

INTRODUCTION

SEEING CÉZANNE

When Griselda Pollock wrote a review in 1990 called “What Can We Say about Cézanne These Days?” her fatigue at the sheer volume of print on the artist was laced with impatience with what she perceived as the relative timidity of the authors.¹ Though eager for new discoveries and insights about the artist, she seemed deeply skeptical that they would emerge. And indeed, nearly two decades later, Paul Cézanne continues to resist his interpreters, although all of them are utterly convinced of the rightness of their arguments. Are we any closer now to an understanding of (let alone a consensus about) this most canonical, and unyielding, of modernists?²

Even if the body of scholarship on Cézanne is among the weightiest in art history, one genre in this painter’s oeuvre has remained relatively unexplored: his portraits. Art historians have made few sustained and systematic attempts to penetrate these paintings as a group. One can find significant exceptions, to be sure: Steven Platzman’s book on the artist’s self-portraits, Linda Nochlin’s eloquent essay on a variety of works, Wayne Andersen’s volume on the portrait drawings.³ Even if we add to these works a score of book chapters, articles, and catalogue entries that address individual works, the portraits nonetheless have not received nearly as much attention as the still lifes, the bathers, and the landscapes. The impression is that scholars have not quite known what to do with them. The apparent standoff is not a great surprise. After all, how does one begin to assess the artist’s stance toward his human subjects when his critics repeatedly portray them as “dehumanized,” “depersonalized,” or, with the formal variant so crucial to the history of modernism, “abstracted”?⁴

To begin to reconcile—or at least comprehend—the dissonance between the “human-ness” of Cézanne’s portraiture subjects and the supposed depersonalization of their pictorial treatment, one must contend with the early twentieth-century argument that the diminishment of the role, and significance, of the subject was a necessary corollary to the emergence of modernity—a potent claim, recently reviewed in an essay by Richard Shiff.⁵ Shiff cites the criticism around Cézanne’s *Madame Cézanne in a Red Armchair* (ca. 1877, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, fig. 1) as a case in point.⁶ To counter this idea of diminishment, I focus here on Cézanne’s nearly thirty portraits of his wife, Hortense Fiquet Cézanne, produced between 1877 and 1894.⁷ These portraits of Fiquet Cézanne stand out for their sheer number (the only rival to her primacy as Cézanne’s subject is the artist himself), their striking variability (Cézanne makes far more restrained shifts in the appearance of his son over time, for example), and their contentious reception history. At the same time, they illuminate Cézanne’s portraiture more broadly, serving as templates for identifying and understanding the visual structures (here distilled, and energetically reworked, over a concentrated period of time) invented by the artist as he reimagined in paint both the possibilities for human expression and the markers of gender and sexuality. Cézanne produced a material, sensuous form (the much-vaunted *réalisation*) for the ineffable traces of human perception of, and response to, the natural world—a natural world that included the human figure, the “other” to the artist’s “self.” For roughly a decade, Hortense Fiquet Cézanne prevailed as the artist’s most significant other.

I do not suggest that the portraits of Fiquet Cézanne are wholly unlike the clusters of portraits that preceded them (such as the portraits of Louis-Auguste Cézanne, the artist’s father; the series of his Uncle Dominic; the Victor Choquet portraits; and those of the artist’s childhood friends Émile Zola and Paul Alexis) or the monumental single works that would follow, such as *Gustave Geffroy*, *Ambroise Vollard*, *The Italian Girl*, *Woman with the Blue Hat*, and *Seated Peasant*, along with the series of working men and cardplayers, and the long, ambitious series inspired by Cézanne’s gardener, Vallier.⁸ Elements such as mask-like faces, bifurcated figures and forms, and inconsistencies in gender typology—all of which I address in this book—occur throughout Cézanne’s mature and late work. However, Cézanne produced most of the contained series of paintings inspired by Fiquet Cézanne in a ten-year period of intense experimentation, which enables us to bring the formal and affective innovations of these works into relief and analyze the portraits with unusual clarity, depth, and singleness of purpose. Fiquet Cézanne’s portraits are the lens through which we can productively test a variety of historical frameworks and theories of interpretation on the ever-contested relation of form and meaning in Cézanne, and in modern art more generally. We have an opportunity to apply the full apparatus of current methods (and relevant



¹ *Madame Cézanne in a Red Armchair*, ca. 1877, oil on canvas, 28½ × 22 in. (72.4 × 55.9 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of Robert Treat Paine, 2nd, 44.776. Photo © 2009 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

historical scholarship) with rigor and subtlety and, I hope, without the weariness that Griselda Pollock signaled with the skeptical title of her article.

The portraits of Hortense Fiquet Cézanne offer inventive expressive structures and provoke the viewer's response, and they invite us to place them in the history of women's portraiture, where they have had an equivocal, if not downright uncomfortable, standing. That this book is the first full-length study of these works perhaps reflects their collective defiance of the expectations that usually attach to portraits of the female companions of great male artists—a genre unto itself.⁹ The enduring resistance to granting Fiquet Cézanne's importance as a subject is a thread of my narrative, and is related to the formal innovations I flag, although I do not posit them as cause and effect. The sheer inconsistency of Fiquet Cézanne's portraits, their seeming defiance of notions of resemblance and the apparent de-eroticizing of many of the images have all acted as prohibitions to "seeing" the works and understanding their place in the larger historical picture—both in Cézanne's oeuvre and in the history of portraiture. In fact, the "crisis of resemblance" that preoccupied so many nineteenth-century practitioners of the genre seems especially evident in Cézanne's paintings of his wife. To begin to see the paintings in this series clearly, we first need to take measure of their differences.

RESISTING RESEMBLANCE

In *Portrait of the Artist's Wife* (ca. 1879–82, possibly reworked 1886–88, Bührle Collection, Zürich, fig. 2), Fiquet Cézanne appears as a stern-faced, erect woman with a commanding, almost muscular presence. She wears an elaborate bourgeois costume: a long jacket embellished with decorative trim and a wide notched collar framing a white blouse, atop a fitted skirt. She gazes out directly but enigmatically from unevenly spaced, ebony eyes whose dark irises swell to fill the narrow ellipses. Her eyes are fixed asymmetrically in a face so inexpressive as to prompt some writers to dub it "mask-like," a term often applied to the subject's physiognomy—indeed, to many of Cézanne's portraiture subjects.¹⁰ Fiquet Cézanne's cheek, articulated roughly in slashing strokes of ocher, pale gray, and acid green, is broad and flat; her chin is square; and her forehead, formed with passages of ocher and gray green pigment, is narrow. Her hair is pulled back severely, except for a small dark brown fringe that has "escaped" at the center of her forehead. Fiquet Cézanne's nose is prominent, though not so exaggerated as to be distracting; and her mouth is firmly set, almost grim, with the lower lip protruding slightly. Gertrude Stein was the first private owner of this portrait, having acquired it from Cézanne's dealer, Ambroise Vollard. The writer displayed it high up on her drawing-room wall, from where it haunted Pablo Picasso as he struggled to realize his own



2 *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, ca. 1879–82, possibly reworked 1886–88, oil on canvas, $36\frac{3}{8} \times 28\frac{3}{4}$ in. (92.5 × 73 cm). E. G. Bührle Collection, Zürich.

vision of Stein in one aborted sitting after another, eventually producing his portrait of her in 1906; his Stein portrait is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (fig. 3).¹¹

In *Madame Cézanne in the Conservatory* (1891–92; plate 1), now also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fiquet Cézanne takes on an entirely different facial structure and body type, neither of which suggests aging. (I address the notion of Fiquet Cézanne’s supposed “timelessness” in chapter 4.) The subject’s head, tilted slightly with an air of mild expectancy, is a long, nearly perfect oval; her nose is straight and delicately proportioned, and her jawline forms a sinuous curve. Her limpid, heavy-lidded eyes gaze toward the viewer. The Bührle portrait’s square solidity is replaced here by a robust but pliant femininity, which is bolstered by the tight-fitting jacket, with its semisheer yoke. Also striking are the ribbon just visible in the topknot of Fiquet Cézanne’s tawny brown hair and the nearly transparent fingerless gloves (*mitaines*) that intervene provocatively between her flesh and the viewer’s gaze. Whereas the Bührle Madame Cézanne has square-shaped hands, strong and solidly planted, the hands of this Madame Cézanne are nearly fingerless. The digits projecting beyond the edges of the semisheer *mitaines* end in sharp, crisscrossing lines. Just as Fiquet Cézanne’s hands are unfinished, so is the skirt they rest upon, but the background setting appears lush and encompassing, despite its fragmentary structure. Seated in the liminal space of a conservatory, she is surrounded by verdant leaves and trailing roseate petals, a *fin-de-siècle* Flora.¹²

Madame Cézanne in a Yellow Chair (ca. 1888–90, plate 2), in the Beyeler Collection in Basel, painted around the same time, offers instead a wraithlike, austere figure in a plain, even homely, red housedress—a garment so prosaic that it goes unreproduced in contemporary fashion plates (an omission that renders it undatable). Gone are the pliant oval face and sensual demeanor of the portrait in the conservatory. Here, Fiquet Cézanne’s face is a fragile arrangement of incomplete dissolving planes imperfectly fused together. Large patches of bare canvas interrupt juxtaposed strokes that signal “nose” or “cheekbone.” Compact curving passages of crimson rim both the left cheekbone and the bottom tip of her right earlobe, rescuing her face from utter flatness. Her dark eyes are painted sketchily; they are hasty swirls of shadow in a vacant field, framed by inverted parentheses of dark brown that seem to signal the gaping eye sockets of the skull beneath the skin. This painting throws Fiquet Cézanne’s materiality into doubt. She seems made not of flesh, but of some chalklike, dissolving material. She appears more absent than present.

Without their titles, these three portraits would hardly be recognizable as the same person, thereby violating one of the cardinal rules of traditional portraiture, as summed up by Joanna Woodall: “Recognition of a visual resemblance is *inseparable* from a sense of the subject’s living presence as a social being and explicitly connected with admiration for the portraitist who created it.”¹³ Even at the turn of the twentieth century, some degree of re-



3 Pablo Picasso, *Gertrude Stein*, 1906, oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 32 in. (100 × 81.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Gertrude Stein, 1946 (47.106). Art © 2009 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

semblance was still expected—even in the early work of Picasso. Some of Fiquet Cézanne’s features or, perhaps more precisely, indices of her identity, do surface more than once: the oval face; the hair pulled up or back; the narrow, widely spaced eyes; and the strong jawline. For every feature repeated, however, another deviates from the pattern. A rounded stout face replaces the delicate geometry of the oval, and a weak, receding chin supplants the jutting jawline (as in *Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1886–88, Detroit Institute of Arts, plate 3); her hair, rather than being bound back, flows loosely onto Fiquet Cézanne’s shoulders (*Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1890–92, Philadelphia Museum of Art, plate 4); instead of turning away in self-absorption, she confronts the viewer with wide reproachful eyes (*Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1885–87, Musée Granet, plate 5; and *Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1885, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, plate 6). The nose is, variously, slightly turned up (*Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1886–87, Philadelphia Museum of Art, plate 7); short and blunt (*Portrait*

of *Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1886–87, Philadelphia Museum of Art, plate 8); large and prominent (*Madame Cézanne in Blue*, ca. 1888–90, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, plate 9); and, in the Basel variation (plate 2), beaklike, broad, and flaring. Differences appear to outweigh similarities.

SELF AND OTHER

The permutations of Fiquet Cézanne’s persona appear to operate on a fundamental visceral level, as if a different person entirely occupied each frame—or, perhaps more radically, as if the artist conjured a different person into being for each portrait. John Gage has asked, “If the best portrait of a particular subject is the one ‘most like,’ then what is it ‘like’?”¹⁴ Cézanne not only confounds the answer to that query but also forces us to formulate completely different questions about the nature and representation of identity. In so doing, he opened a rupture in the portrait tradition usually credited to Picasso.¹⁵ I argue that Cézanne was the artist who broke decisively with the strategies of mimesis in portraiture, and for reasons I elaborate below, that Fiquet Cézanne provided a principal vehicle for this achievement. His collective paintings of her forsake resemblance, jettison conventional notions of identity, and test the boundaries of how the self, along with the nonself who confronts and resists it, is defined, contained, and represented.

The title of this book, *Cézanne’s Other*, might evoke the idea of the “significant other,” one’s life companion. And I do call attention to the way that Cézanne’s portraits of his wife refer to, even as they subvert, conventions for representing the muse. But the problem of defining and representing the “other” goes beyond one painter’s formal investigations in his studio. For that reason, I examine the concept of the other in broader psychological terms that are grounded in shifting notions of subjectivity in the late nineteenth century. Hippolyte Taine, author of *On Intelligence* (Paris, 1870), a widely read and frequently reprinted study, emphasized that understanding one’s own consciousness, or “Ego,” depends on a constant reassessment of one’s sensations as well as a comparison and contrast to *other* sensations and other bodies: a continual oscillation between the *within* and the *without*. The “immediate bodily precinct,” in Taine’s view, is the medium through which “we perceive other bodies and act upon them. Whether the action comes from us or them, it is always between them and us.”¹⁶ Alexander Bain, a Scottish physician and author of *Emotion and the Will* (1865) and *Mental Science* (1884), held that the relation between self and other, subject and object, is “the greatest of all problems of metaphysical philosophy—the problem of self and an external world.” He wrote, “An object has no meaning without a subject, a subject none without an object. . . . There are innumerable couples, mutual foils, polar pairs, coined

among the universe of our impressions as portions of our knowledge.”¹⁷ Thinkers as diverse as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, D. W. Winnicott, Jacques Lacan, and Luce Irigaray—to name a few—share a notion that “the unconscious exists *between* persons; it is always a relational event.”¹⁸ Winnicott, for example, believed that “self-other awareness is itself the core of symbolizing experience and perhaps remains humankind’s most creative activity at various levels of developmental complexity.”¹⁹ According to Merleau-Ponty, whose well-known essay “Cézanne’s Doubt” has become a touchstone for understanding the artist’s sensibility, “The very first of all cultural objects, and the one by which all the rest exist, is the body of the other person as the vehicle of a form of behavior. . . . Already the other body has ceased to be a mere fragment of the world, and become the theater of a certain process of elaboration, and, as it were, a certain ‘view’ of the world.”²⁰

Many discussions of Cézanne’s portraits have emphasized the painter’s isolation and his fear of, and estrangement from, his subjects (which lead, tautologically, to their “dehumanization” or “abstraction”). I pursue a different argument in this book, one that depends on recognizing the role of reciprocity in the production of Cézanne’s portraits, a sensuous and perceptual *engagement* in the presence of the other that was essential for their realization. I propose that the figure of Fiquet Cézanne became for her husband just the “theater of elaboration” that Merleau-Ponty described—with her proximity, familial and physical, being as critical to Cézanne’s enterprise as her difference and detachment. Given Cézanne’s well-known commitment to paint “the motif” as if he had never seen it before—as if, indeed, it had never existed before he laid eyes on it—perhaps we should instead be surprised to see *any* similarities among the portraits of Fiquet Cézanne. Much like the multiple versions of Mont Ste.-Victoire or the Bay of l’Estaque, these portraits might be regarded as potentially endless variations on a theme. But even at the turn of the twentieth century, portraiture, unique among the genres, called for resemblance.²¹ The demand for recognizable form in depicting a human subject undermined portraiture’s status in the traditional hierarchy of the genres; the artist’s ostensible dependence on nature implied that imagination was not required. Cézanne’s portraits of his wife compel us to ask how radically a subject’s features must be remade before they are transmuted into someone, or even something, else? What boundaries must a portrait respect to retain its hold on the phenomenal world?

For her husband, Fiquet Cézanne was simultaneously *within* and *without*. She was related to him, at first by common law (he referred to her as “my wife” in his earliest letters to Zola) and later by marriage; but she was not of his flesh. The possibility of detachment remained, perhaps allowing the artist a greater range of experimental freedom than was available in the presence of his father (whom he feared) or his son (whom he indulged). Difference could be elaborated in the space between the artist and his subject, which Merleau-Ponty called the “interworld,” a liminal zone in which two subjectivities interact.²²

The great variability within the Fiquet Cézanne series lies not only in the images' relative lack of resemblance to one another but in the constant fluctuation between disengagement from and projection toward the viewer. Fiquet Cézanne might at first seem to proffer a bold, forthright gaze (for example, in the Berlin portrait, plate 6), that draws the beholder to her. However, the sensation of engagement, of recognition, recedes as we realize that only one of her eyes focuses on the viewer. Conversely, an image that may initially appear remote (for example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Madame Cézanne in a Red Dress*, ca. 1888–90, plate 10) reveals with prolonged looking a range of subtle, enlivening irregularities that mitigate the initial severe impression.

Cézanne's production of images that signal both retreat and projection became a metaphor for understanding the push and pull of perceiving, of knowing and not knowing, another person. As Jonathan Crary explains in *Suspensions of Perceptions*, "One of the discoveries that [Cézanne] made over the next decade [1890s] is that perception can take no other form than the process of its formation."²³ Fiquet Cézanne's lack of fixedness is, in part, the *subject* of Cézanne's series—an expression of the instability inherent in any human contact and the unpredictability of being simultaneously mirrored, resisted, complemented, and challenged by another human being.

Surveying the body of Fiquet Cézanne paintings, I have chosen to discuss principally the bust- or half-length oil portraits from around 1883 (although all Cézanne dates must be provisional) to 1894, concluding with possibly the artist's last portrait of his wife, a watercolor executed around 1904. All the portraits I analyze demonstrate a tension between what is granted to the viewer (by both the subject and the artist) and what is withheld: the result is an unstable, ever-shifting conjunction of intimacy and distance. For the most part, I set aside discussion of several of the small-scale, early full-length portraits, those painted around 1877, primarily because these works lack the quality of "compromised engagement." I also make only brief mention of small portraits of Fiquet Cézanne's face, because her averted face impedes our ability to discern anything about her expression or affect. In other words, I have chosen to concentrate on the paintings that are the richest repositories of all the contradictions of the self/other dyad that Cézanne wanted to plumb.

One of the early full-length portraits, Boston's *Madame Cézanne in a Red Armchair* (fig. 1), illustrates the contradictions I am analyzing.²⁴ Many know this image through the ecstatic prose of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who conjured it for his wife in a letter of 1907, just after he had seen the posthumous Cézanne retrospective at the Salon d'Automne: "In my feelings the consciousness of her presence has grown into an exaltation which I perceive even in my sleep; my blood describes her in me, but the verbal expression passes by somewhere outside and will not be called in. . . . In this red armchair, which is a *personality*, a woman is seated, her hands in the lap of a dress with broad vertical stripes . . . (and it is the

first and final red armchair of all painting) . . . this chair is painted quite powerfully round the delicate portrait.”²⁵ In Rilke’s prose, the crimson chair seems to be the true “protagonist” of the painting, its forceful presence superseding that of the “delicate portrait.”

Many of the pictorial features that recur later in the Fiquet Cézanne portraits are already here: the pincerlike fingers, the variegated blue jacket, the affection for striped fabrics. Indeed, fabric and wallpaper receive the lion’s share of attention here: the jacket’s blue bow is an explosion of cloth, flowerlike in its elegant disarray and seeming to possess the weight of tissue rather than textile. Yet despite an impression of pictorial “thinness,” abetted by a distant viewing, the pigment is thickly applied in this painting, particularly in the face (where the greens around the mouth appear to have been overpainted) and in the areas that act as material transitions: the creases in the fabric as it is “compressed” by the elbow or molded into a cuff that stops short of the hand and the folds around the neckline. The exception is the striped skirt, in which faceted bands of greens, ochers, and browns alternate with patches of paler tones that are interrupted by blank canvas or unaccountably florid strokes of black. The “hem” of the dress—far less orderly—pushes right up to the canvas’s bottom edge, an assemblage of teetering strokes of slightly muddier hue.

Fiquet Cézanne’s hair seems about to levitate from her head, as if the back has been rolled toward the front and peeled off the scalp, rising like a loaf of nut-brown bread. (Fiquet’s nickname *La Boule* may be relevant here).²⁶ The enfolding red chair widens to encompass its subject, who herself has been widened in situ: the distended proportions of her lap rival those of the Madonna’s in Michelangelo’s marble *Pietà*, which the sculptor amplified to accommodate more gracefully the body of the dead Christ.

Fiquet Cézanne is a recessive presence here (except for that disorderly skirt hem), as in the other early full-length portraits—even given the relative thickness of the gleaming pigment that composes her. Cézanne seems unable to allow his wife to come closer, to press up directly against his own resistance. Her affect remains impenetrable, her body immobile. Areas of cool blue in her face reinforce stasis; they will suggest mobility later, inciting a sense of movement as they hover around her mouth or rim an eye that seems about to turn away. Large obsidian eyes, uninflected by iris or pupil, seem nearly vacant. Fiquet Cézanne’s eyes are so close together that the subject appears cross-eyed and thus incapable of returning the beholder’s gaze. The necklace of black ribbon, included in several of the early portraits, is the only piece of jewelry Fiquet Cézanne wears in her painted representations. (This portrait also grants us the most generous glimpse of her neck, which is otherwise covered.)

Fiquet Cézanne here is more landscape than figure; the fabric is a topography of blues, greens, grays, violets, browns, with the same colors reiterated in her face. The famous red chair is the exception to this color palette (she would never again be painted sitting in it). In

discussing this portrait, Shiff cited the critic Clarence Bulliet's remark, "An apple by Cézanne is of more consequence artistically than the head of a Madonna by Raphael."²⁷ Shiff reminds us that Bulliet was not complaining. John Rewald indicated that Fiquet Cézanne's presence here was more inviting than usual: "Madame Cézanne, one of the painter's most frequent though not necessarily most eager models, seldom escaped this abstracted treatment, yet here he seems to have observed her with something of the benevolence and tenderness he usually reserved for the likeness of his son."²⁸ Though Shiff and Rewald might disagree about this portrait's relative "abstraction," the word clearly signals a withholding, or setting aside, of human accessibility.

PAUL (*FILS*)

To distinguish the "tender" from the "abstracted," Rewald invoked the portraits of the artist's beloved son, Paul. Cézanne's only child was a frequent subject, especially as a toddler and young boy. Beginning around 1880, when he was a young boy of eight, Paul began to appear in his father's oil paintings (some of these nine works are more akin to sketches).²⁹ Paul is the star of his father's sketchbooks, in which the artist studied his son from around the age of four in varying states of consciousness, sometimes drowsing companionably alongside his mother.³⁰ Not only was the young Paul represented on the pages of his father's sketchbook, he was also the maker of quite a few drawings between the linen-covered covers. In the Art Institute of Chicago's sketchbook, the young son emulates his father: his tilting houses and expressively curved trees mirror Cézanne's landscape drawings on the opposite pages. Other pages are filled with rows of childish cursive alphabets. Twice, Paul wrote his mother's name ("Madame Cézanne," *avant la lettre*) above his father's drawings of her, the honorific unfurling like an airborne scroll.³¹

In both Cézanne's drawings and paintings, Paul's rounded cheeks and slightly almond eyes are nearly always easy to recognize.³² The son, who was the apple of his father's eye, largely retains his features, even as his mother's transmute beyond recognition. Despite the differences, however, the portraits of mother and son share critical formal and affective elements: color contrasts and shaped strokes that aim to instigate a sensation of mobility, as well as muscular figural and clothing forms that are in concert with the setting.

The face of Paul *fil*s in the National Gallery of Art (*The Artist's Son, Paul*, ca. 1885–90, fig. 4) appears to have been molded, not simply painted—pushed up, as if to approach the bowler hat atop his head (it invokes both his father's behatted self-portraits and his grandfather's first occupation as a hatmaker). Although the shifts in skin tone are less varied here



4 *The Artist's Son, Paul*, ca. 1885–90, oil on canvas, $25\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ in. (65.3×54 cm). Chester Dale Collection. Image © 2009 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

than the pigments in most of Fiquet Cézanne's portraits, the son's visage is as mobile as his mother's. The dense lower lip—an oblong of orange rose—thrusts forward even as it spreads and flattens to renounce any trace of illusionism. An obstinate force is at work in Paul's mouth, as well as in his out-thrust, rolling chin and slightly beady sidelong glance. The cherubic boy (his cheeks are still round, puffed out like balloons) has become a stubborn adolescent. Paul seems less framed by his setting than struggling for dominance over it; the same diamond-patterned wallpaper that fills many of the Fiquet Cézanne portraits seems to have transmuted here into near-human limbs that press closely around the young man's figure. Another baffle is the elaborately decorated edge that intrudes sharply from the right margin. Perhaps this series of foils is an apt metaphor for an adolescent who found himself enmeshed in what surely must have been an unconventional domestic life.³³

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

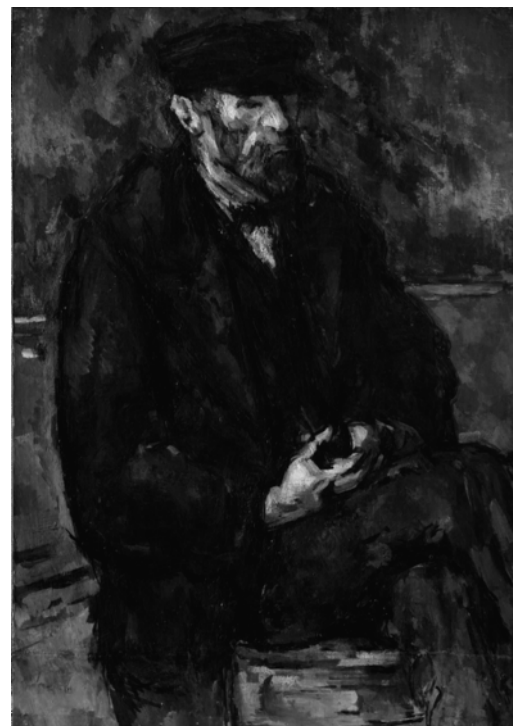
Sitting for Cézanne cannot have been easy—for his son, his wife, or any of the family members, friends, or employees who constituted the painter's main subject pool. Cézanne's fluctuations of mood and temperament were legendary. Richard Shiff has nicely understated the case: "An individual so willful in both aesthetic and human relations does not fare well in the social world."³⁴ Alternating visits to the capital with long retreats to Aix, Cézanne did not spend as much time in the modern city as many of his Paris-based peers—but he was far from complacent about the social and economic changes wrought by modernity. He possessed, as one author has said, "a grim distrust of all changes and controls" and remained preoccupied with "a continual falling-away of his accustomed world and its values, which worsened his sense of personal isolation."³⁵ Georg Simmel, the first sociologist of modernity, described the "culture of interaction" in the new metropolis and enunciated the affective and social ties that drew people together, despite the isolation and impersonality of capitalism: "The extremely lively interaction . . . into which the look from one eye to another weaves people together, does not crystallize in any objective structure, but rather the unity that it creates between them remains directly suspended in the event and in the function."³⁶

I want to imagine the painted surfaces of Cézanne's portraits as representing a distinct *interworld* in which contact—and difference—remain "directly suspended." Sometimes, this materialized boundary between self and other, cast on a canvas surface, appears transparent, like a gauzy scrim, as in the delicately colored *Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1888–90 (Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania, plate 11). At other times, the material form of the interworld appears obdurate, as impenetrable as a wall (*Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1886–88,

plate 3). Throughout his life, Cézanne was profoundly concerned with the varying permeability of the barriers—psychological, sexual, emotional, and physical—between himself and the world outside, prompting his much-mythologized anxiety about human contact. When Émile Bernard, then a young painter, visited Cézanne in Aix in 1904, he reported to his mother that he found the older man “distrustful . . . misanthropic . . . cranky and strange.”³⁷ Many have recounted Cézanne’s terrible fear that someone would get his or her “*grappins*”—hooks—into him and his related aversion to being touched. This story also originates with Bernard, who describes Cézanne’s rebuff when he tried to steady the older artist after a fall. According to Bernard, Cézanne explained that as a child, he had been kicked in the rear by a boy sliding down a banister and from then on could not abide being physically touched.³⁸ Despite his crankiness, the artist’s evident desire for contact—for understanding and acknowledgment and for emotion felt and reciprocated—created an intense conflict with his craving for isolation.

The variable porousness of Cézanne’s pictorial interworld is demonstrated in yet another portrait series that seems to have had intensely personal meaning for the artist: the images inspired by his gardener and factotum, Vallier.³⁹ In the same room as the National Gallery’s *Portrait of the Artist’s Son* (and across from Cézanne’s portrait of his father, *Louis-Auguste Cézanne, Père de l’Artiste, Lisant L’Événement*, 1866) is one of the Vallier paintings (a number of which are also called *The Sailor*), painted around 1906, the year Cézanne died. I consider this series in more detail at the end of the book, in part because, as scholars have already pointed out, some of the Vallier paintings incorporate—even if covertly—the meditative force of a self-portrait.⁴⁰

The pigment of the National Gallery’s *The Gardener Vallier* (1906, fig. 5) is so dense that it appears to lift off from the surface of the canvas. The impasto is a wall of dark, abysmal paint: the near-black eye sockets; the rough-hewn, midnight green jacket, which is articulated not by folds of cloth but by crevices of black. The deep shadows of the beard further the sensation of unknowable, impenetrable depths. During the same months that Cézanne was forging this wall of dark pigment, he was producing ephemeral watercolors and oil sketches—also purportedly of Vallier (*The Gardener Vallier*, 1906, Tate, London, fig. 6). These other variations on the theme of the gardener/sailor (the graphite and watercolor *Portrait of the Gardener Vallier*, ca. 1906, Berggruen Collection on loan to the National Gallery, London, seems a particularly fragile instance) nearly disintegrate because of their delicate fragmentation. The strokes that compose Vallier cling together with the faintest of bonds, like molecules bound by invisible but charged particles. Cézanne likely moved between the ephemeral watercolor and the encrusted oil painting during the same weeks, attesting to the complexity of his late explorations of the “interworld.”



5 *The Gardener Vallier*, 1906, oil on canvas, $42\frac{1}{4} \times 29\frac{3}{8}$ in. (107.4 \times 74.5 cm). Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer, 1959.2.1.(1525)/PA. Image © 2009 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

6 *The Gardener Vallier*, ca. 1906, $25\frac{3}{4} \times 21\frac{5}{8}$ in. (65.5 \times 55 cm). Tate, London. Photo: Tate, London/Art Resource, NY.

WITHOUT AND WITHIN

Cézanne's inexorable gaze turned repeatedly to portraiture subjects throughout his career. But the tension between the desire to engage and the fear of engagement—an impossible conjunction—may well have concentrated most acutely in the figure of his wife. Fiquet Cézanne embodied the possibility, and conceivably the failure, of the deepest intimacy, but she also stood for the most potentially intrusive claims upon her husband's attention: those of domestic life. In painting her portrait, Cézanne could hold his wife, quite literally, at arm's length, fixing her at a reassuring distance yet keeping her close enough to observe her keenly, exhaustively. Cézanne found this form of looking so intensely rigorous that he experienced profound physical strain. "I can't tear my eyes away," he confessed, "they're so tightly glued to the point I am looking at that it seems to me they are going to bleed."⁴¹

Cézanne's looking was so effortful, so physicalized, that he seemed to grant it—at least imaginatively—the immediacy of touch. The urgency of his visual attention made the normally intransitive activity of looking akin to the transitive sensation of touch. The two senses are often conjoined in Cézanne's painting practice, as Shiff has demonstrated, in works such as *Still Life with Plaster Cupid* (1895, Courtauld Institute of Art, London), which frames the sensually robust yet sculptural body of Puget's putto like a painting, even as Cupid's toes curl around the apples in the foreground. As Shiff explains, "Not only identifiable parts of the representation shift between figurality and literalness, but also sensory modes. For touch and vision are caught in a reciprocal figuration: it is touch that is figuring vision, and vision that is figuring touch."⁴²

In her essay "From the Museum of Touch," Susan Stewart proposes that "all touch traverses the boundary between interiority and externality and reciprocally returns to the agent of touching. Touch, like dizziness, is a threshold activity—a place where subject and object are quite close to each other."⁴³ This commingling of subject and object, which was fundamental to new constructions of self in Cézanne's culture, was at the heart of the artist's enterprise in general and of his portraits of Fiquet Cézanne in particular.

Painting Fiquet Cézanne so often over a span of roughly ten years allowed the artist to explore, with an attention both fierce and protracted, the relationship between other and self while sidestepping portraiture's conventional strategies. He did not, for example, lay claim to a consistent or identifiable physiognomy. He did not try to conjure his subject's inner life, and he did not—unlike most portrayers of women—use the conventional inventory of female expressions, postures, and ornamental accessories. In his nearly thirty portraits of her, Fiquet Cézanne rarely looks the same twice. But if we try to glean psychological insights from the portraits, we find them stubbornly inseparable from the paint strokes that suggest them—an interdependence that renders Cézanne's marks both crucial and impossible to isolate. As I have pointed out, Picasso usually receives credit for emancipating portraiture from the strangleholds of resemblance and identity, and belief that he did so has intensified in the past several years.⁴⁴ In describing Picasso's paintings of his mistresses and wives, friends and family, William Rubin once used the terms *transformation* and *conceptual portrait*. "By redefining the portrait as a record of the artist's personal responses to the subject," he wrote, "Picasso transformed it from a purportedly objective document into a frankly subjective one." The painter's portraiture, Rubin concluded, "casts the very concept of identity into doubt. It is no longer fixed, but mutable," a condition, I would argue, that Cézanne had already achieved in his portraits of his significant other.⁴⁵ Fiquet Cézanne, in particular, was a shifting force against which Cézanne could measure his mutating self. Contrary to some critics' assumptions, Cézanne did not view his wife as a static object, as an apple or a "pat of butter" (D. H. Lawrence referred to Fiquet Cézanne's "appleyness").⁴⁶

On the contrary, he found her as changeable as any motif—animate or inanimate—set before him. Cézanne did not objectify his human subjects; rather he injected into everything he painted—be it sugar bowl, skull, or artificial fruit—a capacity for near-human empathy and response. Admittedly, Cézanne’s portraits may not be his most “personal” paintings, revealing how he conceived of the life outside himself. That designation may properly belong to the still lifes he produced in his studio.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the portraits can reveal far more than has been suspected about how Cézanne encountered the world. In his portraits of his wife, the painter preserved her changeableness and the mutability of his response to her—the porousness of each remembered interaction. To think of the images of Fiquet Cézanne as “inexpressive”—the adjective most often applied to them—is to profoundly misunderstand them. Considering them in a new light reveals that in them is concentrated everything Cézanne felt about nature, which he once defined as “man, woman, still life.”⁴⁸

Four chapters and a conclusion follow this introduction. Chapter 1 unpacks the reception history of the portraits of Fiquet Cézanne. In assessing the strangely vituperative criticism Cézanne’s representations of his wife have inspired over the years, I draw connections between the most common denunciations (and most callow dismissals) and the biased vein that runs through the reception history of portraits of women in general. One reason that Cézanne’s portraits of his wife have failed to achieve a greater degree of understanding is that collectively, they challenge the long-cherished assumption that a woman’s “worthiness” to be painted must be immediately evident. Traditionally, a female subject’s erotic appeal was trumpeted through the artist’s sensuous handling of the paint, his suggestion of lustrous skin and its metaphorical extensions: hair, fabric, fur. Cézanne’s portraits of his wife defy such presumptions so thoroughly as to be deliberately provocative.

Even today, many critics see-saw between dismissal and contempt, casually disparaging Fiquet Cézanne’s intelligence, her class status, her temperament, and above all, her relevance to her husband’s life and work. (The story that she failed to arrive at her husband’s deathbed because of an appointment with her dressmaker remains a favorite.)⁴⁹ Although I do not intend to assert Fiquet Cézanne’s “importance” as helpmate and domestic partner, I want to reinstate her primacy as a subject for her husband, the painter.⁵⁰ She served as a principal vehicle for exploring questions that he obsessively posed and reposed in paint: where does one self stop and the other begin? And how can we tell?

In chapters 2 through 4, I examine more closely the procedures and discoveries that derived from the idiosyncratic but critical reciprocity between Cézanne and his wife. Chapter 2 grapples with the painter’s use of color as a vehicle for emotion. Chapter 3 focuses on the conjunction of touch and vision in the art of Cézanne, which seems under particular pressure in the portraits of his wife. Cézanne used metaphors of touch, both its provocation and its refusal, to express his most vaunted ambitions as well as his most primitive fears. Chap-

ter 4 addresses Cézanne's practice of altering or suppressing his wife's sexuality, even her gender—a strategy that, to date, is more often associated with the artist's paintings of bathers, particularly the series of three *Large Bathers* in the National Gallery, London (ca. 1900–1906), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (ca. 1906), and the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania (ca. 1895–1906).⁵¹ In this chapter, Cézanne's drawings play a major role, both as artifacts to study and as evidence of a conceptual process of transformation. I examine not only the notebook drawings Cézanne produced of his wife and his son but also his late studies in graphite—at once delicate and robust—that he made after sculptures in the Louvre and at the Musée des Sculptures Comparées.⁵²

Chapter 4 also compares Cézanne's portraits of his wife in oil with those in graphite or watercolor. The latter representations, found most often in the artist's sketchbooks, raise afresh the question of resemblance that Fiquet Cézanne's oil portraits systematically evade. The drawings have long been characterized as “more intimate” than the oil paintings and thus more revelatory of the artist's inner life—an assumption I explore and challenge. Rather than constituting linked episodes in a continuous development, Cézanne's drawings and paintings of his wife inhabit fundamentally different realms. The book's conclusion highlights a single image of 1904–5 that may represent Fiquet Cézanne. I place it in dialogue with a portrait of Vallier to knit together many of the concerns that are threaded through the book.

The primary sources on Paul Cézanne—early biographies, letters, diaristic accounts—are maddeningly opaque and often contradictory. Nonetheless, I accord the artist's direct interlocutors, such as Émile Bernard and Joachim Gasquet, privileged status. I draw on their remembrances, along with those of later visitors to Cézanne's studio in Aix, “creatively and with caution,” as Shiff advises.⁵³ Gasquet's “remembrances” remain controversial, but I buttress them, whenever possible, with Cézanne's own words or their visual counterparts. My primary evidence remains insistently visual.

Whereas Cézanne's biography is rife with confusing, incomplete, and conflicting reports, we have virtually no extant textual record for his wife (aside from the records of her birth, marriage, and death, which I discuss in chapter 1). No letters from Cézanne to his wife survive, but the painter did send warm regards to Fiquet Cézanne in every letter he wrote to his son.

In addition to depending upon these often-evasive primary sources, I have tried to locate Cézanne's protracted meditation on the relation of self and other in the conceptual and historical framework of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers who shared his preoccupation. Writers in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, neurology, physiology, and philosophy were keenly interested in conceptions of the modern self, which was newly understood to be a fluid category, and not only in relation to the wider world that constituted

the defining other. Thinkers also debated the relation between body and mind around the turn of the twentieth century, seeing them as knit together in myriad shifting ways. Descartes's duality of body and mind was no longer ascendant (although many scholars believe that Descartes never intended to declare the body completely separate from the mind). In the new view, when the self related to an other—that is, to other bodies and other minds—a complex constellation of bodily and mental functions was activated. Consciousness had both physical and mental properties, which flowed from self to other and back again in a never-ending, highly unpredictable exchange. Boundaries between self and other were porous, like those between body and mind.⁵⁴

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of unprecedented scientific discovery, with scientists sharing and adapting new insights across fields. Around 1900, researchers in many disciplines struggled to characterize more precisely the relation between body and mind, soma and psyche. They strove to identify systems of the body, modules of the mind, and categories of, and interrelations between, species. Neurologists and physiologists attempting to fathom the circulation of the blood often modeled their work on the discoveries of Charles Darwin, and “alienists” (later known as psychiatrists) drew upon the insights of both philosophers and neurologists to improve their understanding of the workings of the mind.⁵⁵ Conceptualizing the self's relation to the world proceeded, on one hand, through speculations about humanity's relation to the cosmic order and the natural world and, on the other, through microscopic examinations of the self's most intimate physical border, human skin.

This pool of ideas in physiology, neurology, natural history, psychology, and philosophy resembles the stew of discovery, speculation, and debate that inspired Sigmund Freud's formulation of psychoanalysis. Although I may occasionally in this book use a term that sounds “psychoanalytic” in origin or association, I am interested above all in pre-Freudian constructions of self and other—in what T. J. Clark has called “Freud before Freud”: the Freud who wrote *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), rather than the author of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), for example.⁵⁶ I do not suggest that Cézanne actually read the works of these writers (although he did once proclaim to Joachim Gasquet, “I am like Taine!”),⁵⁷ but I argue that he, the painter, worked in parallel with other independent actors—the physiologist, the physician, the psychologist, and even, at times, the novelist (Cézanne's boyhood friend Émile Zola, for example)—to chart the self's boundaries and internal contradictions and to impose order on the unruly conjunction of physical and mental phenomena. Collectively, these actors produced what Jonathan Crary has called “*original* fashionings of related problems.”⁵⁸ Cézanne, presented as mythically solitary in the master narrative of modernism, was in fact one of a number of historic figures working

through the unstable dyads of self and other, body and mind. Furthermore, he was not always alone in his studio.

My text is inflected not only by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conceptions of the self and its other but also by more recent insights. The feminist Luce Irigaray, for instance, claims that historically men have wanted someone “different but the same,” a phrase that evokes the simultaneous immediacy and remoteness in many of Fiquet Cézanne’s portraits.⁵⁹ Michel Foucault’s meditations on sexuality and gender are pertinent to the confusion of masculine and feminine (the frequently remarked “androgyny”) that characterizes Fiquet Cézanne’s images and complicates discussion of them.⁶⁰ Recent theorists in cultural studies have demonstrated that clothing serves as both the “interior” and “exterior” of the self—insights that illuminate the various ways in which Cézanne fabricates his wife’s garments in paint. For example, the same blue “sack-jacket” looks quite different in three portraits (plates 3, 9, and 12 [*Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1885–88, Musée d’Orsay]), ranging from rough-hewn carapace to translucent skin.⁶¹

My work benefits from the contributions of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose essay “Cézanne’s Doubt” introduced many art historians—and artists—to the French theorist and philosopher’s work, especially in the years immediately following his untimely death in 1961.⁶² Later essays in *Eye and Mind* and parts of his unfinished manuscript *The Visible and the Invisible* have proved relevant to the visual arts.⁶³ For my purposes, Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis upon the inseparability of subject and object, and body and mind, sheds light on the conceptual problem underlying all Cézanne’s portraits of his wife: the relative permeability of the borders between self and other. I find Merleau-Ponty’s formulation extremely useful in unlocking possible meanings for the near transparency found in the Musée de l’Orangerie portrait (*Portrait of Madame Cézanne*, ca. 1890, plate 13) and the Barnes Foundation’s *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* of ca. 1888–90 (plate 11), for instance. In both paintings, the subject’s garments and even parts of her face appear shot through with light. Fiquet Cézanne seems the flimsiest of presences. How thin, and how dispersed, can a constellation of brushstrokes become before they fail to evoke a material human presence? And how ill-defined can the painted borders between self and world—figure and ground—be before giving up their claim to marking the difference?

Until quite recently, philosophers often rejected Merleau-Ponty’s work, lamenting its supposed lack of rigor.⁶⁴ Lately, however, his ideas have become relevant again, in particular to cognitive psychologists and philosophers of mind. Following their lead, I adopt Merleau-Ponty’s work in my arguments. I realize that in so doing I court the censure of those who hold that the phenomenologist does not belong in the same company as the materialist historian Hippolyte Taine or the Marxist sociologist Georg Simmel, whose ideas on

modernity surface in chapter 2. In response, I point out that although my sources are necessarily eclectic, my argument is quite simple, and I sustain it through all four chapters—no matter how diverse, even disparate, my interlocutors might seem.

Cognitive psychologists and philosophers of mind have recently tapped Merleau-Ponty's work as a welcome corrective to a dangerous trend in the study of human consciousness that reduces "mind" to "brain" and then to "neurons"—completely ignoring the body's share in perception. As philosopher Shaun Gallagher explains, citing Merleau-Ponty as his touchstone, "What is fed forward to define the body's perceptual attunement can neither be reduced to physiology nor inflated to conscious control."⁶⁵

In addition to recognizing the influential scholars I cite in the acknowledgments, I wish to acknowledge Mary Sheriff for a work that does not derive from Cézanne studies but has helped me develop a framework for thinking through the artist's paintings of Fiquet Cézanne. In her book *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Sheriff explains how she built the theoretical and historical structure of her arguments for Vigée-Lebrun's "difference." She explores the writings of eighteenth-century *philosophes* who were explicitly concerned with sexual difference in light of contemporary theories about gender—those of Luce Irigaray and Jacques Lacan, among others. As Sheriff points out, these twentieth-century authors inherited the task of their eighteenth-century forebears, as they extended and refined the importance of gender to the formation of self.⁶⁶ My goal for this book is similar: to understand the ideas about identity that emerged and generated debate around the time of Fiquet Cézanne's portraits and to probe them in light of more recent notions of the self—as a construct both constricted and unstable, an ambiguity that Cézanne expressed in a masterly way.

In our age of inattention to history and impatience with details, I hope to promote a kind of art history that is at once historically responsible, theoretically grounded, and visually convincing: an argument that draws upon "eye *and* mind" to borrow Merleau-Ponty's phrase. Not only do I value those who have come before me, but I welcome those who will follow—especially those who expand the study of Cézanne's portraits. If I cannot persuade my readers of the significance of the portraits of Hortense Fiquet Cézanne—for her husband, for us, and for the history of art, I hope that I can at least persuade some viewers to take another look.