overriding anxiety about his own painterly abilities. Balzac's story is centered, however, not on Frenhofer's inability to complete his masterpiece but on the artist's possession of a "secret...the power of imparting to figures extraordinary life." [5] Says Frenhofer, "My painting is no painting, it is a sentiment, a passion! Born in my studio..." Without the artist's secret a painting remains, "a horrible dead thing without any resemblance." [6] With the secret, Frenhofer's painting becomes "not a canvas, [but] a woman!" He asks his apprentices, "Does she not smile at me with every stroke of the brush I have given her? She has a soul, the soul I endowed her with." [7] Isn't this ability to animate dead matter what it would be for the artist to share in the power of the *Pater Omnipotens Aeterne Deus*? [8] Cézanne was drawn to the idea that a painting might be made in which, if the objects or personages pictured did not literally leap off the canvas, they might at least figure a form of animated being.

The literary works listed above were in some strong sense a response to the philosophical and scientific investigations of the previous century. Throughout the eighteenth century scientists were engaged in explorations of how insentient, merely irritable matter could potentially be vivified through repeated exposure to and reaction against sense data: smells and colors, and the feelings generated by things touched. For French empirical scientists following in the footsteps of the British philosopher John Locke, the world of sensible "matter"—for example, of atoms or the corpuscles of the physicalists—was beginning to be hypothesized, quantified, and posited as the experiential foundation of human being. "Man" came not only to experience the world, but to know it and himself through his senses alone.

In Balzac's discussion of the failed painting, the figure of the "statue" is situated as a middle-term, bridging the interstice between animate life (woman) and death (corpse). Such positioning returns the statue to the role it served as protagonist in the thought-experiments of Etienne Bonnot de Condillac and Charles Bonnet during the French Enlightenment. In these experiments a statue in the shape of a man, or "Statue-Man" passed through a series of sensory experiences which served to transform it from a state of dull, if potentially responsive, matter to sentient and motile human being. Locke himself, in a bewildering passage on the impossibility of the immortality of the soul in changelings, cautioned against the attribution of a soul—insensible yet essential for human life—to a human being on the basis of its outward appearance. Corpses and "wild children" look to have the "rational souls" they lack. Locke's followers, however, hinged their considerations of human *Becoming* on matter's interaction with matter in the development of both internal and external human form.[9] Condillac and Bonnet, as theorists of sensation, began with a statue already posited as having human form yet dependent on experience alone for becoming animate. This eighteenth-century proto-existentialist position became tenable precisely because the whole movement of Enlightenment secularization diminished the repercussions of speaking about human beings in material terms. I would argue that it became fashionable to use the figure of the statue in a period coinciding with the tail end of the Baroque—with the vigorous movement and emotional intensity imparted to human form in Baroque sculpture.

In this paper I explore what the figure of the animated statue might have meant for Cézanne, especially in light of his interest in drawing from sculpture in the Louvre. I argue that ideas of formation and animation, both in terms of objects of art and human beings, affected his own representation of statuary and were tied to his understanding of the philosophies of sensitivity and sensibility—a discourse deeply entwined in his own self-presentation and self-understanding as an artist. In doing so I align two not-necessarily co-extensive formulations of materialism. The first as is found in the philosophy of the natural sciences and proposes that all natural phenomena can be explained as having physical / material causes. Closely allied with physicalist and mechanist worldviews, this materialism gives us a world in which everything that we experience, as well as the very fact of our mental experience of it, is the result of specifiable material particles moving and interacting, combining and breaking apart, according to physical laws.[10] The second definition of materialism invoked here is by now a trope of Modernist criticism and discourse—that painting is the process of applying pigmented substance to a material support such as canvas or paper, at times allowing this substance to stand for its own truth *qua material*. [11]

\* \* \* \* \*

The anger of the boxer, the impudence of the faun,  
Even from such cads you gather beauty,  
Grand heart swelled with pride, sickly yellow man,  
Puget, the convict's melancholic emperor.

—"Beacons" by Charles Baudelaire [12]

The verse above is taken from a poem by Charles Baudelaire that, according to Leo Languier, Cézanne had marked as one of his favorites.<sup>[13]</sup> In it, the poet paid homage to a number of artists he claimed as “Beacons” in the history of art. The poem commences with a tribute to Peter Paul Rubens and finishes with one dedicated to Eugène Delacroix. In the body of the poem, situated between the alpha and omega of these two coloristic painters, the sculptor Pierre Puget appears in a stanza directly following one dedicated to Michelangelo. Baudelaire’s choices were also those of Cézanne when he copied works in the Louvre. But Puget held a special place for Cézanne as a fellow Provençal artist. Gasquet recounts Cézanne’s discussion of Puget: “If you want to talk about a Provençal, let’s talk about Puget. He’s one who smells of garlic, even in Marseilles and Toulon, even at Versailles, under the bronze sun of Louis XIV...”<sup>[14]</sup> Cézanne’s admiration for the sculptor was tied to Puget’s ability to animate his forms: “Puget has the mistral in him; he brings marble to life.” “He is the one who makes marble move...”<sup>[15]</sup>

Cézanne’s esteem for Puget was further reflected in his choice to depict, in two still life paintings, a plaster cast believed in Cézanne’s time to have been taken from a sculpture of *Eros* by Puget.<sup>[16]</sup> These paintings, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (c. 1894), now in the Courtauld Institute Galleries (fig. 1) and *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, now in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, dated to 1895 (fig. 2), are anomalous in the history of Cézanne’s production as they are the only two instances wherein sculpture—a subject that figured prominently in Cézanne’s drawing and watercolor practice—was taken up as the subject for fully realized paintings.



Fig. 1, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (*L'Amour en plâtre*), 1895. Oil on paper mounted on panel. London, Courtauld Institute. [\[larger image\]](#)





Fig. 2, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (*L'Amour en plâtre*), 1895. Oil on canvas. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum. [\[larger image\]](#)

Let me begin with the Courtauld version of *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (fig. 1). In this painting Puget's *Cupid* does not display “la beauté des goujats.” Instead, he chubbily strides along, assured of himself like a flâneur passing through the streets of Paris. The statue takes center stage in the painting, curvaceously dividing the canvas down the center, acting as an energetic axis or the fulcrum on which the painting's dynamism is hinged. The format of the canvas accommodates this division, as the painting is one of Cézanne's rare vertical still lifes.<sup>[17]</sup>

*Still Life with Plaster Cupid* is a prime example of the delight Cézanne takes in playing games with paradoxical formal readings.<sup>[18]</sup> The interior space Cézanne creates in this painting is configured very differently from the spaces in his other still lifes.<sup>[19]</sup> Ordinarily, the rear wall of the represented space is depicted as a flat plane parallel to the picture plane. The background is often divided horizontally, giving the intimation of a horizon line—wainscoting on a wall, the back edge of the table, or a swath of fabric serving as ground; the mottled and modulated space above operating atmospherically. Occasionally, a panel of curtain cloth or a piece of furniture will bisect the horizon, or a shelf will echo its geometry. In this *Cupid*, behind the table's surface in the foreground, Cézanne opens up a trapezoidal space which registers ambiguously as both deep recession and vertiginous forward incline. Lining the space in the back and along the left side is a screen-like array of canvases, two of which cite other Cézanne works—in front, on the left, *Still Life with Peppermint Bottle* (fig. 5) and, at the rear, a rendering of another plaster cast in Cézanne's possession based on an *écorché* by Michelangelo.<sup>[20]</sup> The canvas directly behind the Cupid is illegible, covered as it is by his body. I say “covered” but that is not quite right. There is something about the juxtaposition of these two objects that leads me to read them as one. The body of the Cupid is set at an angle so that the area of his body, from crown to genitals, falls within the projected territory of the canvas. The line of the canvas's bottom edge, if extended, would just graze the tip of the pasty pale mark we read as “penis”. Angled as it is, the arm socket faces into the canvas and, below it, where an arm should be, a whitish patch, bending as if at an elbow, can be seen floating nebulously as if still submerged in the liquid materiality of the canvas's surface. This intimation of an arm surfacing from beneath the paint makes the figure somewhat uncanny—pressing the viewer towards the suspicion that the painter not

only builds figures out of marks but, using paint as matter, wields the ability to trap and conceal figures within its layers. If it seems only a matter of time before the Cupid will pull his arm from the muck in which it is lodged and become clear and clean and whole, then the identification of the whitish patch with a trapped limb abets the reading of the Cupid as capable of willful movement—even action against his creator.<sup>[21]</sup>



Fig. 5, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Peppermint Bottle*, 1890-94. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. [\[larger image\]](#)

Emblematized here is the problem of painting as material practice evidenced in the disparity between Frenhofer's artistic theories and his practice. In criticizing Porbus's painting Frenhofer says, "I feel no air blowing between that arm and the background of the picture; space and depth are lacking." Yet later, when seeing Frenhofer's own masterpiece, Porbus exclaims, "There is a woman underneath" and points out the "layers of colours which the old painter had successively superimposed in the belief that he was perfecting his painting."<sup>[22]</sup> The painter, in the attempt to create a life-like figure, always inhabits a figurative position between builder of form and agent of its entombment, even as the material processes deriving from these opposite goals are the same.

The additive process of painting can also be a form of erasure. In Cézanne's painting, areas of darkened shading have been built up around the Cupid, against the backdrop of the canvas. Such areas can be read as "corrections"—places where the artist applies a darker pigment in order to re-contour the outline of a figure. In this painting these corrections appear more as an absence; as if delineating the void left by the Cupid's emergence into three-dimensional space. This absence is countered by the presence of a shadow cast on the back wall by the canvas, to the right. The flat planar surface of the canvas casts a voluptuous, three-dimensional silhouette. It begins logically enough on the floor at the lower, back-right edge of the canvas, but then, after making an artful detour around an apple, bursts into fullness as if the canvas were no longer flat but extended outward by the emergent body. The recessive hollow figured by the Cupid's "corrective" dark halo is separated from the dark bumpy shadow by a thin strip of lighter green, violet, and pinkish marks limning the right edge of that canvas. This strip of light testifies that the dark areas should not be read as a continuous shadow cast onto two surfaces by the same object in "real" studio space, but that Cézanne is saying something about the relationship between the statue and the canvas.

What these discrete darkened areas working together provide is a picturing of the two-dimensional surface of a painting giving birth to extended, emergent, three-dimensional form.[23]

The foreground of the Courtauld *Still Life* is bustling with similar activity. The Prussian- and midnight-blue patterned fabric mimics the Cupid, it too departing from the *Peppermint Bottle* painting and creeping onto the table upon which the Cupid is perched. A large reddish onion seems intent on measuring, exactly, the newfound space between the Cupid's base and the *Peppermint Bottle's* table. It wedges itself in deep between the base and the plate while its shoots, like tendrils, reach precariously outward. Another onion, opposite, clamors for the edge, ready to take that perilous leap into freedom from surface.

At the rear of the painting, Cézanne has represented another of his paintings or watercolors. This one depicts his illustration of an *écorché* attributed to Michelangelo. Thus, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, while centered on small mass-produced statuettes suitable for private studio contemplation, opens its referential network to sculpture by Cézanne's two favorite sculptors.[24] Read from the additive direction of painting, the *écorché* has taken its own first steps towards Being. No longer can we see the striations of exposed musculature which define an *écorché*, as Cézanne's paint has enveloped the statue in a sheath of skin and it has taken on a fleshly volume. A roundness to the belly suggests that an adipose layer has formed over the taut muscles of the *écorché's* abdomen. The enormous apple hovering between the Cupid and the *écorché* seems both taunting and instructive. Its presence assures the *écorché* that there is ample space to emerge into—that he need not remain locked in his plane of liminal being. He kneels as if contemplating its proposal, even while the Cupid learns to mimic its amplitude, extending his belly to echo it. Animation and extension jump species and spread as if contagious.[25]

I want to suggest that even as Cézanne allegorizes coming-to-life and coming-into-being as the additive process of painting, he also represents the same experience as understood through the subtractive methods of sculpting. As I said earlier, the two versions of *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* are unique in Cézanne's repertoire, and their subject matter—their whole elaborate choreography of the sister arts—is specially charged. The central trope of sculptural practice—entering the artistic imaginary through Giorgio Vasari's *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*—is the artist's ability to liberate the captive figure already existing, yet trapped within the marble block.[26] Reading the *écorché* “backwards” from the direction of sculpture, it appears at an equidistant stage of becoming, yet directionally reversed. The figure is still only roughed-out—the basic form is there but it has not been chiseled and filed to a degree of smoothness that would reveal the soft undulations and curves of an expressive animated body. The *écorché's* right foot has not been differentiated from the brute matter that contains it. But these considerations are displayed more clearly in the Cupid figure itself.

The support of the Cupid in the actual plaster copy of the sculpture (figs. 3 and/or 4), and as represented in two of Cézanne's sketches of the figure—*Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, c. 1900 (fig. 6) and, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, 1900–4 (fig. 7)—is a narrow trunk-like structure which extends from the base and connects to the figure on the upper right thigh. As it is depicted in the painting it seems a solid mass from which the leg emerges in high relief. We



encounter the Cupid just as his leg is becoming free of the protoplasmic form of the base. The breach of shadow between his legs suggests that soon this being will walk free of his material support. His foot mimics the roundness and subtle greenness of the fruit. Cézanne has imaged the statue as a figure being liberated from the block encasing it—note the little foot-form, like an embryonic, phylogenic mass near the back of the base and, just below it, another line marking the space his right foot has just stepped from, making his own first mark in the world.[\[27\]](#)



Fig. 3, François Du Quesnoy or follower (in Cézanne's time attributed to Pierre Puget), *Plaster Cupid* (*L'Amour en plâtre*). Paul Cézanne's Les Lauves Studio Copy. Photograph by John Rewald. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 4, François Du Quesnoy or follower (in Cézanne's time attributed to Pierre Puget), *Plaster Cupid* (*L'Amour en plâtre*). Photograph by Lawrence Gowing. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 6, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)*, c. 1900. Pencil and watercolor on white paper. Vollard Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)

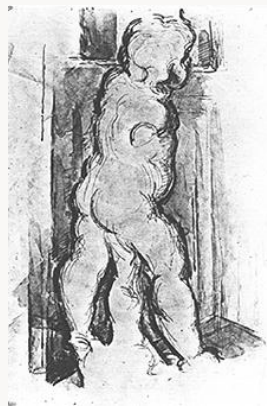


Fig. 7, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)*, c. 1900-04. Pencil and watercolor on white paper. Vollard Archives. [\[larger image\]](#)

The line of the adjacent canvas's bottom edge which, if extended, would just graze the Cupid's penis also represents the division of the vertical figure into two zones of becoming: the upper zone from genitals to crown figures animation as a result of some additive process like painting; the lower zone reflects on the liberation of life by subtracting the mute matter in which it is encased.

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The last two decades of Cézanne scholarship have seen a renewed interest in pinning down the precise character and sources of Cézanne's materialism. In *Cézanne, Lucretius and the Late Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Science*, and her subsequent "Cézanne and Lucretius at the Red Rock," Kathryn Tuma has focused on exploring Cézanne's interest in, and perhaps dependence on, Lucretius.<sup>[28]</sup> She argues that Cézanne's *tache* (the individual stain or mark or patch of color that Cézanne applied to the canvas, and with which he built his representations of material objects) should not be read as a "transparent symbol" (of atomic

substructure).[29] Tuma posits that Cézanne's paint application, instead of simply representing the building blocks of material objects through the "constructive stroke," allegorizes and enacts the secondary properties of matter (i.e. color) as if they were primary properties (i.e. "impenetrability, mobility and weight").[30] Tuma subsequently illustrates how a reading of Cézanne's mark-making strategy as allegorical allows us to understand the motivations behind his overall picturing of objects.[31] I follow Tuma in reading Cézanne's marks as allegorical rather than strictly indexical or iconic.[32] My divergence from Tuma's account lies in my reading of *exactly what* is being allegorized in Cézanne's mark making and overall representational strategy. Tuma premises her exploration on Joachim Gasquet's report that Cézanne often cited Lucretius, saying, "Imagine that the history of the world dates from the day when two atoms met, when two whirlwinds, two chemical dances combined. These grand rainbows, these cosmic prisms, this dawn of ourselves above nothingness." [33] We know that Cézanne understood the original passage, both because Latin "came easily to him," and because even as a student, "he frequently won prizes for calculus, Greek, Latin, science and history." [34] Tuma uses the Lucretian quote to establish a late nineteenth-century atomism with its tropes of invisibility and supra-sensibility as a more central concern for Cézanne than the artist's quotidian ruminations on art and life would suggest.[35]

In *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*, Richard Shiff outlines the reigning epistemological debates about sensation(s) and impression(s) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Briefly, theorists wondered if true sensations could derive from private, subjective experiences, as in the case of the Symbolists' dreams and visions, or if, alternatively, sensations were necessarily anchored in the experience of an objective, empirically-knowable external world, as in the case of the Impressionists' responses to color and light effects.[36] Shiff groups Cézanne with the latter when he states, "I prefer to think that Cézanne's fundamental concern was immediate visual sensation, which, with an intense physicality, he converted into tactile sensations of the brush." [37] Here Shiff's exposition lays open the question of whether Cézanne's understanding of sensation was formed in the matrix of contemporary debates, or whether his views were formed in response to earlier theories of *sensibilité* with which he was acquainted.

I believe Cézanne's understanding of both the Lucretian quote and his ideas of sensibility derived from notions of sensible matter employed in the eighteenth-century by thinkers such as Condillac, Bonnet, and Diderot. In this I agree with Judith Wechsler who, in "Cézanne: Sensation/perception," notes that in his later years Cézanne's letters and statements were overflowing with references to the importance of sensation.[38] Emile Bernard claimed, "*Organize the sensations*, here [was] the first precept of Cézanne's doctrine—a doctrine not at all sensualist, but sensitive." [39] From Cézanne's son Paul we learn some of Cézanne's primary maxims: "(IV) Sensitivity defines the individual. At its highest level, it identifies an artist...(V) Great sensitivity is the most powerful characteristic of any beautiful artistic creation...(VII) The artist gives form to his sensibility, to his own, innate individuality. (XVIII) A mind that can organize powerfully is the most precious collaborator with sensibility in the realization of a work of art...(XXII) Style...develops from the artist's personal manner of feeling and expression." [40] In these maxims we see that, for Cézanne, to be *sensitive to sensations* and to *organize* them; to *feel* and *express*; to give form to one's own *sensibility*—these things were primary. Indeed, such maxims functioned as Cézanne's mantras throughout various recorded conversations.[41] In addition to these comments,

statements from Cézanne's letters suggest that he was familiar with more complex, if popularized, aspects of *sensibilité* and sensationalist theory. As early as 1865 Cézanne wrote that in listening to Richard Wagner's music "You will cause our nerves to vibrate to the noble tones."<sup>[42]</sup> Thirty-nine years later, to the day, he wrote to Bernard: "an optical impression is produced on our organs of sight which makes us classify as light, half-tone or quarter-tone the surfaces represented by color sensations."<sup>[43]</sup>

According to Jules Lachelier's 1885 treatise *Psychologie et métaphysique*, it was "not until the nineteenth-century that psychology, the study of sensation, emotion, and thought, came to be generally regarded not merely as a branch of metaphysics but as a natural science, an area of empirical research into the physiology of perception."<sup>[44]</sup> Nonetheless, *sensibilité* itself was a dominant paradigm throughout much of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries—not only in science and aesthetics but in all manners of daily life. In *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France*, Anne C. Vila explains:

To understand the sensibility paradigm fully, we must first determine what the concept meant within each of the diverse discursive fields that were preoccupied with it. In the moral and social vocabulary of eighteenth-century France, *sensibilité* belonged to the same family of words as *sens*, *sensation*, *sentiment*, *sentimental*, *sensibilerie*, and was associated with notions like sympathy, virtue, pity, benevolence, tender feeling, and compassion. Yet *sensibility* was also central to European physiological terminology beginning in the 1740s, when it edged out *irritability* as the innate capacity to react to stimuli, which was held to underlie all the phenomena of life in the human body.<sup>[45]</sup>

Due to the great number of discourses using these terms, the ideas associated with them were susceptible to extreme slippage. Says Vila: "Various meanings attached to *sensibility* tended to be mutually permeable because eighteenth-century authors used the word as a bridging concept—a means of establishing causal connections between the physical and moral realms."<sup>[46]</sup> Sensationalist philosophers of the intellect such as Condillac, Bonnet, and Buffon; aestheticians like Dubos and Diderot, moralists like Duclos and Rousseau; and Haller and his fellow vitalist theorists and physicians of the Montpellier medical school employed the same basic tenets, originating in Lockean empiricism. Over the course of the eighteenth century, theories evolved which put pressure on Cartesian dualist interpretations.<sup>[47]</sup> "Mind-type things" came to be seen as "body-type things" under a decidedly materialist worldview. By the end of the eighteenth century, even those theories of sensibility with a "pronounced physicalist or materialist undertone" were generally tolerated even by defenders of morality and religion.<sup>[48]</sup>

Just as the soul was evacuated from the body by these physicalist discourses, so too, in France, distinctions collapsed between subtending insensible "primary qualities" of matter and sensible "secondary qualities" such as color. Even Tuma admits: "Stridently opposed to anything not subject to direct observation, French positivist scientists and philosophers resisted atomic theory: some vilified the atom as 'a baseless and shadowy phantom'...and protested that 'a metaphor is not a reality.'"<sup>[49]</sup> The verifiable world consisted of sensible particles which directly acted on the body.

In a letter to Charles Camoin in 1903, Cézanne writes: “My son, at the moment in Paris, is a great philosopher. I do not mean to say that he is either the equal or the rival of Diderot, Voltaire or Rousseau.”<sup>[50]</sup> These are the philosophers whose theories Cézanne esteems.<sup>[51]</sup>

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The “thought experiments” and literary works of sensationalist philosophers like Condillac, Bonnet, and Diderot are essential for understanding Cézanne’s conception of painting, sculpture, life, and movement. Their theories will shed light on Cézanne’s methods, and their own methods will return us to the *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*.

One favorite figure of sensationalist speculation was the “Statue-Man”—a sense-less being imagined as passing through the process by which sensation, sense organs, and animation are developed *materially*, step by step. Abbé de Condillac seems to have been the first to seize on the Statue-Man thought experiment, but it was Charles Bonnet who pursued the figure most extensively.<sup>[52]</sup> Both men were followers of Locke, which is to say, they both believed that one enters the world without innate ideas and is at birth a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate upon which experience will be inscribed. The sense organs (and primary among these, those of vision) are the experiential portals through which sensations will enter the mind/body and begin the engraving process. Only after a sufficient number of successive sensations (experiences) have been registered will a faculty be formed which allows for an idea to be held. In their inquiries into the inner workings of this process, both men invoke the figure of a Statue-Man to explain how “he” might undergo this process. Bonnet in *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l’âme* makes numerous references to fibers, molecules, corpuscles, and vibrations, these terms wavering somewhere between literal and metaphoric usage. Bonnet postulates that there are “sensible fibers” lining the body’s interior which are comprised of “molecules or elementary parts—small strips superimposed on one another which can glide over each other and lend themselves to the movements imparted to them.”<sup>[53]</sup> He illustrates this notion of the sensible fiber in a thought-experiment: Supposing one waves a rose under a Statue-Man’s nose. This motion causes the “infinitely small corpuscles to emanate from the rose” and enter the nose where they might act on the fibers that line it. After a sufficient number of roses are waved and enough corpuscles enter the Statue-Man’s nose, the fibers begin to shape themselves into specific receptors which will henceforth only capture rose corpuscles.<sup>[54]</sup> What does it take to form an idea? As few as two such incidents could produce in the Statue-Man a simple idea such as “two” or “different.” Of primary importance here is the idea of succession. The order in which we receive our sense experiences in some way determines who we are and who we become.<sup>[55]</sup>

Over the course of a century, many philosophers used the figure of the Statue-Man as an experimental test-subject. Many of these investigations concerned the hypothetical isolation of various senses to ascertain what knowledge could be imparted through each; or different senses were paired to understand how they were related. Thus, the body’s experience of sensible matter could ultimately come to solve even a complex intellectual problem like that of solipsism—seemingly solved through the sense of touch: when the Statue-Man touched himself he would feel himself touching and also being touched. When the Statue-Man



touched things not himself, he would receive one sensation but not the other. This, it was believed, would form in him the idea of an external world and his inhabitation of it.[56]

Emile Bernard tells us, “Madame de Staël writes in her book on Germany: ‘The French consider external objects to be the impulses behind all ideas, and the Germans consider ideas to be the impulses behind all impressions.’ Paul Cézanne justifies Madame de Staël’s opinion about the French, but he knows how to obtain a depth in his art which is rare among our contemporaries.”[57] Bernard’s comments reify the distinction between the external world and the individual body. Condillac’s and Bonnet’s Statue-Men are formed and even animated through the constant bombardment of sensible particles impinging on the sense organs from the outside. Taking color as an example, the metaphor of “inscribing” the “*tabula rasa*” is interesting in that it points both to the process of incision—of carving into material—and also to mark-making—of building up ideas through the successive application of color. In this dyadic system, it is impossible to securely equate the sensible fibers with “plate,” or colored corpuscles with “inks,” for the body/mind itself—starting as a *tabula rasa*—seems to be both print and plate in one. Circularly, color itself chisels into bodily matter, vivifying and activating it into an organ for collecting successive color impressions.

Returning to the Courtauld *Cupid*, we remember that Cézanne encounters (and pictures) painterly, even sculptural, problems in his attempt to picture the Cupid’s animation as a result of the interactions between sensible and bodily matter. It was, after all, impossible to directly illustrate with the opaque materials of paint, or plaster, or marble, actions occurring within the interior of the body. Even an *écorché* presents us with just another surface. Systems of physiognomic signification were in place with which one could conventionally portray certain moral states like heroism, but in the late-nineteenth century, a semiotics of internal physiology (or pathology for that matter) was still in development. Cézanne’s ingenious response to the problem is to center the Cupid between the materials comprising the above-discussed dyad—to give them the potential to fold in on one another. Cézanne gives us the “plate” of receptive canvas behind the Cupid and, in the “external space” before him, a palette of sensible matter. White marks and pale blues, pinks and lilacs commingle and activate in a vibratory nebulous array preparing to become marks on that plate. In one sense, the Cupid becomes a sign of work already begun. In another sense, however, the Cupid is a pre-existent form, like the Statue-Man, on which the experiment can be performed. The Cupid’s state as potentially animate, but not yet actively so, is signified by his ability to take on the colors around him: on his chest and in his hair is the gold of fruit, and his whiteness is mottled with the warm pinks and lilacs of the array. Yet, these colors only cling to him externally. The Cupid has not entered the realm of the senses. His body is still locked, genitals to crown, within the territory of the canvas, just as his body itself is still “locked.” His eyes, tightly shut, do not yet see what they, and he, are becoming—they await the moment when they will first open. Likewise, the ears are covered by curls and the nose and mouth are un-curvaceous seams, as if tightly stitched-up from the inside.[58] If in some ways this is an image of emergence, of growth and development—if it implies movement in the freeing of the arm and the stepping from the base—it is also an image of being frozen in the moment of potential. The Cupid is still nothing more than a receptive plate only about to enter the sensual world. A bevy of smells and tastes await him. A few moments more and he will perhaps pull his arm free and for the first time reach down and grasp the succulent fruit. A now tight-lipped and pouty mouth will open to explore the world. Even the budding

genitalia will engorge with the possibility of sexual gratification, for how could he be Eros without some form of access to the sensual world? Soon he will wrap his nakedness in the blue patterned fabric. But “soon” is forever in painting.

Here, I think, is the crux—the turning point—of my interpretation. For as soon as I make the claim that this painting is about *Becoming*: about spatial and temporal movement from a two-dimensional plane to three dimension space; about becoming sentient, sensitive, sensible, about coming into *Being*—I again find myself challenged by the painting's flatness, its stable inertness. I am forced to ask myself, “Why is this Cupid still locked in the space of that frame?” “How can that vertiginous trapezoidal shape ever convince me of perspectival depth?” The artifice of painting is again foregrounded, and takes hold of me, negating my best attempt at reading something *other*. The painting of the Cupid represents, after all, a *Becoming* that shares all the traits of those failed or murderous paintings, or abominations of scientific creation, dealt with in the literature of the period.

It would be easy to assert that this painting substantiates Cézanne's claims of failure were it not for his final rhetorical move, subtle as it is. Cézanne implicates the viewer in a direct relationship with the two figures in the depicted scene. The surface on which the *écorché* rests in the depicted canvas in the background repeats the Cupid's relationship to the table on which it stands. The viewer, mirrors this relation while standing to view the painting in the gallery space. Thus Cézanne has established a counter-clockwise rotation around the “external space,” beginning at the twelve o'clock position of the *écorché*, traveling to the plaster cupid at nine o'clock and ending at the viewer's position at six. Thus, the viewer is situated as an uncanny double to the Cupid, just as the Cupid is the *écorché*'s own double. The painting forces us towards the empathetic recognition that we also share in these material processes of addition and subtraction. Our own sensitive development is, in part, predicated on a reaction to the art and color Cézanne provides. Art is a harmony parallel to nature. The whole process suggests that, if we think that the bringing-to-life and the animation of the Cupid is stalled or failed within the painting, we are (like Porbus) looking in the wrong direction. The viewer's own body and sensitivities are the last term in the hypothetical syllogism Cézanne sets up. If modern painting must content itself with surfaces, then the only interior space and processes to which we have access are those within our own being.

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“The brain of the artist ... the moment he creates should be like a photographic plate, simply a recording device. Many skillful baths have brought this plate to the point of receptivity where it can be impregnated with the conscientious image of objects. Long labor, meditation, study, suffering, joy, and life have prepared it.”<sup>[59]</sup> One could say that becoming an artist, for Cézanne, mirrored becoming a physician in the sensibility-oriented climate of mid-eighteenth-century France—both entailed undergoing a long apprenticeship in the use of one's own senses and in the science of critical bodily signs.<sup>[60]</sup>

For eighteenth century physicians, what these signs comprised were subtle tumescence and detumescence, pulsations, oscillations, quiverings, and vibrations which flitted across the surface of the skin, and escaped with the breath, and accompanied the body's every

movement. Another recurrent eighteenth-century metaphor deployed by writers and physicians to describe the body's dynamic interior was of fibers and organs "vibrating" and "pulsing"—like cords struck by external objects for the senses. While Bonnet often explained the relationship between the fiber and the corpuscle as imprinted and imprinting, he was just as likely to speak of "fibrillar temperaments"—of fibers with "selective aptitudes to vibrate only for certain objects."<sup>[61]</sup> Bonnet and others imagined the interior of the body as an orchestra in which the perfection of the faculties and the experience of pleasure were dependent on "harmonious vibratory combinations" arising when the different fibers of each sense were put into play in the proper order. This music (or dissonance) seeped outwards and animated the surface of the body where it could then be analyzed. Vila explains.

The science of medical semiotics was predicated on the assumption that every action, every movement, and every reaction of the body is a richly significant link in an ongoing chain of physiological or pathological events. [The physician reads] the body's perceptible qualities...its heat and color, its respiratory rhythms, and above all its pulses.<sup>[62]</sup>

The animated body reverberated with pulsating life. Théophile de Bordeu, the leader of the vitalist physicians of the Montpellier school, claimed that each organ in the body made its own "particular impression on the pulse."<sup>[63]</sup> Therefore, a body in which all the organs were pulsing and vibrating (in the right order and in the right key) would, on its surface, display this perfection in sensible movements.

Neither Condillac nor Bonnet made any suggestion as to what their Statue-Men looked like. I am not prepared to make an argument, if there is one to be made, for the influence of mannerist or baroque sculptural forms on physicians or philosophers thinking about the body as a vibrant, pulsating thing—barely containing the reactions occurring within. I will say that both body and sculpture here point to inner states which have nothing in common with the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's Greeks or their statues.<sup>[64]</sup> A harmony of reactions and vibrations is not one of proportions and canons. Distinctions between these two types of "harmony" are given form, and made ironic, in Cézanne's drawings from *Sketchbook II*, in which the artist has copied antique and baroque-era sculpture in the Louvre.

I will begin with two drawings from *Sketchbook II*, now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art and dated by Theodore Reff to between 1872 and 1895.<sup>[65]</sup> The first sketch is from an antique work, the *Borghese Mars* (fig. 9); the second is of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* (fig. 10).<sup>[66]</sup> I have selected two examples which highlight the differences between Cézanne's treatments of antique sculpture and of sculptures by Michelangelo, Puget and other baroque artists. Although I focus only on a few particular examples here, the differences I discuss appear regularly in Cézanne's drawings and establish patterns of treatment, if not unassailable rules. Although Cézanne almost never settles for a single line when outlining a figure—the contouring of his figures is built-up out of a variety of discrete lines superimposed loosely over one another—those that compose the *Borghese Mars* are more tightly bound together and have a straightness and rigidity not found in his treatments of mannerist or baroque works. These marks are relatively careful and communicate the sculpture's appearance with a rough accuracy. There are moments when the lines do settle

into one another, imposing themselves as a thickness and displaying a remarkably sensitive quality, as in the passage traveling from under the chin, over the subtle swelling of the Adam's apple and along the sternal notch of the *Borghese Mars*. In the same drawing, however, there are awkward moments, for instance, the *Mars'* elbow and forearm. The muscular yet languid shape of the forearm in the statue has been transformed in Cézanne's drawing into a roughed-out form which could just as easily be a knee and calf. This awkwardness arises, in part, from Cézanne's own stiffness in addressing the form. In drawing from the antique, Cézanne feels compelled to attend to the exact outline—to the geometry and proportion—yet these are the areas wherein his deficiencies as a draughtsman become most evident. Even the shading in these drawings always follows the same, tight, rhythmic hatching, and in the *Borghese Mars* there is a patch of this shading inexplicably jutting out from the figure's chest, detracting from the beautiful line of the neck.



Fig. 9, Paul Cézanne, *Antique Borghese Mars*. Drawing in Sketchbook II (page viii recto), 1872-1895. Graphite pencil; traces of watercolor. Numbered in pencil viii. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 10, Paul Cézanne, *Michelangelo's Dying Slave*. Drawing in Sketchbook II (page xxvi bis recto), 1872-1895. Graphite pencil. Philadelphia Museum of Art. [\[larger image\]](#)

The treatment of line in Cézanne's drawing of the *Dying Slave* is a radical departure from that in *Mars*. It is as if the statue itself gives Cézanne a freedom to play with line. The outline of the figure on the right is a cascade of undulating threads which threatens to transform the masculine form into one of Rubens's women. And unlike the drawing of *Mars*, in which the lines remain at the edges of the form, in Cézanne's *Dying Slave* they intrude everywhere, celebrating every curve and possible curve. Repetitions and overlays suggest an unstable surface animated by reactions and movements occurring within the interior. His chest is treated as a feminine swelling of breasts; his penis is treated as an object in motion, constantly eluding a single line's ability to specify location—as if the penis's movements are tracked through time by these lines. The raised arm is evoked as almost the disintegration of form in a flurry of movement. The shading is softer and creeps into the hollows. Against this whole animated mass, another convex curve of a line, separate from the body, pushes into the *Slave*'s shoulder on the left. The tilt of the head and the curve of the body suggest that the focus and response of the figure is situated on this external, pressing force.

The fundamental difference between Cézanne's representations of antique and mannerist/baroque sculpture is that in drawing from the antique he is careful to create the form with more exacting lines, and these lines seldom intrude on the interior. No curvaceous flourishes detract from the calm and stillness of the figure. In the example of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*, which I also take as typical of his treatment of baroque works, we see a freedom of line which imparts to the figure curvaceous volume and pulsating movement. Cézanne departs from these distinctions in an unlikely experiment, depicting the antique sculpture of the *Dancing Satyr* (fig. 11) in his baroque style. This image takes the building of form out of superimposed, curved lines to the extreme. The body amasses convexities which imply an impossible musculature. Staggered marks on the figure's left hip convey spatial-temporal movement in the same way as the lines which signify the penis in the *Dying Slave* drawing. While forming a volumetric figure pulsating with life, the lines also hint at disintegration—a shaking apart of the body's matter from the inside out.



Fig. 11, Paul Cézanne, *Antique Dancing Satyr*, c. 1894-8. Pencil on paper. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins. [\[larger image\]](#)

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The eighteenth-century term *sensationniste* referred to a connoisseur of sensation—one whose senses had been refined to a high degree through many sensory experiences. But even as the processes outlined by Condillac and Bonnet hint at a teleology wherein the sense-objects of the external world push the body/mind towards perfection, sensory experiences, in truth, were believed to be aligned along a continuum. The body was constantly in danger of being pushed by external stimuli over to the sinister side. While certain experiences refined one's sensitivity other, harsher ones might serve to erode it. Life was seen as a daily battle against all kinds of potential stimuli and irritants, which could well throw a person's sensibility irreparably off balance.[67] As early as the mid-eighteenth century, theorists were warning against the corrosive effects of the over-stimulating urban environment—a theory which would be expanded in the nineteenth century by the brothers de Goncourt and others.[68] Even Emile Zola would write in 1896, "Ours is a society racked ceaselessly by a nervous abnormal irritability...Everything suffers and complains in the works of our time...being tears itself apart, exposes itself in its nudity." [69]

Adorable springtime has lost its fragrance!  
And time devours me minute by minute  
as a rigid body is enveloped by immense snows;  
I contemplate from on high the Earth in all its roundness,  
and there I no longer seek the shelter of a hut. Avalanche, take me with you in your  
slide.

—"The Taste of Nothingness," by Charles Baudelaire[70]

If life as a consequence of bodily matter's interaction with sensible objects—allegorized as a relationship between the sculptor's subtractive discovery of form and the painter's successive application of marks to build form—was conjured so evocatively in the Courtauld version of *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, then in the Stockholm version of *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (fig. 2) these same processes are forced to allegorize stunted development, disintegration and death.

In the Stockholm *Still Life*, the Cupid is no longer the axis or fulcrum of the painting's energy. Cézanne has organized the interior space so that the back wall is parallel to the picture plane, and the back edge of the table upon which the still life is arranged serves as the painting's horizon line. The odd tilt of the table pushes the Cupid forward against the front of the painting, but the depicted space remains shallow. Unlike the Courtauld Cupid, which extends and emerges into the depicted space, this Cupid registers as cut-out and pasted-on, an effect which is amplified by the figure's confrontational posture. The upper two-thirds of the painting, read from left to right, and consisting of the sky outside, the drapery, the Cupid himself, the back wall, and the Prussian fireplace,[71] are rendered in variations on a theme of "thick, velvety blue." [72] This consistency of color and hue collapses distinctions between foreground, middle-ground, and background in the upper register.

The limited palette allows us to identify some of the same characteristics of line evident in the drawings discussed earlier. Just as in the *Dying Slave* drawing, the Cupid's sides are depicted as a cascade of rhythmic undulations. The lines delineating his inner thighs repeat

this rhythm to a lesser degree. On the figure's left side, a few of these lines break and double, super-imposing themselves on each other, but not to the degree or effect as those in the drawing of the *Dying Slave*. And while, in the *Dying Slave*, these lines suggested that the generation of movement was occurring from within the figure, in this Cupid, the energy lines erupt in the paint outside the figure. Here we are looking to the area just outside the figure's right leg. Marks suggesting lines of force—of current or waves—are affecting the fabric of the drape adjacent to the thigh and ghosting the undulations of the outer thigh. Something is animated here, but it is not the Cupid's leg, only the world outside it.

Nothing resembling these waves of force, or even the lines delimiting the boundaries of the Cupid's body, exists in the Courtauld version. In that painting, the body seems to push out against, and sometimes beyond, the lines desiring to contain it. In the Stockholm version, the painted flesh of the Cupid's body retreats from the line, collapsing inward on itself, as if no pulse creates the necessary tumescence to fill the empty spaces between matter and potential. The Cupid has been reduced to a sort of inanimate "thingness."

I invoked a central trope of sculptural practice in my discussion of the Courtauld Cupid—the idea that the true artist has the ability to liberate a captive figure from brute matter. Here, Vasari describes Michelangelo's working process less metaphorically. The writer recounts how the artist was able

to carve figures out of marble by a method which leaves no chance of spoiling the stone. This method is as follows: one must make a figure of wax or some other firm material and lay it horizontally in a vessel of water; then, as the water is, of course flat and level, when the figure is raised little by little above the surface the more salient parts are revealed first, while the lower parts (on the underside of the figure) remain submerged, until, eventually it all comes into view. In the same way the figures must be carved out of marble by the chisel; the parts in highest relief must be revealed first and then, little by little, the lower parts.<sup>[73]</sup>

Returning briefly to the Courtauld version, we can equate the emergence of the Cupid from the depicted canvas behind it as the emergence of the wax figure from the water as the liquid's level drops "little by little." The positioning of the Cupid in relation to the canvas allows the broken arm to register as "submerged" in the liquid, while the rounded convexities of the figure rise above water/canvas level. In the Stockholm painting, Cézanne repeats the gesture of the uncanny submerged arm. Here it is depicted growing out of the darkest blue area below the figure's right stump. Yet, even if seen as rising from the blue shimmer of background, the Cupid as a whole appears as a sculptural experiment gone awry. Instead of positioning the statue in such a way as to conceal its breakages and erosions, Cézanne forces its absences out at us. The frontality of the arm's slice both lacks a space into which any developed limb could grow and hints that the artist went too far in refining his figure. We are face-to-face with a series of castrations. The figure's body, with its flat, empty chest on the left and the small, almost clitoral penis are countered on the right with the profile of a breast and a deep, gray, shadowed recess hinting at an indeterminate sexuality. The malformed and muted features of the face do not promise to become more than they are now, as if too much matter has been chiseled away. In this painting, the Cupid's eyes are not in the process of formation but are already eroded to the stage of cataract. Already gouged out. The mouth, like that of a ventriloquist's dummy, seems forever locked. What a

thing!—Eyeless, stunted, amputated, mouth sewn shut, senseless—grotesque! Cézanne's flipping of this figure highlights the damage done to it by an abrasive external world. The figure literalizes Zola's comment above: "Everything suffers and complains in the works of our time...being tears itself apart, exposes itself in its nudity."

While my reading of the figure through the metaphor of sculpture tells the story of a process taken too far, and allegorizes the disintegration of the sensitive body in response to the bombardment of the senses by harsh, unforgiving stimuli, other readers address the painting *as* painting—pointing to its unfinished nature: "The pigment is applied in light touches that leave much of the priming visible, a handling suggestive of watercolor. The ample breathing space between brushstrokes, especially in the drapery, the fruit, and the Cupid's face, makes the composition seem more like an oil sketch than a finished painting."<sup>[74]</sup> The painterly hesitations of the Stockholm *Still Life* are foregrounded when viewed in relation to the Courtauld version in which paint could so easily be read as thick matter capable of entombing the figure. Read from the additive direction of painting, the upper register of the Stockholm version envisions a world sparsely populated with sensible matter, not only through the blizzard-like dry brushing and the "breathing space between strokes" but in the prevalence of blues, cold grays, and jaded greens—a limited palette which does not promise to offer the sensible differences necessary to build a life.

If sensory experiences were believed to be aligned along a continuum—one pole terminating at a point wherein no sensible matter will ever conspire to activate the inert matter of being, and the other pole terminating at a point where sensible matter overwhelms the body, grinding it into an effervescence of disintegrating particles—then this painting manages to evoke both poles at once. The Courtauld painting's Cupid, however, dances at the center of the continuum, just circling the point where the additive and subtractive methods of creation are about to reach a point of equilibrium... "c'est au passage d'être sentant à l'Être pensant."<sup>[75]</sup>

Foundational in the energetic encounter between sensitive and sensible matter, motion is, if not a first cause, at least a sufficient one. In Denis Diderot's *Le Rêve de D'Alembert*, a feverish D'Alembert's mumblings are made sense of by Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse and Bordeu, the physician whose theories on the pulse we have already recalled. At one point in the dialogue, D'Alembert tells us the other element in the creation of sensitive being. "[A] germ is an insensitive mass...How does this substance pass over into another form of organization, into sensitivity, into life? By means of heat. What generates heat? Motion."<sup>[76]</sup> Heat is thus a sign of motion and, by implication, animation. The Courtauld *Cupid* pictures the transference of heat as energy, swirling in the external space as modulations of color in the atmosphere. Orange and pink marks come to points and flicker like flames, and the Cupid's body is warmed by these colors. His whiteness is dappled with pinks and oranges and golden tones. Thus, the cold blues and cool greens composing the upper register of the Stockholm painting suggest the absence of heat and by inference, motion itself. Even in the hearth's interior—where a fire once burned—we now find only a cold, crystalline, blue-green, pyramidal shape. The hard edges of this pyramid participates in a decidedly non-organic geometry. Cézanne, perhaps unknowingly, pictures entropy as a dissipation of heat which does not recognize boundaries between objects. Divisions between internal space and external world are effaced in the relative sameness of the blues and the loose facture

composing the sky outside the window and the interior space's back wall. We are reminded of Baudelaire's description of the impending nothingness of death: "And time devours me minute by minute as a rigid body is enveloped by immense snows...Avalanche, take me with you in your slide."

And then there is the curtain. Painted in Cézanne's later years, the Stockholm *Still Life* can be read as a reflection on death and disintegration, and on the processes by which once animate matter returns to a hardened inert state. Originating in the upper register and flowing downward and forward to encroach upon the table's surface, the swath of drapery fabric is arranged so that what should be dragging on the ground, at the bottom of the curtain, has risen to the table's surface. Turning to the arrangement of fabric on the table, from the left, the line tracing the upper curve of the form rises gently, rounding, and then descends behind the Cupid's legs, emerging on the other side to culminate in a conical point. A fluttering line flows along the bottom of the form just grazing the pears on the plate and disappears behind the Cupid's base. The interior folds of this form undulate in and out of light and shadow and hint at a hollow interior. While rendered in lilacs, blues, and greens, the form recalls the conch shell which appears in a similar location in Cézanne's 1870 oil on canvas *The Black Clock*, (fig. 12) once owned by Zola. In both the fabric and the shell, a line divides the form's interior horizontally, hinting at a lip or overhang that causes a shadow to be cast beneath it. Both forms end in a conical point on the right. What would it mean for Cézanne to have referenced this shell-form in the Stockholm *Still Life*? While both the shell and fabric share the soft curves and undulations of an expressive animate body they are, nonetheless, cold, lifeless objects which only uncannily mirror the forms of living things. The shell, however, like the body and like the painting, comes into being through a process of accretion. And as Cézanne has depicted it in *The Black Clock*, the conch shell's slit, with its rosy, reddened lips and scalloped labia-like folds invoke a vaginal portal—the liquid, salubrious, glistening orifice which is the first threshold of human *Being*. In the Stockholm *Still Life*, the shell is conjured up in form but also effaced by Cézanne's palette. Scalloped folds are rendered dry as dust, cooled by the blues and made discontinuous by the priming and canvas showing through. The heat of the reds and pinks lining the conch has dissipated.



Fig. 12, Paul Cézanne, *The Black Clock*, c. 1870. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. [\[larger image\]](#)

The form of the curtain also puts a compelling isometry of forces into play. There is a force toward the viewer as if the fabric is sluggishly pushing the figure forward. This force toward the viewer, and the instability of our own footing proposed to us by the vertiginous slanting

of the table, helps make the image disquieting. This force, however is countered by an even stronger, opposite force. The interior folds of the fabric, which echo those of the conch shell, evoke a sucking void—picture a portal to an abyss to which Being is ultimately returned. While Cézanne's still-life paintings often display the motif of a tilting table strewn with precariously balanced objects, the presence and uncanny configuration of the fabric in this painting seem to offer an explanation for how the objects stay in place here: What else but an unseen suction from the rear of the painting could hold the Cupid and those fruits in stasis on that impossibly pitched surface? The fabric upholds this dual metaphor and connotes the fatalistic theme echoed in a sculptural grouping in the Saint John the Baptist chapel of Saint Sulpice in Paris—René-Michel Slodtz's marble *Tomb of Languet de Gergy* (1753, fig. 13). In the last year of his acquaintance with Zola, (1886) Cézanne had visited Saint Sulpice, and had drawn from sculpture there.<sup>[77]</sup>



Fig. 13, René-Michel Slodtz, *Tomb of Languet de Gergy*, 1753. Marble. Paris, Saint Sulpice, Saint John the Baptist Chapel. [\[larger image\]](#)

In Slodtz's grouping, death is represented as a cavernous swath of black fabric which engulfs even its messenger, a skeleton with a scythe. Behind the tomb, an architectural feature of red, macular marble cascades down the back wall, widening towards the bottom at the same angle as the drapery on the back wall of Cézanne's Stockholm *Still Life*. Yet, while in Slodtz's work, Languet de Gergy is shown lifting his hands and gaze, presumably entreating God to save him from eternal death, Cézanne's painting does not participate in this melodrama. Death in Cézanne's painting approaches steadily, unceasingly, and without fanfare. The Cupid's frozen stance tells us that death will eventually come to devour everything. The ghosted undulations of paint just outside the Cupid's thigh, curved so as to suggest that they are being drawn into the vortex of the fabric's folds, speak to life being drained from the world of things. Cézanne remained stoic on such matters: "Everything we see is fleeting, isn't it? Nature is always the same, but nothing we see endures. Our art must convey a glimmer of her endurance with the elements, the appearance of all her changes. It must give us a sense of her eternity."<sup>[78]</sup>

While Cézanne may have appropriated the imagery of death from a baroque-era sculptural grouping that was religious in nature, his painting speaks not to death as a final resting place but as a phase in an ongoing process of transformation—of the eternal cycle through which



*Being* is continually built up and torn down. Diderot, in *D'Alembert's Dream*, speaks of a statue, different in kind from those of his contemporaries Condillac and Bonnet. Placing himself in dialogue with the fictive dreaming D'Alembert, he speaks to the way a statue can become a man. D'Alembert offers that, "a statue has only latent consciousness, while man, animals, and perhaps even plants, are endowed with active consciousness."<sup>[79]</sup> Diderot replies, "There is certainly that particular difference between a block of marble and the fibers of living flesh," but offers a way in which marble might be transmuted to flesh. Diderot takes one of Falconnet's masterpieces and grinds it into a "impalpable powder" in a mortar and pestle, and mixes the powder with some "humus or dirt containing vegetable matter." After "a year, two years, a hundred years...time means nothing to me" he unites the humus with himself by eating the vegetables he has planted in it.<sup>[80]</sup> Says Diderot: "Here, in four words is the general formula. Eat, digest, distill in a closed vessel, and you have the whole art of making a man."<sup>[81]</sup> By this process, through the "successive efforts required, an inert object, a conscious being, a thinking creature, a being who can solve the problem of the precession of the equinoxes, a sublime and marvelous being, [is created] but one that is still going to grow old, fall sick, die, and finally return to humus."<sup>[82]</sup>

The Stockholm *Still Life* suggests that this was how Cézanne was thinking of death in his later years, for the ground-down Cupid, built up of a fragile, powdery facture, is forever locked in his striding between death's pull and the warm fruit-laden foreground of the painting. The green stem of the round yellow and ochre pear on the left is a frail homage to the willful tendrils of the onions in the Courtauld version. Perhaps even plants are endowed with active consciousness. The effacing of distinctions between interior and exterior spaces, illustrated by the sameness of the sky outside the window and the back wall inside the studio, are repeated metaphorically in the juxtaposition of the fruit with the statue. The fruit are what the statue is becoming, as matter endlessly recycles itself around and through things.

In Diderot's theory, both Falconnet's masterpiece and the being who can solve the problem of the precession of the equinoxes, while existing in very different states, return to the same humus. Death equalizes. In time, either might become organic animated matter again, or under great pressure, either might become solid like limestone or marble. In the same year that he painted his still lifes with a plaster cupid, Cézanne began making his first forays into the quarry at Bibémus. Staring at those rock walls, and thinking about the slabs which had been cut from its sides over time, Cézanne might have given some thought to stories of Michelangelo's trips to the quarry at Carrara, Italy. Another story, perhaps apocryphal, reports that Michelangelo would search for blocks of marble in which he could detect that the veins of color running through the otherwise white stone might trace the veins of the figure imprisoned within.

In an oil sketch from 1894–95, *Plaster Cast of a Putto*, now in the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard (fig. 14) Cézanne again represented the Cupid of his paintings. The Cupid is depicted in violets and aubergines evoking the livid flesh of bodies at the morgue. It is shown from an angle that emphasizes the absent arm. The Cupid is shown striding to the left, facing into a wall or block. The head of the Cupid actually carves into this block, as though it were trying to gain entrance, and between his face and the block itself are dark brownish-purple marks that signify absence, as did those darker marks around the Courtauld Cupid. In this drawing

the tip of the Cupid's penis is circumscribed by two blue-black lines which are rendered more exactly than any of the other marks that make up the figure. Then, as if in a mirror, similarly colored lines echo them, positioned directly in front of the Cupid on the block or wall. Read as a marble block, the rectangular shape before the Cupid, and the Cupid itself, allow the processes of Diderot's organic cycle to be represented as collapsed into one image. The livid colors of dead flesh enter the stone, the marks on the stone point to the containment of a figure within, the Cupid is the product of the artist's work of liberation. That the richly colored marks occur on the penis of the figure points back to the earliest formulations of irritability. The male member was considered the preeminent site of involuntary physiological movements. Both Haller and Diderot described the penis as an organ which could not be coerced by human will. In this, it represented a part of the body that retained a more primitive, primordial form of animation, and became the focus of early treatises on irritability and contractility.[83] Thus, in Cézanne's image the first stages of becoming and the earliest signs of life, longing to be liberated from brute matter, are equated with the first marks of visible color.

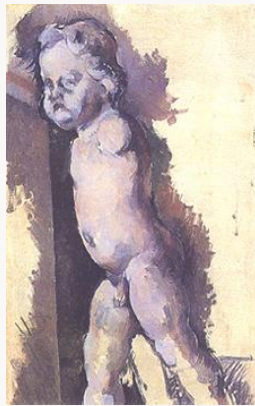


Fig. 14, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)* 1894-95. Oil on canvas. Harvard University, Fogg Art Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

*Plaster Cast of a Putto*, the *Stockholm Still Life*, and even *The Black Clock* present us with a series of facings and mirrorings. In the *Plaster Cast of a Putto*, the Cupid recognizes what he is becoming by the colored marks on the block before him—even his “life” is mirrored in those marks. In *The Black Clock*, the backdrop on the right side is, in fact, a mirror in which the vase on top of the timeless clock is doubled. The Courtauld Cupid's rotation, and the doubling of elements in the painting, force the viewer to recognize his or her own interior states, yet the Stockholm Cupid faces the viewer directly, as if a double in a mirror. His stride counters ours as we step up to the painting in the museum space. The frosted blues shimmer like a glass in which we view ourselves.

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## Notes

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All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are by the author.

[1] Honoré de Balzac, *Gillette or The Unknown Masterpiece*, trans. Anthony Rudolf (London: Menard Press, 1988), 11–12. The short story was originally published in *L'Artiste* under the title “Maître Frenhofer” in August 1831. A subsequent version appeared as *Etudes philosophiques* in 1837. In 1846, Balzac re-named the story *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* (The Unknown Masterpiece) and integrated it into his multi-volume work, *La Comédie humaine*.

[2] According to Anthony Rudolf, *Frankenstein* was available in French around 1820 although there is no reference to it in Balzac's correspondence; Charles Baudelaire was the first French translator for Poe's *Oval Portrait*; Balzac might have been aware of Hawthorne's stories because he was familiar with the work of Washington Allston, the first major American Romantic painter, on which Hawthorne is said to have based these stories. Anthony Rudolf, “The Interrogative Apparition,” (Introductory Essay), *Gillette or The Unknown Masterpiece*, 43, 50, 53. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the painting's transformation occurs through more supernatural means, yet it still fits the paradigm of a work so perfectly realized that it might be inhabitable by a soul and thus, animated. *Der Sandmann* was available in French sometime before 1827. These are obvious examples and there are others that, while not conforming perfectly to the paradigm, illustrate the subtle breakdown of categories between animate and inanimate; vital and inert matter in the period's imaginary. Carlo Collodi's *The Story of Pinocchio* (1883) follows the adventures of a wooden puppet that desires to become a “real” boy of flesh and blood. Cézanne's friend Octave Mirbeau, in *The Torture Garden*, trans. Alvah C. Bessie (New York: Hippocrene Books Inc., 1990), describes the worldview of participants at a “Sabbath shooting-gallery”: “The showman's imagination has substituted figures of men, women and children, [for targets made of clay in the shape of smoking pipes, like Irish pipes]. They have made these figures gesticulate and walk. By means of an ingenious mechanism, they walk happily along or flee terrified...They function like real beings...Really, you can believe that they possess an intelligence, a will, a soul—that they are alive! It is an exquisite sensation to imagine you are going to kill things that move, suffer and implore! ...the arrow splits their cardboard breasts and lays the little inanimate bodies low, in corpse-like postures! ...For the little fellow of cardboard, sawdust or wood which moves back and forth...is no longer a toy or a bit of lifeless material [to the participants]. Watching it pass back and forth, they unconsciously endow it with warm blood, sensitive nerves, thought—all those things, if it is so bitterly sweet to annihilate and so fiercely delicious to see oozing from the wounds you have inflicted,” Mirbeau, *The Torture Garden*, 7–9. Spyros Papapetros explores the ways in which, starting with the “physiological conception of the sublime in the eighteenth century, the ‘body metaphor’ mutated from a harmonious exterior morphology into an organic inner pathology affecting the organisms of statues, buildings and modern metropolises.” See Spyros Papapetros's “On the Animation of the Inorganic: “Life in Movement” in the Art and Architecture of Modernism 1982–1944” (Ph.D. diss., Berkeley, University of California, 2001), 1. Papapetros's discourse sways towards the Darwinian, but the conception of the eighteenth-century sublime emerged from empirical philosophies and sciences focused on sensation. Papapetros presents a fascinating guide to the issues of animation during the period in which Cézanne created his *Cupids*. In his story, Mirbeau explains that the recreational shooters, if they miss their targets, “grow angry, not with their own awkwardness, but with the marionette they have missed.” Mirbeau, *The Torture Garden*, 9. Papapetros would explain this as an example of the popular attitude at the end of the nineteenth century, in which people increasingly attributed will to those inanimate objects which hurt them or which they could not “control.” Mirbeau's novel was first published in France in 1898. According to Joachim Gasquet, Cézanne first made Mirbeau's acquaintance at Giverny in 1894. See *Cézanne: A*

*Memoir with Conversations*, trans. Christopher Pemberton (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1991), 231. Yet in Gasquet's description of the encounter, Cézanne, teary eyed, confides to Mirbeau how touched he was that Rodin had not been too "proud to shake his hand." In this, Cézanne shows himself to be already somewhat comfortable with Mirbeau's friendship, as if it had been established at an earlier point.

[3] For an excellent discussion of the enthusiasm for the tropes of Pygmalion and Prometheus in the eighteenth century, see Mary D. Sheriff's chapter entitled, "The Model Pygmalion and the Artist Galatea" in *Moved By Love: Inspired Artists and Deviant Women in Eighteenth-Century France*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 159–201. Sheriff traces the critical and poetic explorations of these stories in the writings of Enlightenment *philosophes* Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau, as well as in Etienne Falconnet's celebrated sculptural grouping of *Pygmalion and Galatea*, first shown at the Salon of 1763. Sheriff, *Moved by Love*, 166. I thank the anonymous reader at NCAW for bringing Sheriff's work to my attention.

[4] Paul Cézanne, "My Confidences," in *Conversations with Cezanne*, ed. Michael Doran (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 102. In fact, in reading Balzac's story, anyone familiar with Cézanne's self-presentation might recognize how easily Frenhofer's lines could have been transposed without anyone noticing the deception. Cézanne was obviously intimately familiar with the story—knowing it "by heart." In addition to Paul's account, Emile Bernard reports: "Un soir que je lui parlais du *Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu*, et de Frenhofer, le héros du drame de Balzac, il se leva de table, se dressa devant moi et, frappant sa poitrine avec son index, il s'accusa, sans un mot, mais par ce geste multiplié, le personnage même du roman. Il en était si ému que des larmes emplissaient ses yeux. Quelqu'un par qui il était prophétique, l'avait deviné. Ah! il y avait loin de ce Frenhofer à cet impuissant par naissance que Zola avait vu malencontreusement en lui!" "One evening [when] I spoke to [Cézanne] about *The Unknown Masterpiece*, and of Frenhofer, the hero of one of Balzac's dramas, he got up from the table, stood up straight before me, and, striking his chest with his index finger, admitted wordlessly by this repeated gesture, that he was the same character as in the novel. He was so moved by this feeling that tears filled his eyes. Someone had been prophetic and had divined him. Ah! there was a great distance between this [artist] Frenhofer, and [Claude Lantier, (the artist/ protagonist in Zola's novel *L'oeuvre*)] impotent from birth, whom Zola had unfortunately seen in him." Emile Bernard, *Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne* (Paris: Société des trente, 1912), 40–41. Additionally, a number of essays in the exposition catalogue, *Cézanne: Finished / Unfinished*, take Cézanne's identification with the Frenhofer myth into account. Felix Baumann in "Beyond the Uniform Picture Surface" cites *Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* as illustrating the artist's (and by way of association, Cézanne's) struggle, "attempt after attempt" to paint a masterpiece (26). Gottfried Boehm in his essay "Precarious Balance: Cézanne and the Unfinished" presents the traditional reading of Cézanne's identification with Frenhofer as that of an artist who can never quite perceive his works as finished—always striving towards perfection and (quoting Bernard) seeing "higher and further than other painters." Boehm tells us that Frenhofer's goal, like Cézanne's was the unique masterpiece, but all he created was the archetypal incomplete work" (29–30). Christina Feilchenfeldt in her entry "Portraits" expands the standard concept of portraiture (a representation which takes an actual sitter as its referent) to encompass Frenhofer's attempt to "create" a woman from "a canvas covered with lines and colour, in which the features of the subject are no longer discernable" (127). I read the Frenhofer story and Cézanne's identification with it as existing in a more uncanny and grandiose vein than these authors—indeed I think the story is not about the desire to create a representation so much as it is about the desire to create *the woman herself*. Hence, against all striving and desire, the project is indeed, as these writers suggest, always to fail: to remain unfinished, short of perfection, and mere representation. See Felix Baumann, Evelyn Benesch, and Walter Feilchenfeldt, eds., *Cézanne: Finished / Unfinished*, catalogue to accompany the exposition at the Kunstforum, Vienna, January 20 to April 25, 2000, and at the Kunsthaus, Zurich, May 5 to July 30, 2000 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2000).

[5] Balzac, *Gillette or The Unknown Masterpiece*, 26.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Cézanne in a letter to Emile Bernard, April 15, 1904, in John Rewald, ed., *Paul Cézanne, Letters*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1978), 300: "du spectacle [de la nature] que le *Pater Omnipotens Aeternus Deus* étale devant nos yeux." "The spectacle of nature that God, the Eternal and Omnipotent Father spreads out before our eyes." Also in Joachim Gasquet, *Cézanne* (Paris: Les éditions Bernheim-Jeune, 1926), 147.

[9] "It will perhaps be said, that nobody thinks that the shape makes anything immortal, but it is the shape that is the sign of a rational soul within, which is immortal. I wonder who made it the sign of any such thing: for barely saying it, will not make it so. It would require some



proofs to persuade one of it. No figure that I know speaks any such language. For it may as rationally be concluded, that the dead body of a man, wherein there is to be found no more appearance or action of life than there is in a statue, has yet nevertheless a living soul in it, because of its shape; as that there is a rational soul in a changeling, because he has the outside of a rational creature, when his actions carry far less marks of reason with them, in the whole course of his life, than what are to be found in many a beast." John Locke, bk. 4, chap. 4, sec. 14, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), 238.

[10] Historically, materialism as such has been defined in opposition to vitalism, animism, or mind/body dualism.

[11] "In contrast, the figure of opacity suggests that a picture surface retains an undeniable materiality, displaying it in all its unique and deviant particularity." Richard Shiff, "Cézanne's Physicality: The Politics of Touch" in *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 131.

[12] "Colères de boxeur, impudences de faune, Toi qui sus ramasser la beauté des goujats, Grand coeur gonflé d'orgueil, homme débile et jaune, Puget, mélancolique empereur des forçats." Charles Baudelaire, "Les Phares," *The Flowers of Evil*, ed. Marthiel Mathews and Jackson Mathews (New York: New Directions, 1989), 243.

[13] Leo Languier, "Sunday with Paul Cézanne," in *Conversations with Cezanne*, ed. Michael Doran (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 15.

[14] Gasquet, *Cézanne*: 191: "Si tu veux me parler d'un provençal, parle-moi de Puget. En voilà un qui sent l'ail, et Marseille, et Toulon, même à Versailles, sous le soleil de cuivre de Louis XIV..."

[15] Ibid. "...Il y a mistral dans Puget, c'est lui qui agite le marbre."

Although excerpts from it play, for the most part, an ornamental role in my argument, some comments on Joachim Gasquet's *Memoir* of Cézanne as a source seem necessary here. Despite the fact that Gasquet's account has served as the basis for some of the most remarkable writing on Cézanne—inspiring thinkers as diverse as Roger Fry, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Meyer Schapiro, there has long been criticism that the poet is an unreliable source, concerned not so much with accurately reporting on Cézanne's reflections and worldview, as with ventriloquizing his own reactionary political and animist / Catholic worldview through the "recollections" of the artist. This criticism is partly predicated on the historical fact that the friendship between the two men began to erode in the early years of the twentieth century, terminating in 1904, two years before the artist's death. Some eight years later, in 1912–13, Gasquet set to work on the memoir which remained unpublished until after WWI in 1921, perhaps reworked. Richard Shiff, in his "Introduction" to *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne*, while not advocating for the veracity of Gasquet's account, notes that the two men did share a Provençal pride, a willingness to see tradition as tied to French soil, and a striving to formulate a classicism derived from nature. See *Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne*, ed. and trans. by Chris Pemberton (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 15–22. Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer in her book *Cézanne and Provence: The Painter in His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) humorously follows Shiff in wondering how "through some inexplicable historiographic inequity" Ambrose Vollard's account came to enjoy greater respectability than Gasquet's (5). In light of her recent research among Gasquet's personal papers in the Bibliothèque Méjanes in Aix-en-Provence, Kallmyer claims that "Gasquet's account of Cézanne appears to fit seamlessly and convincingly with its contemporary cultural setting... [making his]...a valuable voice on par with Emile Bernard, Maurice Denis, and Vollard." Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence*, 5.

[16] Isabelle Cahn, "Entry for 'Plaster Cupid,'" in *Catalogue for 1996 Cézanne Exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 390. Cézanne certainly believed that the little Eros figure was a work by Pierre Puget, a French painter and sculptor born at Marseilles and who lived between 1622 and 1694. We now know that the Putto depicted by Cézanne was most likely not by Puget at all, but by François du Quesnoy (sometimes "Duquesnoy"). Cézanne's *l'amour en plâtre* stood forty-five centimeters high (17 7/8 inches) and was a popular prop in the art schools and studios of the day. A very similar plaster Putto to the one found in Cézanne's Chemin des Lauves studio (fig. 3), this one retaining both arms and with the inclusion of a fillet around the forehead, is attributed to François du Quesnoy and, in a photograph by Lawrence Gowing, illustrates Theodore Reff's "New Sources for Cézanne's Copies," *Art Bulletin* 42 no. 2 (June 4, 1960): 147–49 (fig. 4). In a footnote on page 147, Reff explains that a similar Cupid "is reproduced as 'Cupid dancing, by Fiamingo' (i.e., Quesnoy) in the catalogues of a late nineteenth century manufacturer: P. P. Caproni and Brother, Inc., *Catalogue of Plaster Cast Reproductions*, Boston, 1901, p. 134; and *Catalogue of Reproductions of Sculpture*, Boston, 1928, I, p. 37." This reattribution matters not a bit for understanding what



the little sculpture meant to Cézanne or these paintings—for all intents and purposes the sculpture was by Puget. The little statuette still can be viewed in Cézanne's extant studio at Les Lauves. See Carol Armstrong *Cézanne in the Studio: Still Life in Watercolors* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2004), 87.

[17] For an overview of the development of Cézanne's still life paintings, see John McCoubrey's essay "Cézanne's Difference" in *Impressionist Still Life* (New York: Phillips Collection in association with Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 34–41.

[18] The painting has often been read as a critique of *trompe-l'oeil*, or a commentary on the *paragone*. Critics point to the inclusion of Cézanne's painting *Still Life with Peppermint Bottle* represented in the lower left-hand corner and believe it to be in a dialogue with the foregrounded tablecloth and table. Here, they forward the notion that Cézanne was saying something about distinctions between artifice and nature, painting and sculpture, Parrhasius and Zeuxis. Similarly, critics such as Pierre Georgel have interpreted the painting as a meditation on the *paragone*, in *La Peinture dans la Peinture* (Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1982), 57. John Rewald gives Lawrence Gowing credit for having been the "first to fully 'decipher' the intricate composition." Gowing's reading asserts that "the picture contains a cast and a painted cast, apples and painted apples, a cloth and a painted cloth. It is notable that there is here no suggestion of the incongruity which has been inseparable from the device of the picture within a picture, as used by other artists from the fifteenth century to [de] Chirico." Gowing quoted in John Rewald, in collaboration with Walter Feilchenfeldt and Jayne Warman, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, *The Texts* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 473. I appreciate Gowing's reading here as he does so clearly draw the seeming distinction between the representation of two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms. As will become clear, I see the relationship between these two models as something other than strict binaries. In the next paragraph Rewald reproduces a review by the *New York Times* critic who had encountered the painting at the Montross Gallery in 1916. Although the reviewer lambastes the painting, he ironically sees many of the qualities that Cézanne wished his paintings to exhibit. "The Cupid is not very convincing. One supposes it plaster on the assumption that plaster ones are the best an artist of Cézanne's profound importance could afford. But it looks like living clay. And all around it are angles, also strangely suggesting the movement and stress of life. Even the blue drapery, flung in innocent folds on the chair, is a strange contradiction of terms. His composition is always coherent, always balanced and rhythmic, but the planes that crash together with a violent line of contact invariably imply a deep agitation stirring the mind with a sense of drama."

[19] In fact, as Richard Shiff notes, the only painting with a similar structure in Cézanne's oeuvre is his *Pichet de grès*, painted the same year. See Shiff, "Apples and Abstraction" in *Impressionist Still Life* (New York: Phillips Collection in association with Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 44.

[20] See Theodore Reff, "The Pictures Within Cézanne's Pictures," *Arts Magazine* 53, no. 10 (June 1979): 99–100.

[21] Shiff compares the jug in Cézanne's *Pichet de grès* to the statuette in *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* saying that they "appear to converge with or be framed by the stretched canvases behind them, as if to suggest that they exist pictorially as both foreground and background elements. They become three-dimensional and two-dimensional at once, sitting on tables while simultaneously filling canvases." See Shiff, "Apples and Abstraction," 44.

[22] Balzac, *Gillette or The Unknown Masterpiece*, 30.

[23] In saying this I recognize that my reading is in contrast to that proposed by Armstrong in *Cezanne in the Studio*, wherein she claims that *Still Life with Plaster Cast* (the title she uses for this same painting) charts the transformation, not so much of two-dimensional surface into three-dimensional space as the reverse: perspectival penetration into surface scansion, transparency into opacity, the eye into the hand..." I would be the first to agree that the painting does display a representational tension between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality, and that any reading of the direction this shift takes can be attributed to the story of Modernism that the given author, myself included, wants to tell. What I appreciate in Armstrong's reading of the painting is her engagement with the impression of movement between planes that the painting puts into play. In particular, I value her invocation of the apples in the painting to map spatial recession—"Three-two-one, one may count those apples-onions-oranges, from front to middle to back, imaginatively harvesting them as one gropes one's way haltingly through the close-to-hand spatial maze of the still life..." Armstrong, *Cezanne in the Studio*, 61.

[24] To judge by the number of copies he made from their works, Cézanne's two favorite sculptors were Puget and Michelangelo. Cézanne showed particular interest in Puget's *Hercules Resting*, upon which he based eighteen drawings, and Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*

which also figured prominently in his copying. Cézanne was drawn to Michelangelo's mannerist exaggeration of masculine proportions and evocation of feminine curves in his sculptures. Both works are in the Louvre. Theodore Reff, *Paul Cézanne: Two Sketchbooks* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989), 167, 185.

[25] Papapetros tells us that "Early ethnographers describe the 'primitive' belief in the extensive power of 'contagion' where the same animating principle passes from one object to another simply as a result of a physical proximity of even a superficial similarity: resemblance is enough to obtain the same results from two totally different things." "On the Animation of the Inorganic," vii–viii. Thus, in this painting, the contagious nature of extension into space draws together unlike things and unites them towards the common goal of *becoming*.

[26] Giorgio Vasari, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, trans. George Bull (London: The Folio Society, 1970), 123.

[27] The foot-form I am discussing here is easier to see if I address it in the form of a comparison between the Cupid's base (fig. 8; b) and its relation to the towel held by the female bather on the far left in *Five Bathers*, Basel (fig. 8; a) and in the Barnes, London, and Philadelphia *Large Bathers* (figs. 8; c, d, and e, respectively). What I refer to as "the little foot-form," of the *Cupid*, mimics the bather's right foot engulfed in a towel in *Five Bathers* (fig. 8; a). This little detail in the Courtauld *Cupid* thus comes to seem tied to the women bathers in Cézanne's unconscious, yet appears only as a seemingly decorative detail in the *Cupid*. Its counterpart in the *Five Bathers* shows it to be significant and not merely a flourish on Cézanne's part. My argument is about emergence—from two dimensions into three; from insensible matter into sensible and sensitive human *being*; emergence into the world both of reason and of sensible erotic pleasures from a place of unknowing. Hence, to see the *Cupid* so seamlessly fit into the progression outlined (figs. 8; a–e) is to understand that this emergence is in some veiled sense also about Cézanne's own grappling with his sexual confusions and fears. The towel acts as the veil. Finally, in the Philadelphia version (fig. 8; e), the Bather walks free of her base/veil.



Fig. 8, Comparison of foot-forms in five paintings by Paul Cézanne a) *Five Bathers*, 1885–87, Basel (detail); b) *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, 1895, Courtauld (detail); c) *Large Bathers*, 1895–1906, Barnes, (detail); d) *Large Bathers*, 1900–06, London (detail); e) *Large Bathers*, 1904–06, Philadelphia (detail). [\[larger image\]](#)

[28] Kathryn Anne Tuma, "Cézanne, Lucretius and the Late Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Science" (Ph.D. diss., Berkeley, University of California, 2000); and Kathryn Anne Tuma, "Cézanne and Lucretius at the Red Rock," *Representations* 78, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 56–85.

[29] Tuma, "Cézanne and Lucretius at the Red Rock," 60.

[30] *Ibid.*, 68–69. And I especially agree with Shiff when he says, "The general principle at work in [Cézanne's] art is analogy." See, Shiff, "Cézanne's Physicality," 142.

[31] Tuma, "Cézanne and Lucretius at the Red Rock," 71.

[32] Shiff implicitly deploys these (Peircean) sign categories in his discussion of Cézanne's *tache* / touch. Shiff relates the Modernist reading of Cézanne's individual paint marks as indexically referring back to Cézanne's authorial subjectivity. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics privileged the idea that such marks directly referenced idiosyncratic sensations as filtered and interpreted through the sensorium of the artist, and furthermore,

used this pronouncement to ascribe value to artistic productions. Yet, Shiff also describes the marks as iconically standing for the sensations themselves, as a materialization of sense data communicable between creator and public. Then, using the Courtauld *Cupid* as an example, Shiff maps his discussion of sensation and mark-making onto the larger support of his ideas of catachresis—that Cézanne's marks exist as duck/rabbit illusions—figures we first perceive as one thing, and then the other as we stare at it, but never both at the same time—involved in an ever-oscillating choreography. Straddling the metaphorical divide between the literalized surface plane across which Cézanne's hand moved in paint-applying tactility, and the figuratively transparent picture plane acting as a window onto a recessive space in which objects overlap and obscure each other, but through which vision proceeds unimpeded, Cézanne constructs painterly “puns.” See Shiff, “Cézanne's Physicality,” 142. I feel that Shiff's discussion of the painting is tangential to my own, given that the focus of his article is the questioning of a later style of criticism as applied to Cézanne's paintings. Shiff's close reading of the formal structure of the Courtauld *Cupid* is, however, especially precise and insightful, although I did not rely on it for my own reading. When first outlining my argument I grappled with Shiff's reading of the conflation / ambiguities of seeing and touch and related his thinking to “Molyneux's Problem”—the problem posed by William Molyneux in a letter to John Locke on July 7, 1688. Molyneux asked Locke whether a man who had been born blind and had learned to distinguish and name a sphere and a cube by touch, would be able to distinguish and name these objects simply by sight, once he had been enabled to see. The problem intrigued many philosophers including Berkeley, Leibniz, Condillac, Voltaire, Diderot, and Julien Offray de La Mettrie. See Marjolein Degenaar and Gert-Jan Lokhorst, “Molyneux's Problem,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/molyneux-problem> (accessed January 29, 2009), and Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[33] Gasquet, *Cézanne*, 135–36. “Songez que l'histoire du monde date du jour où deux atomes se sont rencontrés, où deux tourbillons, deux danses chimiques se sont combinées. Ces grands arcs-en-ciël, ces prismes cosmiques, cette aube de nous-mêmes au-dessus du néant.” Tuma tells us that the atom was finally accepted as “real” by the French and international scientific communities in 1911. Tuma, “Cézanne and Lucretius at the Red Rock,” 60. Therefore, it could be argued that Gasquet's (or even Tuma's) discussion of Cézanne's (and Zola's) embracing of Lucretian “atomic theory” should be read as a proleptic maneuver designed to celebrate Cézanne's correct intuition of the nature of matter by writers in a privileged epistemological position.

[34] Leo Languier, “Sunday with Paul Cézanne,” 14; John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne*, trans. Margaret H. Liebman (London: Spring Books, 1959), 5.

[35] Moreover, I might want to ask how Cézanne understood Lucretius's words. Again: “Imagine that the history of the world dates from the day when two atoms met, when two whirlwinds, two chemical dances combined. These grand rainbows, these cosmic prisms, this dawn of ourselves above nothingness.” The passage is nothing if not sublimely poetic and metaphoric. In the argument developed in this paper, in which I address eighteenth century notions of space as a plenum in which particles, corpuscles, sensible fibers, etc. collide with matter to form sensations and, ultimately, knowledge and life and human *being*, Lucretius's verse, in its very metaphorical nature, could be read as predictive of eighteenth-century developments. In fact, in Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), in chapter one, “The Making of the Enlightenment Mind,” *De rerum natura* has the honor of being the first entry. I think what Cézanne loves in this passage is the dawn of being over nothingness—an affirmation of *being* and, furthermore, a *being* wherein to *be* is to *be in color*.

[36] Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 16.

[37] Shiff, “Apples and Abstraction,” 44.

[38] Judith Wechsler, “Cézanne: Sensation/perception” in *Cézanne Aujourd'hui*, ed. Françoise Cachin, Henri Loyrette, and Stéphane Guégan (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997), 109. Wechsler also believes Cézanne's thinking about sensation was influenced by his knowledge of Condillac's writings.

[39] Emile Bernard, “L'Occident,” in Leo Languier, *Le Dimanche avec Paul Cézanne (Souvenirs)* (Paris: l'Édition, 1925), 28. “Organiser ses sensations, voici donc le premier précepte de la doctrine de Cézanne, doctrine non point sensualiste, mais sensitive.” Maurice Cranston's entry for “Sensibilité” in *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, vol. 28 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), recognizes that the French etymology of the word [Fr.: “sensitivity,” “feeling,” “compassion”] focuses on the definitions stemming from Pascal, that “feeling is more important than reason in the



apprehension of truth.” However, another interpreter of eighteenth-century usage explains that to be “sensitive” was to be both capable of deep emotion and feeling and to be especially adept at receiving sensations from the outside world. Victor Cousin popularized the inaccurate word *sensualist(e)* around 1817, and it came to be aligned with those feelings deemed improper, or stimulated by improper acts as defined by bourgeois society. The original term, *sensationniste*, implied a sort of connoisseur of sensation. “Sensationalism” has come to refer to journalistic hyperbole that results in the over-stimulation and deadening of one’s capacity to feel/perceive/sense. See John C. O’Neal, *The Authority of Experience: Sensationist Theory in the French Enlightenment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 1–6.

[40] Paul Cézanne quoted in Leo Languier, *Le Dimanche avec Paul Cézanne (Souvenirs)* (Paris: L’Édition, 1925), 131–34: “(IV) La sensibilité caractérise l’individu; à son degré le plus parfait, elle distingue l’artiste... (V) Une grande sensibilité est la disposition la plus heureuse à toute belle conception d’art... (VII) L’artiste objective sa sensibilité, sa distinction native... (XVIII) Une intelligence qui organise puissamment est la collaboration la plus précieuse de la sensibilité pour la réalisation de l’oeuvre d’art... (XXII) Le style ne se crée pas l’imitation servile des maîtres; il procède de la façon propre de sentir et de s’exprimer de l’artiste.

[41] Michael Doran, in his book *Conversations with Cézanne*, has assembled a wide assortment of memoirs by Cézanne’s friends, many of which paint the artist discussing his theories of sensation and sensibility.

[42] Cézanne to Heinrich Morstatt, December 23, 1865, in *Paul Cézanne, Letters*, 113: “...vous ferez vibrer notre nerf acoustique aux nobles accent.”

[43] Cézanne to Émile Bernard, December 23, 1904, in *Paul Cézanne, Letters*, 308: “une sensation optique se produit dans notre organe visuel, qui nous fait classer par lumière, demi-ton ou quart de ton les plans représentés par des sensations colorants.”

[44] Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism*, 18.

[45] Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 2. See also O’Neal, *The Authority of Experience*; Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*; and Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

[46] Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 5.

[47] Of course, it is the case that even in Diderot’s writings something like the soul occasionally makes an appearance in the subtext of an argument, but this seems the result of the difficulty in talking about certain functions like memory in physical terms.

[48] Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 19.

[49] Tuma, “Cézanne and Lucretius at the Red Rock,” 60.

[50] Cézanne to Charles Camoin, February 22, 1903, in *Paul Cézanne, Letters*, 293: “Mon fils, actuellement à Paris, est un grand philosophe. Je ne veux pas dire par là que ce soit ni l’égal, ni l’émule de Diderot, Voltaire ou Rousseau.” See note 3 above.

[51] Tuma’s discussion of the critic Lajos Fülep’s response to Cézanne’s work (which Fülep first encountered at the Salon d’automne in 1906) seems to forget this when she reads Fülep as struggling “with what he sees as a strange intersection of sensualism and materialism when he describes how Cézanne’s method manages to evoke the ‘sensation matérielle’ of, for example, an apple.” (Tuma, “Cézanne, Lucretius and the Late Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Science”, 112.) I suggest that Fülep’s struggle is to understand Cézanne’s evocation of an apple in something like paint, and not with the seeming conflation in “sensation matérielle” which, by the end of the nineteenth century would have been a well-understood concept.

[52] Etienne Bonnet de Condillac, “Traité des sensations” (1754), in *Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac*, ed. Georges Le Roy, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947) Charles Bonnet, *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l’âme* (1760) (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970).

[53] Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 27. This as an attempt to solve Condillac’s problem of how the senses could “reconvene” or come together in the mind of the perceiver. See also, Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: October Books, 2001), 59.

[54] For example: “Les Fibres de l’Odorat ont été construites sur des *Rapports* à l’action des Corpuscules odoriferans...” Bonnet, “Traité des sensations,” 437.

[55] Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 35.

[56] *Ibid.*, 47. This differs from Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the ambiguity of touch as discussed by Shiff in “Cézanne’s Physicality,” 150.

[57] Bernard, "L'Occident," 22. "Mme de Staël écrit dans son livre sur l'Allemagne: « les Français considèrent les objets extérieurs comme le mobile de toutes les idées, et les Allemands les idées comme le mobile de toutes les impressions. » Paul Cézanne justifie cette opinion de Mme de Staël sur les Français, mais il sait aller jusqu'à une profondeur d'art qui n'est pas commune à nos contemporains." Bernard's observation here counters Jonathan Crary's attempts to chart a (totalizing) paradigm shift in the discovery of "subjective vision" in the early part of the nineteenth century (as when he discusses Goethe's or Schopenhauer's recognition that our sense impressions are in many ways self-generated, as in the color effects of the "afterimage"), although this viewpoint might be applicable to other French artists. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, 67–80.

[58] The decapitated *écorché* is robbed of all sensual possibilities except that of touch.

[59] Cézanne quoted in Gasquet, *Cézanne*, 134: "Le cerveau...de l'artiste doit être comme une plaque sensible, un appareil enregistreur simplement, au moment où il oeuvre. Mais cette plaque sensible, des baines savants l'ont amenée au point de réceptivité où elle peut s'imprégner de l'image consciencieuse des choses. Un long travail, la méditation, l'étude, des souffrances et des joies, la vie l'ont préparée."

[60] Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 39.

[61] *Ibid.*, 34.

[62] *Ibid.*, 53.

[63] *Ibid.*, 59.

[64] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, "Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture" (1755), in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 36.

[65] Theodore Reff, "Introduction," *Paul Cézanne: Two Sketchbooks* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989), 9. Cézanne seems to have used his sketchbooks randomly, and even the drawings in the books occur in no particular order.

[66] *Paul Cézanne: Two Sketchbooks*, pages 147 and 185 respectively. In that book and, thus, accompanying my figures here, are images of the sculptures from which Cézanne drew.

[67] Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 47.

[68] Deborah L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 77.

[69] From "Souvenirs des Goncourts," *La Revue encyclopédique* no. 153 (August 8, 1896), 546.

[70] "Le Printemps adorable a perdu son odeur! Et le Temps m'engloutit minute par minute, Comme la neige immense un corps pris de roideur, Je contemple d'en haut le globe en sa rondeur, Et je n'y cherche plus l'abri d'une cahute. Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute? — "Le goût du néant" by Charles Baudelaire, Mathews and Mathews, *Flowers of Evil*, 315. (This was another of Cézanne's favorite poems, according to Larguier.)

[71] "And the third [canvas] is elegant, tangy, lucid, a work altogether French, decorative, and pointed,—half breaking away from some rich fabric in a muted floral pattern and draped in ample folds, a plaster Cupid, its arms broken, to its right a plate of pears, to its left a pile of plums. In the background, unforeseeable, bourgeois, but so richly painted, so dazzlingly fashioned, a Prussian fireplace like those ones still used in the country-houses of Provence." "Et la troisième c'est, élégante, savoureuse, lucide, une oeuvre toute de France, decorative et pourtant aiguë,—se détachant à demi sur une riche étoffe drapée à larges plis, à sourds ramages, un Amour de plâtre, les bras coupés, à sa droite une assiette de poires, à sa gauche un tas de prunes. Au fond, imprévue, bourgeoise, mais d'un métier si gras, d'un faire si étourdissant, une cheminée à la prussienne, comme on en use encore dans les bastides de Provence." Gasquet, *Cézanne*, 200.

[72] Rilke to his wife Clara Rilke, October 8, 1907. *Rainer Maria Rilke, Selected Letters 1902–1926*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: Quartet Books, 1988), 144–45. Rilke believed the blue to be an "eighteenth-century blue" evoking "the legacy of Chardin...who stripped it of its pretentiousness." Further on in the letter, Rilke claims that he now sees this blue as Cézanne's "very individual blue."

[73] Vasari, *Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, 123–24.

[74] Isabelle Cahn, "Entry for 'Plaster Cupid,'" 390.

[75] "D'Alembert" speaking in Denis Diderot's, *Le Rêve de D'Alembert* vol. 3, (1830, repr., Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1971), 11: "just at that moment when a being endowed with sensations was about to be transformed into a thinking being."



[76] Ibid., 15: "Le germe est une masse insensible...Comment cette masse passera-t-elle à une autre organisation, à la sensibilité, à la vie? Par la chaleur. Qu'y produira la chaleur ? le mouvement."

[77] "Quand j'arrivai à Paris pour faire des images de Saint Sulpice...je retrouvai Zola à Paris." Bernard, *Souvenirs*, 19.

[78] Cézanne quoted in Gasquet, *Cézanne*, 130: "Tout ce que nous voyons, n'est-ce pas, se disperse, s'en va. La nature est toujours la même, mais rien ne demeure d'elle de ce qui nous apparaît. Notre art doit, lui, donner le frisson de sa durée avec les éléments, l'apparence de tous ses changements. Il doit nous la faire goûter éternelle."

[79] Diderot, *Le Rêve de D'Alembert*, 5: "La statue n'a qu'une sensibilité inerte; et l'homme, l'animal, la plante même peut-être sont doués d'une sensibilité active."

[80] Ibid., 6. "Il y a sans doute cette différence entre le bloc de marbre et le tissu de chair" ... "poudre impalpable" ... "l'humus ou terre végétale" ... "un an, deux ans, un siècle...Le temps ne me fait rien."

[81] Ibid., 9. "Voici en quatre mots la formule générale. Mangez, digérez, distillez *in vasi licito, et fiat homo secundum artem.*"

[82] Ibid., "effets successifs seraient un être inerte, un être sentant, un être pensant, un être résolvant le problème de la précession des équinoxes, un être sublime, un être merveilleux, un être vieillissant, dépérissant, mourant, dissous et rendu à la terre végétale."

[83] Angelica Gooden, *Diderot and the Body* (Oxford: Legenda, 2001), 28.

## Illustrations



Fig. 1, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)*, 1895. Oil on paper mounted on panel. London, Courtauld Institute. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)*, 1895. Oil on canvas. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, François Du Quesnoy or follower (in Cézanne's time attributed to Pierre Puget), *Plaster Cupid* (*L'Amour en plâtre*). Paul Cézanne's Les Lauves Studio Copy. Photograph by John Rewald.

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Fig. 4, François Du Quesnoy or follower (in Cézanne's time attributed to Pierre Puget), *Plaster Cupid* (*L'Amour en plâtre*). Photograph by Lawrence Gowing. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Peppermint Bottle*, 1890-94. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)*, c. 1900. Pencil and watercolor on white paper. Vollard Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)





Fig. 7, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)*, c. 1900-04. Pencil and watercolor on white paper. Vollard Archives. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Comparison of foot-forms in five paintings by Paul Cézanne a) *Five Bathers*, 1885-87, Basel (detail); b) *Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, 1895, Courtauld (detail); c) *Large Bathers*, 1895-1906, Barnes, (detail); d) *Large Bathers*, 1900-06, London (detail); e) *Large Bathers*, 1904-06, Philadelphia (detail). [\[return to text\]](#)





Fig. 9, Paul Cézanne, *Antique Borghese Mars*. Drawing in Sketchbook II (page viii recto), 1872-1895. Graphite pencil; traces of watercolor. Numbered in pencil viii. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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Fig. 10, Paul Cézanne, *Michelangelo's Dying Slave*. Drawing in Sketchbook II (page xxvi bis recto), 1872-1895. Graphite pencil. Philadelphia Museum of Art. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 11, Paul Cézanne, *Antique Dancing Satyr*, c. 1894-8. Pencil on paper. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 12, Paul Cézanne, *The Black Clock*, c. 1870. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 13, René-Michel Slodtz, *Tomb of Languet de Gergy*, 1753. Marble. Paris, Saint Sulpice, Saint John the Baptist Chapel. [\[return to text\]](#)

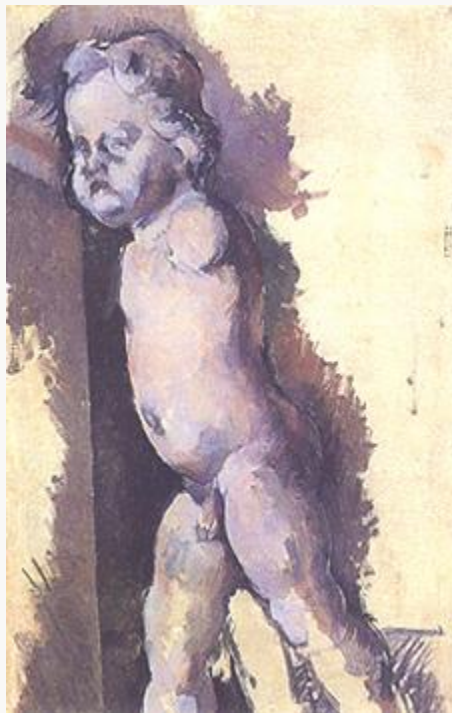


Fig. 14, Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Plaster Cupid (L'Amour en plâtre)* 1894-95. Oil on canvas. Harvard University, Fogg Art Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)