Abstract

Title of Thesis::

ROGER FRY'S CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY: THE ASSOCIATIVE GAUGUIN CONTRASTED WITH THE CONTEMPLATIVE CÉZANNE

Irina Stotland, Master of Arts, 2005

Directed By: Professor June Hargrove, Department of Art History

This thesis analyses the role of Paul Gauguin in the writings of Roger Fry. Fry follows a nineteenth-century opposition of Gauguin as associative artist to Paul Cézanne as contemplative artist. Fry's binary structure influenced the later English language art criticism on Gauguin.

Fry, as his nineteenth-century sources, considered aesthetic experience to be a reflection of the artist's inner self. To Fry, Cézanne's paintings mirrored an instinctual, semi-conscious and contemplative artist. In Fry's view, Gauguin could not sustain passivity before nature and destroyed the disinterestedness of beholding by enacting associations with the outside world. The perception of Gauguin's inner self as weak and the consequent affectation, subjectivism, and associativity, allowed Fry to find Gauguin inauthentic.

To Fry, through disinterested contemplation, Cézanne achieved significance of forms and enabled a beholder's creation of meaning exclusively from them. For Fry, as a formalist, this factor was decisive in choosing Cézanne over Gauguin.

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By

Irina D. Stotland

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Advisory Committee:
Professor June Hargrove, Chair
Professor William Pressly
Professor Marjorie Venit

Dedication

To my grandfather. I hope I can prove you right.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge Professor June Hargrove and Professor Michael Fried as primary influences on this thesis. This work grew out of two graduate seminars I have taken with them at the University of Maryland and John Hopkins University, respectively. Professor Hargrove's class titled "Paul Gauguin in the Context of Symbolism" provided me with the insights as to the place of Gauguin in the philosophical and critical discourses of Symbolism. Professor Fried's focus on the writings of Roger Fry and the critic's definition of the concept of artistic authenticity was equally invaluable to my research. I am extremely grateful for Professor Hargrove's suggestions and comments on the earlier versions of the thesis, although I bear full responsibility for all its shortcomings

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: The Concept of Authenticity

The role of public reception is a necessary consideration in most art historical treatments of Paul Gauguin. Its significance is two-fold: it functioned within the nineteenth-century critical discourse and was the reason for the continued self-focus of Gauguin. Nineteenth-century critical literature generally characterized him as a theatrical, self-fashioning artist as measured against the ideal of a natural genius. The organizing principle of this dichotomy was the concept of artistic authenticity.

The British critic Roger Fry was among those mainly responsible for introducing Gauguin to the English-speaking public. By close reading of Fry's works on Post-Impressionists, one becomes aware of the same framework in Fry, as there existed in nineteenth-century criticism. The schema manifested in a binary structure of opposition between Gauguin and Paul Cézanne, who exemplified two approaches to art in Fry: associative construction and disinterested contemplation. The concept of "authenticity" was as well an organizing point here. [1]

Noteworthy, in the case of the reversal of the value judgments put on the contrasting categories in that opposition, the definition of what is an "authentic" artwork changes as well. However, the binary structure remains constant. For instance, in 1959, H.R. Rookmaaker published Synthetist Art Theories with the subtitle of Genesis and Nature of the Ideas on Art of Gauguin and His Circle. The study has proven to be an invaluable resource for Gauguin scholars ever since. Yet one is struck by a passage in the

[1] Fry's description of Cézanne frequently use the term "authenticity": Cézanne was "profoundly convinced of the authenticity of his inspiration," "it is in the color that Cézanne asserts most decidedly his originality and the authenticity of his gift," Cézanne achieved "authenticity [by] utter denial of bravura or self-consciousness." Roger Fry, Cézanne: a Study of His development (New York: Noonday Press, 1968) 7, 19, 30-31, Fry also described Jacob Epstein as "having found his own indisputably original and unique artistic

preface:

> Up to the present there has existed a romantic notion according to which a true artist creates his work under a kind of divine inspiration and as it were unconsciously. He is endowed with a mysterious kind of insight into the reality of his own times, although he has no deeper discursive understanding even of what he is doing himself. To the author such a proposition seems to be a fallacy, and this conviction is one of the reasons for the choice of the subject treated in this book.[2]

Rookmaaker picked Gauguin as an example of a self-conscious, materialistic and intellect-driven artist, but pointed to these characteristics as positive.

As a sample of mid-century scholarship, Synthetist Art Theories perpetuated the same dichotomous construction that started in the nineteenth century and continued in Fry's criticism. In the later twentieth century, the writings of Michael Fried situated this rhetoric of authenticity within the dialectic of theatricality and absorption.[3] These categories directly relate to Fry's establishment of associativity and disinterested contemplation as defining elements in the public perception of a work of art.

In the twentieth century, the philosopher Martin Heidegger most definitively established the notion of authenticity. He suggested that in order to be in this world "authentically" a person has to constantly live "in terms of the utmost and most extreme possibilities of our own existence." According to Heidegger, "not authentically" means to live as though "we have lost ourselves in the everydayness of existing among things and

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personality… it sticks out authentically from every work, however varied the subjects are." Roger Fry, "Mr. Epstein's Sculpture at the Leicester Galleries," The Statesman 26 (January 1924): 450.

[2] Henderik Hans Roelof Rookmaaker, Synthetist Art Theories: Genesis and Nature of the Ideas on Art of Gauguin and His Circle (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1959) 7.

[3]The binary is most prominent in Michael Fried, Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) , see also Michael Fried, Courbet's Realism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

people," that is "not as we can at bottom be our own to ourselves." [4] In other words, to live authentically is to own you destiny, to be true to your inner self, and not to disappear into the routine of fulfilling the external expectations.

In early European capitalist society, the terms of one's existence were no longer defined by heredity, that is, by a passing down of a social position. One's profession and course in life were now undetermined variables, and one's self-image became separated into public and private identities. External circumstances marked out the public persona, which ceased to be an authentic expression of self; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) defined this state as "self-alienated."[5]

The notion of "authentic" and "authenticity" became extremely important for the developing discourse of artistic Modernism. The nineteenth-century understanding of an aesthetic authentic expression relied on one's perception of the personal genuineness of the artist. The artist and his creation became completely fused. For instance, when praising Vincent Van Gogh, the contemporary French critic Albert Aurier asserted: "the external and material side of his painting is in absolute correlation with his artistic temperament."[6]

One of the most famous novels of the time, The Picture of Dorian Grey by Oscar Wilde, illustrated this preoccupation with image as a reflection of self. In the novel, the portrait of the protagonist retained and mirrored back the true identity of the sitter. In

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[4] Martin Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) 228.

[5] Quentin S. J. Lauer, A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (New York, Fordham University Press, 1976) 216.

[6] Nathalie Heinich, The Glory of Van Gogh: An Anthropology of Admiration tr. Paul Leduc Browne (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 26.

fact, the painting revealed to a viewer a more authentic self than one could ever glimpse in the real person. Acknowledging the Hegelian split, Wilde gave the following definition of an authentic person, who "develops that spirit of disinterested curiosity," then "attains to intellectual clarity," and, having learned "the best that is known and thought in the world, lives… the contemplative life."[7] According to the writer, one should seek the introspective private, rather than the active public life.

As mentioned, in Fry's writings that came a generation after Wilde, the notion of the genuine creative expression was at the forefront. Fry's observation that an artistic perception as an observation of an anti-utilitarian object of art must "be adapted to that disinterested intensity of contemplation, which we have found to be the effect of cutting off the responsive action," echoed Wilde. [8]

This investigation will demonstrate the significance of Fry's understanding of the concept of "authenticity" as it applied to an artist and to a work of art. The evidence will show that Fry' approach stemmed from the nineteenth-century binary model. Fry's works were a part of a historical moment that still exercises a discernable influence on some art historical scholarship, especially on the formalist-leaning criticism. Finally, the thesis will explain the manner, in which these two factors predetermined Fry's choice of Cézanne as a leader of Modernism and the critic's relationship to Gauguin.

[7] Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," in Oscar Wilde: The Major Works , ed. Isabel Paul Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 277.

[8] Roger Fry, Vision and Design (New York: Meridian Books, 1956) 29.

Chapter 2: Roger Fry

Fry's main contribution to art history was the establishment of a critical discourse based on the work of his nineteenth-century predecessors that enabled the discussion of modern art. He became a champion of Post-Impressionism, specifically crusading for Cézanne.[9] Fry was a formalist, namely, his theories privileged form over content and he based his definition of "true" art on visual clues.[10] According to Fry:

> The form of a work of art has a meaning of its own and the contemplation of the form in and for itself gives rise in some people to a special emotion, which does not depend upon the association of the form with anything else whatever.[11]

He believed in the ability of art, more specifically, of form, to transmit and appreciate "emotion in and for itself."[12] Fry further postulated that an art object is only successful when its form is able to convey an emotion and to create an aesthetic experience without referring to the content.[13]

In order for a painting or a sculpture to achieve this visual self-sufficiency, it needed to demonstrate unity of design and continuity of the formal principles within pictorial tradition.[14] These two characteristics came to be associated with both an object

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[9] Letters of Roger Fry, ed. Denys Sutton (New York: Random House, 1972) 1: 98.

[10] Laurie Schneider Adams, The Methodologies of Art: an Introduction (New York: Westview Press, 1996) 16.

[11] Roger Fry, The Artist and Psycho-Analysis (London: Hogarth Press, 1924) 8.

[12] Jacqueline Victoria Falkenheim, Roger Fry and the Beginnings of Formalist Art Criticism (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980) 89.

[13] Benedict Nicolson, "Post-Impressionism and Roger Fry," Burlington Magazine 93.5741(1951): 12.

[14] Art Made Modern: Roger Fry's Vision of Art, ed. Christopher Green (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1999) 14-15.

of art and the artistic personality that produced it. [15] The viewer perceived the artist through his or her work, where the aesthetic experience was directly related to the author's self. This was especially true for the Symbolist artists and critics, given their privileging of the subjective vision of the world. Fry shared this notion with the Symbolists, as seen from his explanation of the significance of the artist's sensibility:

> Any line drawn by hand must exhibit some characteristics peculiar to the nervous mechanism which executed it. It is the graph of a gesture carried out by a human hand and directed by a brain, and this graph might theoretically reveal to us first, something about the artist's nervous control, and secondly, something of his habitual nervous condition, and finally, something about his state of mind at the moment the gesture was made… if we look at it as we look at a work of art it will tell us something of what we call the artist's sensibility.[16]

As this thesis will show, Fry stood on common philosophical ground, even if he did not share all the artistic values with the nineteenth-century Symbolists.

Born to an aristocratic British family, Fry was able to take advantage of the best educational opportunities. In 1885 he became a student at Cambridge, where three years later under the influence of his mentor, John Henry Middleton, Slade Professor of Fine Arts, Fry decided to become a painter. Being a part of a thriving intellectual community enabled him to meet most of the celebrated philosophers of the day. One of them was Edward Carpenter, an anarchist and a friend of William Morris and Peter Kropotkin.[17] As a social radical, Carpenter subscribed to the brand of criticism of modern society popularized in England by Thomas Carlyle. Among other things, the latter posited that industrialism destroyed beauty by dehumanizing the creative process in turning it

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[15] Art Made Modern 21,22.

[16] Roger Fry, Last Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939) 22-23.

[17] Donald D. Egbert, "English Art Critics and Modern Social Radicalism," The Journal of Aesthetics and

into mass production. [18]

Fry's close friend at the time was John McTaggart, who in 1896 published his first book, based on his Cambridge dissertation, under the title Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic.[19] The Hegelian theme comes up consistently in Fry's writing. For instance, a 1913 letter explored the Hegelian notion of the "self-integrated totality" of form and content that is beauty. Fry posited that content was

> merely directive of form and that all the essential aesthetic quality has to do with pure form. It's horribly difficult to analyze out of all the complex feelings just this one peculiar feeling, but … as poetry becomes more intense the content is entirely remade by the form and has no separate value at all.[20]

Here the concept of poetic beauty probably comes through another British art theoretician, Walter Horatio Pater, who paraphrased the German philosopher in stating that a poem

> should be nothing without the form [which] should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter - that is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.[21]

Pater was a significant presence in literary and art criticism at the end of the nineteenth century in England.[22] He, Wilde, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler were the English-

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Art Criticism 26.1(1967): 31.

[18] Dictionary of National Biography: Fourth Supplement 1922-1930, ed. J. R. H. Weaver (London: Oxford University Press, 1937) 161. Egbert 29-30.

[19] Dictionary of National Biography 550.

[20] F. E. Sparshott, The Structure of Aesthetics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) 348.

[21] According to Hegel, "The central point of art's evolution is the union, in a self-integrated totality, carried to the point of its freest expression, of content and form wholly adequate thereto. This realization, corresponding as it does with the entire notional concept of the beautiful, towards which the symbolic form of art strove in vain, first becomes apparent in classical art." Sparshott 349, note 10, 349.

[22] F. C. McGrath, The Sensible Spirit of Walter Pater and the Modernist Paradigm (Tampa: University of South Florida) 1.

speaking proponents of an Aesthetic movement that corresponded to a French group that counted Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, whom Fry greatly admired and translated, among its members. [23]

Aestheticists declared that art should be self-referential and independent from any other sources, where its values should rely only on its formal elements. [24] According to Pater: "art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."[25] Pater directly predated Fry's insistence on the singular importance of form in an artwork and singled out the direct and physical delight of senses as the purpose of art.[26]

Another source for Fry's aesthetic theory was the Ten O'Clock Lecture of 1885, written by Whistler, a celebrated creator of Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket (Fig. 1).[27] He proclaimed the right of art to exist independently, free of any social and didactic obligations:

> She [Art] is, willful, selfishly occupied with her own perfection only -- having no desire to teach… False again, the fabled link between the grandeur of Art and the glories and virtues of the State, for Art feeds not upon nations, and peoples may be wiped from the face of the earth, but Art is.[28]

Whistler's lecture scandalized society, and its influence reverberated throughout Fry's

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[23] Ruth C. Child, The Aesthetic of Walter Pater (New York: Macmillan Company, 1940): 6, Egbert 33.

[24] Iredell Jenkins, "Art for Art's sake" in Philip P. Wiener ed., The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 1:110.

[25] As quoted in Jenkins 1: 111.

[26] As quoted in Child 8, 20.

[27] James McNeill Whistler: An Exhibition of Paintings and Other Works (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1960) 13-14.

[28] James McNeill Whistler, "The Ten O'Clock Lecture," in Whistler: A Retrospective, ed. Robin Spencer (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1989) 212, 226.

writings. Fry credited the artist with trying "to sweep away the web of ethical questions, distorted by aesthetic prejudices, which Ruskin's exuberant and ill-regulated mind had spun for the British public."[29]

The goals of Aestheticism stood in direct opposition to someone like Kropotkin, who preferred the art to show "the ignominies of the present social order."[30] The celebrated French art critics Félix Fénéon, Octave Mirbeau and Gustave Khan and the artists Camille Pissaro and Georges-Pierre Seurat all had ties with Anarchists. [31] In contrast, Whistler was the close friend of the Pre-Raphaelites' leader, Gabriel Rossetti, both of whom a more matre Fry criticized for being elitist. [32]

Fry's approach combined elements of both movements. On one hand, he emphasized the formal elements and rejected associative ideas. On the other hand, he insisted on the ordinary subject matter and aided in the establishment of the Omega Workshops in 1913. This company was inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement and attempted to function as an intermediary between artists and the public, albeit unsuccessfully.[33]

Fry went to Italy in 1891 and to Paris in 1892, where he worked in Julian's Academy of Art. Upon Fry's return to London he lectured at Cambridge. In 1899 Fry published his first book on Giovanni Bellini and began his career as an art critic at Pilot

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[29] Roger Fry, Vision and Design 287.

[30] Robert L. Herbert and Eugenia W. Herbert, "Artists and Anarchism: Unpublished Letters of Pissarro, Signac and Others – I," The Burlington Magazine 102.692 (November 1960): 478.

[31] Herbert 480.

[32] John Sandberg, "Whistler Studies," The Art Bulletin, 50. 1 (March 1968): 62, Richard Morphet, "Roger Fry: The Nature of His Painting**,"** The Burlington Magazine 122. 928 (July 1980): 481.

[33] Egbert 32.

and then at the Athenaeum, reviewing books and exhibitions. In 1903, Fry, together with Bernard Berenson, became involved with the founding of The Burlington Magazine.[34] The influence of the work of this American art critic on Fry's theory of form is hard to overestimate. In The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance, published in 1896, Berenson wrote that it was "upon form and form alone, that the great Florentine masters concentrated their efforts… in their pictures at least, form is the principal source of aesthetic enjoyment."[35] In 1905 Fry published The Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds.[36]

All of the sources of most significant critical thought were available to Fry. The concept of "significant form" was yet to be created by another of Fry's friends and a formalist art critic, Clive Bell. Undoubtedly, all the influences mentioned aided Fry in the development of his own critical theory

From 1906 to 1910, Fry worked in New York City at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. First, he held the position of Curator of the Department of Painting, and after 1907 as an advisor. The scholar continued publishing articles in the Nation and The Burlington Magazine. [37] Fry met Vanessa Bell and Virginia Wolf that same year and joined the Bloomsbury group of artists and writers.

In the period between 1910 and 1912, Fry published reviews on exhibitions of Modern Art and organized the very important show, Manet and the Post-Impressionists, at the Grafton Galleries.[38] In 1920, Fry published his most celebrated work, Vision and Design, a collection of articles written over twenty years. He completed Duncan Grant in

[34] Letters of Roger Fry 1: 96-97.

[35] Roger Fry. Vision and Design, ed. J. B. Bullen (London: Oxford University Press, 1981): 42.

[36] Letters of Roger Fry 1: 97.

[37] Letters of Roger Fry 1: 97-98.

1923 and the essay The Artist and Psychoanalysis in 1924. In 1926, Transformations in Art and Commerce appeared. During the next years, Fry visited Matisse and Picasso, traveled to Paris, and organized a Cézanne retrospective. He completed Flemish Art and Cézanne in 1927, Characteristics of French Art and The Arts of Painting and Sculpture in 1932, and a theoretical treatise Art History as an Academic Study in 1933. Until his death from a heart attack in 1934, Fry exhibited and remained as active as in his youth.[39]

Fry's Nineteenth-Century Sources

As we have seen, Fry's concept of the creative process and his notion of an authentic artist were indebted to the influence of various European sources. France, which championed cultural innovations at the time, led Europe in art throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, avant-garde critical thought on art belonged to France, especially in the later part of the century. As mentioned in the biographical sketch of Fry, he frequently traveled to France for study and recreation and was privy to all the modern developments in art criticism.

In the winter of 1910, Fry translated the writing of nineteenth-century art critic Maurice Denis for The Burlington Magazine.[40] Ultimately, Denis's influence is the most distinguishable in Fry's writings.[41] Fry especially relied on Denis's definition of

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[38] Egbert 31, 32.

[39] Letters of Roger Fry 1: 101-102.

[40] Letters of Roger Fry 1: 40.

[41] Letters of Roger Fry 1: 40, Michael Fried, "Roger Fry's Formalism," Tanner Lecture on Human Values, University of Michigan, 3 November 2001 [cited 3 October 2004] p. 5. Available from http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/volume24/fried_2001.pdf

"classic," that is exemplary art.[42] For Denis, a perfect balance between subjectivity and objectivity defines Cézanne's art as "classical," where the artist's self imbues the form with authenticity without overwhelming it (Fig. 2):

> Before the Cézanne we think only of the picture; neither the object represented nor the artist's personality holds our attention. We cannot decide so quickly whether it is an imitation or an interpretation of nature. We feel that such an art is nearer to Chardin than to… Gauguin… a Cézanne inspires by itself, by its qualities of unity in composition and color, in short by its painting. The actualities, the illustrations to popular novels or historical events…seek to interest us only by means of the subject represented. Others perhaps establish the virtuosity of their authors. Good or bad, Cézanne's canvas is truly a picture.[43]

According to Denis, the artist's self does not dominate the painting, nor are we distracted by references to matters outside of the image; rather, the object represented impresses a viewer as it is, by the truth of its form.

Fry's classic artist is also completely absorbed in the object. [44] The need to paint a certain way, driven by authentic experiences of real, ordinary things, is central in Fry's writings. [45] For instance, he defines the work of art as a result

> of that passionate intensity of feeling which broods upon the theme until it yields up its last particle of material; until all is informed with a single idea… nothing is for effect, no heightening of emotion, no underlining of the impressive or the delightful or the surprising qualities of things, but an even, impartial, contemplative realization of what is essential – of the meaning which lies quite apart from the associated ideas and the use and wont of the things of life.[46]

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[42] Fry, Cézanne: a Study of His development 87.

[43] Maurice Denis, "Cézanne," in Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology, eds. Francis Frascina, Charles Harrison, Deirdre Paul (New York: Harper and Row, 1982) 58.

[44] Falkenheim 25.

[45] Fry, Cézanne: a Study of His Development 10, 31.

[46] Frances Spalding, Roger Fry: Art and Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 209.

Both critics chose Cézanne as their model and defined his greatness by the painter's refusal of artificial eloquence and his continuous pursuit of simplicity and austerity.[47] In his discussion of El Greco, Fry reiterated the same sentiment based on Denis's idea that Cézanne "a du Greco en lui."[48] In Fry's view, both Cézanne and El Greco can be characterized as uncompromising in representation.[49]

As a leading voice of Symbolism, Denis based his theories on certain philosophical sources that inspired the movement. Generally, the inspiration came from the German school of Idealist philosophy that followed Immanuel Kant. By proxy, their theories also influenced Fry. One of the questions that interested the nineteenth-century philosophers was the assumption that the inner self is instinctive and more genuine as opposed to the external self.

One found the same concept of the authentic as necessarily inward, self-based and unconcerned with the outside in the nineteenth-century art criticism. As early as 1837, an Academic theorist and friend of Jacques Louis David, Antoine Quatremère de Quincy suggested that "besides the local… model contemplated by all alike, each one has within himself another, which he consults and imitates."[50] Thereby, he identified artistic authenticity in terms of its inward concentration

Among the critics directly involved with Symbolist art, Denis, Joris Karel Huysmans, Achille Delaroche**,** Kahn and Aurier openly acknowledged Hegel, Friedrich

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[47] Fry, Cézanne: a Study of His Development 72. Judith Wechsler, Cézanne in Perspective (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1975) 52-53.

[48] Vision and Design 146.

[49] Vision and Design 146.

[50] Richard Shiff, "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy, and the Spontaneous Classic: Theory and Painting in Nineteenth-Century France," Yale French Studies, 66 (1984): 36, 37, 40.

Schelling, and Arthur Schopenhauer as their philosophical sources.[51] The theories of the German philosophers on the nature of self were of particular interest to them.

Schelling's System of Transcendental Idealism came out in 1800. He suggested that an object of art presents one with an image of the universal self when the "particular [the object] is so in accord with its idea that this idea itself, as the infinite, enters into the finite and is intuited *in concreto*."[52] According to Schelling, even a hint of "self-awareness" is a danger to "losing the I" and not being able to grasp the Absolute. [53] The concepts developed by Schelling had a profound impact on the later philosophy of Hegel. [54] Shelling's anxiety about the artist's awareness of self influenced Fry's definition of a contemplative, unconscious artist as an authentic creator.[55]

As we have seen, Hegel's definition of the self-alienated spirit and the establishment of primacy of the inner self as the source of authenticity were paramount within the nineteenth century critical discourse. In his posthumously published Lectures on Fine Art, Hegel posited that in order to achieve a true vision of the "spirit" one has to look to the form, to "the beautiful appearance of spirit in its immediate sensuous shape, " which can enact the reconciliation of the spirit visible in form with the spirit as inner self.

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[51] Swedenborg was translated into French in 1820 and was mainly known through Seraphita, Carlyle was translated in 1864 by Taine, Schelling was translated in 1845, Wagner was translated in 1861, and Schopenhauer in 1880 Rookmaaker. Sven Loevgren, The Genesis of Modernism: Seurat, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and French Symbolism in the 1880's (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971) 18,156. See, Rookmaaker: 183 – 186.

[52] Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," Art Journal 45.2 (1985): 152.

[53] As quoted in Damon Linker, "From Kant to Schelling: Counter-Enlightenment in the Name of Reason," The Review of Metaphysics 54.2 (2000): 358.

[54] "In Hegel's philosophy, then, modern man achieves Absolute Knowledge--and his reason, complete self-satisfaction--in coming to see that man himself is unconditioned--that his essence is Absolute Freedom." According to Linker, Schelling directly anticipated Heidegger. Linker 372.

[55] Roger Fry, French, British, and Flemish Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1951) 205-206.

According to Hegel, the Ideal consists of two parts:

> (*a*) the subjective being in itself and (*b*) the external appearance, in order to enable the spirit to reach through this cleavage a deeper reconciliation in its own element of inwardness. The spirit, which has as its principle its accord with itself, the unity of its essence with its reality, can find its correspondent existence only in its own native spiritual world of feeling, the heart, and the inner life in general.[56]

According to Hegel, the truly beautiful form of an object of art can give us a glimpse into the Absolute.[57] Fry later emphasized the same primacy of form.

Arthur Schopenhauer, a German philosopher (1788-1860) who continued that fascination with the inner self, was the most influential philosopher within the French Symbolist movement. [58] His highly significant The World as Will and Representation first appeared in 1819, was republished as a revised edition in 1844, and a French translation appeared in 1880 under the title of Pensées, Maximes et Fragments.[59] Schopenhauer based his philosophy on the Kantian concepts of the appearance (phenomenon) and the thing in itself (noumenon).[60] Schopenhauer defines noumenon as will, which "is the thing-in-itself, the inner content, the essence of the world. Life, the visible world, the phenomenon, is only the mirror of the will."[61]

The only way to experience the world authentically is through the idea of the

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[56] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 1: 517-518.

[57] Van Meter Ames, "Aesthetic Values in the East and West**,"** The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 19.1 (fall 1960): 6.

[58] Rookmaaker 36-39.

[59] Rookmaaker 244, 262, note 61.

[60] Christopher Janaway, Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 21.

[61] Israel Knox, The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer (New York: Humanities Press, 1958) 126, Kathleen M. Higgins, Robert C. Solomon, A Short History of Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 223-224.

world, that is, unconsciously, by abstracting from the phenomena – all sensuous distractions in order to feel the universal truth of being. One way to achieve this state is through art, which should present us with the image of the idea – a "universal archetype" itself. [62] Schopenhauer wrote that art was

> the work of genius...repeats or reproduces the eternal Ideas grasped through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding in all the phenomena of the world; and according to what the material is in which it reproduces, it is sculpture, or painting, poetry, or music... We [define] it as the way of viewing things independently of the principle of sufficient reason.[63]

Here again, is the notion of disinterested contemplation. In 1888 the influence of Schopenhauer moved the Belgian Symbolist writer, Georges Rodenbach, to publish Du Silence that advertised "solitude raised to the level of a moral principle." [64] As we will see, Fry considered disinterestedness ethically significant as well.

The Symbolist movement was anti-positivist and had a principal investment in the metaphysical, spiritual realm rather than in material knowledge. However, the logical consequence to the interest in the inner self was the development of early scientific psychology. As the nineteenth century progressed, so did curiosity into the hidden processes of the mind.

Several early theories of the unconscious came to fruition at the time. Armand-Marie-Jacques De Chastenet, the Marquis De Puységur (1751-1825), developed the theoretical foundation for the study of the unconscious. Marquis de Puységur suggested that the somnambulistic state induced by hypnosis was a psychological process that

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[62] Dale Jacquette, Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 232-233, 249 – 258, 157, Loevgren 25, Higgins, Solomon 225.

[63] Sparshott 219.

depended on the strength of the hypnotist's or the magnetizer's will.[65] In 1819 Abbé de Faria published De la Cause du Sommeil Lucide, in which he delineated the principle of suggestion. [66] It was followed by Francois Joseph Noizet in 1820 with Mémoire sur le Somnambulisme and Alexandre-Jacques François Bertrand's Traité du Somnambulisme in 1823.[67] In 1845, De l'amulette de Pascal, étude sur les rapports de la santé de ce grand homme et de son genie by Louis-Francisque Lélut, Des Hallucinations by Brierre de Boismont and Du Hachisch et de l'Aliénation Mentale by Moreau de Tours were published. [68]

Jean-Martin Charcot took a scientific interest in the effects of hypnosis. In 1862 he started a neurological clinic at the Salpêtrière Charcot in Paris, where he used hypnosis as a medical treatment for hysteria. One of his students in 1885-1886 was Sigmund Freud.[69] Finally, in 1889, Pierre Janet, who was also a student of Charcot, produced L'automatisme Psychologique.[70] He developed a concept of the partial mental state, in which a part of a personality could split from consciousness and perform in the state of automatism.[71]

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[64] Robert Goldwater, Symbolism (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998) 29.

[65] Eugene L. Bliss, Multiple Personality, Allied Disorders, and Hypnosis (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1986) 14-15.

[66] Bliss 16.

[67] Ellenberger 105, notes 73, 71.

[68] Tony James, Dream, Creativity and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France (Cambridge: Oxford University, 1995) 72.

[69] Morton Hunt, The Story of Psychology (New York: Anchor Books, 1994) 101-102.

[70] Ellenberger 157.

[71] Ellenberger 359.

Concurrently with modern developments in psychological research, there were parallel interests in the unconscious in artistic circles, since both shared an understanding of the creative process as an ecstatic state that binds automation and reality by destroying the "normal" boundaries between them.[72] Psychiatrists voiced an interest of a number of bohemian writers who considered the dream-state to be a path to self-exploration, and to a more genuine vision. [73] For instance, Mallarmé pointed to the unconscious as the source of his poetic vision: "I have made a long descent into Nothingness in order to speak with exactitude. There is only Beauty--and it has but one perfect expression: Poetry."[74]

More importantly, in the discourse of understanding dream states as conducive to an authentic expression, passivity became another prerequisite for an artistic creation. One of the nineteenth-century philosophers, Henri Bergson defined a successful work of art as one that suppressed the active part of artist's identity. Then, a "state of perfect docility" created in the audience enabled the viewers to empathize with the artist.[75]

Fry's Definition of Authenticity

In his understanding of the nature of an artwork, Fry followed the late nineteenth-century pattern, specifically the three criteria of authenticity established in art critical

[72] James 275.

[73] Theophile Gautier explained the talent of Honore Balzac by the latter's gift of dreaming: "His attitude was that of an ecstatic, a somnambulist asleep with his eyes wide open: lost in the depths of a reverie he didn't hear what was said to him or else his mind, far away, responded too late." Baudelaire on the dream-state induced by hashish: "It is indeed at this period of the intoxication that all the senses acquire a new sharpness, a greater intensity. Smell, sight, hearing, and touch play an equal part in this development. The eyes aim their gaze towards the infinite. The ear discerns almost imperceptible sounds in the midst of the greatest tumult." James 73,160, 125.

[74] Dianna C. Niebylski, The Poem on the Edge of the Word: The Limits of Language and the Uses of Silence in the Poetry of Mallarmé, Rilke, and Vallejo (New York: Peter Lang. Place, 1993) 41.

[75] Jennifer L. Shaw, Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France (London: Yale University Press, 2002) 205, notes 15, 60.

writings.[76] According to sociologist Nathalie Heinich they were: first, permanence that demonstrated the "constancy of a creative personality" and second, the universality that allowed the placement of the work in the history of art and its reading according to certain aesthetic rules. Critics should be able to assign a meaning to the work of art in order to exceed the artist's subjectivity and thereby perceive the painting as something universal. [77] The third was the interiority of creative inspiration, which identified the artist as the sole source of inspiration.[78] Consequently, according to this argument, the claim of authenticity in art depended on the manifestation of the inner harmony and strength of the painter's self.

This interiority as a significant factor is clear in Fry's insistence on the unconscious nature of an authentic artist-genius.[79] For Fry, creation was a quest of abandonment: while the mind was wandering, the true self could come through in art. Fry defined successful, that is, authentic art as an intuitive creation which achieved the irreducibility of the aesthetic experience:

> I believed [the] form to be the direct outcome of an apprehension of some emotion of actual life by the artist…apprehension of a special and peculiar kind [which] implied a certain detachment… I conceived the form and the emotion which [the work of art] conveyed as being inextricably bound together in the aesthetic whole.[80]

However, Fry also required from an authentic artist a visibility of his unique

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[76] For instance, Fénéon expressed the same sentiment in his writings. In championing Paul Signac, the critic defined an authentic expression by its permanency, generality and synthesis. Joan Ungersma Halperin, Félix Fénéon, Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 100.

[77] Heinich 26.

[78] Heinich 26- 27.

[79] Fry, Vision and Design 294, Fried, "Roger Fry's Formalism" 21-22.

personality. For instance, Fry congratulated the sculptor, Jacob Epstein (Fig. 3), on

> having found his own indisputably original and unique artistic personality... However completely he seems to abandon himself to the personality he is interpreting, it is Epstein's personality that really startles us. That is the way of great masters, or at least most of them. [81]

Fry consistently brought this up in talking of the force of Cézanne's art, of its "reckless daring born of intense inner conviction."[82] Repeatedly, Fry connected the authenticity of an art object with the authenticity of self. As a result, personal perceptions of Gauguin and Cézanne played a significant role in the discussions of Post-Impressionists.

Fry invented the term "Post-Impressionism" (Fig. 4) in order to name a group of extremely diverse artists when London's Grafton gallery presented their novel art to the English public on November 5, 1910.[83] According to Fry, this "somewhat negative label" was "the vaguest and most noncommittal" term.[84] During the discussion of the possible name for the show, Fry considered the term "Expressionists" but in frustration over others' objections said: "Oh, let's just call them Post-Impressionists. At any rate, they came after Impressionists."[85]

The show included Gauguin, Denis, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Paul Sérusier, Odilon Redon, Albert Marquet, Georges Rouault, Maurice de Vlaminck, André Derain, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Georges Seurat. Most of these artists already resisted being

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[80] Fry, Vision and Design 294.

[81] I believe Fry does not mean that Epstein's personality dominates his sculptures, but that the artist's authenticity imbues the work of art and that this truth of the form impresses the viewer. Fry, "Mr. Epstein's Sculpture at the Leicester Galleries" 450.

[82] Fry, Cézanne: a Study of His Development 10.

[83] Nicolson 11.

[84] Fry, Vision and Design 291.

[85] Bernard Denvir, Post-Impressionists (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 7.

classified together by identifying themselves variously as Neoimpressionists, Fauvists, Synthetists, and Symbolists.[86] On October 5, 1912, a second Post-Impressionist exhibition took place in London. It was broader and included artists from France, England and Russia. [87]

The basis for uniting these disparate artists was their relationship to Impressionism, which preceded them. It is to that temporal difference that Fry referred in describing "Post-Impressionism" as a negative term.[88] The second connecting factor was their dedication to their aim of expressing the inner vision of reality without consideration for the naturalistic reproduction.

The reception was varied and polarized the audience into confrontational segments.[89] However, most of the reviews of the new art were negative: "It begins all over again and stops where a child would stop" reported The Times; "the twitch of a paralytic" evaluated The Athenaeum; "crude efforts of children" was the description in The Connoisseur; and "the pavement pastellist" was the verdict of The Spectator. [90]

The critics and the public singled out four artists as the most significant: Seurat, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin. Right from the start, Cézanne and Gauguin found themselves in different camps.[91] Although initially all four painters enjoyed

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[86] Denvir 7.

[87] Amanda S. Bourque, Patrick H. Hutton, and Amy J. Staples, Historical Dictionary of the Third French Republic, 1870-1940 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) 2: 800.

[88] "In each case, the works of art were read by Fry in terms set out by the artists themselves as a form of self-conscious departure from the narrowly optical art of Impressionism." Richard R. Brettell, Modern Art 1851-1929. Capitalism and Representation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 22.

[89] Denvir 7.

[90] Nicolson 14.

[91] Amanda S. Bourque, Patrick H. Hutton, and Amy J. Staples 2: 801.

approximately equal critical attention, the situation changed for Gauguin fairly quickly.

Fry rarely mentioned Gauguin and usually in a succession of other names. Cézanne was the object of Fry's sincere admiration and the focus of his research; he is the subject of thirty-three works by Fry. [92] In contrast, Fry discussed Gauguin only four times. There was some commentary on the artist in "The Last Phase of Impressionism" in The Burlington Magazine in 1908 and he was mentioned in "The Post-Impressionists" published in Nation in 1910, and in "The Exhibition of Modern Art at Cologne" that also appeared in Nation in 1912. [93] Fry singled Gauguin out once, in "On a Composition by Gauguin" published in The Burlington Magazine in 1918 and that was a highly critical article.[94]

[92] Donald A. Laing, Roger Fry: An Annotated Bibliography of the Published Writings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979) 243.

[93] Laing 46, 156, 164.

[94] Laing 174.

Chapter 3: Fry's Authentic Artist: the Choice of Cézanne over Gauguin

Fry's unsympathetic perceptions of Gauguin stemmed in part from a somewhat fictional self-fashioned narrative of the artist's biography. Gauguin positioned himself as a "civilized savage," citing his Peruvian heritage on his mother's side.[95] Even nowadays his biography encourages romantic interpretations of his life. The books based on Gauguin's life carry such titles as 1931 Paul Gauguin: the Calm Madman by Beril Becker and Noble Savage: the Life of Paul Gauguin written by Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson in 1954. The most celebrated fictional interpretation of Gauguin was Somerset Maugham's Moon and Sixpence published in 1919, just a few years after Fry organized the Post-Impressionist exhibition. The novel was the basis for a film directed by Albert Lewin in 1942. Other cinematic treatments of his life include Lust for Life directed by Vincente Minnelli in 1956, Wolf at the Door, directed by Henning Carlsen in 1986, and Paradise Found of 2003, directed by Mario Andreacchio.

Paul Gauguin. Biography

Gauguin's factual story is simultaneously more regular and fascinating than the fiction. Paul Gauguin was born to Aline and Clovis Gauguin on June 7, 1848. Clovis was a Republican journalist, whose convictions forced the family to flee France for Peru with the change of the political regime. During the sea voyage to Peru Gauguin's father died. The family lived in Peru from 1849 to 1854, after which Aline took her two children, Paul and Marie back to France to Orléans. In 1861, they moved again, this time to Paris.[96]

[95] Robert Goldwater, Paul Gauguin (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1928) 28, 45.

[96] Françoise Cachin, Gauguin: The Quest for Paradise, trans. I. Mark Paris (London: Harry N. Abrams,

In 1865, Gauguin joined the merchant marine and sailed between Rio and Le Havre until 1871.[97] After the death of his mother in 1867 a well-off businessman, Gustave Arosa, became Gauguin's guardian and had a profound influence on his life. Arosa's art collection introduced Gauguin to Impressionist paintings, Peruvian pre-Columbian ceramics and photo-lithographs of world's monuments. He helped Gauguin to find a position as a stockbroker at the firm of Paul Bertin and introduced the young man to his future wife, Mette-Sophie Gad.[98]

Gauguin's career as a painter started in 1874 , when he began to paint under the influence of his co-worker, Claude-Emile Schuffenecker, and enrolled at the Colarossi Academy. [99]Gauguin started to garner celebrity in the artistic circles of the Parisian avant-garde in 1880 when he started to participate in the exhibitions of the Impressionists.[100] In 1882 Gauguin lost his job because of the financial crisis in France.[101]

A year later, Gauguin moved with Mette and their five children to Rouen. They next went to Copenhagen, his wife's native city, where Gauguin attempted to exhibit his paintings. Disappointed in his efforts, he returned to Paris with his son, Clovis, in 1885. A year later he exhibited with the Impressionists in their eighth and last show and moved

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1992) 12-15.

[97] John Rewald, Studies in Post-Impressionism, ed. Irene Gordon and Frances Weitzenhoffer (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986) 170.

[98] Bradley Collins, Van Gogh and Gauguin: Electric Arguments and Utopian Dreams (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001) 47-48.

[99] Goldwater, Paul Gauguin 46.

[100] Goldwater, Paul Gauguin 46.

[101] Amanda S. Bourque, Patrick H. Hutton, and Amy J. Staples 1: 414.

to Pont-Aven in Brittany. The same year he met Vincent and Theo van Gogh in Paris.[102] In April 1887, Gauguin and a fellow painter Charles Laval left for Panama, but they ended up sick in Martinique, and then were repatriated back to Paris. Gauguin remained in Paris until October of 1888, during which time he stayed with Schuffenecker, and had a very unsuccessful exhibition at Boussod and Valadon.[103]

In May of 1888, Van Gogh invited Gauguin to stay at his Yellow House in Arles. Gauguin arrived in late autumn, but the two-month collaborative relationship ended with Van Gogh's violent psychotic breakdown. Gauguin spent 1889 -1890 in Brittany and worked with, among others, Émile Bernard. He exhibited twice in 1889 with Les XX in Brussels and in Paris at Volpini's Café des Arts with other Synthetists, where Aurier noticed him. [104] Impressed by Gauguin's creations, Aurier published his influential "Le Symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin" in Le Mercure de France in 1891[105] The same year Gauguin decided to leave Europe for Tahiti. [106]

The time in Gauguin's life, staring with the moment of his rejection of all the responsibilities of a husband, a father and a provider, has invited a number of psychoanalytical musings. Gauguin's decision to leave his son Paul with Mette and to bring another son, Clovis, with him to Paris is interpreted as an attempt to revise personal history. Gauguin's father, Clovis, died very early, which as a child, the artist, probably perceived as abandonment. First, Gauguin repeats history by identifying himself with his

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[102] Cachin 25, 26.

[103] Rewald, Studies in Post-Impressionism 172.

[104] Cachin 51, 33, 35, 39, 60, 62.

[105] John Rewald, Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956) 567.

dead father in taking his father's namesake, Clovis, and leaving his own namesake, Paul, behind. Then, Gauguin changed history by symbolically leaving his father, since the painter ultimately abandoned his son Clovis at a pension.[107]

Gauguin's search for the "primitive" in Brittany and Tahiti is seen as a desire to achieve the pre-oedipal unity. The general understanding of the "primitive" entails its identification with primal, non-gendered, namely, androgynous origin. A child who does not yet identify himself as separate from his parents exists within the pre-oedipal unity in the primitive state of non-self. That is, a child is not concerned with his gender identity, which is a part of a bigger whole.[108]

Gauguin's attempted suicide after the news of the death of his only daughter, Aline, is accordingly linked by the psychoanalysts to a commemoration of the death of Gauguin's mother, also named Aline. In that reading, two deaths coincide with the thirty-year break and reinforce Gauguin's trauma of loss. [109]

In some ways, the availability of Gauguin's biography as rich psychoanalytical material speaks to his success in self-fashioning. Gauguin died on May 8, 1903 at Atuona in the Marquesas Islands, yet scholars are still fascinated by his psychological makeup.[110] On the other hand, to somebody like Fry, the artist's declarative self-image may have seemed unnecessarily distracting and detracting from Gauguin's art.

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[106] Amanda S. Bourque, Patrick H. Hutton, and Amy J. Staples 1: 414.

[107] Gilbert J. Rose, "Art, Androgyny, Fantasy, and the Arts," in Homosexuality: Reality, Fantasy, and the Arts, eds. Charles W. Socarides and Vamik D. Volkan (Madison: International Universities Press, 1990) 268.

[108] Rose 268.

[109] Rose 262-263.

[110] Amanda S. Bourque, Patrick H. Hutton, and Amy J. Staples 1: 414.

Gauguin began buying modern painters even before he became an artist: Pissarro, Armand Guillaumin, Claude Monet, Mary Cassatt, and Edouard Manet were all in his collection, which was estimated at fifteen thousand francs by the time of its sale by his wife.[111] Gauguin's favorite possessions were the works by Cézanne.[112] In fact, the first painting that Gauguin tried to extract from his Danish brother-in-law after leaving for Tahiti was a Cézanne.[113]

Among the canvases by Cézanne that Gauguin owned were: Still-Life, which was the center of Homage to Cézanne by Denis (Fig. 5), Tree Alley (Fig. 6), and Mountains in Provence (near Estaque) (Fig. 7) that was lauded by Fry as "miraculous" and the "greatest" landscape of the artist. Cézanne's motifs regularly appear in Gauguin's art.[114] For instance, Mountains at Estaque influenced the composition of Christ in the Olive Garden (Fig. 8). The now lost Still-Life was probably very similar to Compotier, Glass and Apples (Still Life with Compotier (Fig. 9), which was incorporated by Gauguin in his Portrait of a Woman with Cézanne's Still-Life (Fig. 10).[115]

Gauguin met Cézanne through Pissarro and later joined them in Pontoise in 1876.[116] Despite Gauguin's open admiration for Cézanne, the feeling was not mutual. The conflict started when Gauguin's wrote to Pissarro in the summer of 1881 asking him,

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[111] Merete Bodelsen, "Gauguin, the Collector," The Burlington Magazine 112.810 (September 1970): 593, 594, 601.

[112] Merete Bodelsen, "Gauguin's Cézannes," The Burlington Magazine 104.710 (May 1962): 207.

[113] Bodelsen, "Gauguin, the Collector" 603.

[114] Bodelsen, "Gauguin, the Collector" 605-606, Bodelsen, "Gauguin's Cézannes" 205, 209, Merete Bodelsen, "Gauguin Studies," The Burlington Magazine 109.769 (April 1967): 218, 226.

[115] Bodelsen, "Gauguin's Cézannes" 207-208, 211.

[116] John Rewald, The History of Impressionism (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961) 410, 456.

perhaps in jest:

> Has M. Cézanne found the exact formula for a work acceptable to everyone? If he discovers the prescription for compressing the intense expression of all his sensations into a single and unique procedure, try to make him talk in his sleep by giving him one of those mysterious homeopathic drugs, and come immediately to Paris to share it with us.

Cézanne, who was notoriously suspicious of other artists, disliked Gauguin thereafter.[117] Many of the avant-garde nineteenth-century art writers, including Denis, shared Gauguin's high regard for the "master of Aix." As we will see, the regard for one was frequently achieved by criticizing the other, and Fry's method followed this pattern as well.

Fry's Associative Gauguin and Contemplative Cézanne

Fry's book Cézanne: a Study of His Development published in 1927 was the defining moment in the critical literature on the painter that successfully established him as a leading figure of Modernism within the history of art. The principal argument revolved around the nature of Cézanne's artistic authenticity. Fry defined the concept as a semi-conscious search of a naïve genius to visualize the true makeup of the subject through uncovering its underlying structure.[118]

Cézanne's vision of the artist's role and function within the creative process is one of complete silence and automation. According to Cézanne: the artist is nothing more

[117] Rewald, The History of Impressionism 456.

[118] According to Fry in the early paintings Cézanne is preoccupied with the "attainment of style." However, "his sincerity and …naiveté are so great that he prefers to fall into extravagance… His very awkwardness here comes to his aid." Fry also notes that in Cézanne there is "no deliberate poetic intention… even in the least successful of these works he showed the authenticity of his inspirations and the exigency of his artistic conscience." The artist's saving grace is his "contemptuous candor… desperate sincerity of his work." In Fry' s view, the artist "gave himself up entirely to this desperate search for the reality hidden beneath the veil of appearance." Fry, Cézanne: a Study of His development 25, 27, 38.

than a receptacle of sensations, a brain, a recording machine…" The willful intervention of the painter, the reinterpretation instead of translation, will lead the artist to corrupt the imagery with "his own insignificance" and to produce an inferior painting.[119] An entry in Cézanne's journal declaring "I seek while painting" presents this conception of artistic creation. [120] The statement manifested the artist's insistence on the complete absorption in the process of painting itself. [121] Seeking presupposed a total involvement, absolute concentration on creation, and a disregard for any external distractions.

As Cézanne said to Zola, "in spite of all alternatives, the only refuge where one finds true contentment is in oneself."[122] Fry shared the same sentiment: "Biologically speaking, art is a blasphemy. We were given our eyes to see things, not to look at them."[123] Put differently, in Fry's view, an artist should seek in passive contemplation, not analyze for utilitarian purposes of imitation. Cézanne's search for inspiration appeared to Fry as an exclusively internal, absorptive and semi-conscious process. Based on this criterion Fry claimed Cézanne as the perfect example of a classic artist.[124]

In contrast, Fry evaluated Gauguin's art as more "conscious" and therefore less

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[119] Joachim Gasquet, "Cézanne. What He Told Me," in Martha Kapos, ed., The Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective (London: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1993) 250 –251.

[120] Richard Thomson, Framing France: The Representation of Landscape in France, 1874-1914 (Manchester: Manchaster University Press, 1998) 78.

[121] Richard Thomson 78.

[122] Rewald, The History of Impressionism 536.

[123] Sparshott 219.

[124] According to Fry, Cézanne succeeded by "unconscious distortions… in producing harmonies… having a profound import, though we are as little able to give any reason for that feeling of deep significance as we are with regard to a great piece of pure music…" Falkenheim 25, 44.

"authentic" than that of Cézanne.[125] Neither Gauguin's self-consciousness nor his favored use of literature, religion, and mythology as references correlated with Fry's conception of essential self-enclosed harmony. In Cézanne: A Study of His Development there was an implicit comparison of Cézanne with Gauguin in Fry's dismissal of the "willed and a priori inventions of the ego." [126]

According to Fry's logic, the brand of Gauguin's art which referenced the "external," admitted to its imperfection. To Fry, the superiority of Cézanne's talent manifested itself in the artist's ability to find beauty in the mundane. In critic's view, Gauguin had to invent or borrow an element to hold a viewer's attention, whereas Cézanne was able to create a lasting image of beauty by contemplating something as insignificant as an apple.

For that reason, in the article "On Composition by Gauguin," Fry excluded Gauguin from the ranks of the "the profoundest" geniuses,

> those who arrive at a vision so universalized that they become almost indifferent to what material lies to their hand. One kind of object, one type of human being, serves as well as another; whatever is presented to their eyes becomes the springboard for their leap into infinity.[127]

Gauguin did not conform to the notion of disinterestedness in his choices. This preference for certain associative subjects manifested his weakness to Fry.

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[125] As we can see from Michael Fried's writings, the unaware artist proved to be a continuing preoccupation of modernity. Fried establishes the frequent occurrences of 'unconscious', 'semi-conscious' etc. in the writings by Roger Fry on Cézanne and convincingly situates the rhetoric within the dialectic of theatrical/anti-theatrical artistic expression. Fried, "Roger Fry's Formalism" 21.

[126] Forrest Williams, "Cézanne and French Phenomenology," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 12.4 (1954): 485-486.

[127] Roger Fry, "On a Composition by Gauguin," The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 32.180 (1918): 85.

Fry's Gauguin and the Tradition of the Nineteenth-Century Criticism

Many of Gauguin's contemporary critics anticipated Fry on this subject. According to Fénéon, Gauguin's failure was the avoidance of reality and the replacement of it with transient, disparate, and personal phantasmagoria.[128] In line with this nineteenth-century perspective, Gauguin did not possess a sufficient inner vision, and, as a result, had to rely on his analytical powers.

Fénéon in his review of the Café des Arts exhibition picked up on the rational and self-conscious nature of Gauguin's art. The critic favorably compared Gauguin to "the spot-makers": "Monsieur Gauguin was trying for an analogous goal."[129] The "spot-makers" to whom he was referring were the Pointillists who emphasized the application of scientific principles and rationalization to painting. Denis, another of Fry's sources, pointed to the same characteristic when he wrote about Gauguin's art: "You find… beneath rustic or exotic appearances, and alongside a rigorous logic, certain compositional artifices, in which there lingers, dare I say it, a bit of Italian rhetoric."[130]

Although Fénéon's words were meant as a compliment, and Denis's were not, the general perception of Gauguin's style that continued in Fry, was that it was highly analytical and calculated. In light of these characteristics, a view of Cézanne's art as a function of an inspired, irrational creative process contrasted with the opinion of Gauguin's art as an outcome of manipulations. Van Gogh emphasized the difference between the two artists by talking about Gauguin as an abbot in charge of keeping order

[128] As quoted in Halperin 100.

[129] Fénéon, "Un autre groupe impressioniste," in William R. Everdell, The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 375, note 36.

[130] Maurice Denis, "From Gauguin and Van Gogh to Classicism" in Modern Art and Modernism 53.

and Cézanne as a contemplative monk.[131]

One may, however, point to Denis's justification of his shift from Gauguin to Cézanne based on the latter's slow, methodical analysis of the subject prior to painting.[132] The key difference would be the perception of the timing of the painter's analysis. To Denis, Gauguin analyzes while he is painting, subsequently, he is aware of constructing the image, while Cézanne's creative process is that of "seeking," that is, abandoning all of his self-consciousness. In other words, in Denis's view and in Fry's opinion as well, Cézanne completely relegates the process of creation to the realm of unconsciousness.

Another instance of the perceived assertive manipulation came up in relation to Gauguin's public image. In contrast to Gauguin's self-identification with a "noble savage" and to his obvious affectation of a sort of Rousseauean ideal of natural man, a common nineteenth-century view of Gauguin was as a contrived poseur.[133] Sérusier described Gauguin by marveling at his "childish affectation…[and] a pursuit of originality taken to the point of mystification."[134] Lucien Pissarro was convinced that Gauguin's originality was a lie: "what a faker Gauguin is! Come now, seriously, do you think he has all that many ideas? We've talked with him and know, there is not a chance we'd be taken in!"[135] As we will observe, the theme of affectation and deceit continued in Fry's criticism of the artist.

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[131] Van Gogh wrote to Theo about Gauguin as such an abbot: "when it is a question of several painters living a community life, I stipulate at the outset that there must be an abbot to keep order, and that would naturally be Gauguin." Vincent van Gogh to Theo 544, 1888 in Heinich 47, 48.

[132] Richard Thomson 130.

[133] "I am not ridiculous, because I am two things, which cannot be ridiculous: a child and a savage." Goldwater, Paul Gauguin 13.

[134] Paul Sérusier to Maurice Denis, March 1889, The Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 97.

One of the charges leveled against Gauguin during his life was the constructed style of his art. Both his supporters and opponents favored the contention. The concept of "constructed" carries a negative connotation of fraudulence, as it connotes a certain process of forced unification, of piecing together of fragments.[136] To the nineteenth-century critics, multiple sources and allusions indicated Gauguin's inability to bring together a personal vision on its own strength and to "agglutinate as sentences" the momentary apparitions on the basis of their own significance.[137]

As noted by Richard Shiff, references to history, geography and chronology were the distinguishing differences incompatible with the status of "classical spontaneous art."[138] Gauguin's borrowings from various sources left the incorporated elements disconnected, disjointed – as fragments not unified by a single vision as in the case of Cézanne. A critical ally, Octave Mirbeau, underscored the characteristic trait of Gauguin's art, its esoteric mixture of disparate sources: cultural, literary, and religious. An unsympathetic Pissaro compared his art to "the art of a sailor, picked up here and there."[139] Fénéon compiled the most complete list of Gauguin's sources. He cataloged Cézanne, Bernard, Monet and Van Gogh as principal influences on Gauguin and shockingly stated that it was Cézanne by influencing Gauguin who impacted the latter's

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[135] Lucien Pissarro to Camille Pissarro, London, May 1891, The Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 58.

[136] August Strindberg to Paul Gauguin, Paris, February 5, 1895, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: Sources and Documents, ed. Linda Nochlin (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966) 172.

[137] Halperin 101.

[138] Shiff, "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy" 51.

[139] Octave Mirbeau's described Gauguin's art as the "unsettling and savory mingling of barbarian splendor, Catholic liturgy, Hindu meditation, Gothic imagery and obscure and subtle symbolism." Maurice Berger, Modern Art and Society: An Anthology of Social and Multicultural Readings (New York: Westview Press, 1994) 92.

followers. [140] In Fénéon's view, Gauguin's insistence on a subtext spoke to the artist's ineloquence and internal weaknesses, since to elicit a viewer's response he had resorted to external ideas. Again, the critics questioned the unity and validity of Gauguin's art by pointing to its self-insufficiency.

Fry concurred with his nineteenth-century influences. He described the weakening effect of symbolic images by comparing them to familiar songs that

> have become associated with many other things in our minds, so that when they are played we no longer can fix our minds on the form, we are instantly invaded by the associated feelings of loyalty, devotion to country, boredom from the memory of tiresome functions.[141]

In his view,

> the form may by various means, either by casual opposition or by some resemblance to things or people or ideas in the outside world, become intimately associated in our minds with those other things, and if these things are objects of emotional feeling, we shall get from the contemplation of the form the echo of all the feelings belonging to the associated objects.[142]

Fry insists that these echoes fragment one's aesthetic contemplation that should remain disinterested and captivated by the forms only. According to this reasoning, since Gauguin's images drew upon multiple sources, his success in bringing them together and overcoming their symbolic distractions would be decided by the strength of his will. Ultimately, as we will see, the view of an art object as a reflection of the artist's self became the decisive factor. If Gauguin's self was not unified, not strong enough, this would be reflected in the perceptions of the images the artist produced.

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[140] Halperin 226. "…Gauguin is not the initiator of the current movement. Led at first by Pissarro, this movement was then put on course by Cézanne, to whom Gauguin introduced us." M. Paul Sérusier to Charles Morice, "Inquiry into the Tendencies of Art Now" in The Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 122. First published in Mercure de France (August-September 1905).

[141] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis 266-267.

The contemporary poetry of the Symbolist circle seemingly had the strongest connection with Gauguin's art.[143] However, both his opponents and proponents manipulated the link for their disparate purposes. Denis in his article of October 1903 for L'Occident, "The Influence of Paul Gauguin," managed to structure his remarks in a way that simultaneously asserted that Gauguin did not invent Synthetism and pointed to the connection between the painter and the Symbolist literary circles.[144]

Denis went further in emphasizing the relation by consistent use of literary terms in discussing Gauguin's oeuvre. The critic remarked quite approvingly that "Gauguin gave us a claim to lyricism" and that the painter's distortions were as justifiable as "the metaphors of the poets."[145] However, other avant-garde critics viewed such a correlation between painting and poetry as admitting the creative limitations of a "peintre-litterateur."[146] In their view, painting and literature should be separate. For instance, Charles Merki in "Apologia for Painting," published in Mercure de France in June 1893, opined: "painting and literature show us the general only behind the particular. They have their own domains, they function differently and are quite separate."[147]

Associations with music were more acceptable, especially in Symbolist circles,

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[142] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis 267.

[143] Maurice Denis, Maurice Denis, 1870-1943 (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju and Zoon, 1994) 36.

[144] According to Denis, Gauguin's "Synthetism …became Symbolism through contact with the literary men." Maurice Denis, "The Influence of Paul Gauguin," in The Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 95. First published in L'Occident (October 1903).

[145] Denis, "The Influence of Paul Gauguin," in The Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 96.

[146] Michael Marlais, "In 1891: Observations on the Nature of Symbolist Art Criticism," Arts Magazine 61.5 (1987): 90, 91.

[147] Marlais 90, 91, Albert Aurier, "Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 175. First published in Mercure de France (March 1891).

which counted Wagner as one its sources.[148] In the hierarchy of the arts, painting traditionally occupied a lower position as a more limited expressive medium.[149] Gauguin tried to strengthen the connection between his vision and music by emphasizing that in Where Do We Come from? What Are We? Where Are We Going*?* (Fig. 11) the "dream is intangible…as Mallarmé said, 'It is a musical poem, it needs no libretto.' "[150] However, Gauguin continued to evoke literature in his art.

The view of Gauguin's painting as a corollary to the Symbolist poetry of Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine persisted in criticism. It was consistent with the alleged weakness of his art and its lack of independent existence. Therefore, Aurier's insistence on the necessity of language to Gauguin's imagery was yet another reason to question its artistic authenticity. [151]

The critical theories themselves differed greatly, with Aurier's approach being metaphysical and Denis's formalist.[152] As described by Patricia Mathews, Aurier preferred an interpretive style of criticism.[153] His descriptions of Gauguin's paintings were characterized by emotional, effusive discussions somewhat tangential to the

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[148] George Mauner, "The Nature of Nabi Symbolism," Art Journal 23. 2 (winter, 1963-1964): 96.

[149] Joyce Medina, Cézanne and Modernism: the Poetics of Painting (Albany: State University of New York, 1995) 138-139.

[150] Paul Gauguin to André Fontainas, Tahiti, March 1899 in Rewald, Studies in Post Impressionism 183.

[151] James Kearns, Symbolist Landscapes: The Place of Painting in the Poetry and Criticism of Mallarmé and his Circle (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1989) 56-57.

[152] Robert Goldwater, "Gauguin and Primitivism," in Harold Spencer, Readings in Art History: the Renaissance to the Present (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1983) 2: 357-377, 373.

[153] Patricia Townley Mathews, Aurier's Symbolist Art Criticism and Theory (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986) 69.

artwork.[154]

Aurier's dislike of Impressionism stemmed from the critic's penchant for an art that was "less immediate, less directly sensory."[155] The point of interest for the purposes of this paper is the apparent contrast between Aurier's approach and Fry's statement that almost all: "emotional elements of design are connected with essential conditions of our physical existence."[156] The difference is between two modes of perception, where the physical appeal to the senses is opposed to intellectual insight.

Like Fry, Fénéon was interested in the discussion of technique and style. He was more concerned with formal characteristics than with meaning, as was evident in his quasi-scientific language of describing Seurat.[157] The same focus on formal elements is also characteristic of the writings of Denis, who was more concerned with the opportunities and problems of the medium than with the theoretical integration of his ideas.[158]

These are distinctions in approaches to art that persist to this day. The interpretive approach proved to be more popular in the long run as it offered the critics more freedom than did formalism. The former enabled the factually grounded discussion of the social, cultural environment of artistic production and the application of psychoanalysis. In other words, it permitted the content to enter into the image and the critic to make use of language in grasping the ideas. In contrast, formalism, at its purest, restricted the art

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[154] Marlais 91, 92.

[155] Marlais 92.

[156] Fry, Vision and Design 34.

[157] Marlais 92.

[158] Kearns 36-37.

historian to the discussion of form or developed abstract and tangential interpretations of it that frequently defeated the critical language. In an interesting way, formalism did what it warned against: it forced the writer to mix the mediums by limiting the subject of verbal/written communication to formal elements.

However, Fry's placement of Gauguin in the binary structure of opposing associative and contemplative has endured. Even if a scholar has a positive view of Gauguin, the twofold approach remains in place, as we have seen in Rookmaaker. Perhaps it is a relic of an abandoned methodology of formalism. Another possibility is that the mythology of Gauguin is at this point no longer modifiable in any drastic way. In that case, the perception of Gauguin's work will remain trapped by the artificial contrast: a view of his art as intellectual and multi-sourced will be compared to another "type" of art seen in light of Fry's theories as exclusively self-based.[159]

Besides Gauguin's connection with literature, religion was one of his most important sources in art. He referred to it in describing his art as a parable: "I act a little like a Bible."[160] However, some contemporaries viewed the connection as a disadvantage. For instance, Van Gogh saw Gauguin's religious paintings as an artistic weakness. In a letter to Theo, the older brother comments on the canvases by Bernard and Gauguin that employ the Biblical themes: "Christ in the Garden with nothing really observed has gotten on my nerves. Of course with me there is no question of doing anything from the Bible. Frankly… the Pre-Raphaelites did it much better."[161] (Fig. 8) For Van Gogh, an

[159] The "types" of art in this construction are fabrications themselves, since they depend on critic's personal perceptions of the artist's creative process. To Fry, Gauguin exemplified the creation by association and Cézanne presented contemplative conception of an artwork.

[160] Paul Gauguin Letters to His Wife and Friends, ed. Maurice Malingue and trans. Henry J. Stanning (London: Saturn Press, 1946) 221.

authentic painting has to possess an intense emotional significance that would make a turn to a Biblical subject, such as the garden of Gethsemane, unnecessary.

Van Gogh's reference to the Pre-Raphaelites as models for the "literary artist" (Fig. 12) coincides with Fry's opinions of the movement, and sounds extremely similar to critic's perceptions of Gauguin. Fry said that the mistaken desire of the Pre Raphaelites to " be poets at all costs – was the cause of their failure. With a little more clear thinking, a little more honesty and less pretension to a high calling, what an art we might have had!" He further described their art as the "anemic resuscitators of the past." [162]

Fry insisted that a genuine artist would use ordinary subjects to create transcending images.[163] However, Gauguin used the supernatural to express common personal insecurities. His self-aggrandizing appropriation of the guise of Christ to express the loss of his artists-disciples and the resulting feelings of loneliness directly opposed Fry's principle to avoid pretension.[164]

Another issue linked with the perception of Gauguin as a disingenuous artist was his intentional primitivizing. The nineteenth-century critics and some fellow artists questioned the sincerity of Gauguin's appropriation of elements from the past as his own.

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[161] Van Gogh to Theo November 1889, Van Gogh to Emile Bernard, Saint-Rémy, December 1889, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: Sources and Documents 147, 150.

[162] Roger Fry, "Modern Mosaic and Mr. Boris Anrep," The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 42.243 (June 1923): 277.

[163] Roger Fry, "Art and Religion," Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature 139.2, (1902): 241, 243.

[164] At that time Gauguin was in great financial need, Van Gogh just suffered his breakdown and Emile Bernard was keeping his distance. "As for me, of all my efforts this year, nothing remains but howls from Paris which penetrate here and discourage me to such a degree that I dare not paint any more, and can only drag my old body about on the sea shore of Le Pouldu in the bleak North wind. Mechanically I make a few studies (if you can call brush strokes in accord with the eye, studies). But the soul of me is absent and is mournfully regarding the pit which gapes in front of it—the pit in which I see the desolate family deprived of paternal support—and no heart on which to unload my suffering." Gauguin to Bernard, November 1889, Collins 207-208.

For instance, Van Gogh, in a letter to Bernard that talked about the art of both Bernard and Gauguin, questioned the validity of their incorporation of medieval motifs. He asked the younger painter "are you going to revive medieval tapestries for us? … you will trade [the truth] for what it is … counterfeit, affected!"[165] For Van Gogh, the pictorial reference by Gauguin to the Italian "primitives" was problematical, because of its superficiality and contrivance.

Fry evoked Van Gogh and agreed with him by insisting that the "real artists, even if they are destined to paint highly imaginative works and to go mad in the end like Van Gogh, generally begin by making an elaborate study of an old pair of boots or something of that kind."[166] For Fry, the appropriate subject for an artist should be the everyday, the ordinary and the unimportant. Ultimately, the subject itself is irrelevant, as the force of artistic expression should channel itself through the formal elements by transcending the particular element of reality. As we have seen, nineteenth-century critics similarly interpreted Gauguin's appropriated historical references as evidence of his avoidance of everyday reality. That, in turn, allowed for the conclusion that his forays into the metaphysical and mythological realm were "degenerate" and came about because of his lack of personal depth and integrity.[167]

Within the nineteenth century, the matter of distortion and the question of its justification was extremely significant for both conservative and avant-garde critics.

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[165] Van Gogh to Emile Bernard, Saint–Rémy, December 1889, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: Sources and Documents 148.

[166] Fry, The Artist and Psycho-Analysis 15.

[167] According to Van Gogh's description of Bernard's canvases that echoed that of Gauguin's: "They are erudite enough - one feels that they are done by somebody who is obsessed by the primitives... It is not that this leaves me cold, but it does give me a painful feeling of degeneration instead of progress." Rewald, Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin 307.

Alphonse Germain writing for La Plume commented that something as ephemeral as a state of mind was not sufficient to substantiate the formal disfiguration. In his view, such an approach led artists like Gauguin to incoherence when they suppressed "all syntax, with the pretext of giving images a more natural flavor." [168] The accusation here, as in the reviews of Gauguin's exhibition at the Vollard gallery in 1899 by Fontainas and Denis, was of artifice, arbitrariness, willfulness and exploitation for self-advertising.

For instance, one of the descriptions of Gauguin's art talked about the "people of his dreams" that were "dry, colorless, and rigid," the "meaning is doubtful and the expression is arbitrary."[169] Dreams here, instead of being a positive sign of an internal creative activity, refer us to the view of Gauguin's inward self as unproductive and incapable of producing strong imagery. Whereas "the Byzantines" distorted "through ignorance," Gauguin set out to deform his images because "his mind is sick." [170] The missing link for the critic was the perceived absence of what Fry described as an "internal necessity," which would justify Gauguin's distortions. Fénéon's acclaim for Pissarro focuses precisely on the sufficiency of the artist's vision to imbue his images with intensity without misrepresenting reality.[171] In many ways, Germain and Fénéon

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[168] "Their espousal of distortion, ill-justified by their desire to render an aesthetic state of mind when faced with some natural effect, leads them back." Alphonse Germain, "The Distorters Theory," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 181-182. First published in La Plume 1 September 1891.

[169] Mathew Herban, Maurice Denis's "Nouvel ordre classique" as Contained in His Théories (1890-1910), diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1972 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1977) 34, Halperin 221, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: Sources and Documents 177.

[170] Germain traces the possible consequences of such "savage" subjectivism: "by setting out to distort in an anti-natural way, our young decorators become the interpreters of a nature that is on the decline, the portrayers of a degenerate race at its last gasp." Germain in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 181-182, 182, 191. Andre Fontainas, "Review of Paul Gauguin's Exhibition at the Vollard gallery," in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: Sources and Documents 177. First published in 1899.

[171] Halperin 111.

foresaw Fry's emphasis on the artist's "inner compulsion" as a validation of the resulting imagery.

In contrast, Gauguin's work appeared willfully subjective.[172] Denis commented on this topic by comparing still-lifes by Manet (Fig. 13) and Gauguin (Fig. 14):

> Suppose now that we put together … natures-mortes [still-lifes], one by Manet, one by Gauguin… We shall distinguish at once the objectivity of Manet; that he imitates nature 'as seen through his temperament', that he translates an artistic sensation. Gauguin … is a decorative, even a hieratic interpretation of nature.[173]

In other words, Gauguin's art did not conform to Denis's understanding of classical painting that balanced individual and universal elements in representation, but rather forced his own vision onto the spectators.

Within critical discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the authenticity of an artist was determined by the degree to which he avoided self-consciousness about his impact on the public. According to Fry,

> the artists who have done anything approaching first-rate work have been thoroughly bourgeois people – leading quiet, unostentatious lives, indifferent to the world's praise or blame, and far too much interested in their job to spend time in kicking over the traces.[174]

As follows from Fry's view of creation, an authentic artist should not be overly conscious of his reception and not actively seeking the public recognition. Not surprisingly, Fry extolled Cézanne as "half-conscious of the immensity of his genius and … exaggeratedly pleased with any recognition."[175] Fry saw Gauguin as extremely concerned with the

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[172] Herban 25, 27.

[173] Denis, "Cézanne," in Modern Art and Modernism 58.

[174] Fry, The Artist and Psycho-Analysis 11.

[175] Fry Cézanne: a Study of His Development 3.

public perception.[176] In fact, whenever a positive review reached Gauguin in Brittany or Tahiti his reaction was an ill-tempered acceptance.[177] Judgments on Gauguin's self-involvement that resulted from Gauguin's words and public assessments translated into perceptions of his art as self-aggrandizing.

Gauguin is one of the view artists in the history of Modernism, which produced self-portraits in the guise of Christ. Besides painted self-portraits, Gauguin also made ceramic sculptural pieces, such as Jug in the Form of a Head: Self-Portrait (Fig. 15) and Ceramic Vase with a Caricature Self-Portrait (Fig. 16). While describing the importance of pottery Gauguin mentioned the creation of man "out of a little clay," thus emphasizing the process of divine embodiment taking place in his shaping and firing ceramics.[178]

Some nineteenth-century critics noticed the insistence with which Gauguin used himself as subject in all mediums. Consider Fénéon's description of one of Gauguin's paintings: "Barbarous… in quality, scant of atmosphere … these proud pictures would sum up the work of M. Paul Gauguin, were not this gritty artist chiefly a potter. He cherishes the hard, ill-omened, coarse-grained clay of stoneware…"[179] As noted by Joan Halperin, the wording of the statement is deliberately elaborate. Fénéon used the word *griéche*, which alluded to both the stoneware and to "gritty" as a personality trait.[180] By referring to Gauguin's character Fénéon underscores the artist's desire to leave a physical

[176] Fry, Vision and Design 266

[177] " Exhibitions are of no use to me, except to catch me unjustly and to mix me up with God knows whom…" The Letters of Gauguin to Georges Daniel de Monfreid, trans. Ruth Pielkovo (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922) 79.

[178] Paul Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, trans. Daniel Guerin (New York: The Viking Press, 1978) 30.

[179] Halperin 214.

[180] As quoted in Halperin 214.

mark of his authorship on the piece. Mirbeau, commenting on Gauguin, also noted the intimidating nature of the artist's authorial embodiment that overrode the formal expressiveness of his art. Mirbeau dramatically described it as a "bitter, violent aroma of fleshly poisons [that] arises from it."[181]

In his interpretation of Vision after the Sermon: Jacob Wrestling with an Angel (Fig. 17), Aurier as well insisted on the created reality of the embodiment as a medium of revelation. The critic viewed the subject of the painting as a daydream generated by the sermon in the minds of the impressionable female congregation. Aurier identified Gauguin, who represented himself in the guise of priest in the painting, as a hypnotist who kept his audience in a trance by the power of his voice: "Voice that has now become visible, imperiously visible, and it is his Voice that the white-coiffed peasant women contemplate." [182] In other words, critics appraised the visibility of Gauguin's self-embodiment as controlling and overriding.

We have here a seemingly contradictory assessment of Gauguin' s will as both too weak to hold the disparate pictorial elements together and so strong as to overpower the visible. Perhaps, the words of Denis about Cézanne can clarify the problem. He said, that

> whether [art] reproduces objective nature or translates more specifically the artist's emotion, it is bound to be an art of concrete beauty, and our senses must discover in the work of art itself abstraction made of the subject represented — an immediate satisfaction, a pure aesthetic pleasure. The painting of Cézanne is literally the essential art, the definition of which is so refractory to criticism, the realization of which seems impossible.[183]

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[181] As quoted in Halperin 218.

[182] Aurier, 'Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 175. For the connection of Symbolism with occultism, hypnotism and psychology see Feliz Eda Burhan, Vision and Visionaries: Nineteenth Century Psychological Theory, the Occult Sciences and the Formation of the Symbolist Aesthetic in France, diss., Princeton University, 1979 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms).

According to Denis, a viewer should feel the strength of an artist's will through formal unity and structure of the work, in short, through the absence of an obtrusive persona, such as that of Gauguin. Both Denis and Fry see the presence of harmonious form as an expression of the self-effacing Cézanne. [184]

Besides Gauguin's self-image, the human figure as such was notably important to the artist. He insisted on populating his paintings with people. For instance, consider Gauguin's copy of Cézanne's The Still-Life with Compotier (Fig. 9) that as mentioned was once a part of his collection. The still life forms the background of a portrait in Gauguin's interpretation. The Portrait of a Woman in Front of a Still-life of Cézanne (Fig. 10) is Gauguin's overt statement of difference between the two. The choice of a woman to sit in front of Cézanne's still-life is important.

According to Norma Broude, during the 1890s art critics were preoccupied with the relationship between artist and nature, whether an artist should control or succumb to it. For instance, most of the nineteenth-century art writers saw Impressionists as "passive" and feminized based on their subject- an already inert landscape and their submissive approach to it.[185] Cézanne was mostly a landscape and still-life painter. Further, Gauguin's and Cézanne's self-identified and were perceived as respectively "willful" and "receptive" to their subjects.[186] In line with this logic, a gendering argument

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[183] Denis, "Cézanne," in Modern Art and Modernism 59.

[184] According to Fry, Cézanne was "naturally timid and submissive," it is this attitude that is "is simple, almost naïve" that " reveals the fundamental characteristics of his genius." Fry, Cezanne: a Study of His Development 6, 18.

[185] Norma Broude, Impressionism: A Feminist Reading the Gendering of Art, Science, and Nature in the Nineteenth Century (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997) 161.

can be put forward here.

In other words, Gauguin not only demonstrated the importance of anthropomorphism to his art by using the human figure as a vehicle of control and appropriation in painting a woman's portrait in front of a Cézanne's still-life.[187] Gauguin also assigned a gender to Cézanne's work. He emphasized its femininity by fusing the original landscape with the sitter, who now occluded most of the backdrop. The presence of Gauguin becomes that much more pronounced in his reinterpretation as the only masculine, vigorous, and active force of creation and subjugation.

In contrast to Cézanne's passivity, Gauguin's continuous insertion of self-images revealed him as a controlling authorial presence. Some critics Gauguin's domination of the medium by embodiment as detracting from the process of painting as such, by turning a creative work into the "repository of biographical experience."[188] The perceived demonstrative nature of figurative insertion, such as in Cézanne's still life, could only compound Cézanne's distaste for Gauguin's anxiety to signal his authorship.

The timing of one's discovery as a "genius" was a significant factor in the nineteenth century. However, conventions dictated that the chase of fame and popularity was unseemly. In the words of his unsympathetic critics, Gauguin "groveled to get himself elected (that is the word) man of genius," he had an "itch for recognition and

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[186] Herban 25, 27. Cézanne insisted that painter's "whole aim must be silence. He must silence all the voices… within him… become a perfect echo. And then the entire landscape will engrave itself on the sensitive plate of his being." As quoted in Gasquet in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 251.

[187] Benjamin Harvey, Formalism's First Affair: What Roger Fry Made of Paul Cézanne, diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2003) 260-268.

[188] Rosemary Lloyd, "Writing on the Self: Mallarmé, Redon and Symbolist Autobiography," Romance Quarterly 45 (1998): 180.

…fanfaron ways."[189] On the other hand, contemporaries perceived Cézanne as unaware and surprised with the praise he received:

> He appeared to us immediately to be a loner, shy yet violent, emotional in the extreme…he demonstrated the measure of his innocence (or of his confusion), by taking Mirbeau and me aside to tell us, with tears in his eyes, "He's not proud, Monsieur Rodin; he shook my hand! Such an honored man!!!"… he actually knelt before Rodin, in the middle of a path, to thank him again for having shaken his hand. Hearing such things, one could only feel sympathy for the primitive soul of Cézanne.[190]

As mentioned, Fry's emphasis on Cézanne's timidness and humbleness is as well established.[191]

Ultimately, in the view his nineteenth-century critics, Gauguin's attempt at simultaneously achieving public recognition and remaining a reclusive visionary was unsuccessful. In the transitional period at the end of the nineteenth century, midway between collective nationalism and individualistic modernity, Gauguin found himself uncomfortably poised on the fence between the status of Tahitian hermit and that of meddling Parisian poseur. To Gauguin's reviewers, both conservative and progressive, he seemed not to belong to either. Perhaps Gauguin's ambivalence in the wake of emerging modernity and the definition of its forms in art was the cause of his disfavor. That was one of the reasons for the critics' perception of Gauguin as not authentic.

Typically, one counts Impressionism as the first art movement of modernity.[192] As noted by Fry in Vision and Design, the Post-Impressionists depended on the earlier

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[189] Halperin 213, 214.

[190] Conversations with Cézanne, ed. Michael Doran and tr. Julie Lawrence Cochran (Berkley: University of California Press, 2001) 4.

[191] Fry, Cezanne: a Study of His Development 6, 18.

[192] Brettell 22.

movement for their self-identification through contrast.[193] Given this reliance of the Symbolists on the Impressionists for a theoretical foundation, the latter's views of authenticity in art are worth considering.

The artists of Pissarro's generation defined legitimacy of artistic expression in terms of the uniqueness of personal perception. The possibility of inter-influences and borrowing from fellow painters did not constitute an act of creative impotence, but rather was seen as a sign of useful collaboration among equals.[194]

The Symbolists and Synthetists were not a homogenous group, there was no "school" to unify them, no *métier*. The Pont-Aven experiment failed at establishing an artistic community.[195] The Post-Impressionists were grouped together by virtue of coming after the Impressionists but were in fact a group of artists driven by various subjective aims, as mentioned previously. As a result, cooperation could potentially infringe on the development of an artist's individual style.

The modern emphasis on originality brought about the anxiety over anonymity. Art seemed to be developing towards greater and greater subjectivism – a reflection of self-defined personal style. The contest for the status of an original, of an artistic discoverer, became one of the defining characteristics of Modernity. Charles Merki noticed the trend when he sarcastically wrote: "As you may know, everyone is something

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[193] Fry, Vision and Design 290.

[194] On the subject of Mauclair's article on Cézanne, Pissarro sarcastically described art critics " They imagined that artists are the sole inventors of their styles and that to resemble someone else is to be unoriginal. Curiously enough, in Cézanne's show…certain landscapes…are similar to mine. Naturally, we were always together! But what cannot be denied [is] that each of us kept the only thing that counts, the unique "sensation"!" Camille Pissarro to Lucien, November 22, 1895, in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 59. First published in Mercure de France (June 1893).

[195] Mark Roskill, Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1970) 99-100.

of a genius now."[196] In fact, the problem of being individual was crucial to nineteenth-century art theory.[197]

Consider, for instance, the bitter quarrel between Gauguin and Bernard as to who actually started the Symbolist movement. Bernard and Gauguin collaborated in Brittany and Pont Aven in the late 1880's. Bernard introduced Gauguin to the style of "cloisonnisme."[198] The conflict between the two artists occurred in 1891, because of the critical acclaim awarded to Gauguin as a recognized inventor of the movement.[199] Bernard resented this acknowledgment and painted Gauguin as his Judas in Christ in the Olive Garden (Fig. 18). Bernard later claimed that his Breton Women in a Meadow (Fig. 19) predated Vision after the Sermon (Fig. 17) and was plagiarized by Gauguin.[200] Another example of such anxiety was Cézanne's apprehension over the possibility of Gauguin stealing his vision. Cézanne was scandalized by the possible theft of his "petite sensation."[201]As a result, according to Raymonde Moulin: "The emphasis has shifted from the unique character of the work to the unique character of the artist, artists have been forced to differentiate themselves from each other at any cost." [202]

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[196] Charles Merki, "Apologia for Painting," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 276.

[197] Shiff, "The Original, the Imitation, the Copy" 28.

[198] It was not only Bernard's influence, but also that of Louis Anquetin. Collins 79.

[199] In one of his letters Bernard writes "The canvas in question is called Breton Women in the Meadows and I wrote about it in the Mercure de France in my article The History of the so-called School of Pont-Aven: it was this picture which had such an influence on Gauguin's technique and provoked the row. He got it from me in 1888 in exchange for one of his own pictures of the same size, and took it with him to Arles where Vincent saw it and made a copy of it." Douglas Cooper, Letters to Emile Bernard (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938) 102, notes 3, 4.

[200] Roskill 99-100.

[201] Richard Thomson 62-63.

[202] As quoted in Heinich 210, note 10.

The urgency to demonstrate one's authorship was closely connected with the rush to confirm one's personal inimitability, which became a necessary prerequisite for the authentic artist. However, contemporaries, like Paul Sérusier, considered Gauguin's pursuit of originality specifically infantile and bourgeois.[203]

In keeping with the opinion that the value of the work of art increased with the degree of individuality it reflected. Aurier, among others, suggested that the artists should resist the influence of milieu. [204] Since the isolated artist did not belong to any particular school he was the undisputed owner of a particular style.[205] The exit from the competitive environment of the creative community, be it physical or mental, could give an artist an opportunity to achieve a degree of self-reflection. The inner world would become the focus of contemplation and reinforced the contention that the work of art was a direct reflection of the artist's character.

However, both nineteenth-century critics and Fry saw Gauguin's choice to withdraw to exotic Tahiti as an insincere affectation. As one of Gauguin's contemporaries sarcastically commented on the artist's escape from civilization:

> Daudet, in high spirits, told us about the 'departures' of Gauguin who wants to go to Tahiti, hoping to find nobody there, but who never leaves. So that his best friends end up by saying to him: 'You'll have to go, old man, you'll have to go.[206]

In evaluating Gauguin's desire to travel, Fry compared him to Renoir, who according to the critic, upon hearing the news **"**said, in a phrase which revealed his own character:

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[203] Paul Sérusier to Maurice Denis, March, 1889, Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 97.

[204] Mathews 82.

[205] Mathews 82.

[206] Rewald Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin 484.

"Pourquoi? On peint si bien a Batignolles."[207] Renoir's humble, genuine "character" is here in direct opposition to Gauguin's inauthentic personality.

In fact, after he left for Tahiti, Gauguin kept a door to Europe open. He corresponded with the art critics Morice and Fontainas and his wife, among others. He edited a paper that opposed the colonial government, and he used every possible means to shock the expatriate bourgeoisie by his behavior.[208] In short, he remained in contact with the civilization he so direly wanted to escape. Perhaps, it was Gauguin's effort to tie together two worlds by not making a choice between them that resulted in his failure in the eyes of his critics as an ambivalent, non-resolute self.

To quote Carlyle, whose work was well known to Gauguin: "man's spiritual nature, the vital Force which dwells in him, is essentially one and indivisible."[209] On one hand, Fry speaks of Cézanne's painting as aiming and succeeding at creating this totality, a "coherent, architectural effect" by its formal harmony.[210] On the other hand, Fry points to Gauguin's propensity to introduce the outside elements into his painting in order to achieve an authoritative unified message.[211] It speaks to the aforementioned problem of visually compensating for an essential inadequacy of self. To nineteenth-century critics and Fry, Gauguin lacked the strength to discard his external connections. Ultimately, in

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[207] Fry, Vision and Design 266

[208] Denys Sutton, "Notes on Paul Gauguin apropos a Recent Exhibition," The Burlington Magazine 98.636 (1956): 91. Goldwater, Paul Gauguin 48.

[209] Vojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski, "Paul Gauguin's Self-Portrait with Halo and Snake: The Artist as Initiate and Magus," Art Journal 46. 1 (Spring 1987): 23. Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes and Hero-Worship (Everyman: London and New York, 1908): 338.

[210] A Roger Fry Reader, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 83.

[211] In the article on Gauguin, Fry balances the compliments to Gauguin's ability as a designer to create a "satisfying pictorial" experience in spite of his propensity for symbolism, literary references, self-consciousness and intellectual sophistication. Fry, "On a Composition by Gauguin" 85.

their eyes, he was unable to achieve Carlylian indivisibility, to overcome the Hegelian split of the self-alienated spirit.

Gauguin seemingly falls back on the external to strengthen a personal expression that his inner self is unable to communicate independently and powerfully. Formally, the resulting lack of compositional tightness in Gauguin's art, as perceived by Fry, could tie back to the artist's fragmented self. In this way, the view of pictorial slackness in Gauguin's art connects with the previously described approach to artistic expression as indicative of an artist's character. Fry saw Gauguin's alienated self as unable to provide a unifying force to the artwork, incapable of impressing upon the beholder the totality and the irreducibility of an artistic identity through the form.

Aurier inadvertently hinted at the same issue in his article on Gauguin in 1891. The writer demanded walls for the painter-as-decorator, and supported his request by pointing to the character of Gauguin's composition. Aurier suggested that the beholder "would be tempted at times to take them for fragments of immense frescoes, and they nearly always seem ready to explode the frames that unduly limit them!"[212] The critic highlighted the incompleteness of the painting in its entirety, for even when the canvas was finished, it still looked like a fragment to him. In lieu of a solution to this compositional problem, Aurier proposed getting a bigger canvas, such as a wall, for Gauguin.

A need for formal unity in Gauguin's oeuvre was, however, a persistent issue, not so easily resolved. The critics remarked on the matter in connection with the perceived incoherence and illogical conglomeration of images in his paintings. Gauguin's eclectic sources, ranging from literary and historical to ethnographical, enabled the charge of

looting.

As mentioned, Lucien Pissarro considered Gauguin incapable of being so diverse and original, as he seemed on the surface.[213] Lucien's father Camille Pissarro, who encouraged artistic collaboration and practiced it as a part of Impressionist *métier*, made a distinction between the process of collaboration and the uninspired and willful poaching, of which he accused Gauguin. A number of art critics consistently interpreted Gauguin's canvases as chaotic and incoherent and saw them as a collection of unrelated fragments "poached" from many disparate cultures.[214]

One would be hard pressed to pinpoint whether the view of Gauguin's art as disjointed translated to the view of his personality or vice versa. As mentioned in the biographical note on Gauguin, personal perceptions are a factor in the readings of his art. The issue of Gauguin's self-identification also became a part of the discourse.

Gauguin's view of his identity did not conform to the long established understanding of an authentic, true self pre-existing in each person.[215] In his letters, Gauguin acknowledged the conflation of his public and private selves and his inability to differentiate between the two: "The public man, the private man. You want to know who I am… I myself do not always see myself very clearly."[216]

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[212] Aurier, "Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 180.

[213] Lucien Pissarro to Camille Pissarro, May 1891, Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 58. See, Belinda Thomson, "Camille Pissarro and Symbolism: Some Thoughts Prompted by the Recent Discovery of an Annotated Article," The Burlington Magazine 85.946 (1982): 14-24. For the significance of Pissarro in the development of the modern art see Martha Ward, Pissarro, Neo-Impressionism, and the Spaces of the Avant-Garde (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[214] Richard Thomson 62-63.

[215] Michael Losonsky, Enlightenment and Action from Descartes to Kant: Passionate Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 38.

[216] Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage 268.

Gauguin's predilection for self-portraits (Fig. 20) and the representation of Christ as his alter ego as in Yellow Christ (Fig. 21) and Green Christ (Breton Calvary) (Fig. 22) spoke to his difficulties in creating an autonomous self-portrait. In almost post-modern terms, the artist became aware of himself by opposing a part of the self to the unified self.[217] Juxtaposition of double images of selves as in Self-portrait with Yellow Christ (Fig. 23) offered to Gauguin a solution to his problem of self-identification by pointing to the differences between the selves. In short, the artist was working out his psychological idiosyncrasies through his art. Unfortunately for Gauguin, Fry's opposition of Gauguin to Cézanne also created a contrast between their creative processes. Fry specifically defined Cézanne's art as heroic, since to the critic, it was indicative of the painter's struggle to keep the art free from any personal psychological fixations.[218]

To achieve the clarity he seeks, Gauguin represented both the real, embodied self and the ideal self, which was frequently in the guise of Christ.[219] For instance, in the Vision after the Sermon (Fig. 17) Gauguin is not a singular entity. The psychological split

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[217] In a curious way Gauguin's statement about the conflation of two selves and his use of split images as self-portraits predates the postmodern critique of authenticity. See, Jame L. Mars's interpretations: "Inauthenticity is the self's infidelity to itself. Alienation, then, in its most fundamental sense is inauthenticity, infidelity of the self to its own internal structure of selfhood in such a way that there is loss of self…a splitting-off of the self from itself…The product of authentic choosing is an authentic self. There is a distinction between self as constituting and self as constituted. But the point is that unless the constituting self is authentic there is no authentic, constituted self; authenticity cannot flow from inauthenticity… the constituted self as habitual and sedimented becomes internally related as past to the constituting self. To choose is to choose in relation to a past, present, and future in such a way that the self in the full sense is a circuit of selfness, a dialectic between constituting and constituted self." Inauthenticity is seen as split self, which can be overcome by finding a balance between two fragments. James L. Marsh, Post-Cartesian Meditations: An Essay in Dialectical Phenomenology (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988) 112, 139, 116.

[218] Richard Shiff, "'Painting, Writing, Handwriting, "Roger Fry and Paul Cézanne," in Roger Fry, Cézanne: A Study of His Development (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1989) xix.

[219] Ernst Van Alphen, "Strategies of Identification," in Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations, eds. Bryson, Norman, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994) 269. For a general discussion of Gauguin's fragmented identity see Edward Powers, "From Eternity to Here: Paul Gauguin the Word Made Flesh," Oxford Art Journal 25. 2 (2002): 87-106.

leads to the division of self into two parts: the priest and Jacob, both of whom are partial representations of Gauguin's ego and alter ego.[220]

In Self-portrait with Halo (Fig 24), the Self-portrait with Yellow Christ (Fig. 23), and in the Jug in the Form of a Head, Self-Portrait (Fig. 15), the self is in pieces as well. The aggressive juxtaposition of real and dream identities confronts the viewer. These are images of the dichotomous binaries of consciousness and unconsciousness. The bona fide Gauguin is truncated, disembodied, and assaultingly frontal, whereas the dream Gauguin, a symbol of the desired self, is in the form of a snake, Christ, or Jacob. This disunity of identity further reinforced the perceived lack of self-sufficiency in his paintings.

Furthermore, Gauguin's seeming difficulty with his self-image exacerbated the frustration critics felt in connection to the legibility of Gauguin's art. On one hand, they linked the weak self-image to the use of the other mediums of representation, such as literature. On the other hand, the writers pointed to the artist's use of obscure signifiers for mapping and strengthening of inner-self in connection to the masking of shallowness of meaning, which was, in their view, a result of the split self.

Whereas for Gauguin, "precision often [destroyed] a dream, [took] all the life out of a fable," and for Aurier Gauguin's celebration of "the pure joys of esotericism" was a reason for admiration, other critics disagreed. [221] Merki in "Apologia for Painting" considered the introduction of the obscure as an admission of the personal

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[220] Gedo argues that Gauguin "depicts his doppelganger as the unredeemed Jacob, reappears as…the biblical Jacob, blessed, renamed, and reunited with his wives… on the other side of the river." Mary Mathews Gedo, Looking at Art from the Inside Out: The Psychoiconographic Approach to Modern Art (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 76.

[221] Paul Gauguin, Paul Gauguin's Intimate Journals, trans. Van Wyck Brooks (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958) 68, Aurier, "Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 275.

superficiality.[222] Fry concurred with Merki, decrying the desire to seem extraordinary as "profoundly opposed to the acceptance of originality." [223]

According to Fry, only when the public is familiar with the subject can it understand the art's creative message fully. He went as far as to say:

> If to clothe the abstract truth in esoteric symbols means to loose sight of the truth itself, then we must be content to go on in the sordid and revolting ugly surroundings which are the distinguishing characteristics of the past hundred years of our civilization.[224]

An authentic expression should be transmitted to the viewer directly, not by hinting at the meaning by symbolization, but by way of visual stimulation of one's senses. [225]

This dissatisfaction with the opaque syntax of Gauguin's art translated into a perception of the artist's intentional obscuring of the internal dynamics of an artwork. For Fry, who perceived Gauguin's painting as the product of disparate cultural, mythological, and religious sources, a typical beholder could not be fully privy to the process of interpretation. A viewer was presented with the finished object and excluded from the process of arriving at an independent meaning.

To Fry, the notion of visible and harmonious internal relations of a work of art was a defining character of a successful aesthetic experience. He insisted that "in all cases our reaction to works of art is a reaction to a relation and not to sensations or objects or persons or events. This, if I am right, affords a distinguishing mark of what I

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[222] Merki posits that from the moment of "the resurrection of Symbolism it has been acknowledged that every work must have a second meaning… most, unable to be profound, made do with being obscure…" Merki, "Apologia for Painting," in Post-Impressionists: a Retrospective 180.

[223] Fry, "Art and Religion" 246.

[224] Fry, "Art and Religion" 249.

[225] Fry, Vision and Design 33-36.

call esthetic experiences, esthetic reactions, or esthetic states of mind."[226] According to this logic, Gauguin's paintings are precisely object- and sensation-oriented. His art provides the audience with a ready-made experience that the paintings showcase in a forceful manner.

The obscurities of Tahitian mythology as in Nave Nave Moe (Sacred Spring) (Fig.25), or the sacrilegious conflation of Gauguin and Christ in Self-Portrait with Yellow Christ (Fig. 23) unfailingly impressed or even shocked the viewer. However, since the objects were simultaneously associative and inscrutable, much of these intentionally outrageous choices seemed arbitrary. One can interpret the closed nature of the paintings as yet another attempt to dominate the observer's perception by presenting a finished and static image instead of involving the viewer in the construal of meaning.[227]

[226] Fry, Transformations in Hunter Mead, An Introduction to Aesthetics (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1952) 236. In his critique of Minimalism, Michael Fried presents a theory that is similar to Fry's logic. According to Fried, in an object of art it is "the mutual inflection of one element by another, rather than the identity if each is what is crucial…The individual elements bestow significance on one another precisely by virtue of their juxtaposition: it is in this sense, a sense inextricably involved with the concept if meaning, that everything…that is worth looking at is in its syntax…[which] essentializes meaningfulness as such." Michael Fried, Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 161-162.

[227] Fried defines such attitude in Minimalists as "literalist" and theatrical. Fried, Art and Objecthood 150.

Conclusion

Fry, by virtue of being the exponent of an art criticism that emerged in the era of modernism, was inevitably drawn to the problems of finding new forms for the expression of the new mentality. As a formalist, he put emphasis on artist's achievement of "significant form" as a reflection of inner significance, that is, legitimacy of self. This notion of personal authenticity and its indivisibility from the authenticity of an artwork emerged as one of the most important issues within the critical discourse of new modernity.

Fry perceived Cézanne's art as almost beyond representation and language. His Cézanne created a world in and of itself, "mediated through nothing other, than the form."[228] According to a contemporary philosopher Merleau-Ponty, in Cézanne "the experienced thing is not uncovered or constructed from the data of sense, but offers itself from the start as the center from which they radiate."[229] In his view, the "thing," exists as nothing but as it is perceived and it is wholly accessible to the viewer. Therefore, the openness of the dynamics of the structural construction allows a viewer to experience and thereby participate in the creative process. Similarly to Merleau-Ponty, Fry emphasized that Cézanne's painting transcended the visualized objects by their authentic strength by "being in the world" unconsciously and contemplatively.[230]

Ultimately, in Fry's analysis, Gauguin and Cézanne pursued different paths in

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[228] Stephen Eisenman, "The Failure and Success of Cézanne," in Nineteenth Century Art: a Critical History, ed. Stephen Eisenman (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994) 354.

[229] As quoted in Williams 491.

[230] Natasha Staller, "Babel: Hermetic Languages, Universal Languages and Anti-Languages in Fin de Siècle Parisian Culture," Art Bulletin 76.2 (June 1994): 347.

their efforts to escape the transience of artistic expression by objectification. Cézanne, as opposed by Fry to Gauguin, pursued the inductive method starting with the particulars (that carry within them the whole) and merging the architectural elements into the cohesive unity.[231] In this approach, the form was most significant, since it allowed the artist to achieve the objectification of subjective perceptions through the sound structure that made the transitory seem permanent. In other words, according to Fry, Cézanne succeeded in achieving an equilibrium between personal vision and sensory exactness, which Gauguin never accomplished.[232]

In keeping with Fry's logic, Gauguin's efforts were deductive, since in his art, the content rather than form was primary. Fry's Gauguin attempted to present the universal Idea through associative pictorial symbols. As a result, Fry implies that Gauguin's paintings required viewers to piece together a totality of their perceptions.

In my view, Gauguin's creations are, in fact, a code to be deciphered. However, as such, they have and continue to lent themselves to discussions of symbolism, primitivism, colonialism, and feminism, among other issues.[233] Gauguin's art faced and still faces a viewer as a bundle of complicated symbolic and psychological possibilities of meaning, but in doing so, it offers one an advantageous unlimited range of interpretative approaches. Yet, it is precisely that multiplicity of interpretations, that incidentally, the contemporary scholarship now relates to Cézanne's paintings as well, that did not share Fry's priorities and his definition of authenticity. [234]

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[231] Williams 491.

[232] Williams 483. Clearly, one could always argue that Gauguin never set out to achieve the equilibrium.

[233] Staller 331-354.

[234] For example, see T. J. Clark, "Freud's Cézanne," Representations 52 (Autumn 1995) 94 – 122.

In Fry's understanding, the associative processes that took place in front of Gauguin's paintings sabotaged the all-important unity of relations within the painting. According to Fry, Gauguin's downfall is due to the pandering to the public, which results in the wrong kind of accessibility because Gauguin accomplishes it by going outside of the formal elements and outside of aesthetic experience.[235]

Since the associative method of creation was a sign of a weak inner self, where the representational factor destroyed the disinterestedness of beholding in a viewer and eclipsed the "significance of form," as a formalist Fry considered the resulting image inauthentic. This is the basis of Fry's artificial opposition of Gauguin to Cézanne and this becomes the basic structure for later English language art criticism on Gauguin.

[235] According to Fry, "every year as the depth of Cézanne's vision and the greatness of his style become more visible and the interval between him and Gauguin gets bigger. The very qualities which made Gauguin so much more easily accessible at first now turn against him." Fry, French Art of the 19th century-Paris 278.

Illustrations

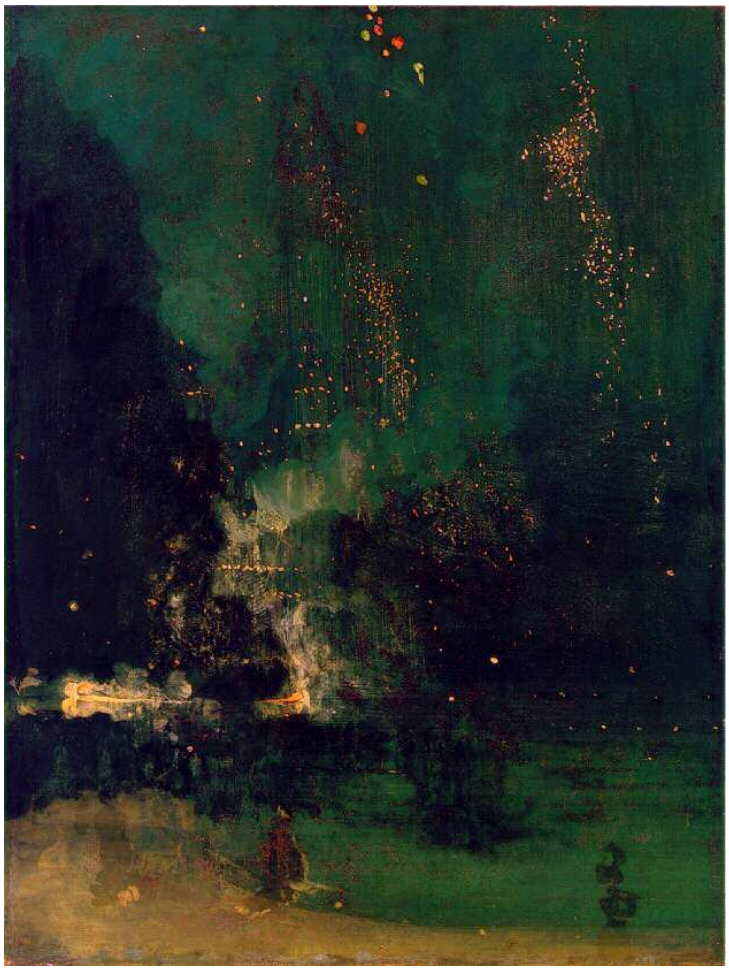

Figure 1 James Whistler. Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket, 1875. Oil on wood. 0.3 x 46.6 cm. Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.

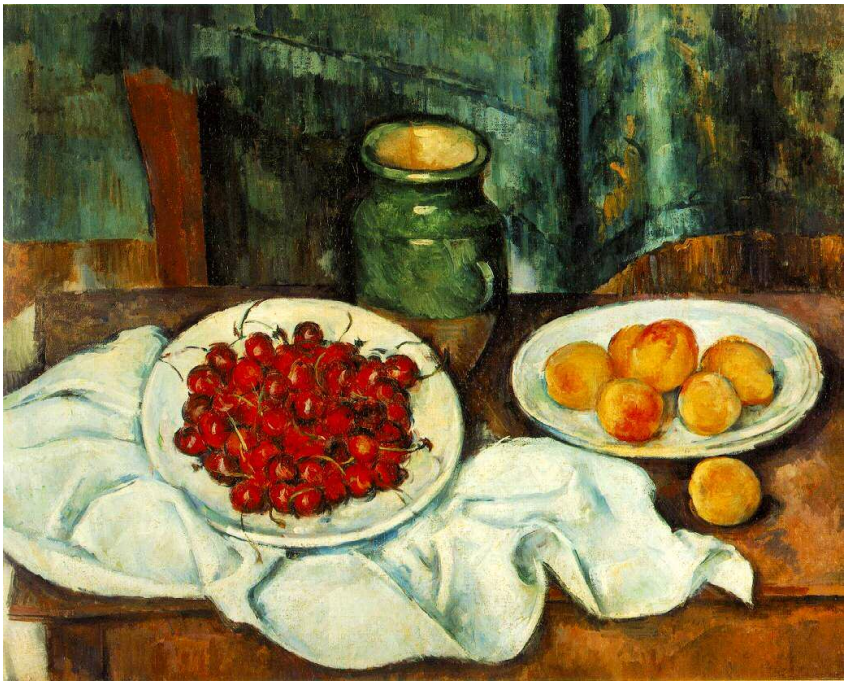

Figure 2 Paul Cézanne. Still-Life with Plate of Cherries, 1885-1887. Oil on canvas. 58.1 x 68.9 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

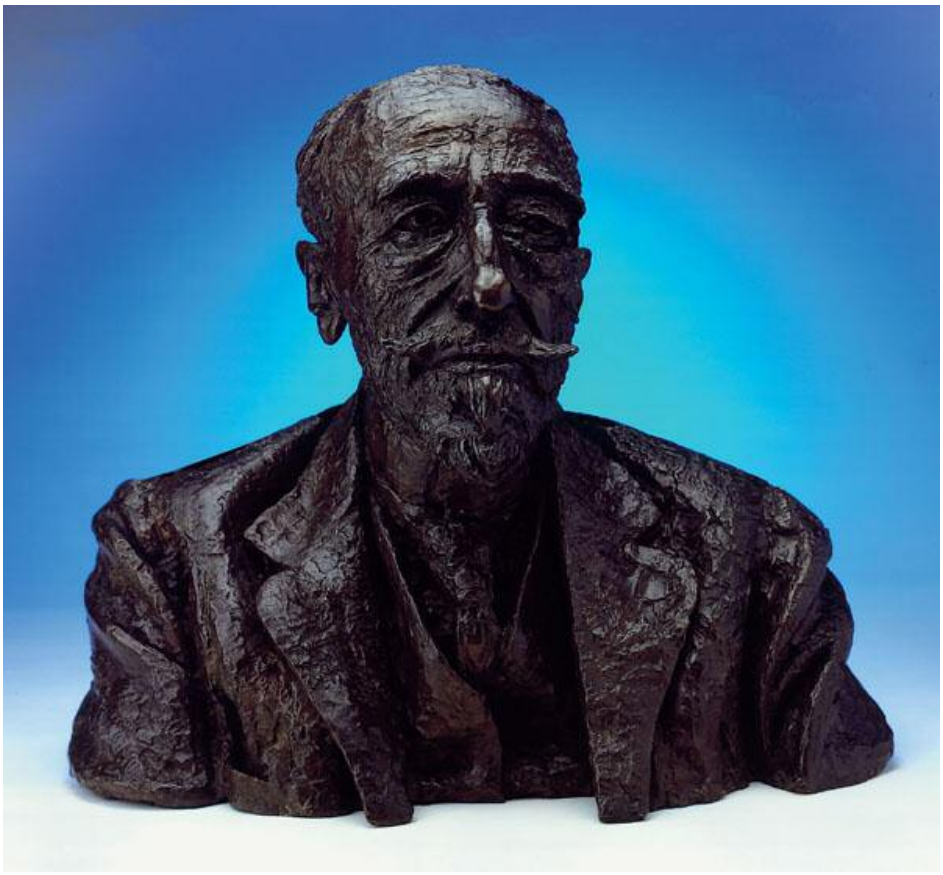

Figure 3 Sir Jacob Epstein. Bust of Joseph Conrad, circa 1924. Bronze. Museum of Canterbury, Canterbury.

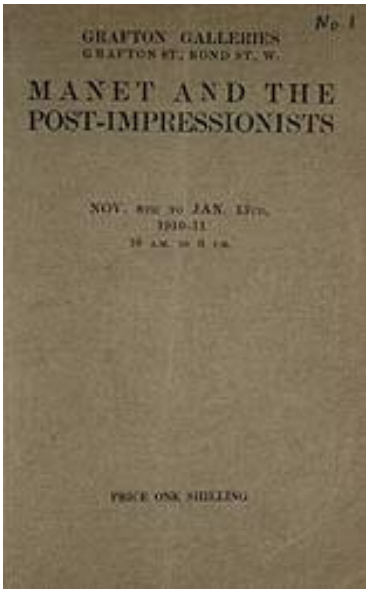

Figure 4 Exhibition Catalogue, Manet and the Post-Impressionists, 1910, Tate Archive, London.

Figure 5 Maurice Denis. Homage to Cézanne, 1900. Oil on canvas. 180 x 240 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

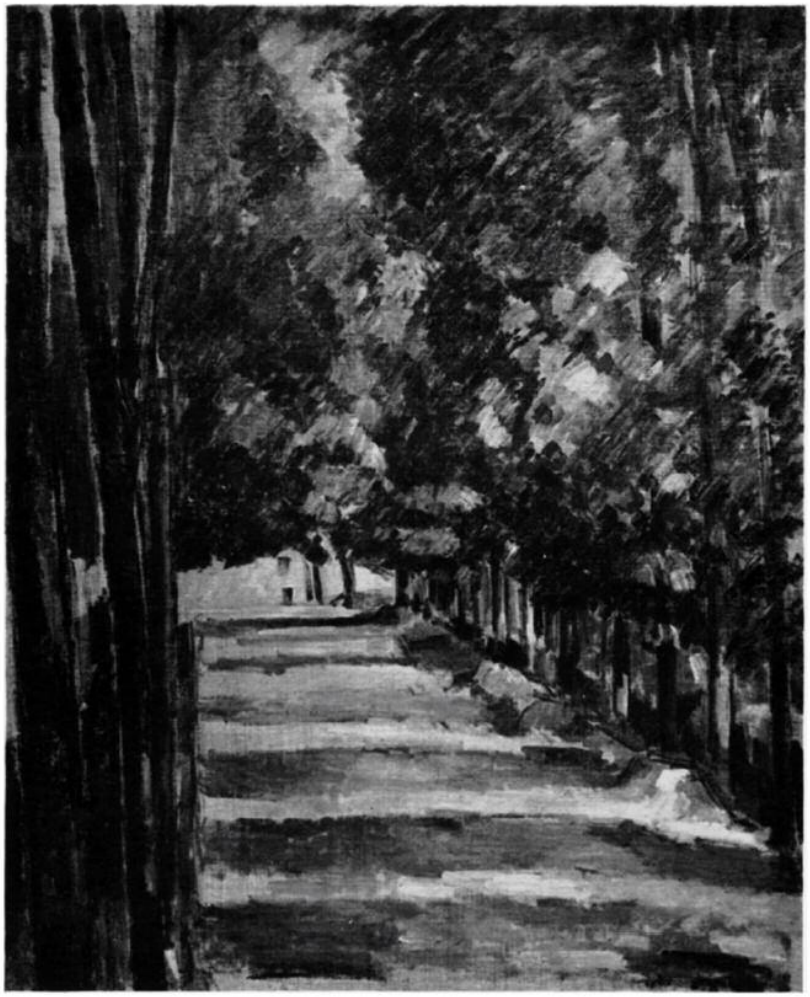

Figure 6 Paul Cézanne. Tree Alley (L'Allée), circa 1879. Oil on canvas. 75.5 x 60.5 cm. Göteborgs Konstmuseum, Gothenburg.

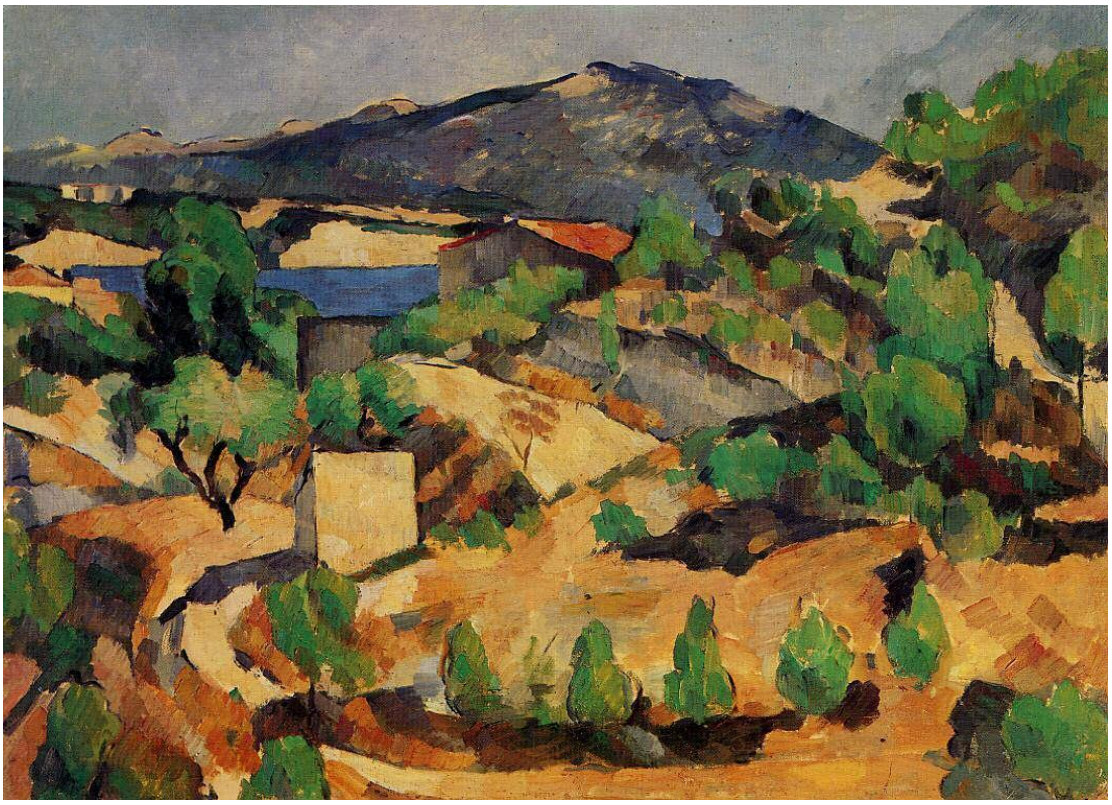

Figure 7 Paul Cézanne. Mountains in Provence (near L'Estaque),1886. Oil on paper mounted on canvas. 54 x 73 cm. National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Wales.

Figure 8 Paul Gauguin. Christ in the Garden of Olives, 1889. Oil on canvas. 73 x 92 cm. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach.

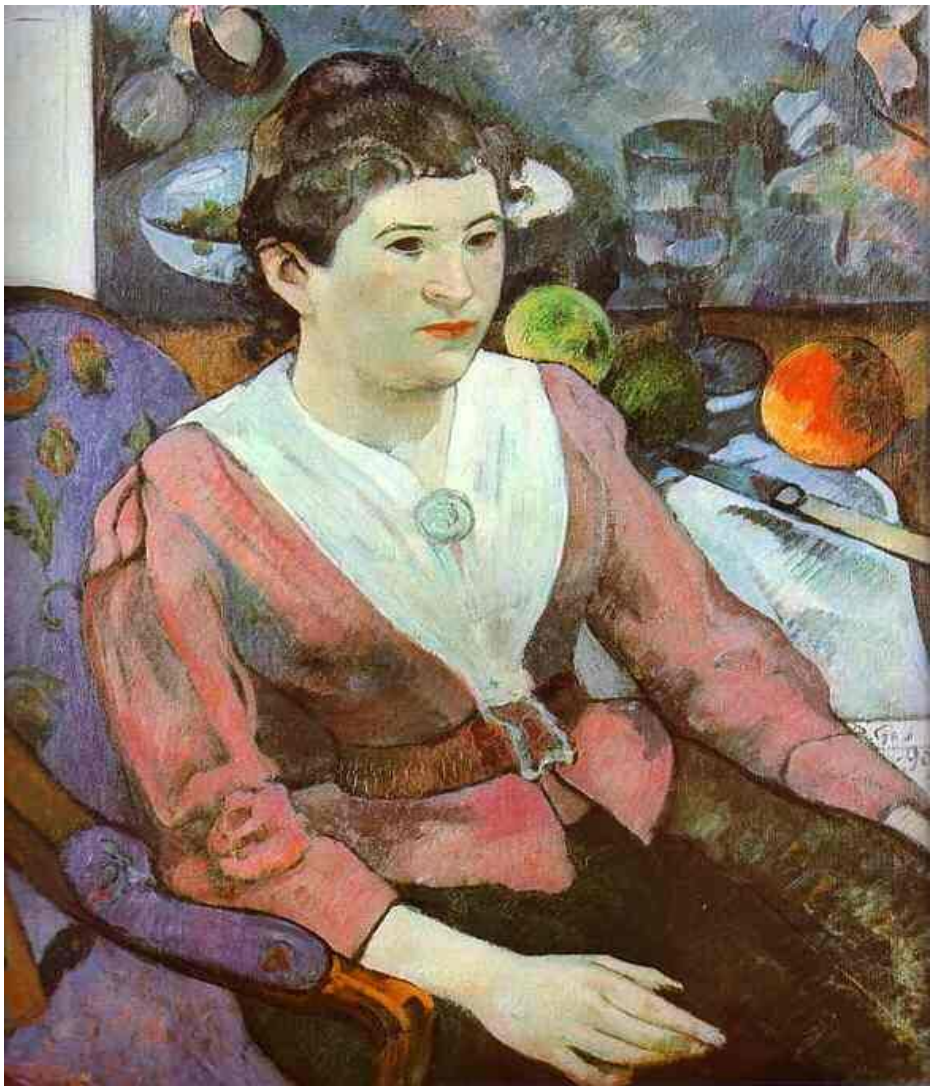

Figure 9 Paul Cézanne. Compotier, Glass and Apples (Still Life with Compotier), 1880. 46 x 55 cm. Oil on canvas. Lecomte collection, Paris.

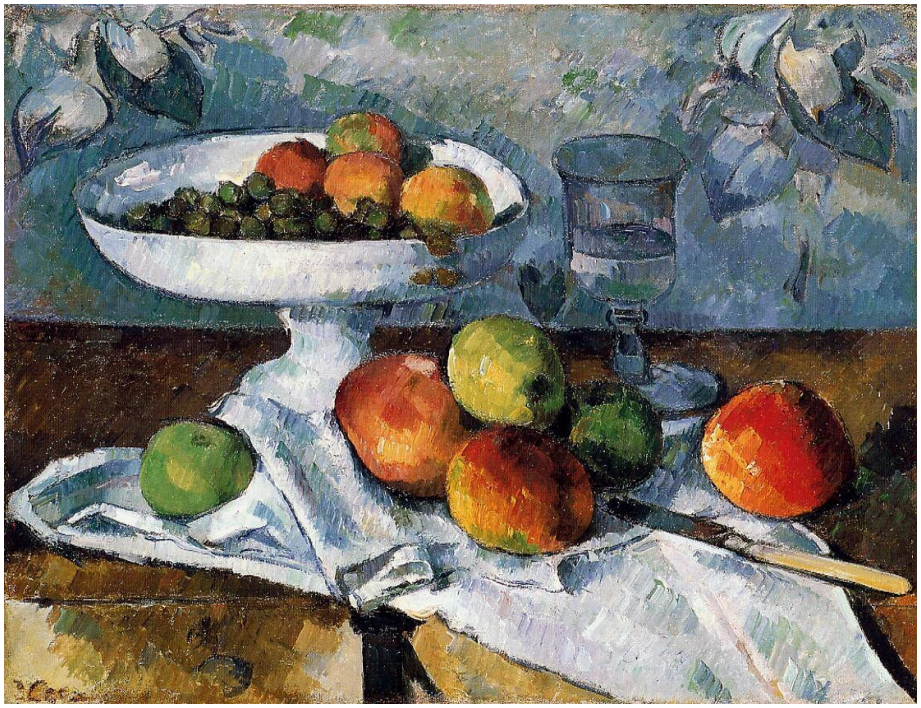

Figure 10 Paul Gauguin. Portrait of a Woman with Cézanne's Still-Life, 1890. Oil on canvas. 65.3 x 54. 9 cm. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

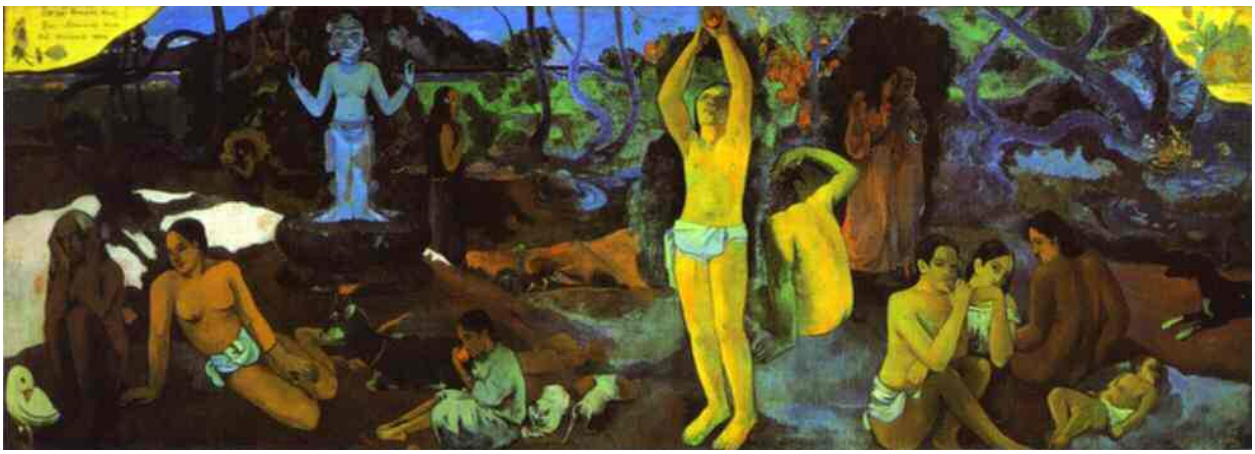

Figure 11 Paul Gauguin D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous? (Where Do We come from? What Are We? Where Are We Going?), 1897. Oil on canvas. 139.1 x 374.6 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 12 Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Lady Lilith, 1867. Oil on canvas. 51.3 x 44 cm. Watercolor and gouache, on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Figure 13 Edouard Manet. Oysters, 1862. Oil on canvas. 39.2 x 46.8 cm. Washington Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

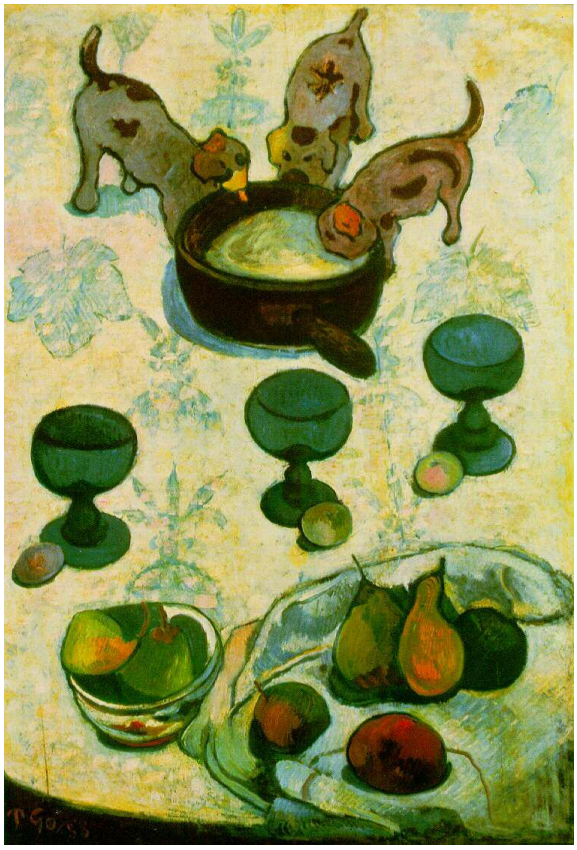

Figure 14 Paul Gauguin. Still Life with Three Puppies, 1888. Oil on canvas. 88 x 62.5 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 15 Paul Gauguin. Jug in the Form of a Head, Self-Portrait, 1889. Stoneware glazed in olive green, gray and red. Height 19.3 cm. Museum of Decorative Art Copenhagen, Denmark.

Figure 16 Paul Gauguin. Vase with a Caricature Self-Portrait, 1888. Clay. Height 28 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 17 Paul Gauguin. Vision after the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel), 1888. Oil on canvas. 73 x 92 cm. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburg.

Figure 18 Émile Bernard. Christ in the Garden of Olives, 1889. Lost. Reproduced in Émile Bernard: A Pioneer of Modern Art (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1990) illustration 18.

Figure 19 Émile Bernard. Breton Women in the Meadow, 1888. Oil on canvas. 74 x 92 cm. Private collection.

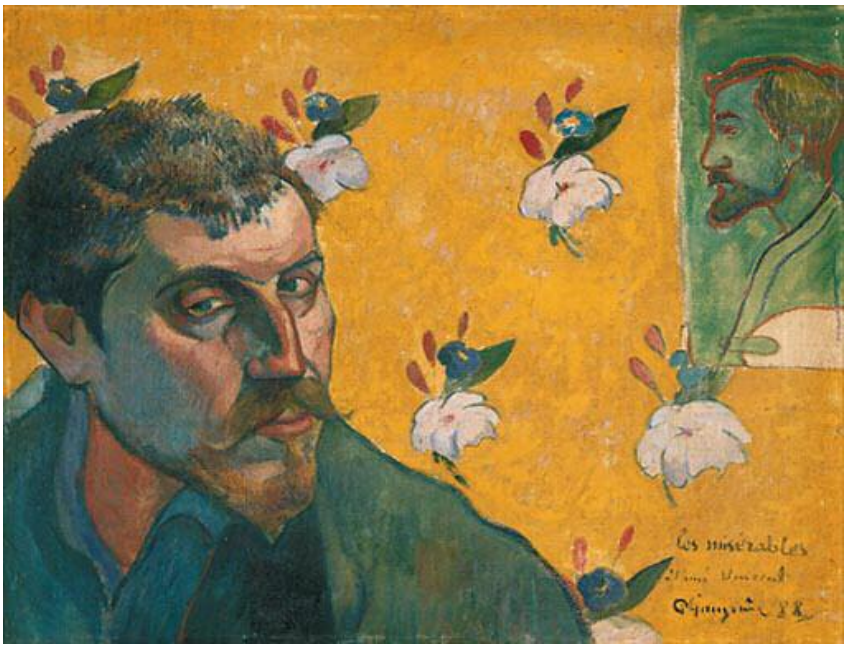

Figure 20 Paul Gauguin. Self-Portrait with Portrait of Bernard ("Les Misérables"), 1888. Oil on canvas. 45 x 55 cm. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

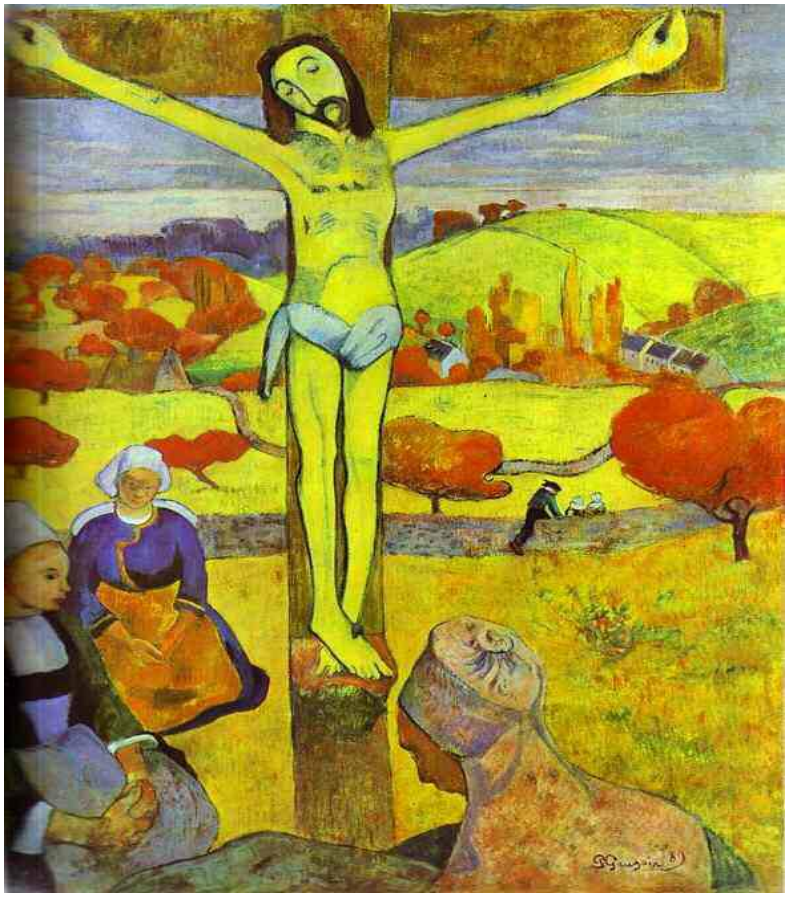

Figure 21 Paul Gauguin. The Yellow Christ, 1889. Oil on canvas. 92.1 x 73.4 cm. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.

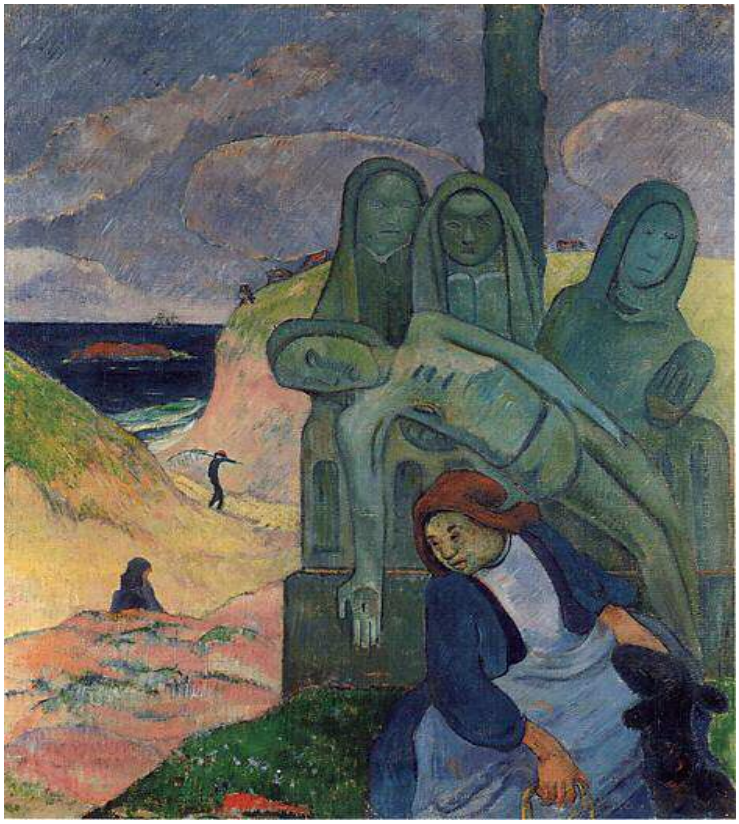

Figure 22 Paul Gauguin. Green Christ (The Breton Calvary), 1889. Oil on canvas. 92 x 73.5 cm. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Belgium.

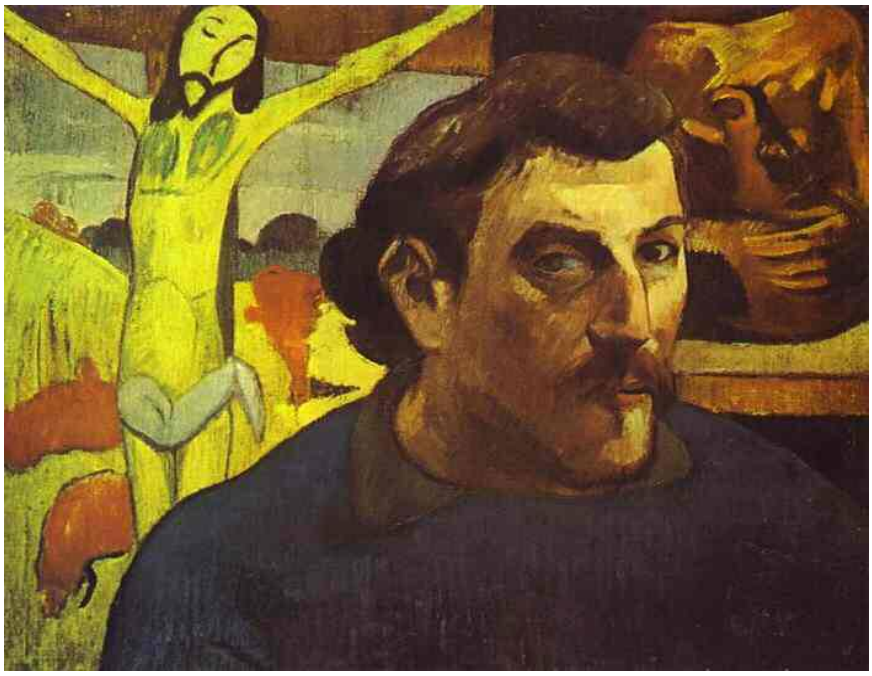

Figure 23 Paul Gauguin. Self-Portrait with Yellow Christ, 1889. Oil on canvas. 38 x 46 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

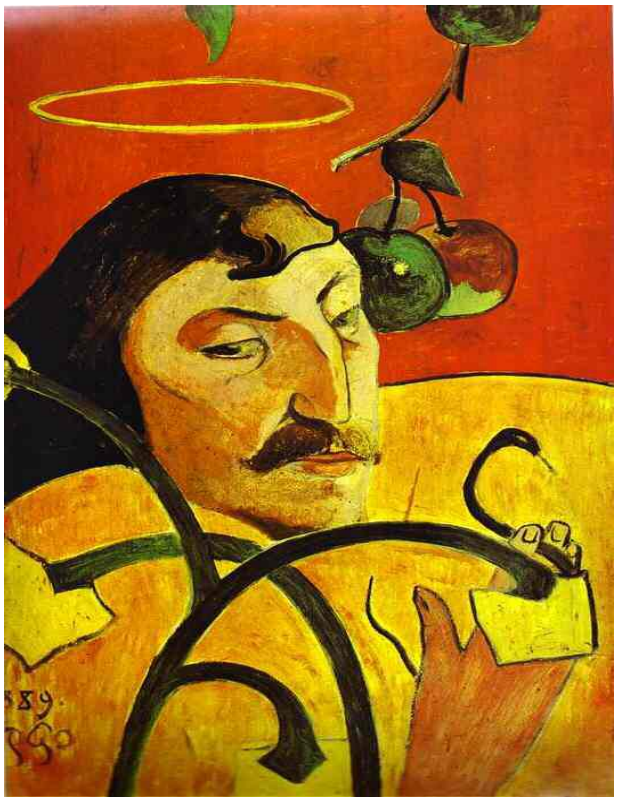

Figure 24 Paul Gauguin. Self-Portrait with Halo, 1889. Oil on wood. 79.6 x 51.7 cm. The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

Figure 25 Paul Gauguin Nave Nave Moe (Sacred Spring), 1894. Oil on canvas. 74 x 100 cm. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

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