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CÉZANNE, WAGNER, MODULATION

In memory of Thomas S. Turner, 1914 – 1994:  
composer, professor of music theory, ardent Wagnerite.

1

"Elaborate parallels between [Cézanne's] method and music are apt to provoke *un soupir étouffé* more like a yawn than Baudelaire's romantic sigh," Lawrence Gowing warns.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, shared terms and a figurative use of words borrowed from one art to describe another will not induce us to believe the two arts share means and ends. When music is written, pictures painted, the characteristics of one cannot be adapted to those of the other. Yet when we listen to music, look at pictures, it may happen we are stirred by faint intimations of likeness. That an orchestral score is said to have its color, a painting its rhythm, points less to Gowing's dread parallel than to an underlying coherence of perception whereby all the senses are knit together within a global unity. Periodicity, interval, motion and closure belong to the whole of experience and are represented by music, painting, sculpture, poetry, theater and dance equally. Though these qualities are parceled out in forms distinct to each art, though the arts are by the same token also unlike as techniques, they all have reference to tension, ease, acceleration, retardation, expansion, resolution. All differences fully acknowledged, parallels between the arts can be reduced, then, to a common denominator, the universe of human feeling. This view of the matter grants permission to observe between Paul Cézanne and Richard Wagner a striking similarity, not in respect to the way they wrote operas or painted landscapes, but in respect to a common meaning.

Cézanne and Wagner both employ modulation, a structural means of crossing from one element of a work to another. Though their works are formally unlike, the meaning of modulation for both is that it embodies the transitional aspect of experience, the feeling of our attention shifting from here to there. The two sorts of modulation imply a shared human ground. Such is the theme of what follows. It starts with rudiments of music theory, where modulation is a commonplace, completely spelled out, familiar to all trained musicians; continues with Wagner's theory and practice and the significance of same; then turns, with more detail, to he who brought his awareness of modulation to

another art. Ninety years after his death Cézanne's aims and practice are still variously contended by Cézanne scholars, and well worth exploring one more time.

Listening to a melody in the key of C, we hear a relation between the tones that summarizes the C major scale and gives rise to a feeling of tonality. The melody possesses in the recurrent tone, C, its focal tone, its tonic, from which it departs, only to return. All the tones in the melody *are* tones, in the sense of having aural position, because they are heard in relation to the tone, C, the tonal center, place of coming to rest and of termination.

Music written in one key departs it to step into another through modulation. A simple technique is to make a stepping-stone of a chord belonging to both keys, what is called a pivot chord, one of double allegiance, serving both tonalities equally. A textbook example is heard in the "Bridal Chorus" from Wagner's *Lohengrin* when the C minor triad, appearing in one measure as a harmonic unit of B flat major, slips four measures later into the tonality of G Major, as is promptly established by the appearance of the dominant and tonic in that key. In both occurrences the triad is made of three tones of the same pitch, it is both times sonically identical, yet as its position relative to a tonal center undergoes a shift it is heard to take on a different sound quality.

Not to overlook what individual composers have done in individual works and the varying levels of discrimination listeners are capable of, but in general it may be said that listening to modulations in much pre-Wagnerian music we seldom lose track of the original harmonic base, the home key.<sup>2</sup> This is not the case with the author of *The Ring of the Nibelung*, whose music wanders, whose composition is best approached through his versification. His theory of prosody rests on vowel sounds that he terms "stem-rhymes." These he considers elemental indicators of emotion, and which he then sets to music. He thinks that a play of assonance and alliteration on the vowel sounds of the stem-rhymes re-enforce the play of emotions. Combining music and verse, he combines the identified emotion of a stem-rhyme and the harmonic impulse. For the phrase, "'Liebe gibt Lust zum Leben' [love gives joy to living]," he argues,

as a like emotion is physically disclosed in the Accents' stem-rhymed roots, the musician would here receive no natural incitement to step outside the once selected key . . . . On the contrary, if we take a verse of mixed emotion, such as: "die Liebe bringt Lust und Leid" [love brings joy and sorrow], then here, where the stem-rhyme combines two opposite emotions, the musician would feel incited to pass across from the key first struck in keeping with the first emotion, to another key in keeping with the second emotion, and determined by the latter's relation to the emotion rendered in the earlier key.<sup>3</sup>

Praising but abjuring what he terms the absolute music of Haydn and Mozart, the emotional progress of whose harmony he thinks artificially constrained by the repeats and returns of the sonata form, even when symphonically extended, Wagner sets out to do otherwise.<sup>4</sup> Resorting to semitone progressions within the setting of the diatonic scale,

or Chromaticism, he exploits the phenomenon of leading tones, whereby some steps in a scale are heard to cry out for the resolution of merger with adjacent steps. In *Tristan und Isolde* he endows a prevailing emotion of unquenchable yearning with systematic modulations that greatly undermine or completely remove any sense of a secure harmonic base.

In the first three bars of the prelude, the opening theme expires on

a wholly unexpected chord which functions as a dominant seventh chord on B. The oboes push upwards by semitones in search of resolution, but the cadence in the third measure does not bring the triad on E promised by the preceding chord. In its stead a dominant seventh chord built on E is found, which prevents the phrase from ending conclusively.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the harmony expresses feeling through the relative and immediate rather than predetermined and foreseeable situation within the total harmonic structure. Growing from the words, attending the continually novel unfolding of the emotions being depicted in the drama, the forward drive of the harmony is constrained no more by what Wagner deemed the arbitrary principles of "absolute music." It is indeterminate and searching.

## 2

It is to his use of color that Cézanne will apply the word "modulation." This is documented, as will be shown. But how did he come to that word? From the historical record clues may be gleaned.

To play clarinet in a band, as does the young Cézanne, is to understand something of chord structure, counterpoint and progression, if only by reading the parts and playing one's own while hearing the result. He marches in religious processions with the music club of the *Collège Bourbon*, along with Emile Zola, who plays cornet. The two friends join the Wagner society in Marseilles. To acquaintance Heinrich Morstatt, musician and Wagnerite, who performs the music of his favorite composer for the Aixois circle of friends, Cézanne writes, "you will cause our acoustic nerves to vibrate to the noble tones of Richard Wagner." In a subsequent note he informs Morstatt, "I had the good fortune to hear the overtures of 'Tannhäuser,' 'Lohengrin' and 'The Flying Dutchman.'" Cézanne's *Overture to Tannhäuser* commemorates the opera whose production, in Paris, in 1861, sparks a tumultuous scandal not long before his first visit there. Two other paintings, a *Bathers* and *The Idyll*, respectively depict and freely play with what Cézanne knows of the Venusberg setting of the first act, and of Tannhäuser's dilemma of too much love, so poignantly in contrast to his own. That the young Cézanne, an ultra-Romantic for whom no extravagance is unthinkable, would respond to a music of voluptuousness, structural resilience, frank theatricality and heightened emotionalism is easy to understand, especially since Wagner becomes a cause célèbre to the advanced painters among whom Cézanne in his youth is eager to count himself. No doubt elevating Wagner's work in

Cézanne's eyes is the notoriety his work by the late eighteen-sixties modestly shares. Baudelaire's defense of the musician, appearing in the month of Cézanne's arrival in the capital, contains no discussion of musical harmony, such as is offered in summary above, but Morstatt, who later in life is to direct a music school in Stuttgart, is surely capable of explaining to Cézanne Wagner's iconoclastic harmony -- though noting the possibility is not equal to claiming he did so. But then Wagner's music so unequivocally exemplifies its author's formal intentions that even the uninstructed listener is taken by its chromatic momentum.<sup>6</sup>

The hunt for a source of Cézanne's color modulation cannot go far in this direction, however. For one, the painter's interest in the composer possibly does not last. If Louis Aurench recalls the aging Cézanne playfully singing airs from the comic operas, *La Dame Blanche* and *Le Pré aux Clercs*, and from Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, it is selections from Weber he prefers to hear his sister play on the piano.<sup>7</sup> For another, to posit a direct influence of Wagner's harmony on Cézanne's color, then try and support it with documentation of the sort just given, is a folly of scholarship such that a fabric of influence is woven for no better reason than that yarn can be found. The most that can be made of the record is that Wagner's music may be a faint cue for Cézanne in respect to his future invention. And turning from music to an ostensibly more promising venue proves nearly as unfruitful. True, borrowing musical terms for the lexicon of color is common during Cézanne's lifetime. True also, the Impressionists elevate the discrete *tache* and the rough *facture* of the sketch to the status of finished work and reduce mixed color in nature to its painted constituents. These unquestionably settle in Cézanne's mind to generative effect. Still, from Impressionist intentions to those of Cézanne is a considerable leap. There seems little basis for positing a direct relation of source to outcome here, either. Procedurally speaking, it does not follow from compilation of topically related materials or juxtaposition of temporally related events that the baton of formal development is seen passed from artist to artist in a causal chain.

### 3

One might root out faint evidence that Wagner's harmony is understood by or explained to Cézanne, and that Cézanne says, in effect, "Eureka! I can translate that to my own ends." One might assert that color modulation is an inevitable extension of Impressionism (as though temporal sequence were automatically a proof of interdependence). Neither would win a jury. Other considerations are also far from proof by evidence but can at least be described as less improbable, although they cannot please the historian, for they are nebulous, they escape into psychology, they leave no explicit record. One is the mighty intuition of genius, of which historiography cannot directly speak. The other is the cultural ether in which both Wagner and Cézanne swim, the rumor of ideas, the diffuse network of connections and correspondences shooting through scientific, philosophic and artistic discourse of the period like cracks in a wall.

Here the Gowing protest against comparing one art to another can fairly be extended to the culture at large. Spatial disjunction between the people and the landscape behind them in Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* and between the people and the cattle in Courbet's *Young Ladies of the Village* signal a beginning disquiet as to whether received traditions for articulating pictorial space will continue to suffice. Geometric perspective then meets its comeuppance in the wake of Impressionism. Tying these events to the modification of classical physics in the wake of relativity theory, and tying this in turn to the downfall of eighteenth century harmony in the wake of Chromaticism, so as to argue a comprehensive shift in the world view, would be as unconvincing as trying to establish the overt influence of Wagner on Cézanne. An uncritical comparison of linear perspective, "absolute" music and Newton's physics to each other and to their respective aftermaths should rightly cause jaws to gape, this time in incredulity and irritation.

If the notion of the unified world outlook, the *Weltanschauung*, evokes "*un soupir étouffé* more like a yawn than Baudelaire's romantic sigh," another model for the migration of thought between disciplines is called for, one that admits of confusion and entropy, rather than progress of the Hegelian sort. The fragmentation and scatter of ideas across temporal and geographic distance, third-hand learning, plain inattention, finding in texts what is wanted, rather than what is meant - these, under such a view, are the means of change, whereby an achievement dies into other achievements, and blossoms in fresh guise. Here is modulation of another sort, belonging not to pictorial or musical form but to historical ferment. Here is a process of transformation driven by what I call "creative misunderstanding."

"The other day," Cézanne reminds Gasquet (for example), "you were speaking to me of Kant." Though hostile to intellectuals the painter is educated in the literature of Rome, far from ill read, sometimes given to speculative flights of talk. According to Bernard, he has an opinion of the German school of philosophy. "I know," he is made to say in Socratic exchange, responding to a remark of Bernard's on the illusion of the senses, "there have been philosophers . . . who have denied the existence of reality, for whom all is illusion, dream, phenomenon. They are *litterateurs*."<sup>8</sup>

"I am coming increasingly to see that you are really a great *philosopher*!" Wagner writes to Liszt in December of 1854. "By contrast I often think of myself as a proper cheapjack. Apart from making - slow - progress on my music, I have now become exclusively preoccupied with a man who - albeit only in literary form - has entered my lonely life like a gift from heaven. It is *Arthur Schopenhauer*, the greatest philosopher since *Kant* . . ." Having shot past the progenitor to the offspring, Wagner, in his letter, goes on with typical effusion to admire Schopenhauer's "final denial of the will to live" and to extol the "heartfelt yearning for death" - sentiments belonging more to *Götterdämmerung* than to the dutiful, modest, lucid sage of Königsberg.<sup>9</sup>

Significant is the recurrence of the hallowed name. It seems the two artists are linked indirectly, via a third man. If by 1811 Madame de Staël writes of the *Critique of*

*Judgment* that "it produced such a sensation in Germany, that almost all which has been accomplished since in literature as well as in philosophy, has flowed from [it]," fifty years later, during a time when abstract thought is of much greater interest to the educated class than is the case today, Kant's influence is incalculable. It pervades all of continental Europe.

Kant's remarkable insight, his "Copernican revolution," is that things are grasped neither by pure conceptual overview, "as they are in themselves," nor by pure experience, from our immediate view of them, but in a synthesis of concept and experience. Confined as we are to our immediate, temporary view of a thing, we are yet able to weigh the bare display, the mere "seeming," from above and beyond, as involving objective reality. We transcend our limited view because we have reference to our prior knowledge of space, time, substance and causality. That we bring these categories to the phenomenal occasion follows from this indubitable truth: that there can be no thought without a thinking subject, a self who reflexively knows it is one because it apprehends its own unity. And this unity of the self *is* a unity only because it exceeds mere transience. For a transient self is a self that forever perishes; that is to say, it is no self at all. To be whole the self must endure -- it must extend in the spatio-temporal dimension. Thus, in its own identity, the self intuits the concepts of space and time, from which flow the concepts of substance and causation, since that which abides must be material and enter into probabilities. From its inner state of continuation the self extrapolates the state of outer things.

Kant's work is open, in the aftermath, to a "subjective" interpretation, one that emphasizes the perceiving self over the perceived thing. The synthesis of experiential phenomena and mental concepts bears, not on the real, but on our minds. Kant's is a theory of mental outlook, rather than of our grasp on reality. It tells of personality, and of the mind's workings. This leads to a journey into the inner life of the self, and of the efflorescence of mental forms by means of which this inner life is rendered, both treated as important ends in themselves. Here, in Kant as he was filtered out afterward, is a source of the Romantic movement, of which Wagner and the youthful Cézanne are both heir. Here is Chopin and his acquaintance, the forever-introspective Delacroix of the *Journals*. Here also is Schopenhauer, self-proclaimed successor to Kant. Extolling the re-discovered East, Schopenhauer speaks of the "veil of Maya," a web of representations, beyond which our understanding cannot go. Seeming is all. Reality lies beyond our grasp.

This view, it may be, is the one Cézanne damns as that of a "*litterateur*."<sup>10</sup> For he is greatly attached to the actual tablecloths, apples, vases, trees and rocks with which he identifies, as if existing in them. Yet he may well take in, by reading or by conversation, neo-Kantian logic to the effect that the recoiling, storm-tossed, suffering self is the site from which whole worlds spring.

Needless to say, neither he nor Wagner has toward ideas the least sense of responsibility. Nor should they. Formal development in the arts may take from ideas, but

it obeys its own imperatives. By means of peripheral attention, half-learning, reassembly of poorly understood bits, sublimation to their own purposes and outright amendment, Wagner and Cézanne convert Kant's "practical reason" to what he calls "purposiveness without purpose," and cast it as a musical or pictorial image.

So here, again, is the theme of this essay, only stated more completely: Each moment of experience - each instance of attention to this or that - bears on outward tablecloths, apples, vases, trees and rocks and on inter-organic feeling. Seeing an apple, to paraphrase Whitehead, we see it with our eyes. Touching it, we are aware of its smooth skin, but also of our finger. Thus the ongoing flow of our feeling, born of our inter-organic sensations, is partner to our involvement with that which stands beyond us. Each moment of experience is, in addition, born of the previous one, and is the germ of the next. Each moment is a bridge from past to future, by means of which we cross, and so continue on. It is in this complex progress, catching the outer realm with our organs of sense, reverberating inwardly with its impacts, hitching along, moment-to-moment, through time and space, that sensations of periodicity, interval, motion and closure rise.

In the harmonic modulation of Wagner, the color modulation of Cézanne, the self in its present state, as the site of feeling, from which the unified outer and inner world unfolds, is displayed in the formal instant, the individual chord or mark. As the self subsists in space and time by stepping from temporary locus to temporary locus, so is the formal instant a temporary locus of feeling, in which the work's global totality of formal instants is reflected. Yet it is a formal instant next stepping to its neighbor. The aim is not to illustrate Kant's aesthetics, but to picture, in the musical or pictorial structure, a decadent understanding of his transcendental idealism. Such is the result of Cézanne's (and Wagner's) "purposeful misunderstanding."

Just as Newton's physics is imagined in the geometric perspective works of his disciples Humphry Ditton and Brook Taylor as a certain state of looking, a figurative embodiment of Newton's uniform space and what he called "absolute, true and mathematical time,"<sup>11</sup> just as the Empiricist conviction that all knowledge is etched on the mind by the senses is imagined in Impressionism as a variant state of looking, imbued with absolute perspective-space but also drenched in experience, a visual instant of space and time impacting on the retina as a mosaic, so color modulation in Cézanne and harmonic modulation in Wagner imagine a neo-Kantian synthesis, the creation of outer object and inner perception in a particular sound or mark. In its very capacity of transition, the mark or chord connotes the extended whole, the ongoing project of feeling.

Remarks on philosophy made by Wagner and Cézanne are outlying markers of their respective central projects. Implying the cultural ether and a formal content, in themselves they are by the way. They belong to the Kantian Diaspora. Emanating from a central mind, of which the two artists are only marginally aware, such remarks bear on disconnected questions, methods, conclusions. They join a hundred subliminal cues

coalescing in the minds of a musician and painter who are prompted by what they mistake for instinct, and who then choose.

Among the more than ten thousand surviving letters by Wagner references to philosophy are few. His chromatic practice predates his first encounter with Schopenhauer, and his comments show him finding there more a stimulus to imagination than to analytic thought. His comments on Schopenhauerian themes are revealing of his preoccupation with escaping worldly woes, and with extinction, but are philosophically uninteresting. He takes from Kant, via Schopenhauer, only those few transmuted parts he needs, and then only through appropriation to his voracious ego.

Fired by visitors who over-stimulate him, the otherwise solitary Cézanne volubly extemporizes on his work and on any intellectual news they bring. As a corrective, "We are going to put our absurd theories into practice," he says to Louis Le Bail as they go off to paint. He eagerly talks ideas, but afterward says such chat is *bafouillage*. Among the books remaining in his studio after he dies the works of Kant and Schopenhauer are notably, though not conclusively, absent, as his family has removed those they think valuable. Gasquet claims to have explained Kant and Schopenhauer to Cézanne at Cézanne's request, but the patchwork of ideas Gasquet sets in the painter's mouth does not suggest an informed, deliberate, sober instructor. Gasquet, after all, was a poet, and poets are no more responsible to discourse than are painters.<sup>12</sup>

If to conclude this search for the source of Cézanne's interest in modulation one asks, "is it prompted by playing a musical instrument, by joining in the avant-garde enthusiasm for Wagner, or by a marginal interest in philosophy," one responds, "none of the above - and all." The myriad influences of Cézanne's total life, genetic and cultural, faint or plain, gather toward this word. If on the one hand the artist is probably little aware of why Wagner's music sounds as it does, and of Kant, on the other hand he little needs to actively seek or have explained to him the workings of harmony or of the Kantian revolution. For he imbibes the zeitgeist. He glimpses in the overtures of Wagner and much else he hears, sees, discusses and reads his own iconoclastic creation, toward which he is slowly, almost reluctantly, drawn.

#### 4

The rule he breaks can be traced to fourteenth-century Italy. Cennino Cennini, writing in circa 1390 of how to shade with pigment and ink on tinted paper, says, "divide [the ink] into three sections: one section, shadow; the next, the color of your ground; the next, with lights put on it." To paint a drapery he recommends three tints: a dark and a light made by mixing white and blue, a half-tint made by admixing the first two. For painting drapery in fresco the three become six. Division of tones becomes uniform practice, taught in workshop and school, employed by generations of painters, most rigorously in renditions of cloth, as in Cennini's favored examples. Customarily one of several half-tints strikes the local color of the material, that is, the native color apart from

the influence of lights, shadows and reflected or neighboring hues, and the lights and darks are established relative to this absolute. An example from the South is the Madonna's robe in Masaccio's *Enthroned Madonna and Child* of 1426 in the National Gallery, London; from the North, one hundred years later, the robes of the apostles in Dürer's *Four Apostles* of 1526.<sup>13</sup>

In the France of Cézanne's day Cennini's "shading" (*ombrare*) has become "modeling." Historian, critic and theorist, Charles Blanc, in his widely distributed *Grammaire des arts du dessin*, first published in 1867, speaks of chiaroscuro, the extension of the method to the picture as a whole, when he writes, "The moderns [since Leonardo], not content with modeling separately each figure, have invented the modeling of the picture, . . . treating it . . . as a single whole, having its broad parts of clear, of brown, and of half-tints." Academician Jules Breton shows how far spread and standardized modeling is when he writes, "Artists' manuals tell us that modeling is the art of grading tints from the lightest to the darkest so as to express physical relief;" and the eclectic and popular teacher, Thomas Couture, helps prove Breton's generalization by asking in his book of instruction that the palette be divided into areas for lights, shadows and half-tints. "Look well at your model," Couture advises, "and ask yourself where the light is greatest . . . Establish the point at which the shadow is deepest, the black most intense. It serves as a guide, as a standard for finding the different values, of your shadows and your tints."<sup>14</sup>

That Couture re-casts the advice of his distant predecessor shows the remarkable continuity of a simple but flexible method over a considerable span of time. If the aim of that method is to describe light falling across things, showing them in relief, its meaning is of a stabile center, a categorical reality, a true thing beyond question, that of local color, modified by circumstance but retaining at all times and in all places its essential sameness.

Though the mature Cézanne exceeds Couture in his exquisite sensitivity to values, or relations on a scale of tones from black to white, his approach to color, and especially to its significance, is nearly diametric. To Le Bail he plants himself for his own way and opposite a tradition he thinks arid, exhausted, inadequate when he says, "the main thing is the modeling; one shouldn't even say modeling, but modulating." Yet to Bernard he plants himself for a tradition and opposite the Symbolists, whom he thinks superficial and arbitrary, with their bold outlines and uninflected areas of color, when he says, "I never wanted and will never accept a lack of modeling or gradation. That's nonsense." Tugging the verb *moduler* this way and that, giving it a favorable or unfavorable reading according to the context and his audience, he carves out his position -- against passing by stages from dark to light, against color schemes, outlines and design that are willed, for ringing changes on a range of hues.<sup>15</sup>

Such is his devotion to the things he paints that he rejoices in and greatly respects their chromatic singularities, their unique aura of color, as did many of his predecessors,

most immediately Delacroix, but his practice, leaping from but drastically altering Impressionism, is to a remarkable extent his own. To parse his visual experience of his subject he uses, during his most regulated phase, in the decade of the eighties, his distinctive blocky stroke. Whether originating in studio paintings of the mid-seventies, as Professor Reff argues, or in the earlier hatch-work of the pencil drawings, and thus having its root in established convention, this stroke is initially a grasping-at-straws.<sup>16</sup> Unable because of his impulsiveness and lack of confidence to fit his hand to the finer mark of a Monet, a Renoir or a Sisley, needing some device or other with which to build pictures other than haphazardly, he stumbles and makes a blocky chunk of paint. As impulse calls for counter-impulse, as thesis calls for antithesis, failure and accomplishment go round and round in Cézanne's psyche like a Chinese dragon. To scale a height he tumbles into an abyss. The inept stroke is immediately the engine of a formidable plastic construction. If to a landscapist the motif is a picture-like aspect of nature, read into a particular site, this stroke, too, is a motif, only like that in music, a repeated phrase, the concrete manifestation of Cézanne's "little sensation," the basic formal unit he deploys to render appearances and build pictures. It is polyform, or, to borrow the term for words of multiple meaning, holophrastic. Cézanne is the little tailor who kills seven flies with one blow. Simultaneously his stroke conveys drawing, edge, direction, interval, position, mass and, lastly, color.

In respect to which his stroke becomes more and more adventurous. Graduated sequences of hues, dark and light, warm and cool, stipulated first by regular, blocky strokes, then by freer, more irregular ones, become the abstract designators of position. Through color difference, otherwise known as color interval, they build the space. Within a sequence of sometimes narrowly grouped tints, belonging, say, to a peach or the wall of a building, no single stroke is proposed by Cézanne as the true color nonpareil. He evidently does not believe in color absolutes, and makes no attempt to ground his rendition of the peach or wall in a supposedly irreducible color-essence. The *sense* of local color is preserved, its *stipulation* put off. Cézanne does not drive toward a conclusion, he is engrossed in a process, he is forever arriving, he discovers hue rather than fits it to a pre-made scheme. There is an over-all color particularization of the thing described, resulting from the multiple relationships of color in their *totality*. We as viewers identify the peach in one of his still-lives as yellow not because Cézanne has tagged it with a local color, around which he has grouped light and dark variants, but because the sequence as a whole constructs a yellow far too nuanced to otherwise specify. The true color of things, his paintings claim, is to be found in the aggregate. Cézanne does not divide tones; he sums hues.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of local color modified by admixture to make the lights and shadows, as traditional practice in its most basic expression would have it, Cézanne marches from color to color. Each change of value strides with a change of hue. Sometimes these differences are minute, sometimes pronounced; sometimes they are to adjacent colors on

the spectrum, sometimes to distant. The changing patches use color interval to state changes of apparent position. As the canvas silts in, these patches strongly give the fullness of things and their slightly varying distances from the viewer as their contours shear or rotate away. Yet as Cézanne grows older his unwilling radicalism goes further, for the patches begin to not cling to things as color clings to things in a still life by Zurburan or by Fantin-Latour. The patches walk slightly beside or apart from things. One senses, while examining a painting, the more objective position behind or nearby. An appropriate term is displacement, another, transition. In Cézanne's late watercolors especially one finds these sliding motions, these side steps, these shifts. By eschewing absolute color, by walking from hue to hue, by tipping the patches of color away from the thing described, so that they seem to be detached, to be floating and to be on their way elsewhere, Cézanne speaks of perceived location as rigorously specified but also as displaced and transitive. To his representation of things in their abiding aspect he adds their altering appearance as time goes by.

This comes about (returning once more to my theme) because he inspects himself even as he inspects things. His acutely alert and exquisitely nuanced capacity to pay attention is aimed equally inward and outward. Perceived locations and their attendant hues include, for him, the very act of looking. Seen in this way, as attributed to inner and outer, those locations and hues do change in time even as they remain constant. They are constant yet various because vision obeys physical laws that govern the behavior of light and optics, bears on an existent, abiding, exterior world, planted with matter, dense with things, but also bears on the inward state of the perceiver, his feeling-of-looking. Movements of the head and body, rapid shifts of fixation of the gaze, from this point to this point to that, have behind them movement of the self, or what we now ordinarily call consciousness, projecting its needs and aims on things, via the eyes. Never does consciousness attend identically to any two sequela in a row. The temporal condition, inwardly, is ever one of pulling future sights into the present, pushing present sights into the past, as the self makes its way through time. Vision, taken in its inward aspect, of event tumbling into event, is a rushing stream, a consuming grass-fire, an avalanche, a cascade - a life-long modulation.<sup>18</sup>

Objective reality is continually posited in the physically given but transitive state from which it is glimpsed. As Cézanne reputedly says to Gasquet, "Nature is always the same, and yet its appearance is always changing." As he says to Vollard, in off-hand words of heraclitean significance, the contour "keeps slipping away from me." As Monet says, in language that can so aptly be used of Cézanne, a painting that does not capture a single moment but is instead made of many is a "composite picture."<sup>19</sup> A Cézanne welds together a host of moments, fastening one to another in continuous succession, like a string of pearls, yet it holds them simultaneously, on the surface, for our immediate delectation, like a medallion. As the eighties ripen into the nineties, Cézanne finds it less the case that there are things or parts of things with transitions between, the whole

suffused with lights and darks, than that all is transition. Some paintings dating to the new century, notably those of the Mont Sainte-Victoire, fix the solidity of the material world in one top-to-bottom, side-to-side mass, but they are also swarms. The assumption of a categorical reality, as depicted in the art of painting through the home base of local color for five hundred years, is threatened as never before.

5

The terms, "harmony," "modulation," "scale" and "chromatic," are used by Cézanne to describe his method. "To read nature," Bernard reports him saying,

is to see it, as if through a veil, in terms of an interpretation in patches of color following one another according to a law of harmony. These major hues are thus analyzed through modulations. Painting is classifying one's sensations of color.

Advising Bernard to begin lightly with almost neutral tones, Cézanne goes on to say, "Then one must proceed by steadily climbing the scale and tightening the chromatics." "One should not say model," he says, "one should say modulate."<sup>20</sup>

The law of harmony may well be adapted from Blanc, who figures in Cézanne's thoughts. Blanc says color is under fixed laws and can be taught like music. Black and white are "the extreme terms of the chromatic scale." Quoting with approval the words of Euler, "the parallel between sound and light is so perfect it is sustained even in the least particulars," Blanc gives teeth to his assertions by discussing "elementary and generative" (primary and secondary) colors, a "chromatic rose" (color wheel), simultaneous contrast, achromatism, a harmony obtained by the juxtaposition of similar tints and - his coinage - "optical mixture," the *mélange optique* of Pointilist fame.<sup>21</sup> The veil is conceivably Schopenhauer's "veil of Maya," that is, of illusory appearances, but altered by Cézanne into a skein of marks. As for "classifying one's sensations of color," this means, I think, assigning to each "sensation," winnowed from nature, *en route* to a painting, deposited as a mark, a specific, contextually appropriate value and hue (not applying a pre-conceived color system). What Cézanne means by "climbing the scale and tightening the chromatics" might usefully be speculated upon (it may refer to the procedure Bernard witnessed, of starting with the more neutral darks then proceeding to the more closely grouped lights), yet would evidently remain uncertain.<sup>22</sup> That he in general and often adopts conventional language of the period, applying musical terms to a related way of thinking, is plain - there are too many instances to think otherwise - but "related" is the operative word.

One may speak of laws of color, one may speak, as Blanc does, of color scales and color vibrations as equaling those of sound, one may speak of rules for constructing with color, derived from this knowledge, but it does not follow, pace Blanc, that painting and music have the same formal logic. It is no comment on the quality of their work to say that Georges Seurat, Johannes Itten, Hans Hoffman and Josef Albers show how

formally limited such knowledge is when applied to painting. Little can color theory be compared to the elaborate syntax of musical harmony, with its conventions of call, response and repeat, its utterances made of chord progressions, its highly developed system of notation, through which the disembodied beauty of mathematics is made audible. Color in painting is above all concrete, its relations can be nicely weighed only in a context, its visible quality is determined by the unique variables of each situation in which it is employed, and by the material presence of support and pigment. Here the Gowing warning gains its full weight.<sup>23</sup>

Yet what Cézanne means by color modulation as distinct from modeling is clear as a concept, manifest in his work, similar in import to that of Wagner's Chromaticism.

The meaning of Cézanne's color rises from its intense relationality. Rather than implicit in a pre-made framework of local colors, lights and darks, each color is, to Cézanne, painting his picture, latent in the motif, yet found: found in relation to his altering response to his motif, found in relation to neighboring colors in the painting, found in relation to the total, eminent visual situation. Constrained no more by the principles of absolute color, a home color for each thing depicted, to which all variations are subsumed, Cézanne's "little sensation," his distinguishing touch, roams from here to there, assembling and assembling. To repeat language from the final sentence on Wagner in part one, it is "indeterminate and searching."

Eighteenth-century harmony in music is analogous to local color in painting. Both concern a center, a range of differentiations bearing on that center. First Wagner, then Cézanne, move away from these comparatively rigid schemes. In their mature work the formal instant - the mark or chord - takes its place in, and resonates with, an emergent formal structure rather than a planned one. Think not of a balloon-frame house, for which the length and location of each stud, joist and rafter is ordained in the drawings, but of a free-branching tree, growing true to the habit of its kind, oak or pine, yet growing in ongoing and continually varying response to its present state within its total environment. The structure of a work of art made along organic principles of growth is likewise true to type, yet varying and of unforeseeable outcome. For the artist as he shapes his material, the envisioned structure is continually modified by its present condition, the next decision responds to those previous, the new chord or mark rebounds from those that have accumulated, impelled by a reasoning internal rather than extrinsic to the life-long project of his work.

Though Cézanne is far from sole agent in the purposeful decomposition of local color into its constituents and analogs, the honor of precedence for which must go to Impressionists and Pointillists, his challenge to local color attains, in his later work, an apotheosis. Treating the persistence of things in his various perceptions of them, and the transience of those self-same perceptions, he treats the persistence of their color and the sliding-away of his visual grip on it. Color in his paintings passes through stages in which the center of hue moves. The "same" color seen now is different from what it had

been and will be, likewise the "same" position, for Cézanne intuitively understands that his outlook bears on stability but is not itself static. His outlook is swept along on the tide of feeling, the ever-evolving subjective state, which, like a rhapsody, plays on. Positing his color patches as displacement and transition, geared to the trembling whole, he posits the act of looking at the actual world not as a simple receipt of reputed fixed types of reality but as an evolution of the self.

Thus the hegemony of local color and modeling is undone. Just as in Wagner's music one hears a side-stepping movement up and down the diatonic scale from key to key, foretelling atonality, one sees in Cézanne's paintings a sidestepping movement across the range of hues, foretelling Cubism. This development, to be sure, is reached by modulation of the historical sort, a rapid and in some respects retrograde progress of creative misunderstanding, from Cézanne's way with color back toward tonality and modeling - a progress that can be said to accelerate with the master's death on October 22, 1906. For shortly after Georges Braque learns of the loss he sets out from Paris on his crucial pilgrimage to L'Estaque.

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#### Notes

1. Lawrence Gowing, "The Logic of Organized Sensations," *Cézanne: The Late Work* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p. 59. Gowing may have had in mind Professor Badt, who compares Cézanne's use of an array of hues to the chromatic scale. (Kurt Badt, *The Art of Cézanne*, trans. Sheila Ann Ogilvie (University of California Press, 1965), pp. 40-49.)

2. Martin Berstein and Martin Picker, *An Introduction to Music*, 3rd ed. (Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 66—67.

3. Richard Wagner, *Wagner on Music and Drama: A Compendium of Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, ed. Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn, trans., H. Ashton Ellis (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1964), pp. 210-211.

4. Wagner, *Wagner on Music and Drama*, pp. 154-155, 224.

5. Cannon, Johnson and Waite, *A Short History of Musical Styles and Ideas* (Thomas Y. Crowell, 1960), pp. 387, 389.

6. The enthusiasm for Wagner among radical painters is fictionalized in Emile Zola, *L'OEuvre*, first installment, *Le Gil Blas*, 1885, trans. Thomas Walton (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 229. Gagnière enthuses to Claude: "Oh, Wagner! The God, the incarnation of centuries of music! What an onslaught on conventions, what wholesale destruction of ineffectual theories it stands for, the revolution, the breaking down of barriers to infinity! . . . The overture to *Tannhäuser*, what is it but the mighty hallelujah of the new age!"

For Cézanne's remarks on Wagner in his letters see Paul Cézanne, *Letters*, ed., John Rewald (Hacker Art Books, 1976), pp. 103, 121; for a more complete account of Cézanne, Morstatt and Wagner see Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Cézanne: In the Letters of Marion to Morstatt,"

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trans., Margaret Scolari, *Magazine of Art* 31 (Feb., Apr., May, 1938) pp. 288-291; for the influence of *Tannhäuser* on the *Bathers and Idyll* see Mary Tompkins Lewis, *Cézanne's Early Imagery* (University of California Press, 1989), pp. 185-192; for Baudelaire on Wagner see Charles Baudelaire, "Wagner and Tannhäuser in Paris," *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (Phaidon Press, 1964) pp. 111-139.

7. See Jack Lindsay, *Cézanne: his Life and Art*, (Graphic Society Ltd., 1969), pp. 129-30.

8. "'The other day,'" Joachim Gasquet, *Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations*, trans. by Christopher Pemberton. London, 1991, p. 150; "'litterateurs,'" Emile Bernard, *Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne*, (La Rénovation Esthétique, 1926); trans., Paul Cézanne, *Cézanne on Himself: Drawings, Paintings, Writings*, ed., Richard Kendall (New York Graphic Society, 1988), p. 290.

9. Richard Wagner, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, trans. and ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), p. 323.

10. This gloss on Kant and neo-Kantianism derives not only from the Kemp-Smith and Meredith translations of, respectively, the critiques of reason and judgment, but also from Roger Scruton, *Kant* (Oxford University Press, 1982) and Roger Scruton, *From Descartes to Wittgenstein: A Short History of Modern Philosophy* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). Scruton's popularizations suggest ways of rendering Kant idiomatically. Needless to say, any interpretation given to Kant's technical terms is open to dispute.

11. Humphry Ditton's *A Treatise of Perspective, Demonstrative and Practical*, published in 1712, was followed in 1715 by mathematician Brook Taylor's more influential *Linear Perspective*. Both men were cohorts of Newton, and Taylor collaborated with Newton on a musical treatise. Their books on perspective, along with John Hamilton's *Stereography, or A compleat body of Perspective*, published by private subscription in London in 1738, brought to the subject an elaborate and highly abstract geometer's analysis consistent with Newton's Euclidean physics but remote from the work-a-day concerns of painters. (See Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art* (Yale University Press, 1990), p. 148.)

12. "'Absurd theories,'" John Rewald, *Cézanne* (Spring Books, 1959), p. 174; "books remaining," Theodore Reff, "Reproductions and Books in Cézanne's Studio," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. LVI, November 1960, pp. 303-309; "patchwork of ideas," Gasquet, *Cézanne*, pp. 122, 166.

13. Cennino Cennini, *Il libro dell' arte o trattato della pittura* (The Craftsman's Handbook, trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (Dover Publications, 1954), pp. 18; 49-50; 92)

14. Charles Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (Grammar of Painting and Engraving), trans. Kate Newell Dodggett (Hurd and Houghton, 1874), p. 127); Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (Phaidon Press, 1971), p. 29; Thomas Couture, *Méthode et entretiens à atelier*, Paris, 1868, (*Conversations on Art*), trans. S. E. Stewart, New York, 1879, p. 3). In nineteenth-century practice drawing in tones was considered to be continuous with, and indeed a preparation for, painting, as Couture makes clear: "The word value, as we employ it, applies rather to drawing, than to coloring. Value is the greater or lesser intensity of a tint, so that we say a strong value, or a weak value. To a painter we say, observe your values, and your coloring." (Couture, *Conversations on Art*, p. 26.)

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15. As early as 1876 he writes to Pissarro (Cézanne, *Letters*, p. 146), "The sun here [in l'Estaque] is so tremendous that it seems to me as if the objects were silhouetted not only in black and white, but in blue, red, brown and violet. I may be mistaken, but this seems to me to be the opposite of modelling."

"The main thing," Rewald, *Cézanne*, p. 174; "I never wanted," Emile Bernard, *Souvenirs*, p. 39. ("Eh bien! il ne m'a pas compris, répondait-il furieusement; jamais je n'ai voulu et je n'accepterai jamais le manque de modelé ou de graduation; c'est non-sens.")

16. Theodore Reff, "Cézanne's Constructive Stroke," *The Art Quarterly*, Autumn, 1962, pp. 214-227. Regular, parallel marks appear in Cézanne drawings as early as 1858-59 (Chappuis 34, 35). The hatch-work is mechanical and it addresses light and shade more than volume, but in a drawing of a Roman bust, dated c. 1859 (Chappuis 58), the mature technique of modeling with planes established by hatching in pencil is already in evidence. On a *Page of Studies* dated 1871-74 the technique is full-blown, foreshadowing its appearance in the paintings.

17. Though Gowing's acute visual intelligence and fine way with words in his "The Logic of Organized Sensations" sets the pace for this essay, to entirely agree with his finding is impossible. Giving I think unwarranted importance to a water-color, *The Green Pitcher*, he claims the local color of the pitcher is struck with an emerald green that has on either side of it patches of blue and yellow, the primary constituents of green. From this preliminary discovery, he says, Cézanne grew a system of modulation from local color through the spectrum. But one is hard pressed to find in Cézanne's mature paintings single patches or areas of color that are unequivocally local, and Gowing's "series of colors, always in the order of the spectrum and always placed at regular intervals along it" are even less in evidence. In *The Green Pitcher*, for instance, there are numerous touches of nuanced green, each one ratcheting the eye one step along, none to be taken in itself for the "material color of the pot," and the adjacent blue and yellow are not pure but much modified by the self-same green strokes, which they overlap.

When Gowing claims that, "no pot ever produced this logical sequence . . .," and that what is at issue is, "an emergent logic in the order [of colors], rather than anything one can imagine observing on the spot . . .," he surely leans toward error. For if nature suggests to Cézanne colors he sets in his picture, it is equally the case that his picture suggests colors he then finds in nature. An "emergent pictorial order" provokes observation "on the spot." What grows within the painting for and of itself, what is seen in the motif, are meant by Cézanne to come together as a seen unity -- a likeness. It is this achieved unity that the artist refers to as "realization." But Gowing implies a dichotomy, a split. And when, in the same vein, he quotes with evident approval the words of Bernard, who had his own agenda in respect to his own interests as a painter, and who said of Cézanne's modulations that the course they took "was fixed beforehand in his mind," he, Gowing, deprives Cézanne of his main impetus, which was to hatch his "sensations" from previous ones. It was intrinsic to constructing with "sensations" that the choice of hues be of the developing color-structure in the painting *and* of the perceived moment *sur la motif*, that is, synthetic but unforeseen.

In short, Gowing's reading is over-determined and anachronistically biased by reference to a subsequent language of non-mimetic art. Modulation, yes; local color transposed via an a-priori system into equally spaced steps along the spectrum in such a way as to eclipse appearances, no.

See Gowing, "The Logic of Organized Sensations," pp. 58-59 and throughout. For an earlier, slightly more moderate version of his idea of *The Green Pitcher* see Françoise Cachin, et al., *Cézanne* (The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1996), p. 288.

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18. For a rewarding discussion of Cézanne's treatment of time see the important essay by George Heard Hamilton, "Cézanne, Bergson and the Image of Time," *College Art Journal* 16 (Fall 1956), pp. 2-12.

19. "'Always the same,'" Gasquet, *Cézanne*, pp. 148-150; "'kept slipping,'" Ambroise Vollard, *Cézanne*, trans., Harold L. van Doren (Dover Publications, 1984), p. 86; "'composite picture,'" Lila Cabot Perry, "Reminiscences of Claude Monet," *The American Magazine of Art*, XVII (March, 1927), p. 120.

20. "Lire la nature, c'est la voir sous le voile de l'interprétation par taches colorées se succédant selon une loi d'harmonie. Cest grandes teintes s'analysent ainsi par les modulations. Peindre c'est enregistrer ses sensations colorées." Emile Bernard, "Paul Cézanne," *L'Occident*, Paris, July, 1904 p. 23 (trans. Judith Wechsler, *Cézanne in Perspective*, Prentice-Hall, 1975, p. 42; "'climbing the scale,'" Rewald, *Cézanne*, p. 175; "On ne devrait pas dire modeler, on devrait dire *moduler*." Bernard, "Paul Cézanne," p. 24 (trans. Wechsler, *Cézanne in Perspective*, p. 42).

21. Blanc, *Grammar*, pp. 145-169 (the chapter on color). Blanc's 1865 articles on color in the periodical he founded, the *Gazette-des Beaux-Arts*, certainly crossed Cézanne's path, for his mother and sister were subscribers (see Lindsay, *Cézanne*, p. 156). Cézanne was also familiar with Jean Désiré Regnier's *Dela Lumière et La Couleur chez les Grands Maitres Anciens*, one section of which is entitled "Antagonisme -- Effet -- Complémentaire -- Discordance -- Harmonie." (See Robert William Ratliffe, *Cézanne's Working Methods and their Theoretical Background* (Doctoral Thesis, University of London, 1960), pp. 333-336.) For a discussion of "musicality" in respect to painting and especially in respect to Roger Fry on Cézanne see Judith Wechsler, *The Interpretation of Cézanne* (UMI Research Press, 1972), pp. 41-43.

22. Bernard, *Souvenirs*, p. 39.

23. A difference Albers appreciated. After examining the question in some detail he concluded, "All this may signify why any color composition naturally defies such diagrammatic registration as notation in music and choreography in dance." Also appreciated by Delacroix, who wrote, "What places music higher than the other arts (with many reservations in favor of painting precisely because it resembles music in so many ways), is that although completely in a convention of its own, it is also a complete language." (Josef Albers, "Harmony," *Interaction of Color*, rev. ed. (Yale University Press, 1975), 39-43; Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Lucy Norton, ed. Hubert Wellington (Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 267-268.)