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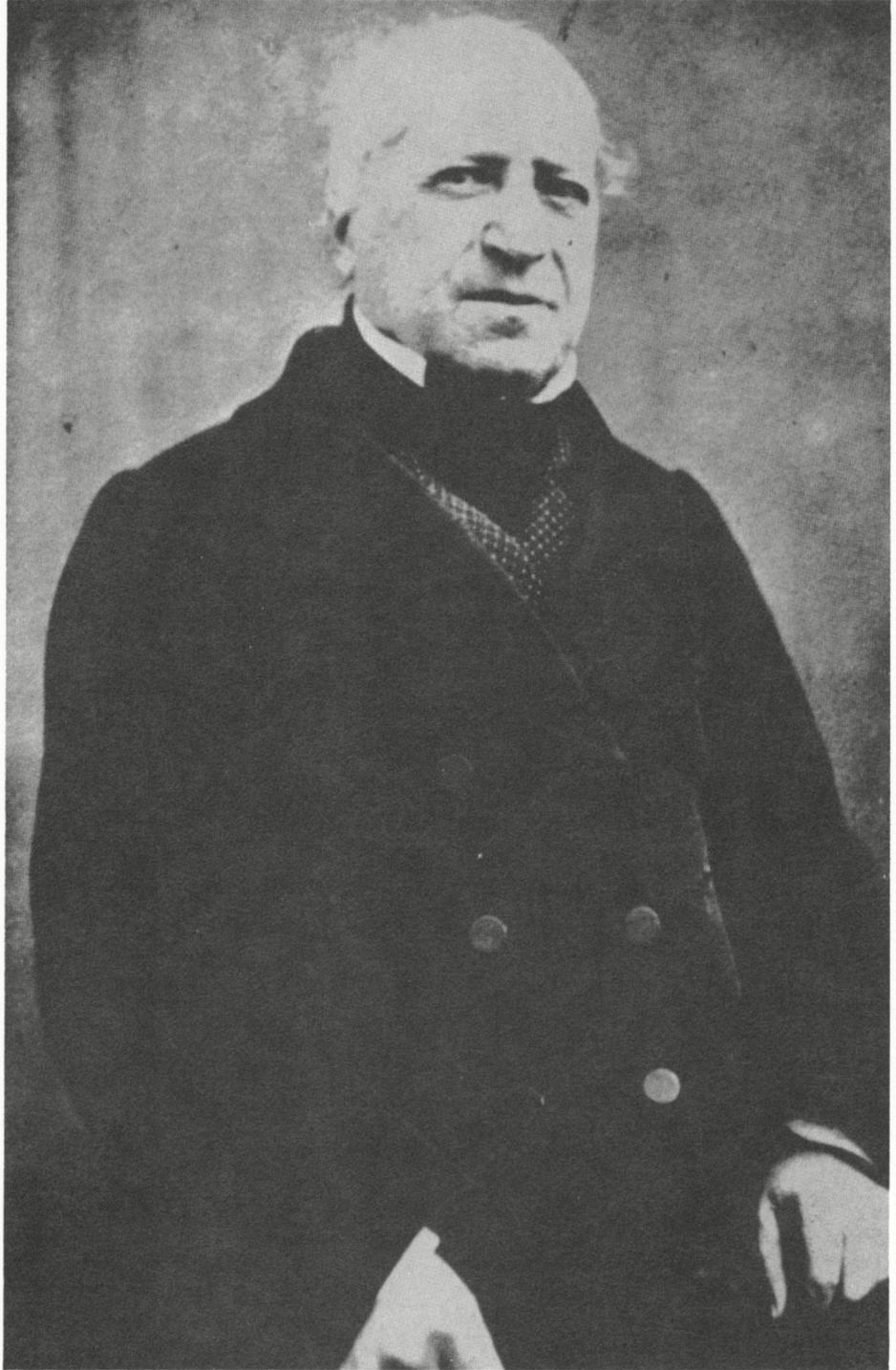
Cézanne and His Father

JOHN REWALD

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*Louis Auguste Cézanne, the artist's father.*

# Cézanne and His Father

JOHN REWALD

The strong-willed personality of Paul Cézanne's father apparently impressed all who came in touch with him. Emile Zola, who was not yet ten when his father died and who usually sided with his friend Paul whenever a conflict opposed son against father, knew the banker well. He also knew that the latter deeply resented what he considered Zola's interference by strengthening Paul's penchant for an artistic career which the banker steadfastly opposed. It is not surprising, then, that in 1869 when Zola first conceived his series of Rougon-Macquart novels as a tremendous fresco of a "family in the modern world," he should have referred in his preparatory notes to Cézanne and his father. Theirs was possibly the only father-son relationship with which he was intimately familiar.

According to Zola's initial notes, among the problems with which he intended to concern himself was "the influence of the feverish modern environment on the impatient ambitions of the characters. The actual environment—locale and place in society—determine the class of a character (worker, artist, bourgeois: myself and my uncles, Paul and his father)."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, from the beginning, the young novelist planned to rely on his personal experiences, of which the future painter and his father formed an extensive part. In the notes relating to one of the central figures of the fourth novel in the series, *La Conquête de Plassans* (which appeared in 1874), Zola speaks more specifically of the old banker: "Take the type of C... 's father, mocking, republican, bourgeois, cold, meticulous, stingy; depict his home life; he refuses his wife any luxury, etc. He is, moreover, garrulous and, sustained by his wealth, doesn't care a rap for anyone or anything."

This is one of the few first-hand reports on Cézanne's father, and it is not exactly flattering. The outspoken, authoritarian, shrewd

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes are taken from J. Rewald, *Paul Cézanne*, New York, 1948, 1968, and Paul Cézanne, *Correspondance*, Paris, 1937 (London, 1941), but some are here newly translated.

banker was a self-made man whose humble beginnings were doubtless remembered by many members of Aix's rather exclusive society, although, as partner in the only bank of the town, he wielded considerable influence. He was a picturesque figure about whom legends sprang up, both favorable and unfavorable; mostly the latter. On the other hand, his integrity and acumen must have been a matter of public record, for how otherwise to explain that after the collapse of the Second Empire the retired banker, by then seventy-two years old and never having held any elective office, found himself designated by acclamation as member of the provisional municipal council? (He was put on the finance committee, but did not care to attend any meetings.)

Louis-Auguste Cézanne, born in 1798, had thoroughly learned the trade of hatter, production of felt then being a major industry in Aix. Having done well in this business, he was able, during the revolutionary year of 1848, to acquire the only local bank, which had failed in the political and economic crisis. It took courage and foresight to do so, for the newly established Second Republic seemed to be headed for trouble. A hardened republican, Louis-Auguste not only had confidence in the new government, he must also have seen that difficult times could be beneficial to money lenders, provided they knew how to operate wisely. Wisely operate he did, and eventually proved to be tremendously successful.

While still dealing in hats, Louis-Auguste had met a local girl sixteen years younger than himself; they were married in 1844, after she had borne him a son, Paul, in 1839, and a daughter, Marie, in 1841. A second daughter, Rose, was born ten years after the wedding had been performed. Obviously, the father could not be "rushed" into any decision. One thing becomes clear: if he reached the ripe age of forty-six before marrying and legitimizing his two children, it was evident that he did not care in the least what his fellow citizens might think or say. Among the maxims he readily propounded and which his son was always to remember were such sound principles as: "Don't get too excited, take your time and act with caution." He also liked telling Paul: "Whenever you go out, know where you are headed." No doubt the old man took his own advice and fared well by it.

By the time Louis-Auguste Cézanne had become a prosperous banker, his fondest dream apparently was that his eldest child and only son should succeed him at the bank and build into a family business the firm that he, through hard work, had put on a solid foundation. In 1859, the year Paul turned twenty, the banker acquired a manorial estate just outside of Aix, the *Jas de Bouffan*. The mansion itself was very run-down, but with it came a farmhouse and thirty-seven acres of land, mostly profitable vineyards. The price reputedly was 90,000 francs (Zola, in his first job in Paris at the time, was earning sixty francs a month). This purchase was considered ostentatious in Aix, "the whim of a parvenu," but as usual, the banker was completely indifferent to the reactions of others.

It must have been at some time during the previous year, in 1858, that young Cézanne became conscious of his calling, though it is of course impossible to fix the very instant or to ascertain how "seri-

ous” he was at first. All we know is that at about that time seems to have begun what Zola, in a letter of March 1860, called his friend’s “two-year struggle” against his father’s opposition to an artistic career. When Paul passed his final school examinations late in 1858, it was decided that he enter the venerable University of Aix. The father was doubtless proud to provide his son with the higher education he himself had not received and to see him register at the law faculty, law being considered in France the key to everything. The son complied with his father’s desires. To do otherwise would have been almost unthinkable. Obviously, he was being groomed to climb that social ladder on which the banker was determined to launch his descendants, knowing full well that his own access to it was barred. Paul seemed unhappy with the career his father was envisioning for him, but that was certainly no deterrent to the elder Cézanne. His own success having confirmed the banker in what he considered the rightness of his philosophy, he was convinced that the ambitious plans he had formed for his son would eventually justify the pressure he had to exert in order to obtain obedience.

The young Paul continued, as in the past, to write poems, mostly in a mocking vein (which did not prevent Zola from discovering great promise in them), translate Latin verses, plan tragedies, and paint. His apparent lack of purpose made it much easier for the banker to have his own way. Indeed, the son of this robust realist (some called him “rapacious and tough”)—made of the same fiber as his energetic and farseeing contemporaries who were accomplishing the Industrial Revolution—turned out to be a hopeless dreamer. Withdrawn and shy, Paul was at the same time romantic and boisterous, exuberant and unstable, overconfident and moody, hesitant and stubborn, proud and melancholy, sensitive and insecure, suspicious and irascible. He was also quite immature.

In his father’s eyes, the son’s inclination for art did not at first take on alarming proportions. Since the end of 1858, at the very time when he began his law studies, Paul had been enrolled at the evening classes of the municipal drawing school where tuition was *free*. He also occasionally copied some sweet and dull works at the local museum, with which his mother seems to have been very happy. Meanwhile he asked Zola to obtain information about a project they had discussed together, that of competing for some prize of the Academy in Paris, “provided, of course, it won’t cost anything.” Evidently, his father did not give him any funds but otherwise let him be, as long as he attended his university courses. The banker did not seem to have had any objections, either, to turning over to Paul the walls of the more or less dilapidated large living room at the Jas de Bouffan which, little by little, his son covered with an assortment of murals.<sup>2</sup> While these activities did not yet cause the father any apprehension, they did prompt him to warn his son: “Think of the future; one dies with genius but one eats with money!”

In December 1859, after one year of study, Cézanne successfully passed his first examinations, though by then law had become quite repulsive to him. Yet, strangely enough, in his many letters to Zola, he practically never speaks of painting. The first time he mentions

<sup>2</sup> On these mural decorations, see Gerstle Mack, *Paul Cézanne*, New York, 1935, pp. 145–47, pl. 12, and Douglas Cooper, “Au Jas de Bouffan,” *L’Oeil*, Feb. 15, 1955, pp. 13–16, 46, whose list, however, is incomplete since he did not include the so-called *Contraste* (L. Venturi, *Cézanne—Son Art, Son Oeuvre*, Paris, 1936, No. 87).

his dreams of becoming an artist, of going to Paris and finding a studio there is in a letter of June 1859, in which he reports at length his burning though unrequited love for “a certain Justine” with whom he had not yet exchanged a single word and who, moreover, was infatuated with one of his friends. This project “à la Murger” seems to have evolved more around his juvenile passion for the girl than his own serious plans for the future.

However, by the end of that same year, Zola’s letters to his friend (those Cézanne wrote to him are lost) indicate that Paul had now decided to be a painter. Thus it was only after one year of study that Cézanne became confident of his destiny. Even then he was still torn between determination and indecision, frequently considering it best to appease the banker and earn a law degree before leaving for Paris to study art. Zola was exasperated by Paul’s indecisiveness, unable to understand why Paul would agree to waste more years on law if he meant to abandon it ultimately. But Paul obviously dreaded discussions with his father and put these off to gain time, no doubt hoping that something unforeseen might occur to soften his father’s attitude. By now, however, the conflict must have been in the open, and the banker could no longer pretend to be unaware of how Paul felt about law on the one hand, and art on the other. He certainly could not comprehend how a son of his, brought up to “face realities,” raised in a home where the word “art” was probably never pronounced, taught—as everyone else in the household—to respect the father’s wishes, how this son could have gotten it into his head to devote his life covering canvases with pigment (a pleasant pastime, possibly, but definitely not a respectable “profession”).

Confronted with this situation, Louis-Auguste Cézanne, true to his background and his convictions, decided to bend the son to his own stern will. It seems inconceivable that he might have acted differently, that he might have told Paul that he sympathized with his yearnings, that he wanted him to choose the career that most attracted him, that he did not care whether he made a financial success of it, provided he found satisfaction in “self-expression,” that he had the means to support him and would do so gladly as long as he could assure the son’s happiness.

Though fairly current today, such an attitude was absolutely unheard of then. Moreover, according to his elder daughter, the banker, while not a tyrant, was quite “unable to understand anyone except those who worked in order to get rich.” But there was more at stake for him than the mere exercise of his authority; he must have felt that, by protecting him against his youthful fancies, he acted in his son’s own interest.

Those who have indicted Louis-Auguste Cézanne for his intransigence have searched for all kinds of hidden indications to show the extent Cézanne suffered from his father’s incomprehension and even hated him. They have been helped, of course, by hindsight and the awareness that the emerging painter *was* a genius, something his father did not, and could not, know. They have overlooked the fact that the banker acted according to deeply felt principles which were those of his class and his time.

A glance at the early life of most of Cézanne's fellow impressionists shows that they fared no better with their families. Pissarro had to help for five years in his middle-class father's store until, after running away, he was allowed to become an artist. Bazille's patrician parents insisted that he study medicine; after two years they also permitted him to attend art classes; only after four years, however, and after having failed in his examinations, was he allowed to abandon medicine. Sisley was sent to England for two years in preparation for a commercial career. Monet certainly experienced the greatest hardships with his well-to-do grocer-father who appears to have been not only overbearing but actually petty and cruel (though nobody has as yet attempted to explain what the elder Monet's lack of humanity did to the psyche of his son). Only Manet and Degas escaped such difficulties, but their fathers were not self-made men, and Degas's family even showed real appreciation of art. Renoir's parents were poor and unable to help their son, who—having been brought up not to expect anything—learned early to fend for himself. It would be idle to speculate whether Cézanne was any worse off than the others, except to say that he probably would not have been able to shift for himself (a fact that cannot have escaped the banker) and that his father seems to have been less coarse and brutal than Monet's.

In February 1860, when life at home became unbearable because of Paul's reproachful glances, brooding silences, and barely contained rebellion, his father offered to let him go to Paris, with the condition that his teacher at the local drawing school approve the action. It was a conciliatory move that raised great hopes, but also an extremely shrewd one, since the teacher, as Zola immediately suspected, was not eager to lose a pupil and told the banker that Paul could still learn a great deal in Aix. The disappointment was too much for the young man, who now abandoned himself completely to discouragement and apathy. The father had won the first round, yet his son was so deeply affected that he considered renouncing all his dreams; he began to doubt his own talent and no longer felt himself possessed by the desire to paint. Even Zola's letters could not shake his inertia and despondency. This was more than the father had bargained for and it must have been at this time that the banker authorized Paul to abandon his law studies.

While he took up his brushes with new-found enthusiasm, Cézanne continued to suffocate in his stale and frustrating surroundings, longing to join Zola in Paris and to plunge himself into the stimulating atmosphere of the capital. His father finally realized that nothing would be gained by further resistance and acquiesced to the departure, though he did not yet consider himself vanquished. He felt certain that Paul would be disillusioned in Paris and come back to resume his studies. The trip was decided on so suddenly, toward the end of April 1861, that Cézanne could not even inform Zola of his impending arrival. After their three year battle, the banker proved himself a gracious loser; he not only accompanied his son to Paris (he probably had to attend to some business there) but also took his daughter Marie along. Together they would find appropriate lodgings for the painter, commensurate with the mod-

est though sufficient allowance he was to receive. Much to Zola's surprise, Paul's father did not seem to hold any grudges against him and insisted that they all dine together.

Louis-Auguste may have been inordinately headstrong, but he was far from primitive; he certainly knew his son well and, to a certain degree, "understood" him without, however, being ready to capitulate before Paul's complicated personality. While he may have felt that his son's lack of stability called for particularly strict discipline, he must also have been impressed with the young man's tenacity, a characteristic he probably owed to paternal genes. The only thing that obviously completely escaped him was the question of his son's talent, but this, it would seem, was of minor importance to the banker, since even the most promising artist would have made an unlikely successor for his business.

Cézanne's father had been right: after the expectations built up during years of hopes and dreams, Paris soon disappointed the awkward and unsociable provincial, completely out of tune with the active and sophisticated city. Zola, though wrapped up in his own concerns, tried his best for the friend who did not know a soul in the capital, but after about five months the painter could stand it no longer and fled into what must have appeared to him the protective folds of Aix, of the *Jas de Bouffan*, and of his family.

By giving in, the father won the second round. His victory appeared complete almost beyond expectations when the son seemed to abandon all thoughts of art and actually resigned himself to enter the paternal bank (rather than resume his law studies). Yet it was a short-lived victory; Paul could not conceivably find happiness behind a pay desk. By now Louis-Auguste must have realized that even his son's submission would not make a banker out of him. Being a realist, he understood that no stubbornness would ever achieve the impossible and—having been convinced—gave in at last. In this way the third and final round was won by the painter, who now obtained an allowance from his father and was free to pursue his artistic goals.

The future was to reveal that, whatever agreement father and son entered into, was not a perfect one. There were to be many occasions of friction in the course of which the banker used the purse strings to assert his authority, the only means left to him and of which he availed himself with vindictive nastiness. While this humiliated the artist, particularly in later years, it does not alter the basic fact that at the age of about twenty-three Paul Cézanne gained freedom from financial worries and could devote himself completely to his calling, in a way totally unknown to Monet, Renoir, or Pissarro. Despite his periodically strained relations with the banker, the young Cézanne certainly was not too badly off, and yet it is precisely in his earliest utterances that some scholars have attempted to find clues to a peculiar father-son relationship. They have gone over the childish drawings and immature poems of the teen-ager for revelations of the adolescent's psyche, oblivious to the fact that these juvenile products were meant to be funny and that no analysis of them should be undertaken without some allowance for a young man's fancy, parody, and satire (an allowance that de-

mands from the analyst that he himself show a faint sense of humor).

Examining a burlesque poem contained in a letter to Zola of November 1858, Theodore Reft has endeavored to detect in the young author not only hidden guilt complexes and sexual fantasies, but also an "unconscious desire to eliminate his own father as a rival and threat."<sup>3</sup> Kurt Badt went further when he sought to discover in a lugubrious drawing, (in another letter to Zola, of January 1859) analogies with Dante's Ugolino and ventured the theory that Cézanne hated his father, dreaming to see "fate catch up with the 'sinner' who, after his death, will wind up in hell and there be turned over to him, the son," so that he, the artist, can take revenge by devouring his own father's head, the very one that had evolved the devilish plan of letting him starve spiritually.<sup>4</sup>

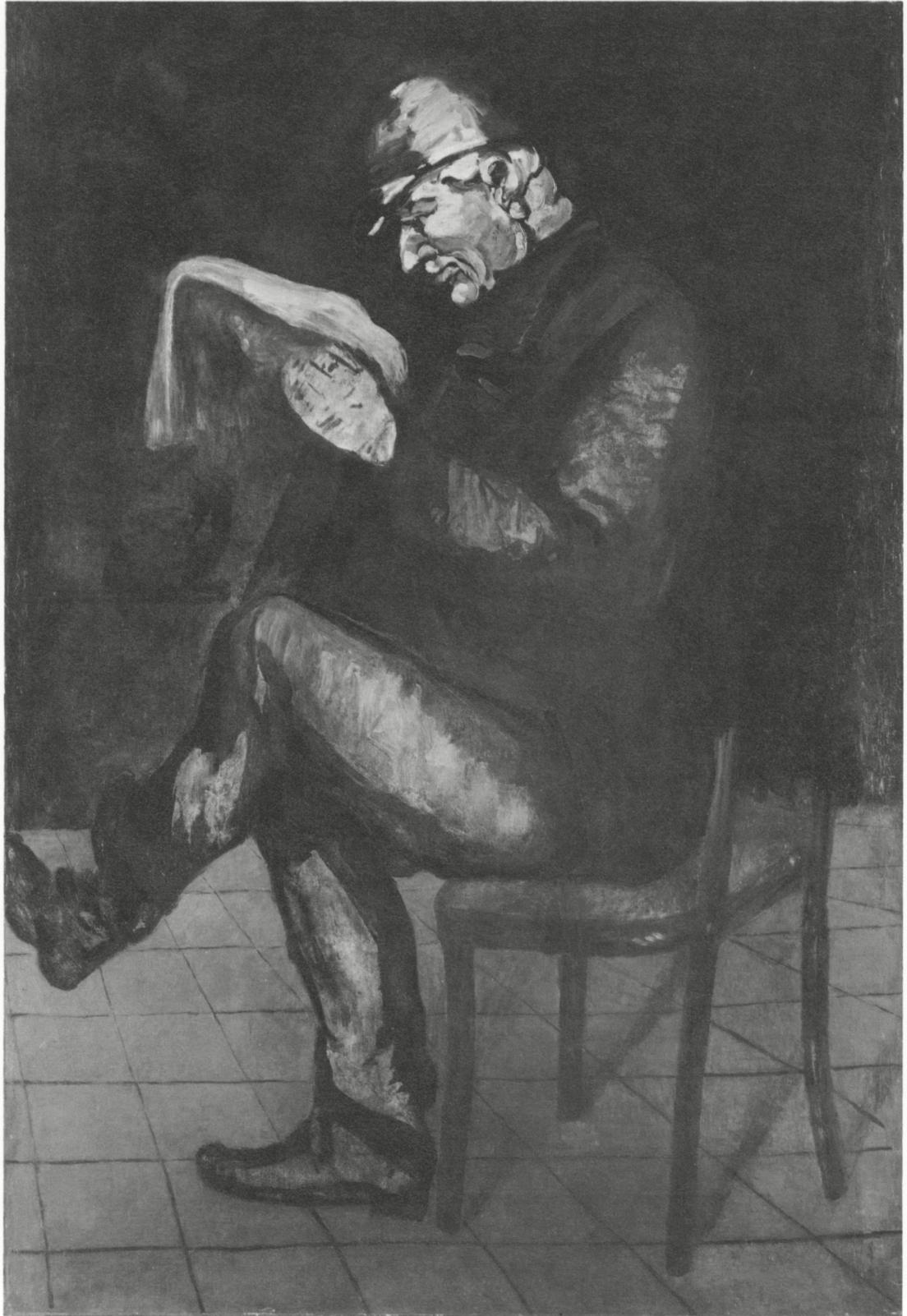
It is of course almost impossible to argue with this search for obscure significance and highly individual interpretation, at least not without venturing on the thin ice of psychoanalytical speculation. In any case it seems considerably "safer" to confine oneself to established facts. Since it has long been recognized (despite today's extreme permissiveness) that discipline, and even punishment, provide the child with proof of parental care and concern, one can assume that the young Cézanne, with all his yearnings, resentments, and transports of anger, found in his father the steadying element he needed, the authority that protected him from his own lack of decision. If there was unconscious hatred, there was also love, the love-hate relationship so common between father and child. It is certain that the *Jas de Bouffan*, where the painter usually found a haven and to which he returned for many decades, remained for him, as he was to say—even some ten years after the banker's death—*la maison de mon père!*

But more important still is the one testimonial that has been completely neglected: the series of portraits Cézanne did of his father, whom he represented in more paintings and drawings than Manet, Monet, Renoir, or Pissarro ever did of their respective fathers. Cézanne's early models were obviously drawn from the small circle of his family and friends. Since he either abandoned or destroyed many of his works of those years, it is impossible to establish an exact count. From the paintings that have survived, however, it would seem that, despite his veneration for his mother, Cézanne hardly ever asked her to pose, whereas her brother, Dominique Aubert, was his most frequent model, possibly because he was particularly "pictogenic." He seems to have been readily available and willing to don all kinds of disguises, to be painted as a monk, a lawyer, or what not. Next to this uncle, the banker appears to have been his son's favorite model. From the likenesses that are known, it would seem that he agreed to pose provided he could read; he was getting on in age and was probably no longer as active as in former years. Three portraits exist, of which the first two are full length and rather large; they must have required several sittings, whereas the much smaller heads of the uncle were often "dashed off" in one afternoon.

The earliest of the three portraits shows Louis-Auguste Cézanne

<sup>3</sup> "Cézanne's *Dream of Hannibal*," *Art Bulletin*, June 1963, pp. 148–52. One of the minor flaws of this study is that it gives weighty consideration to details which the author simply misunderstands. When he explains that Cézanne, by saying that Hannibal falls asleep *du côté gauche*, picks "a familiar equivalent of 'wrong' in the symbolism of dreams," he completely overlooks the fact that the crucial word in this verse is *débauche* and that Hannibal would have fallen asleep *sur la droite* or *sur le dos* provided they offered a rhyme with . . . *auche!* Similarly he states (note 16) that the expression *faire la noce* "suggests both an orgy and a wedding banquet." It definitely suggests no such things to Frenchmen, and any reliable dictionary would have told him that *faire la noce* has nothing to do with nuptials and still less with an orgy or even sex, since it merely means "to go on a spree, to have one's fling, to have a high old time."

<sup>4</sup> *Die Kunst Cézannes*, Munich, 1956, pp. 77–79, here translated from the original German edition.



*Fig. 1. Cézanne. Portrait of the Artist's Father. c. 1865. Oil on canvas, 168.5 x 115.5 (66 7/8 x 45 1/2). National Gallery, London.*

strictly in profile, seated—somewhat uncomfortably—on a chair that appears almost too frail for his considerable bulk (fig. 1). He is absorbed in a newspaper, wearing an unusual visored cap, doubtless because he was bald and, like many Frenchmen, in constant fear of drafts (he seems always to have worn, even indoors and while dozing, this or a similar, unvisored headgear, which were possibly the residue of his hatter's stock). This first likeness was probably done around 1865, when the artist was in his mid-twenties and the banker approaching seventy. It is painted rather coarsely, with some parts sketchily indicated, while the features are modeled in contrasts and executed with a certain realism that had not as yet appeared too frequently in the young man's work, though it was to emerge now with increasing frequency in portraits and still lifes.

What is peculiar about this painting, which measures  $66\frac{3}{8}$  x  $45\frac{1}{2}$ " , is that it originally was part of the decorations of the vast living room at the Jas de Bouffan where it was placed in the center of a spacious niche, flanked on either side by two of *Four Seasons*.<sup>5</sup> Painted directly on the plaster,<sup>6</sup> its appearance at the focal point in the largest room of his parents' home was not the result of some leisurely dabbling on an empty surface but represented, on the part of the artist, a deliberate effort to allocate to his father the most dominant spot in the entire house. The parental authority is thus freely acknowledged here, and on the painter's own terms not as something imposed upon him by paternal tyranny but rather as a confirmation—and to a certain degree acceptance—of an inescapable reality.

Cézanne's second portrait of his father, even larger than the preceding ( $78\frac{3}{4}$  x  $47\frac{1}{4}$ " ), which was recently donated by Paul Mellon to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, is without question the most important of the three likenesses the artist painted of the banker. It is also one of his rare works so fully documented that even its date of execution is known. Indeed, on November 2, 1866, Antoine Guillemet, a young painter Cézanne had met in Paris and who was then visiting him in Aix (and trying to obtain from the banker a more substantial allowance for his son), in a letter to Zola mentions one of their friend's recent canvases, "a portrait of his father in an armchair which looks very good. The painting is 'blond' and the effect is splendid; the father looks like a pope on his throne were it not for *Le Siècle* that he is reading."

This portrait (fig. 2) is much less hesitant and/or sweeping in its execution than the first one. Painted in parts with a palette knife, it shows—on a large surface—the same vigor that distinguishes so many of the more spontaneous likenesses of the uncle which must date from the same period. Following on the heels of the more romantic and groping earlier expressions of the young artist, this vigor and strength prompted him to plan a series of quite big canvases of which almost none have survived. (Doubtless inspired by the example of Courbet and Couture, as well as many Salon painters, not only Cézanne but Manet, Monet, Bazille, Renoir, and even Pissarro were then executing works of large scale.)

Unlike the first portrait with its rather primitive profile representation, this one shows the banker in front view, seated more com-

<sup>5</sup> Cooper, *op. cit.*, reproduces fig. 2 as one of the mural decorations of the Jas de Bouffan, confusing it with the portrait in profile, fig. 1 (Venturi No. 25).

<sup>6</sup> See National Gallery Catalogues, French School—Early 19th century, Impressionists, Post-Impressionists etc. London, 1970 pp. 24–5, No. 6385.



**Fig. 2. Cézanne. Portrait of the Artist's Father Reading "L'Événement."**  
*Autumn 1866. Oil on canvas, 200.0 x 120.0 (78 3/4 x 47 1/4 ). National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Paul Mellon.*

fortably in a stuffed armchair set at an angle through which an illusion of depth is created, enhanced by the shadows cast by the model's forward-reaching feet. This illusion is further, and more subtly, underlined by a small still life that hangs on the wall behind the highbacked armchair (the latter also appears in a few other paintings done at the Jas de Bouffan).<sup>7</sup>

Though the picture does not appear quite as "blond" as one may expect from Guillemet's description, it is certainly less dark than many of Cézanne's previous works; indeed, the tobacco-brown background is considerably lighter than the small still life that appears almost black by contrast. And the flowered slipcover of the chair provides a light setting against which the somber coat and cap of the father are powerfully set. Moreover, the central feature of the canvas is the large, unfolded, blank sheet of newspaper whose masthead, in bold letters, is clearly visible, upside down.

Notwithstanding the fact that the palette knife technique demands a fairly rapid execution, while the pigment is not yet dry, this portrait—if only due to its size—must have required repeated sittings to which the artist's father submitted while reading *Le Siècle*. Founded in 1836, it had been the first inexpensive newspaper (40 francs a year) and had enjoyed a tremendous popularity.<sup>8</sup> Thirty years later it still had 44,000 subscribers and was by far the most widely read of the French dailies. It had a tradition as the voice of the "constitutional opposition," that is, as the advocate of the principles of 1789 and 1830; under the Second Empire it obviously took an anti-government position without, however, exceeding the bounds set by law. Louis-Auguste Cézanne must have found the paper very much to his liking (as doubtless did his son who, while not particularly interested in politics, loathed Napoleon III, "the tyrant"). If, in the artist's likeness of his father, the masthead mentioned in Guillemet's letter of November 2, 1866, was replaced by that of *L'Événement*, this had nothing to do with the banker's republican reading habits.

*L'Événement* had been launched in October 1865 by the enterprising director of *Le Figaro*, Henri de Villemessant, who was more interested in circulation than in editorial opinions. Within little more than a year, in November 1866, the paper ceased to appear, but in April and May it had offered Zola a platform for his first art criticism. At his own request, the young novelist, then twenty-six, had been entrusted by Villemessant with the Salon review, not because he had any experience in art matters, but more likely because he was a contributor to *Le Figaro* and because the editor was doubtless willing to gamble on a little-known and not too expensive an author.

Zola's eagerness to write this series of articles is easily explained by the fact that through Cézanne and his friends, such as Guillemet and Pissarro, he had met a number of artists more or less of his own generation, most prominent among whom was Manet. In their company he had listened to, and participated in, many discussions concerned with new principles that were eventually to lead to impressionism. Zola had found in the unconventional ideas of these painters, and in their obstinate attachment to nature, many elements

<sup>7</sup> I. Elles has suggested, however, that the figure seems to be in contrast with its "still life-like" setting: "The father, though in a lounging jacket and wearing a cap, does not sit comfortably in the armchair, barely leaning against its back, and he is not relaxed. Nor is he absorbed in the newspaper . . . which he holds in front of him, rather he barricades himself behind it. The paper remains a pretext. Even the picture that hangs on the wall in the background, a repetition of a still life by Cézanne . . . does not manage to create an intimate, cozy atmosphere in which the sitter could feel at ease and protected." See I. Elles, *Das Stilleben in der französischen Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Zurich, 1958, p. 107. This small still life can clearly be recognized as Venturi No. 62. It is symptomatic for the confusion concerning the chronology of Cézanne's work that Rivière should have dated the portrait 1868 (instead of 1866), and the still life which appears in it: 1873.

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to M. Michel Melot, Conservateur at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, for information concerning the newspapers *Le Siècle* and *L'Événement*.

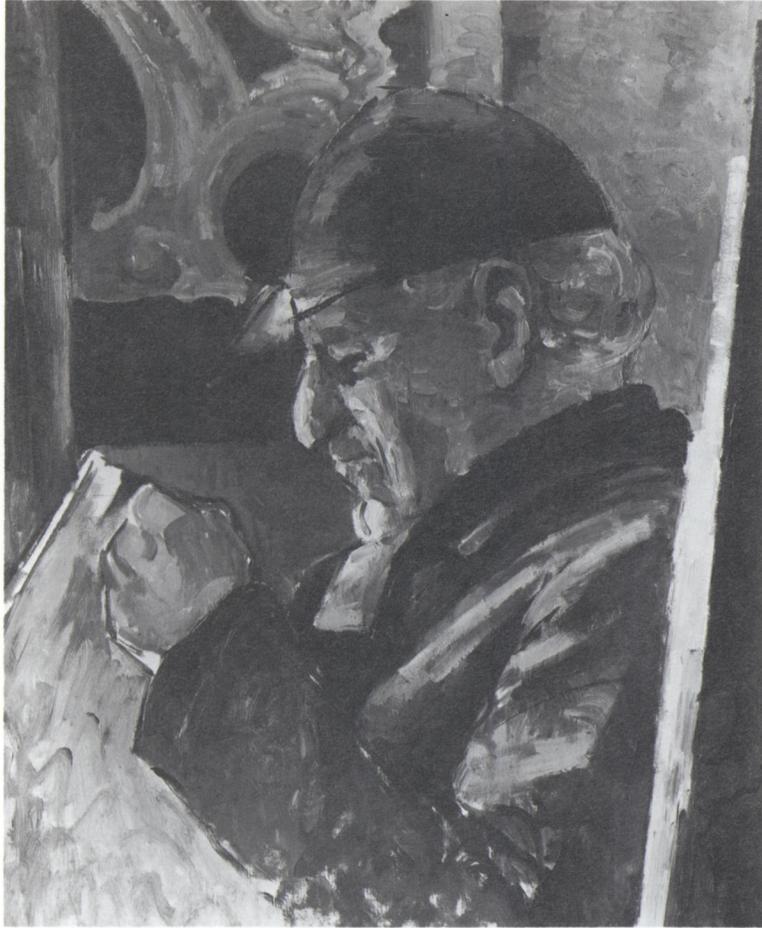
<sup>6</sup> Cézanne is known to have sent two works to the Salon of 1866. One was his portrait of Antony Valabrègue (Venturi No. 126; Collection Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, Va., presented to the National Gallery of Art, Washington in 1970), which is stylistically related to the likeness of his father executed later that same year. The other may have been the still life dated 1865 (Venturi No. 59; in the Cincinnati Art Museum). Both works are signed.

akin to his own literary tendencies. He thus was anxious to formulate their common views not only by proclaiming what he admired, but just as much by attacking the celebrities of the day whom they abominated. When the Salon jury of 1866 rejected the entries of Manet (who had obtained a *succès de scandale* with his *Olympia* at the previous Salon), Renoir, and Cézanne (who had fully expected to be refused<sup>9</sup>), among others, Zola seized the occasion to lash out at the enemy and to devote an entire article to his friend Manet, something absolutely unheard-of, considering that he was writing a Salon review and that the painter was not represented in the exhibition. His diatribes caused such an uproar that Villemessant put a stop to Zola's performance before he could complete his task. Zola thereupon decided to issue in a pamphlet the articles that had appeared. At the head of this brochure he put the proclamation: "That which I seek above all in a picture is a man and not a picture."

Zola had not spoken of Cézanne in his series who, though rejected like Manet, was—unlike the latter—still completely unknown. But now, in lieu of a preface to the articles, he wrote a long dedication in the form of a letter to his boyhood friend. It was a very personal, warm, even affectionate letter in which Zola said: "For ten years we have been discussing art and literature. We have lived together—do you remember?—and often daybreak caught us still conversing, searching the past, questioning the present, trying to find the truth and to create for ourselves an infallible and complete religion. We have shuffled stacks of frightful ideas, we have examined and rejected all systems, and after such arduous labor have told ourselves that outside of powerful and individual life only stupidity and lies exist."

Cézanne must have been deeply touched by Zola's public acknowledgment that the writer's forcefully expressed views on art were rooted in their long years of friendship. Was it as a sign of gratitude that in the portrait of his father he replaced the masthead of *Le Siècle* with that of *L'Événement* where Zola's controversial articles had originally appeared? Was it because *L'Événement* had just suspended publication that he wanted to preserve its name for posterity? Was it because he hoped to give reality to what must have been a wishful dream: his father immersed in Zola's articles (in which, no doubt, the banker had not the slightest interest)?

If the painter intended this portrait as an indirect homage to his friend, he evidently would have done better to let his father hold Zola's small brochure, titled *Mon Salon*, with which his own name was connected. This, however, would have required an altogether different composition and even, in the absence of the large sheet, a different pose of the model. Since it is quite obvious that the banker was actually reading *Le Siècle* while sitting for his son, the change of the paper's masthead came as an afterthought and obliged the artist to redo only a small section of his work. It seems impossible not to recognize here Cézanne's intention to make the painting more meaningful and relevant without altering his artistic concept. Only his most intimate friends could have known that *L'Événement* did not relate merely to a short-lived newspaper, but those few must have realized that the painter was establishing a link between the



*Fig. 3. Cézanne. Portrait of the Artist's Father. 1870–71. Oil on canvas, 55.0 x 46.0 (21 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ ). Collection Joseph Klingenstein, New York.*

man who provided for him (and was to do so for the rest of his life) and the friend who had exerted the most important single influence on his adolescence and early years as an artist.

Since Louis-Auguste Cézanne was not particularly fond of Zola, precisely on account of this influence, he may have resented this “falsification” of his likeness, this introduction of an element that was patently foreign to him. But by now he had resigned himself to the situation and probably did not even care. In any case, a few years later he posed for a third portrait (fig. 3), executed in 1870–71, possibly while his son was hiding from conscription at the Jas de Bouffan. Like the first one, this portrait shows the banker strictly in profile, again wearing his cap and reading a paper; it is considerably smaller than the others, measuring only 21 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ ” and appears, at least in part, to be unfinished (it may be a section of an originally larger canvas).

After the Franco-Prussian War, Cézanne does not seem to have painted any more likenesses of the banker, though he did a number of drawings of him, usually in sketchbooks. The truth is that the relations between father and son suffered considerable deterioration in the following years, mostly due to the fact that in Paris,

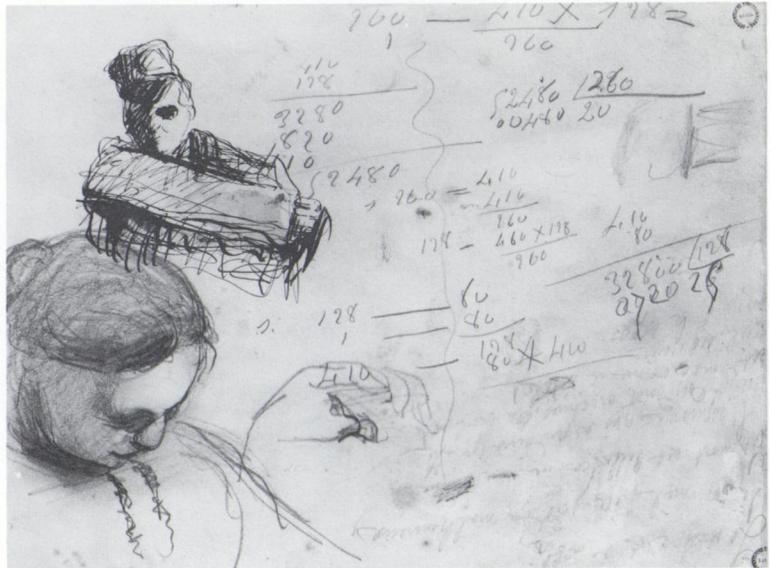


Fig. 4. Cézanne. Sheet of Studies with Sketch of the Artist's Father Reading a Newspaper. c. 1866. Pen and ink (for the portrait sketch), 17.7 x 23.5 (6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>), (entire sheet). Kunstmuseum, Basel.

around 1869, the painter had met a young girl, Hortense Fiquet, who bore him a son in January 1872. While the artist's mother was eventually taken into his confidence, the situation was carefully hidden from the father who, however, was nobody's fool. Thus a painful and sordid tug of war between the two men began, not because of the father's opposition to the son's artistic activity but because the old man resented the fact that the painter, without being able to earn a penny, was keeping a family at *his* expense (and did not even have the courage to admit it). For several years Cézanne was to experience constant apprehension of being found out, while the banker avidly opened letters addressed to his by now almost forty-year old son at the Jas de Bouffan and hunted for other indications of his "guilt." The painter meanwhile steadfastly denied his paternity, even in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Under these circumstances the Jas de Bouffan ceased to be a haven. Not only did Cézanne's correspondence turn into a major problem, it also became increasingly difficult for Hortense Fiquet to follow him in his erratic travels from north to south, where she had to hide with the child in communities near Aix so that the artist could occasionally visit with them. As the boy reached school age, around 1878, such trips back and forth between Paris and Provence became even more complicated. The unavoidable crisis broke out precisely in 1878 when the banker, angered by his son's inept lies, told him that since he pretended to be a bachelor, he would not need the usual allowance while staying with his parents. Unable to send any remittances to Hortense, who was then living in Marseilles, Cézanne first thought of looking for a job but eventually accepted help from Zola who offered to provide her with the necessary funds. "I had hoped," Cézanne wrote during these trying months to his friend, "to find here the most complete tranquility but



Fig. 5. Cézanne. *The Artist's Father (reading?)*. 1877-80. Pencil, page of a sketchbook, 12.1 x 22.2 (4 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ ). *The Art Institute of Chicago*.

a lack of understanding between me and the paternal authority has as result that, to the contrary, I am more tormented. The author of my days is obsessed with the idea of affranchising me.—There is only one good way for this which would be to let me have two or three thousand francs more a year and not to postpone after my death his intention of making me his heir, since I'll be finished before him, that's for sure."

There was, however, some unexpected relief about which



*Fig. 6. Cézanne. The Artist's Father (dozing? and the artist's son). 1877-80. Pencil, page of a sketchbook, 12.5 x 22.2 (4 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ ). The Art Institute of Chicago.*

Cézanne informed Zola on September 14, 1878, concerning his then eighty-year-old father: "Papa has given me back 300 francs [obviously from his temporarily reduced allowance] this month. Unheard of! I believe that he makes eyes to a charming little maid we have in Aix; mother and I are in L'Estaque. What results!"

Eventually some kind of truce must have been worked out and the painter's allowance restored; in the spring of 1879, Cézanne was able to go to Paris and subsequently settle in Melun with Hortense

and their child. It was not until the end of 1881 that he returned to Aix; early in 1882 he was back in Paris and vicinity until the autumn of that year, but after that he remained in the south till the summer of 1885. It was evidently during his various sojourns at the Jas de Bouffan that he made most of the portrait drawings of his father,<sup>10</sup> frequently while the latter was reading. One of these drawings (fig. 10) shows the banker in the same armchair as in the painting in which he reads *L'Événement* (fig. 2), except that now he holds the paper at a greater distance, being obviously far-sighted and wearing no glasses. In other drawings the old man appears to be dozing and it seems easy to imagine the painter, in the peaceful atmosphere of the living room, reaching for his sketchbook once again to draw the familiar features and attitude of his motionless father. Cézanne's portraits do not always reveal warmth or any kind of emotional relationship with the sitter, yet in these drawings of the aged banker one does sense an undefinable tenderness, as though, while contemplating him, often without the model's knowledge, the painter had felt the deep-rooted links that nature and fate had established between him and this old man. On some of these sketchbook pages one also finds other studies: on one of them appears, together with the banker's head, in reverse, a likeness of the artist's son, about five years old (fig. 6); and on another, a drawing of Hortense Fiquet (fig. 7). However one may wish to interpret this, it is certainly not without significance that we thus see the artist's father, in various portraits by his son, associated not only with Zola but also with his own wife and child.<sup>11</sup>

The aging banker probably grew slowly weaker during his last years. He distributed at least part of his wealth among his children, although in those days inheritance taxes as well as fiscal control were practically nonexistent. It is not impossible that he merely wished to be relieved of some burdens. Be this as it may, it would scarcely seem that his children brought the old man much comfort and satisfaction. In 1881 his youngest daughter, Rose, had married; her husband, while astute and alert, did not show any particular business acumen, and was to prove a better spender than earner. His elder daughter and favorite child, Marie, turned into an increasingly devout spinster. It was with resignation, and possibly bitterness, that Louis-Auguste now complained: "Paul will be devoured by painting and Marie by the Jesuits."<sup>12</sup>

Doubtless it was Marie Cézanne who brought about the final "reconciliation" of father and son. She obviously knew about the painter's liaison and may also have been aware of a mysterious love affair he had in 1885. Disturbed by Paul's "irregular situation" as well as by the illegitimacy of his child, and conceivably feeling that marriage—even with Hortense Fiquet of whom she had a rather low opinion—would prevent any further, reprehensible escapades, she ceaselessly admonished her brother: "Marry her—why don't you marry her!"

To straighten out the uneasy relations between her probably agnostic father and sinning brother must have become a sacred errand for Marie, anxious to secure the salvation of their souls. Her pious zeal was to reap its reward when she obtained the father's —

<sup>10</sup> It seems worth mentioning that only a single drawing of Cézanne's mother is known, which shows her asleep in an armchair.

<sup>11</sup> Adrien Chappuis, who is preparing a catalogue raisonné of Cézanne's drawings, has helped me locate all the artist's drawings representing his father and has provided most of the photographs of these; the dates here assigned to these drawings conform to those of his forthcoming publication. The book by Wayne Andersen, *Cézanne's Portrait Drawings*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, appeared after this article was written.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Ch. Flory-Blondel, "Quelques souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne par une de ses nièces," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1960, p. 301.



*Fig. 7. Cézanne. The Artist's Father (and Hortense Fiquet). 1878–81. Pencil, 21.5 x 12.7 (8½ x 5), (sketchbook page). The Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., Marion H. Phinney Bequest.*

weary?—consent to Paul's marriage. This is, admittedly, conjecture, yet how otherwise explain that the banker, aged eighty-seven, should have accepted the legalization of ties he had fought so strenuously for so many years, or that the son, certainly no longer in love with Hortense Fiquet with whom, as the future was to reveal, he had no intention of living permanently, should have agreed to marry



Fig. 8. Cézanne. *The Artist's Father (dozing?)*. 1879–81. Charcoal, 22.0 x 25.1 (8<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>). Collection Mr. and Mrs. Emery Reves.

the mother of his by now fourteen-year-old boy? But on April 28, 1886, in the town hall of Aix-en-Provence, they married; both the artist's father and mother signed the official register. The witnesses to the religious ceremony, which took place the following morning at the church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, were Cézanne's sister, Marie, and Maxime Conil, Rose's husband. Louis-Auguste Cézanne died on October 23, six months after the wedding, in his eighty-ninth year.

Within a few years a mutual friend was able to report from Aix to Zola that the painter "has no financial troubles. Thanks to the author of his days whom he now venerates . . . he has enough to live." The posthumous veneration was probably predictable, but what may appear less predictable was that Cézanne soon even imitated his father's high-handed methods. When his wife demurred at leaving Paris for the south, he simply cut her allowance in half and thus forced her to settle in Aix, while he continued to live with his mother and older sister at the *Jas de Bouffan*. This arrangement, he felt, would also enable him to spend six months in Paris every now and then.<sup>13</sup>

The history of the three portraits Cézanne painted of his father

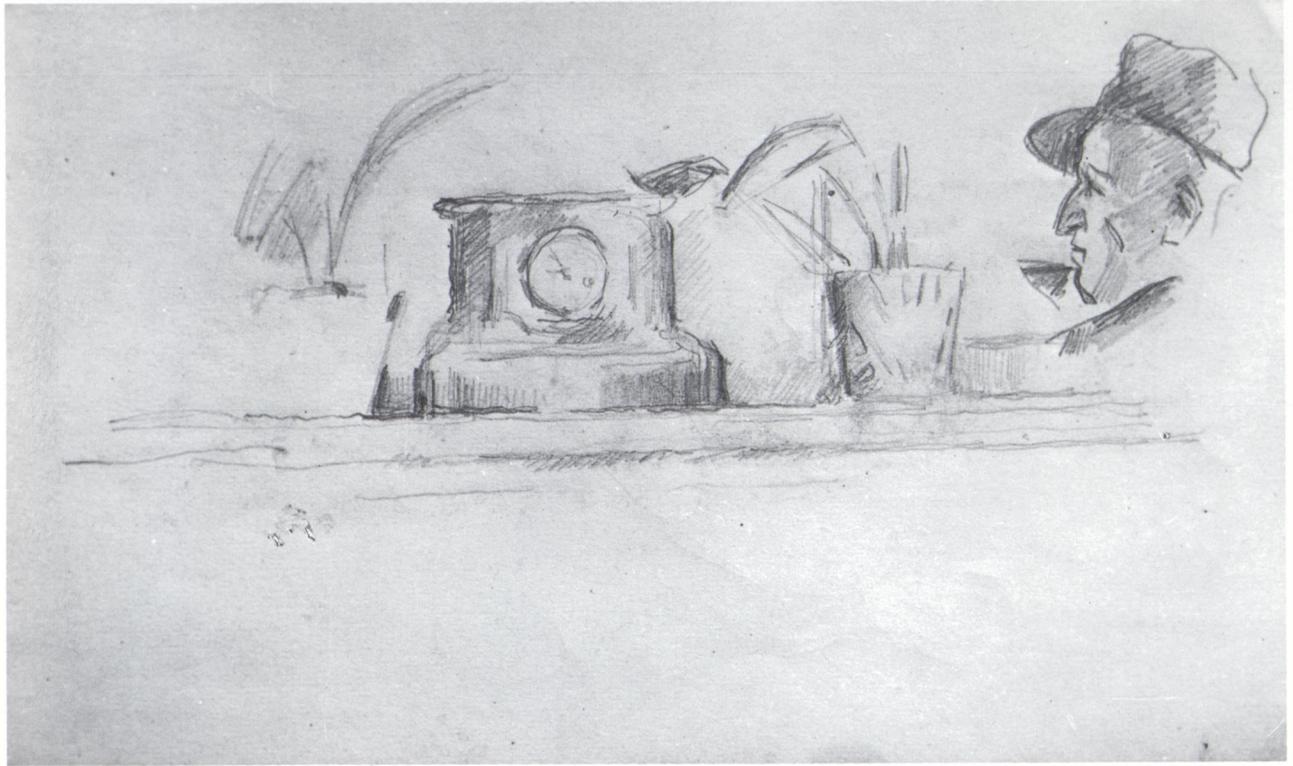
<sup>13</sup> But this scheme did not work in the long run, his wife not being easily subdued. By 1896 Cézanne complained to a friend that he "had to go to Paris or return from there according to her orders."

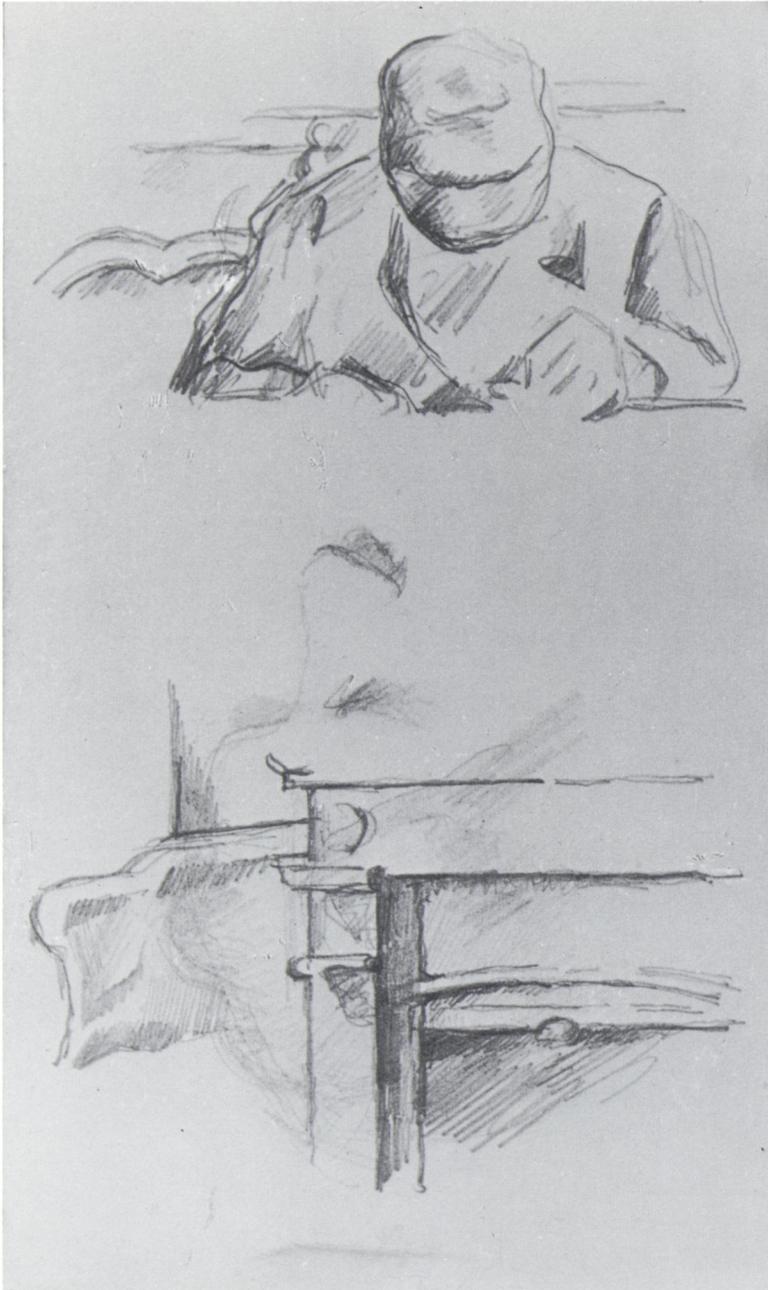


*Fig. 9. Cézanne. The Artist's Father Dozing (and head of a woman). 1882-85. Pencil, page of a sketchbook, 12.5 x 22.2 (4 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ ). The Art Institute of Chicago.*

is only partially known. The one that adorned the niche at the Jas de Bouffan remained in place when the property was sold in 1899 after the death of the artist's mother. The new owner subsequently offered *all* the mural decorations of the living room to the French Government who declined the gift. They were eventually detached from the walls; the portrait of Louis-Auguste Cézanne (fig. 1) was acquired by the American collector John Quinn, then entered the collection of the Reverend Raymond Pitcairn near Philadelphia







*Fig. 12. Cézanne. The Artist's Father Writing (and study of a mantelpiece). 1883-86. Pencil, 21.8 x 12.4 (8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>), (sketchbook page). Collection Adrien Chappuis, Tresserve, France.*

became better acquainted with the problems of fatherhood (the boy was neither brilliant nor particularly industrious, but indolent, gentle, and good-hearted), Cézanne avoided passing on to him the banker's worn-out maxims and platitudes with which he himself had been raised. He found much kinder words when he told his son: "Whatever mischief you may get into, I shall never forget that I am your father." On the other hand, he also frequently expressed gratitude for Louis-Auguste Cézanne and said repeatedly: "My

