EMILE BERNARD: THE UNWILLING MODERN

a thesis presented

by

Peter Rudd

to the Department of Art History and Theory

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in the subject of Fine Arts

University of Sydney - October 1998

ABSTRACT

Emile Bernard: The Unwilling Modern

The introduction presents Bernard as a neglected example of tensions between modernism and traditionalism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century painting. It analyses the key terms of modernism, Symbolism and classicism, and states previously ignored connections between the phases of Bernard's career as the central theme of the thesis.

Chapter one revisits a well known part of Bernard's career, his early years in Paris and Pont-Aven. Esthetic contradictions are observed between Bernard's representation of his modern experience and his nostalgic sources of inspiration. These are connected to his wish to transcend what he understood as the secular values of modern French life. Bernard's search for a modern Catholic esthetic is examined in relation to his friendship with Vincent van Gogh, to his troubled relationship with Paul Gauguin and to his brief participation in Joséphin Péladan's Salon of the Rose+Croix.

Chapter two discusses the Orientalist works which Bernard painted during his stay in Egypt between 1893 and 1903. Bernard's modernist revision of conventional Orientalist forms in his Egyptian painting, and his contemporary Symbolist writings for the Mercure de France, are regarded as an extension of his previous experimentation in France. His development of a new traditionalist esthetic after 1896 is seen as a continuing expression of persistent contradictions in his art. It is observed that he continued to draw inspiration from such a seminal modernist figure as Manet even as his open contempt for the contemporary avant-garde coloured the reception of his work as exhibited by Vollard in 1901.

Chapter three examines Bernard's two influential essays on Cézanne of 1904 and 1907. Bernard's developing opinion of Cézanne as an increasingly flawed figure who linked modernist painting to the art of the past is seen as reflecting his contempt for the Cézannism of his radical contemporaries, as well as mirroring his dissatisfaction with his own troubled traditionalism.

Chapter four is concerned with Bernard's early twentieth century painting as seen in the context of the writings on Cézanne by progressive critics and the paintings being made by such younger modernists as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. The evidence of a modern sense of dislocation and fragmentation present beneath the surface of Bernard's traditionalism is seen as connecting him to the preoccupations of contemporary radical painting at the same time as his violent conservatism made him an ever more marginalised painter and critic.

Chapter five deals with Bernard's painting and critical writings of the 1920s, and in particular with his address to younger painters who were then adopting classicist pictorial forms. The sense in Bernard's painting and writing of the irreparable loss of past pictorial knowledge, comparable to the mood of contemporary Italian classicists, is contrasted to the radically deformed classicism then prevalent in France. Bernard's increasing identification with Delacroix and his rejection of the example of Ingres is related to his antipathy for modernist uses of Ingres' painting.

Chapter six observes links between Bernard's mature painting and the early surrealism of Salvador Dali. It argues that the assemblage of borrowed and disconnected pictorial fragments in Dali's painting affords an explicit representation of the processes guiding Bernard's work. The strange, monumental Cycle Humain which Bernard painted in the 1920s in response to the First World War is taken as an example of his increasingly difficult effort to sustain his ambitious traditionalist painting in the face of modern change.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis with a discussion of Bernard's historical and biographical writings, in which he expressed his growing pessimism as an artist who was involved in a process of historical decay that he ultimately sensed he could not resist.

CONTENTS

Volume One

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to the University of Sydney for the Australian Postgraduate Award which made this thesis possible. I have profited greatly from the advice of my supervisor, Virginia Spate, as well as from that of Roger Benjamin who offered me his valuable insights at the start and conclusion of this project. My understanding of Bernard was enriched by my conversations and correspondence with Laure Harscöet-Maire who was also kind enough to show me her collection of paintings by Bernard. I wish to thank the Department of Manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities in Los Angeles, and the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie in Paris for allowing me generous access to their collections of documents written by and relating to Bernard. Finally and most importantly I must thank Kazunao Hayashi for having the patience to live with me while I wrote this thesis.

List of Illustrations

All works are executed in oil on canvas unless otherwise stated. All measurements are metric.

16. Jean-François Millet, Les Bucherons (from the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, July 1887, 11)

17. Emile Bernard, Self-Portrait, 1888, 46 x 55, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

18. Emile Bernard, Pardon at Pont-Aven, 1888, 74 x 92, private collection

19. Postcard of Brittany (from David Sweetman, Paul Gauguin, London, 1995, 184)

20. Paul Gauguin, The Vision after the sermon, 1888, 73 x 92, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

21. Jean-Charles Cazin, Tobias and the angel, 1880, 186 x 142, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille

22. Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret, Breton women at a Pardon, 1887, 125 x 141, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Museum, Lisbon

23. Emile Bernard, Portrait of Madeleine, 1888, 61 x 50, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi

24. Emile Bernard, Madeleine au Bois d'Amour, 1888, 138 x 163, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

25. Hippolyte Flandrin, Pietà, 1844, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

26. Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa, 1504, 63 x 46, Musée du Louvre, Paris

27. Emile Bernard, Château de Rustephan, 1889, 92 x 73, Musée du Prieuré, St Germain-en-Laye

28. Emile Bernard, Four Bathers, 1890, 32 x 41, private collection

29. Emile Bernard, Seven Bathers, 1889, 63 x 61, private collection

30. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Jupiter and Thetis, 1811, 327 x 260, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence

31. Emile Bernard, Les Nymphes sur fond bleu, 1889, oil on cardboard, 49 x 39, private collection

32. Emile Bernard, The Annunciation, 1889, 40.4 x 50.3, private collection

33. Emile Bernard, Christ in the Garden of Olives, 1889, private collection

34. Vincent Van Gogh, Pietà (after Delacroix), 1889, 73 x 60.5, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

35. Emile Bernard, The Burial of Vincent Van Gogh, 1893, 73 x 93, private collection

36. Emile Bernard, Pietà, 1890, 90 x 130, private collection

37. Carlos Schwabe, Poster for the Rose+Croix Salon, 1892 (from La Revue Encyclopédique, 1892, 1105)

38. Emile Bernard, Breton women with umbrellas, 1892, 81 x 100, Musee d'Orsay, Paris

39. Georges Seurat, Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, 1886, 207.6 x 308, The Art institute of Chicago, Chicago

40. Emile Bernard, Les Fleurs du mal, 1892, 63 x 93, private collection

41. Paul Gauguin, Soyez mystérieuses, 1890, 73 x 97, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

42. Emile Bernard, Christ and the Evangelists, 1893, fresco, the Catholic mission, Samos (destroyed)

43. Emile Bernard, Une Rue à Caire, 1894, watercolour, private collection

44. La Rue du Caire, Exposition universelle, Paris, 1889 (contemporary illustrations from Sylviane Leprun, Le Théâtre des colonies, Paris, 1986, pl 34)

45. Emile Bernard, La Halte des nomades (after Delacroix), 1881, 58 x 50, private collection

46. Emile Bernard, Femmes puisant de l'eau, 1893, 99 x 84, private collection

47. Emile Bernard, Femmes puisant de l'eau, 1894, 60 x 49, private collection

48. Emile Bernard, Fête arabe, 1894, gouache, 84 x 110, M.A.A.O., Paris

49. Emile Bernard, Self-Portrait with Hanenah, 1894, 60 x 50, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper

50.(a) Emile Bernard, Christ on the Cross, 1896, 120 x 92, Eglise de Pont-Aven

50.(b) Paolo Veronese, Calvary, 1584, 102 x 102, Musée du Louvre, Paris

51. Emile Bernard, Musiciens espagnols, 1897, 181 x 119, private collection

88. Paul Cézanne, Concert champêtre (after Titian), watercolour, c.1878, 12.6 x 18.2, Musée du Louvre, Paris

89. Thomas Couture, Romans of the Decadence, 1847, 473.7 x 787.4, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

90. Emile Bernard, Après le bain, 1908, 122 x 153, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

91. Henri Matisse, Le Bonheur de Vivre, 1906, 171 x 234, The Barnes Foundation, Merion

92. Agostino Carracci, Love reciprocated, engraving, c.1595, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore

93. Pablo Picasso, Two nudes, 1906, 151.3 x 93, Museum of Modern Art, New York

94. Henri Matisse, Luxe, calme et volupté, 1904, 98.5 x 118.5, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

95. Rupert Bunny, Scène d'Eté, c.1907, 249 x 298, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

96. Emile Bernard, Woman at St Briac, 1887, 56 x 42, private collection

97. Emile Bernard, The Temptation of St Anthony, 1889, 37.5 x 45.5, private collection

98. Giorgione, Sleeping Venus, c.1510, 108.6 x 175.3, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden

99. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Le Bain turc, 1862, 108 diameter, Musée du Louvre, Paris

100. Emile Bernard, Self-Portrait, 1910, 52 x 48, private collection

101. Pablo Picasso, Three Women, 1908, 200 x 178, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg

102. Emile Bernard, La Famille, 1910, 95 x 120, Private Collection

103. Gustave Courbet, Bathers, 1853, 227 x 193, Musée Fabre, Montpellier

104. Gino Severini, Maternité, 1916, Museo dell'Academia Cortona

105. Gino Severini, Maternité, 1920 (from Gino Severini, Du Cubisme au classicisme)

106. Gino Severini, Still-life (from Gino Severini, Du Cubisme au classicisme)

107. Gino Severini, Two Punchinellos, 1922, The City Museum, The Hague

108. Emile Bernard, Nu assis, 1922, 115 x 121, private collection

109. Emile Bernard, Madonna and Child, 1898, 57 x 53.5, private collection

110. Pablo Picasso, Studies, 1920, 100 x 81, Musée Picasso, Paris

111. Pablo Picasso, Bathers, 1918, 26.3 x 21.7, Musée Picasso, Paris

112. Maurice Denis, Les Premiers pas de Dominique, 1911, 180.5 x 160, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes

113. Pablo Picasso, Three Women at the Spring, 1921, 230 x 165, Museum of Modern Art, New York

114. Emile Bernard, Nature morte au nu, 1921, 32 x 47, private collection

115. Antonio Nardi, Figure dans mon atelier, 1924, 98 x 110, Galleria Nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Rome

116. Emile Bernard, Le Goûter sur l'herbe, 1908, private collection

117. Emile Bernard, Self-portrait with a palette, 1914, 74 x 55, private collection

118. Alfred Barr, The Development of Abstract Art, jacket of the catalogue for the exhibition of Cubism and Abstract Art, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936

119. Emile Bernard, Femmes sortant du bain, 1893, 87 x 66, private collection

120. Vincent van Gogh, Les Sarcleuses, 1890, 49.5 x 64, private collection

121. Salvador Dali, Imperial Monument to the woman child, c.1930, 142 x 81, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

122. Salvador Dali, Architectonic Angelus of Millet, 1933, 73 x 60, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Renia Sofia, Madrid

123. Pavillon de l'Afrique français, postcard, Exposition Internationale des Arts décoratifs, Paris, 1925

124. Pavilion of French Oceania, Exposition coloniale, Paris, 1931 (from Edna Nicholl A Travers l'Expostion coloniale, 159)

125. Temple of Angkor Wat, postcard, Exposition coloniale, Paris, 1931

126. Emile Bernard, Bretonne à la nature morte, 1932, 47 x 33.5, private collection

127. Emile Bernard, Construction of the Temple of Jerusalem, 1922, 260 x 300, private collection

128. Emile Bernard, Christ healing the sick, 1922, 260 x 300, private collection

129. Ary Scheffer, Le Christ consolateur, 1837, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, Amsterdam

130. Emile Bernard, La Doute, 1924, 265 x 300, Museum of Modern Art, Venice

131. Emile Bernard, Torse féminin, 1933, 84 x 64, private collection

132. Emile Bernard, Self-portrait with a statue, 1932, 103 x 80, private collection

133. René Magritte, The Rape, 1934, 73 x 54, private collection

134. Louis Anquetin, Self-portrait (from the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, February 1934, 108)

135. Emile Bernard, Pardon at Pont-Aven, 1940, 119 x 117, private collection

136. Emile Bernard, Après le récolte de goémon, 1939, 118 x 140, private collection

137. Emile Bernard, Après le récolte de goémon, c.1889, 81 x 63.5, private collection

Introduction

From a distance, it is possible to underestimate the urgency of late nineteenth and early twentieth century debates about the nature of modernity and the question of its representation in art. These debates involved not only radicals and conservatives, but engaged artists and critics of every complexion between the two extremes. They were arbitrated by critics sympathetic to modernism with a set of prescriptions that was rigid enough to meet resistance even from the few artists it sanctioned. Picasso attacked the modernist principle of progressive research when he announced in 1923:

> The several manners I have used in my art must not be considered as steps towards an unknown ideal of painting [...] I have never taken into consideration the spirit of research. When I have found something to express, I have done it without thinking of the past or of the future.[1]

With typical irony, Picasso, on the surface at least, rejected the model of stylistic evolution promulgated by progressive dealers, critics and historians. Such non-conformity was, however, a privilege of his preeminent status. Other radical twentieth century artists who opposed the idea of the forward momentum of their work would fall from critical favour and lose value in the art market to end their careers in relative obscurity. The sustained and increasing status of a Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso or Mondrian was matched by as many careers, like those of Bernard, Anquetin, Derain and Severini, which appeared to falter after moments of youthful promise. Although Maurice Denis retained the respect of some progressive artists and critics after his conversion to classicism in the late 1890s, his reputation did not escape the decline that was accorded to those former radicals who called for a brake on modernist innovation. In 1916 he observed,

> On préfère couramment dans l'oeuvre d'un artiste moderne, les balbutiements de ses débuts. S'il acquiert un peu de science, s'il apprend son métier il se gâte, on le méprise: c'est un 'pompier'[2].

Such critical prejudice alienated not only Denis but many of his contemporaries who responded like him to modernism's endless pursuit of the new by revoking their former membership of it. Emile Bernard presents an extreme example. The vigorous avant--gardism of his works of the late 1880s and the early 1890s was replaced after 1896 by a similarly marked conservatism. The modernist response to Bernard's stylistic metamorphosis, summarised in Jules Meier-Graefe's 1904 study of modern French art, Entwicklungsgeschichte der Modernen Kunst, predicted the decline of his reputation in the twentieth century. The handful of respectful reviews given to Bernard's exhibitions after 1901 by admirers of the stature of Arsène Alexandre and Claude Roger-Marx, could never emulate the interest he had first excited as a youthful collaborator of Gauguin and Van Gogh.

Bernard was not forgotten after his death, but the numerous books, articles and exhibitions devoted to his work usually addressed themselves to restoring his early painting from the tarnish of his later conservatism. The major Lille retrospective, Emile Bernard, held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in 1967 was representative. It was dominated by works of the Pont-Aven period, and provided a catalogue in which a chronology of the artist's life followed three pages on the period from 1884 to 1893 with five lines on that from 1905 to his death in 1941. This trend was maintained as recently as 1990 by the exhibition of Emile Bernard, a pioneer of modern art at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, which collected a comprehensive group of Bernard's Pont-Aven paintings but acknowledged his later career only as an embarrassing coda.

The modernist view of Bernard has been opposed in recent decades by Jean-Jacques Luthi. His monograph, Emile Bernard. L'Initiateur (1974), and catalogue raisonné (1982) support Bernard's mature image of himself as a follower of received esthetic wisdom

whose first works were no more than a youthful excursion prior to the sustained researches of his maturity. Bernard had defined the reputation that he wished to leave to posterity when, in 1905, he had written in La Rénovation esthétique,

> le cloisonnisme n'était et ne pouvait être qu'un mode de décoration bref, intéressant certes [...] mais anti-pictural et méconnaissant les beautés que nous ont léguées nos Initiateurs de l'Art suprême.[3]

His later work was devoted to the idea of his continuance of the line of preeminent Renaissance and Baroque masters.

Although they resuscitate the larger part of Bernard's career, both Luthi's and Bernard's defences of his mature work are limited, like the modernist attack on it, by their dismissal of one side of his oeuvre and by their failure to recognise the persistent unorthodoxy of his later painting. The present thesis, departing from this dichotomous view, will instead address continuities between the phases of Bernard's oeuvre and acknowledge the blurring of traditionalism and modernism that runs through his art. In the light of Bernard's long critical engagement with the work of his radical contemporaries, his painting and criticism will be considered as a magnifying mirror for suppressed anxieties and contradictions in the modernist project, and as more characteristic of its time than has previously been allowed.

My interest in Bernard's career stems from my own experience as an artist who was educated in the 1970s and 1980s and who felt and feels alienated from the modernist modes of artistic practice that I was taught. The triumphant narrative of modernism's breaking of old rules interests me less than the persistent power of the works of the past to haunt the modern imagination. As a painter who wanted to represent aspects of modern experience in the language of figuration and realism established by earlier masters, I was bemused by a statement like that made by Benjamin Buchloh in 1983, that

in order to be relevant contemporary art must fulfil 'the historical formal necessities that we have inherited as far as the development of the aesthetic language itself is concerned'. In practice, he stated, these inherited necessities had persuaded serious contemporary artists to make a 'very systematic and very relevant analysis of the particular conditions under which the work of art is produced - under which the work of art is received – under which the work of art is distributed.'[4] Such an analysis, he claimed, should reject figuration as an obsolete mode whose present function was to reinforce conservative authoritarian ideologies.

Buchloh's comments were made after he delivered his paper, 'Figures of authority, ciphers of regression', in which he refuted the return to figuration in contemporary art by looking back with perspicacity at the conservatism of the European avant-garde in the 1920s and 1930s. The fundamental claim of this paper that what he called 'mimetic modes' in modern art necessarily expressed anonymity and passivity is one I reject. It seems to me to underestimate the complexity and diversity of the uses of figuration in Western art and to discount the long history of transformation and renovation through which representational art has proven itself to be at least as vigorous as the abstract and conceptual modes favoured by Buchloh. When we recall the variety of styles produced under the regime of the 'visual and spatial ordering systems' which Buchloh argued had been 'systematically broken down since the middle of the nineteenth century', his claim that the modern return to figuration constituted an attempt to 'establish a new aesthetic orthodoxy' sounds hollow.[5] The 'ideological backlash' which he associated with the classicism of artists such as Picasso, Derain and Severini was not merely a rejection of the consequences of pre-war Cubism, but a reaffirmation of the importance of the memory of pictorial tradition to the development of radical art. Cubist painters demonstrated their connection to the art of the past by referring to the subject matter, composition and colour

of earlier painting. The return to mimetic modes after 1910 did not fail to retain aspects of Cubist innovation, and to reveal the ongoing tensions between radicalism and conservatism in modern art.

Buchloh was certainly right, however, in his conviction that the history of modernism could not be escaped by those who came after it. The most telling part of his argument is his observation that the artistic forms of the past are not simply available to contemporary artists as fragments to be imputed with a spurious newness by their reassembly. I would argue in support of this that the most difficult task faced by modern figurative artists is that of finding ways to represent their originality within conventional pictorial forms. This has usually been effected through a deformation and rearrangement of borrowed elements in which artists have acknowledged their remoteness from their sources while drawing on the persistent power of the techniques of illusion that they provide. The self-portrait of Christian Schad, for example, which Buchloh cited as making an invalid claim 'to a cultural practice that has lost its vitality', seems to me, on the contrary, to evoke a peculiarly modern perversity through its retrogressive linear precision and illusory solidity (figure 1).

Emile Bernard's career is of particular interest to me because its idiosyncratic trajectory, out of step with contemporary developments in painting, clearly illustrates the loneliness and melancholy of the moderns' address to the art of the past. His oeuvre gives vital evidence of the problems associated with the use of long established realist modes by an artist who was uneasily conscious of his distance from his pictorial models. Focussing on the expression of Bernard's conservatism in his painting and art criticism, my thesis will explore tensions between modernism and traditionalism that have usually been played down in histories of modern art. Bernard will be regarded as exemplary of a pervasive

modern anxiety with the memory of the past which I will also briefly discuss in relation to works by his 'master', Cézanne, as well as to those by such younger contemporaries as Picasso, Severini and Dali.

The rapid transformation of culture and society in Bernard's lifetime happened alongside manifestations of intense conservatism in French life, and Bernard was far from alone in his right wing politics or in his strong identification with the Catholic church. Historians such as Kenneth Silver and Romy Golan have traced the important roles played by conservatism and nostalgia in shaping the course of French art after 1914.[6] Their work reveals a persistent desire for continuity with the past which was expressed as clearly in the work of some avant-garde artists as in that of their less radical contemporaries. Conservative movements in French politics and society, such as l'Action français or the rise of regionalism in the 1920s and 1930s, afford an historical context for Bernard's thought but they are not discussed in the present thesis in which I have chosen to concentrate strictly on the esthetic expressions of Bernard's conservatism. Although Bernard's work reflected the wider preoccupations of his time, his idiosyncratic oeuvre did not conform to the historical patterns traced by Silver and Golan. Bernard perversely attempted a return to old forms at a time when many were seduced by the possibilities of the new, and, in the 1920s and 1930s, he developed a painterly traditionalism which deliberately distinguished itself from the hard-edged classicism of a number of his contemporaries.

Bernard's failure to fit in with the dominant tendencies of his time has typically troubled the few historians who have been willing to study his mature work. The sensitive analysis of Bernard's career in Charles Chassé's Le Mouvement Symboliste dans l'art du XIXe siècle ended its unexpectedly long exposition of his later theory by admitting,

> On se demandera peut-être pourquoi étudiant le symbolisme, j'ai donné ici une telle importance à l'exposé de doctrines qu'en sont précisément l'antithèse (en apparence tout au moins), mais c'est qu'il m'a paru curieux de noter comment du symbolisme a pu ainsi naître un classicisme aussi orthodoxe dans un esprit très cultivé.[7]

Chassé properly resisted the confinement of his enigmatic subject in ready categories, observing that 'même dans son classicisme des souvenirs de symbolisme flottent encore; car ceux qui ont traversé cette epoque troublé ne l'ont pas traversé en vain'. This equivocal opposition of Bernard's 'symbolisme' to his later classicism is problematic and indicates our need to examine our terms before we proceed. Classicism and Symbolism, along with modernity and modernism, will be critical terms for this study.

In Baudelaire's archetypal definition, modernity is 'le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, le moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable'.[8] Modernity's image, Baudelaire argued, would be registered in the 'port', 'regard' and 'geste' of its age, but would typically elude the efforts made to fix it in pictorial representation. The experience of modernity revealed in his description of the urban crowd as an 'immense reservoir d'electricité' called for new pictorial forms. In a prophetic comparison, he likened 'the painter of modern life' to 'un kaléidoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements représente la vie multiple et la grace mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie'. The apparent loss of bodily integrity occasioned by immersion in the field of urban energy, he predicted, would prompt the artist's fragmented rendering of the same experience.

Modernism, as applied to artistic movements, is usually thought of as beginning in the mid-nineteenth century around the time of Baudelaire's astonishing essay. An esthetic product of modernity, modernism has at various stages of its development celebrated or rejected the material and ideological framework providing for its existence. Imitating the

material progress which made new science and technology always seem to be rendering present modes of life obsolete, esthetic modernism called for an accelerating obsolescence of styles which forced its exponents to represent themselves, in the act of self-critique, as constantly in step with or preferably ahead of their time. By 1960 Clement Greenberg had fused modernism's disparate styles in his monolithic theory of the medium as the ever more deliberate message of all progressive painting since Manet.[9] Michael Fried has pointed out that while a later historian like Timothy Clark has criticised the primacy of esthetic values in Greenberg's theory, he has retained Greenberg's emphasis on 'the material means by which illusions and likenesses were made'.[10]

The modernist art devised by Bernard and Gauguin in the late 1880s asserted the material properties of their medium with a force that has ensured their lasting place in the modernist canon. It also expressed their hostility to aspects of contemporary technology and society. Modern science and progress were opposed in their works by their address to a range of exotic, Byzantine, Gothic and early Renaissance sources which were discovered in the modern spaces of the museum and the universal exhibition. Such a retrieval of previously neglected or forgotten forms had existed in European art since the Renaissance, but became problematic in the later nineteenth century when it was connected to the modernist pursuit of the new.

The problem was addressed by Symbolist critics with their reference to the theory of Romanticism, and in particular to Baudelaire's idea of 'correspondances', as evoked in his sonnet of that title. Baudelaire's identification of nature as a 'forest of symbols' which embodied the beliefs and sensations of the artist was developed by his follower, G.-Albert Aurier, in his radical analyses of the art of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Bernard. Reconfiguring empirical data as a cryptic code for primal associations, Aurier, like

Baudelaire, collapsed internal and external realities, defining radical painting as a symbolic field that had superseded the mimesis of its precursors. He absorbed the memory of the art of the past which had attended every new development in art with his suggestion of a spiritual continuity between the great works of the present and the past. In his 1892 study, 'Les Symbolistes', he united 'primitive', Renaissance and modernist art as a chain of instinctive responses to what he thought of as eternal messages in nature. The moderns' appreciation of a work such as the Mona Lisa, he argued, aspired to a spiritual plane where the artist's and his admirer's souls would meet as in a Neo-Platonic conversation between divine lovers.[11]

As defined in Aurier's theory and concretised in the art of his friends, Symbolism embodied an effort to discover lasting values remote from the ephemera of modernity. A similar motivation was to be attributed to Baudelaire by Walter Benjamin in 1939 when he wrote of the 'correspondances' as a defence mechanism against the experience of shock which he thought of as characteristic of modernity.

> What Baudelaire meant by correspondences may be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form. This is possible only within the form of ritual [...] The correspondences are the data of remembrance - not historical data, but data of prehistory. What makes festive days great and significant is the encounter with an earlier life.[12]

Benjamin's words seem as relevant to Baudelaire's criticism of art as to his poetry and, in particular, evoke the enigmatic phrases of his writings on Delacroix which were to exert an enduring influence on Bernard. Baudelaire's announcement, in his Salon of 1846, that melancholy was the quality which defined Delacroix as 'le vrai peintre du XIXe siècle' was quoted by Bernard in 1910 as a central idea of his art criticism:

> cette mélancholie singulière et opiniâtre qui s'exhale de toutes ses oeuvres, et qui s'exprime et par le choix des sujets, et par l'expression des figures, et par le geste, et par le style de la couleur.[13]

This statement did not explain how the artist who had shown Les adieux de Romeo et Juliette, L'Enlèvement de Rebecca from Ivanhoe, Marguerite à l'église and a Lion at the Salon of 1846 could be construed as 'le vrai peintre du XIXe siècle', but the singular melancholy to which Baudelaire referred would seem to have been the symptom of a disjunction between the imagination of the modern artist and the outward forms of modern life. It emerged again in his tragicomic call to artists to represent their century in its real clothes, 'l'habit nécessaire de notre époque, souffrante et portant jusque sur ses épaules noires et maigres le symbol d'un deuil perpétuel' - and in the ironic note on which he introduced his Salon by exhorting the bourgeoisie to devote the same seriousness to the arts as it applied to its practical affairs.[14]

Baudelaire's portrayal of Delacroix as a painter engaged in a heroic struggle against the hostile conditions of his age ensured the painter's lasting importance for Bernard. But Delacroix was not the painter of black frock-coats, nor of the private 'floating' existences of the great city whom Baudelaire imagined in the last paragraphs of his Salon. Instead, his occasional depictions of modern public events (the Massacre at Chios, Liberty leading the people) borrowed their gestures and attitudes from High Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and imitated their dramatic and expressive clarity. The allegorical progress of Liberty through the rubble of Paris is made possible only by the nostalgia of Delacroix' style. His Romantic visualisation of modern life implies the melancholy of an unseen reality that is revealed only in the nervous tension of what Baudelaire thought of as the 'douleur morale' of its protagonists' faces.

The last master of French painting to embrace the memory of High Renaissance and Baroque composition so completely, Delacroix embodied a conservatism which was cited approvingly by Bernard in 1910.[15] He disdained the art that he expected to follow

him, which, he thought, would be propelled by bourgeois patronage, sterile criticism and scientific progress. Later painters were to fulfill Delacroix' expectations by responding increasingly to the unbalanced postures conditioned by modern life and captured by the new medium of photography. As the unexpected shapes revealed by the camera and mastered by a draughtsman of the calibre of Degas took their place in nineteenth century painting, however, they were counterbalanced by compensatory images of equilibrium and stasis. The stillness which Ingres had bestowed on the Vicomtesse d'Haussonville to impart a classicising simplicity to the lines of her fashionable dress, passed through Flandrin and Puvis to modernists like Seurat and Gauguin.

Despite Bernard's early association with the radical milieu of Anquetin, Signac, Van Gogh and Gauguin, he resisted the monumentalising of modern experience which was exemplified by a work such as Seurat's Bathers at Asnières, with its assertion of a continuity between modern life and the memory of the past. Bernard's earliest works, instead, made the idea of a modern traditionalism problematic by focussing on the tension between his knowledge of the art of the past and his experience of modern life. He used borrowed styles to inform a pictorial critique of his age which looked back to Delacroix' earlier resistance to the dissatisfying surface of his modernity. Although Bernard briefly alluded to a sense of stability and permanence in the style of his mature Egyptian works, painted in Cairo around 1900, he returned to obvious equivocation with the uneasy forms of his twentieth century traditionalism.

In Delacroix' journal, which Bernard had read as early as 1893, classicism was defined as a term for those works which were destined to serve as models for the future. His rivals in the school of David, Delacroix claimed, were unworthy pretenders to the classic in their narrow-minded imitation of the antique.[16] This controversial opinion affirmed the

tension between originality and retrospection which was central to modern painting, and which would spawn the variety of meanings ascribed to classicism over the coming century.

Despite the excitement generated by the new spectacles and experiences of modernity, the memory of earlier art was kept alive for artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the new spaces created for old paintings in the art museum and in books like Charles Blanc's fourteen volume Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles (published between 1861 and 1876). When Robert Rey wrote on the subject of what he called the revival of classic sentiment in late nineteenth century painting in 1931, he remarked on the nostalgic appearance that was still apparent to him in much contemporary art.

> Si, terminant la visite de quelque Salon d'Automne ou des Indépendants on ferme les yeux, si on essaye de se constituer une sorte d'image moyenne, résultat des images comme superposées des tableaux les plus intéressants qu'on vient de voir, on s'aperçoit avec surprise que cette image moyenne a je ne sais quel air un peu parodique, mais bien marquée de 'tableau de musée'. Quelque chose comme ce que serait l'image moyenne sur l'envers de nos paupières en sortant de la grande salle du XVIIe siècle au Louvre.[17]

Rey's idea of an 'image moyenne' formed from parts of various remembered works pointed to a conservatism which was expressed by some early twentieth century artists in their use of the term tableau for a superior class of painting, distinguished by its affinity with the art of the past. The term which had been used in the nineteenth century to distinguish finished and successful works from studies, sketches or failures was adopted in the twentieth century by painters as diverse as Bernard, Denis and Matisse to separate their engagement with the memory of earlier art from the supposed spontaneity of Impressionism.

Bernard's famous essay on Cézanne of 1907 reflected the mood of its time by drawing

attention to Cézanne's interest in a surprising range of earlier masters. He recorded that Cézanne's studio was decorated by photographs of works by Daumier and Forain as well as of Couture's The Romans of the Decadence and Delacroix' Hagar and Ishmael in the desert, the last of which Cézanne copied in oils around 1900. These constituted only the tip of Cézanne's visual memory, however, and of the eccentric historical references that were crucial to his importance for the next generation. Bernard's understanding of a modern classicism which he defined in relation to Cézanne's supposed successes and failures as a restorer of the values of the art of the past will provide an important theme of the present thesis. While he had initially been attracted to Cézanne's painting in the 1880s as the most extreme and enviable revision of the art of the old masters he had ever seen, his fascination with Cézanne lasted well into the twentieth century by which time he had come to regard him as the exemplar of a necessary reference to the art of the past which, he now thought, should be more obedient than transforming.

As an embodiment of the esthetic shifts and contradictions that troubled his age Bernard affords a significant and hitherto underexamined example of inherent ambiguities in modern art. One of the artists and critics, along with such figures as Denis and Péladan, whose conservative esthetic was at times oddly aligned with the modernism it usually combated, Bernard might paradoxically be regarded as offering 'l'image le plus complète et la plus surprenant de notre époque tourmentée', in the same sense as he made the claim for Anquetin.[18] The usual tendency to examine parts of his oeuvre in isolation, such as his early paintings of Pont-Aven or his 1904 essay on Cézanne, has helped to conceal elements of continuity in his career and to obscure his relevance to broader questions faced by modern artists. The more complete survey of his painting and criticism in the present thesis traces his difficult attempt to revive the pictorial language that he derived from the art of the past in an age which had been transformed by new habits, technologies

and uses of vision.

In the absence of a complete biography other than Luthi's brief Emile Bernard. L'Initateur of 1974, my thesis is structured around a chronological account of Bernard's career that pays most attention to moments in which his work seems to have had most relevance to the broader context of modern painting. In chapter one, Bernard's art and criticism are examined in relation to the Symbolist avant-garde of the late 1880s and early 1890s. This is the most familiar part of his career, but needs to be reexamined in the light of the unrelenting conservatism of his later art. In particular, the story of Bernard's radical breaking of pictorial rules, as told by John Rewald's Post-Impressionism from Van Gogh to Gauguin and the 1990 exhibition, Emile Bernard, a pioneer of modern art, needs to be revised to take more account of Bernard's intense concern with his place in history and his uneasy relationship to the life of the present. Chapter two discusses Bernard's sojourn in Egypt between 1893 and 1897, a period about which little has been written in French and nothing in English, but which was crucial to the reorientation of his art towards a conspicuous deference to the masters. On examination, this phase of Bernard's career does not appear to constitute a straightforward rejection of his former radicalism but, rather, to reveal the persistence of his troubled modernness under a different guise.

Bernard's return to France and his confrontation with the French avant-garde is examined in chapter three which focuses on some significant and previously unexamined differences between his two famous essays on Cézanne, published in 1904 and 1907. My argument develops Richard Shiff's account of the idiosyncratic nature of Bernard's interpretation of Cézanne by relating Bernard's changing attitude to his master to his criticism of the art of his younger contemporaries, in essays for L'Occident and La Rénovation esthétique.[19] In chapter four, I compare Bernard's assessment of Cézanne

to those made by other prominent early twentieth critics such as Denis, Rivière and Schnerb. I relate differences between Bernard's and other accounts of Cézanne to distinctions between Bernard's paintings of the first decade of the century and those of his radical contemporaries. By locating Bernard within the tension between progress and retrospection at the start of the twentieth century it is hoped to connect him to a broad modern uncertainty.

Bernard's response to the classicism produced by formerly radical painters in the second and third decades of the twentieth century is examined in chapter five in which his single-minded later development is related to his unremitting sense of separateness from modern culture. Bernard has usually been excluded from surveys of realism in the 1920s and 1930s (Les Réalismes 1919-1939, On Classic Ground), no doubt because his career took a significantly different course from those of his younger contemporaries, but there are important links between his nostalgia and theirs. I discuss some connections between Symbolism and Surrealism in chapter six which examines Bernard's late monumental figure paintings, the Cycle humain, and observes some connections between Bernard's responses to art history and those made in the early work of Dali. The thesis concludes with a brief chapter examining Bernard's late writings on his own career and on those of other nineteenth and twentieth century artists which give a sense of his opinion of his status and achievement.

Throughout the thesis, my argument gives considerable weight to Bernard's critical writings which never failed to express his unfashionable opinions with uncompromising force and which offer insight into his conscious and unconscious motivations. As expressions of the discomfort of the modern artist, they provide important and previously neglected documents for the study, in the pictorial realm, of what Harold Bloom has called

the anxiety of influence.[20] The primary documents of this study - Bernard's essays for Le Coeur, L'Occident, the Mercure de France, La Nouvelle Revue d'Egypte, L'Amour de l'art, the Gazette des Beaux-Arts and his own La Rénovation esthétique, along with his painting after 1893 have until now been ignored, save for a few famous exceptions, as irrelevant to the story of modern art. In the following pages they are returned to their place within it.

1 A Stranger In Paris

The various styles Bernard developed in his painting before 1893, the year he left France for Italy, Greece and Egypt reflected the modern French painter's difficult status in French culture. This chapter will argue that Bernard's position was made especially difficult by his connection to an idealist Catholic tradition, elevated above the commercialism, materialism and secularism of contemporary life. The importance of early Christian art to Bernard's painting style has been recognised since 1888 when Edouard Dujardin referred to a 'cloisonnisme' which recalled the simplicity of medieval cloisonné, but Bernard's reference to such closer models as Delacroix and Millet, and their crucial influence on the terms of his own modernism, has not previously been discussed. The echoes of earlier nineteenth century masters in the style and iconography of Bernard's radical works of the late 1880s and early 1890s suggest that his art was more consciously engaged with his memory of French art history than may at first appear.

The problematic status of painting and the painter in the nineteenth century became critical in the 1880s with the radical responses to the contemporary styles of Naturalism and Impressionism. The malaise of modern style was attributed in two seminal novels, A Rebours (1884) and L'Oeuvre (1886), to the placement of ambitious modern artists between modernity's expected truth to modern life and its persistent memory of past traditions. In L'Oeuvre, Zola's artist-hero Claude Lantier tries to exceed the reportage of his age by painting a panorama of Parisian work and leisure. Lantier invokes Renaissance art through the monumental scale of his work and through its matt technique, imitating fresco. His wish to transcend nature engenders a symbolic nude personification of Paris which makes an unlikely appearance at the centre of his 'masterpiece' and irreparably disrupts its continuity. Lantier's painting cannot be resolved,

Zola insists, since its modernism, identified with its author's gift for recording physical experience, is irreconcilable with his memory of outmoded esthetic forms.

Zola's account of the modern imagination drew on the conservative criticism of the decay of academic pictorial standards that had begun decades earlier and was a familiar critical complaint by the time that Charles Blanc regretted the rise of genre and landscape painting in his Salon of 1866. The modern sensibility, Blanc argued, was hostile to the pictorial invention demanded by the highest forms of painting in the academic hierarchy.[1] Blanc's worst fears seemed to have been realised when Zola in 1879 and Henry Houssaye in 1882 observed Impressionism's corrupting influence on the idealism of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.[2]

Huysmans, taking a hostile position to the Naturalism declared by Zola, disparaged the modernist fixation on modern life and, in A Rebours, praised the few of his progressive contemporaries who were trying to evoke imagined pasts. Like Zola, Huysmans regarded modern artists as characteristically reliant on their physical experience, an attribute which he discovered even in the obviously artificial works of Moreau and Redon. In Moreau's Salomé at the Salon of 1876 he found a jumble of symbols borrowed from Egypt, India and Phoenicia whose incoherence, he thought, showed the artist's effort to 's'abstraire assez du monde pour voir, en plein Paris, resplendir les cruelles visions, les féeriques apothéoses des autres âges'.[3] He discovered a similar modernness in Redon's evocations of distant worlds, this time attributed to the artist's debt to modern science. As evoked in A Rebours, Moreau and Redon did not conjure the past so much as express their impossible desire to reconstruct it. The enigmatic juxtapositions of their long view across history impressed Huysmans as definitive of their age.

L'Oeuvre and A Rebours developed themes that had preoccupied nineteenth century critics at least since Baudelaire had written his ironic panegyric to 'l'héroïsme de la vie moderne' in 1846.[4] The difficulty of making great art in the face of accelerating social and technological change persuaded some to adopt positions of detachment from modern culture. Zola's novel, like his art criticism, declared his hostility to the Salon which he rejected for its corruption by bourgeois stupidity and official malice. Huysmans, more radically, shrunk from the image of modernity itself which he thought should be warded off by the construction of elaborate alternative environments. Such resistance to modern life gained more proponents as the century progressed and as advocates of Symbolism as different as G.-Albert Aurier and Joséphin Péladan declared their contempt for contemporary values.

Emile Bernard was eighteen years old in 1886, the year of the publication of L'Oeuvre, and a reluctant pupil in the studio of the Academician, Fernand Cormon. He had entered Cormon's studio in 1884 against the will of his practical father, and recalled ten years after the event that he had only profited from his time there by the contacts which he made with other radical students, notably Toulouse-Lautrec, Anquetin and Van Gogh, who seem to have been attracted by Cormon's reputation for open-mindedness. Lautrec made a portrait of Bernard in 1885 in which the alert eyes and cynical mouth evoke his youthful intelligence and arrogance (figure 2). Bernard was expelled from Cormon's studio early in the following year after what seems to have been an esthetic dispute with his master. His departure from the only formal artistic instruction he would ever receive was propelled by an hostility for his age that fulfilled the premonitions of Huysmans and Zola.

Bernard's account of his apprenticeship with Cormon, written in Cairo in 1895, revealed that his contempt for his teacher was inspired by his attachment to moral values which

compelled his opposition to modern corruption. Denouncing the 'déchristianisation' of French culture instigated by the Revolution of 1789 and calling for the revival of an alternative Renaissance-inspired piety, Bernard complained that the moral guidance which he attributed to Ghirlandaio, Verrocchio and Perugino (whom he characterised as painters of 'douces madones') was absent from his age. Cormon had visited his studio twice a week, Bernard remembered, but had had no constructive advice to give his pupils when he appeared. These pupils had amused themselves in their master's absence by playing cruel tricks on each other and by lewdly insulting their life models. Bernard looked back on such pranks, which were common in nineteenth century French studios, as symptoms of a modern secularism and cited with particular horror the violence of one verbal attack on a young female model.[5] Dislodged from its high status in Academic idealism, the life-class, in Bernard's experience, had descended to an exercise in boredom and habit.

Two surviving photographs of Cormon's studio appear to support Bernard's recollection. In one, the members of the studio attend obediently to the master who is seated at a student's easel (figure 3). In the other they play up in Cormon's absence, introducing a bulldog, the anatomy skeleton and a nude male model to their masculine company (figure 4). Like his pupils' antics, Bernard regarded Cormon's failure to instruct as a symptom of modernity, suggesting that his neglect of his métier had been matched only by his attention to the art market. Cormon's painting of Cain at the Salon of 1880, a gigantic illustration of Hugo's La Conscience, had made his fashionable reputation. Straddling the conflicts of the age, its prehistoric figures were hailed by one critic as a reconciliation of 'le darwinisme et la Bible' (figure 5).[6]

After he left his studio, Bernard emphatically distanced himself from Cormon's example.

He argued in 1895 that sincere art had only been made in the nineteenth century by those who suffered worldly failure for their resistance to the Salon, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the mainstream press. His list of glorious outcasts - Delacroix, Courbet, Daumier, Millet, Corot, Manet, Redon, Cézanne, Renoir, Degas, Monet, Sisley, Gauguin and Seurat - was a roll call of the nineteenth century avant-garde. Puvis de Chavannes was also included, although Bernard noted that he was an exception, inexplicably successful despite his genius. Placing the nineteenth century in the latest stage of a long decline from Renaissance excellence, Bernard contended that true modern greatness depended on an opposition to the values of the present that would be supported by imaginary connection to the past. Moral affinity with earlier Christian artists, he argued, would rectify the uncertainty of style promulgated by a cynic like Cormon.[7]

Bernard's radical esthetic drew on the terms of the contemporary avant-garde critique of State sanctioned art, but it also recalled the conservative Catholic esthetic theory that had developed alongside the reactionary ultramontanism of the first half of the nineteenth century. Michael Driskel has argued that the ultramontanist beliefs espoused by a conservative cleric like Dominique Lacordaire were reflected in pictorial form by the Neo--Byzantine paintings of Ingres, Amaury-Duval and Flandrin.[8] With his idealist opposition to the now dominant mode of Naturalism, Bernard looked back to the values of those archaising precursors, but his acknowledgement of his debt to them was prohibited by the radicalism which he professed as a member of the avant-garde. The projection of his progressive identity compelled him to deform established forms of idealism, as well as of Naturalism and Impressionism. The rebellious lineage which he traced in 1895 affirmed his distance from such conservative Catholic forms as appeared after 1870 in the basilica of the Sacre Coeur, erected in Montmartre in the 1880s and 1890s, or in the debased idealism of a Bouguereau.

Bernard's retreat from familiar Catholic forms to the cryptic style and iconography of his radical Christian works, and his use of the art of the past as a medium through which to address the complexity of modern life, gave a new twist to the use of the museum by his radical contemporaries as a site of artistic transgression. Manet, Cézanne and Degas had all produced youthful pictures which explicitly referred to their knowledge of the Louvre, positioning them uneasily between archaism and modernism. In Bernard's case, however, this fundamentally modern practice of re-contextualizing the abundant possibilities of the museum's collections was supplemented by his traditionally sanctioned desire to submit to a single living master - a patriarchal guide like the Quattrocento masters who were famous for instructing Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael. Such a master, Bernard hoped, would initiate his temperament.[9] He found the painter whom he sought in an unlikely place. Around 1886, he discovered in the tiny picture shop of Père Tanguy the work of Paul Cézanne, who had been working alone in Provence since the 1870s.

Overcome with the singularity of Cézanne's style, Bernard immediately nominated himself as his disciple. Although he claimed to have been intimidated by his respect for Cézanne's work, his failure to make contact with him until 1904 had a practical purpose. It facilitated the use that he made of his paintings as enigmatic signs, distinct from their mysterious author. In the short biography of Cézanne which Bernard wrote for Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui in 1890, he set out his eccentric interpretation of his style.[10] His qualities of naïveté and sincerity, Bernard argued, were exemplary of his estrangement from modern Paris, and revealed his alienation from his century. The innocence of his style, he thought, was worthy of a Giotto. From his acquaintance with the collections of Tanguy, Chocquet, Schuffenecker and Gachet, Bernard knew enough of Cézanne's oeuvre to sketch a history of his development from a first Romantic style, exemplified by

the portrait of Achille Emperaire which he had seen at Tanguy's; through an Impressionism, said to be influenced by Monet and to be characterised by a more diligent reference to nature; to a composite of the two, distinguished by deliberate hieratic drawing and a sunlit palette. This last phase, Bernard claimed, achieved a classic effect in a work such as the portrait of Madame Cézanne in a red armchair - apparently the painting now in Boston – in which he observed an hieratic design formed from interlocking fields of vibrant colour (figure 6).

Although Bernard's account of Cézanne's style implied a modernist preference for formal over literary values, he compromised this position with his admiration for the subject of Cézanne's Temptation of St Anthony in which he discovered an expression of its author's yearning for contact with the past (figure 7). Cézanne's depiction of the Saint's eclectic vision confirmed Bernard's sense of the new in modern art as an unexpected collision of disparate pictorial ideas, and supported his analysis of Cézanne's painting in terms which recall those used by Stéphane Mallarmé in his important essay on Manet and the Impressionists of 1876.

Mallarmé had argued that Manet's 'freshness frequently consists [...] in a coordination of widely scattered elements'. He paradoxically described Manet as 'ignoring all that had been done in art by others' while simultaneously calling attention to his debt to Spanish, Dutch, Japanese and English models. Manet's unifying vision, Mallarmé thought, had defended him against the threat of domination by his pictorial memory.[11] In 1890 Bernard maintained, on the other hand, that Cézanne's painting exemplified a style which garnered strength from its reach past Impressionism to the art of the masters. Seduced by the apparition of the nude female figure in Cézanne's Temptation of St Anthony, projected from and warded off by the kneeling saint, Bernard thought of it as an image of

the tension between modern innovation and nostalgic retrospection. In St Anthony's loss of control of his imaginings, apparently relinquished to the watching devil, he found a link between the artist and his subject. While praising Cézanne's originality, Bernard also drew attention to his debt to Romanticism, and observed an 'indécision mystérieuse' in his shimmering technique which reminded him of the texture of old stone.[12]

Bernard had been sufficiently infused with the possibilities of Cézanne's style by the end of 1887 to want to depart from the Impressionist style of Manet as admired by Mallarmé, as well as from the more recent avant-gardism of Seurat's Neo-Impressionism, with which he had briefly flirted in 1886 and 1887. Renouncing the scientific pretensions of Seurat's Divisionism, he adopted instead an archaising manner through which he invoked the conventions of more primitive styles.[13] Bernard described the development of the Cloisonnism which he had founded with Louis Anquetin in 1887 in two late biographical essays written in 1932 and 1934. These writings, of doubtful historical accuracy, at least offer a considered reappraisal of the intent and significance of Bernard's youthful works which avoids the violent anti-modernism of his early twentieth century writings.[14]

After watching Monet at work in Vétheuil, Bernard recalled, Anquetin had toyed with and rejected Pointillism - 'plus bas encore' than Impressionism in his estimation - and had searched for a radical new style that would reveal a simultaneous connection with the present and the past. This search involved literary as well as pictorial sources. In 1887 Anquetin had worked on a picture of a Paris cabaret which, according to Bernard, had combined realistic portraits of his friends with a symbolic nude figure inspired by Zola's description of the dominant female figure in the failed masterpiece of L'Oeuvre. Like its fictional counterpart, Bernard observed, Anquetin's painting had been abandoned half--finished and unresolved.[15] The new idiom for which they were searching, he added,

would not be found in such devices but in the effort to 'voir le style et non point l'objet'.[16]

For all his enthusiasm for the hallucinatory effect of Cézanne's St Anthony, Bernard chose to explore his radical new style, at first, through the prosaic genres of portraiture, still-life and scenes of modern life. He later repudiated the café scenes which are prominent subjects of this period, however, by claiming to have no sympathy for the milieu to which he had been introduced by Toulouse-Lautrec and Anquetin:

> A dix-sept ans, comme aujourd'hui, je n'avais encore jamais mis de moi-même les pieds dans un café, un théâtre, ou un concert publique [...] j'eusse pu user de ces plaisirs comme des autres, mais ils ne m'attiraient pas.[17]

This statement contains an element of truth, for Bernard revealed his youthful antipathy for modern life with more clarity and force in a subject closer to home, the suburban views which he painted in the vicinity of his parents' house in Asnières.

In 1887, Bernard painted a view of the railway Bridge at Asnières which asserts his Cloisonnist style with unprecedented force (figure 8). As if mindful of Seurat's Bathers at Asnieres, exhibited at the 'Indépendants' in 1884 (figure 9), Bernard's Bridge at Asnières enlarges and solidifies the bridge in its background to confirm his rejection of Seurat's technique. The wide veil of air, light and haze that is conjured by Seurat's broken layers of paint is replaced in Bernard's work by blocks of solid colour that meet in hard lines. Two black figures driven through the frame of urban construction substitute for Seurat's group whose attitudes seem to express pleasure in the touch of water, grass and sunlight, and in the relaxation of bodies untroubled by the proximity of work and pollution. Unlike Seurat's references to Renaissance painting, the memory of a primitive and exotic flatness in Bernard's version of Asnières is unsettling. As embodied in The Bridge at Asnières, his dictum, 'voir le style et non point l'objet' involves a subversion of modernity. His accumulation of industrial structures and blank gaps fixes an aspect of the modern city

that seems frozen, unbalanced and uninviting.

Despite its small scale, the Bridge at Asnières establishes a link to the art of the past through Bernard's reference to the flatness of mural painting. Bernard's colour and composition seem to borrow, in particular, from the nostalgic style of Puvis de Chavannes, with his use of cool greens, dark greys and dull pinks recalling the palette of Puvis' Poor fisherman, exhibited at the Salon of 1881 (figure 10). The sense of a connection between Bernard's and Puvis' works is supported by Bernard's imitation of the structure of Puvis' landscape in the sharp diagonal of his foreground bank which leads the eye to the top, left corner of his canvas and along a narrow strip of faded sky. Bernard has overturned Puvis' boat, in an ironic inversion, to place it on dry land. Such compositional correspondences and alterations are less profound, however, than the unexplained effect of resignation which is removed from Puvis' imprecise time and place to the suburbs of modern Paris. The sombre colour and flat spaces of Bernard's Asnières record the 'occultes détresses' which Huysmans searched for but could not find in Signac's earlier representation of the same site.[18]

Contradicting the Baudelairean fixation on the crowd as the salient embodiment of modern life, Bernard's vision of an underpopulated Paris indicated his distaste for the surface of modernity. His apparent estrangement from his subject was reinforced by the radically simplified forms with which he reshaped the usual Naturalist terms for the depiction of contemporary life. The combination of mundane and exotic influences in Bernard's work, for all the radicalism of his style, however, was not unprecedented, and extended a history of tension between realist and idealist influences in French art.

II

The seeds of Bernard's vacillating style had been sown by the radical art and criticism of the preceding decades. The opposing claims to the ideal and the real which had been associated with the Italian and Northern schools since the Renaissance had been reappraised in the 1850s by the Realist critic, Theophile Thoré, in his Musées de la Hollande. Citing Raphael and Rembrandt as embodiments of the opposing values of the past and the future, Thoré constructed an historical Janus from the heads of the Italian and Dutch masters, arguing that

> L'un a vu l'humanité abstraite, sous les symboles de Vénus et de Vierge, d'Apollon et de Christ, l'autre a vu directement, et de ses propres yeux une humanité réelle et vivante. L'un est le passé, l'autre l'avenir.[19]

Although he accurately detected the engagement of his radical contemporaries with the quotidian imagery mastered by the Dutch, Thoré underestimated the hold of Italian forms on the French imagination. Even the nominally Realist paintings of his great contemporary, Millet, fused Dutch influence with a nostalgic idealism. Millet's masterpiece, the Angelus, arranges its humble figures in, and casts its fading light on a symmetrical composition which evokes a natural altar (figure 11). The conservative critic, Paul de Saint-Victor, recognising the tension between Millet's mundane and spiritual poles of reference, ridiculed his Gleaners in 1857 as 'les trois Parques du pauperisme' and unworthy aspirants to the exalted mantle of Michelangelo.[20]

After 1860, radical French painters were to draw increasing attention to the historical precedent for their style in the works of the seventeenth century Dutch masters and of their French disciple, Chardin. Their mundane subjects and frank vision were contradicted, however, by their fixation on problems of composition which called up the memory of more distant masters. In his recent study, Manet's Modernism or, The Face of

Painting in the 1860s, Michael Fried has shown how the frequently unintelligible interplay of borrowings in the work of such progressive painters as Manet and Fantin-Latour characterised the uncertain relationship to history experienced by the artists whom he identifies as the 'generation of 1863'.[21] Mining a rich vein of Italian, Dutch, Spanish and Flemish sources, these progressive painters revealed the disorienting complexity of nineteenth century visual experience and presaged the equally dense historical references that were to be made from the later nineteenth century. The avant-garde painters of Bernard's generation, surveying a wider range archaic and exotic sources, evoked increasingly intense feelings of temporal dislocation and historical decay.

Well before Bernard discovered his work, Cézanne's representation of ordinary life had developed in the direction of an extreme emphasis on the monumental and the frontal which the young Bernard admired as 'hiératique'. The portrait of the painter's wife which he praised in 1890 as 'une des plus grands tentatives de l'art moderne vers le beau classique' enthrones its subject iconically in a red armchair, and reinforces its archaic effect with patches of ochre and blue that shimmer like mosaic on the wall behind (figure 6).[22] Bernard was probably not aware that the classic effect of Cézanne's 1877 portrait, as well as referring to his favourite primitive Italian models, also derived from an unheralded Dutch source in the previously neglected work of Vermeer. Thoré had described Vermeer as both 'méconnu' and 'inconnu' in the introduction to his groundbreaking article published in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in 1866.[23] By 1870, however, Vermeer's reputation had improved sufficiently to allow the purchase of his Lacemaker for the Louvre (figure 12). Cézanne seems to have recorded his fascination with this little canvas in the portrait of his wife sewing in a red armchair which was painted around the same time as the portrait honoured by Bernard (figure 13). Beyond the similarity of the pose of Cézanne's figure to that of the Lacemaker, Vermeer's previously

unobserved influence is apparent in the square divisions of Mme Cézanne's fingers and in the blockish modelling of her head, which imparts a static dignity to her pose. An even greater effect of solidity and stillness is made by the second, more frontal version of the portrait where a memory of Vermeer is retained in the transparent modelling of the face and in the cool greens on the broad forehead. The fusion of the sewing motif with the grand simplicity of the Lacemaker was attempted again in 1882 when Seurat made a charcoal drawing of his mother which replicates Vermeer's composition almost exactly (figure 14).

The sense of order which Cézanne and Seurat evoked through reference to Vermeer centred on bodily rather than imaginary experience. The stability and calm expressed in their depictions of ordinary life, implying a resistance to modern change, was emulated by Bernard in his early paintings of domestic and urban subjects. Bernard soon moved from Cézanne's transformations of ordinary life, however, to adopt more exotic forms which recalled the visionary effect of Cézanne's Temptation of St Anthony. The yawning spaces of his urban views pictured a youthful alienation from the modern city that was more than compensated for by his visionary responses to contrasting rural subjects.

Bernard was first attracted to the western province of Brittany which he visited on foot in 1886 by its famous Christian monuments and rituals. The province was much frequented by nineteenth century artists and was diligently painted as a source of picturesque landscapes and festivals for Parisian audiences. Bernard went there immediately after he left Cormon's studio, and his experience was compared to a religious pilgrimage in the article in which Francis Jourdain described it, in 1893, for the Symbolist journal, La Plume.[24] In 1895 Bernard himself referred to Brittany as a site of spiritual retreat from the corrupting influence of Paris.[25] His representations of the Breton landscape and of its

inhabitants imagined a communal and rustic existence to which he imparted a nostalgia worthy of the mid-nineteenth century canvases of Millet.

Bernard gave the rural labour of Breton peasants an implied Christian symbolism in the paintings that he made in Pont-Aven the year after he saw the major 1887 retrospective of Millet's work in Paris. He had probably attended this exhibition in the company of Van Gogh whom he had met at Cormon's studio in 1886 and had painted with at Asnières in 1887. They shared an enthusiasm for Delacroix and Millet which was tempered by their radical inheritance of Impressionist colour and technique. As Van Gogh remembered in 1889, their disillusionment with the spectacle of Paris had led them to imagine the possibility of using 'une nature de campagne plus pure que la banlieue' as the vehicle for expressing sentiments like those they admired in the 'romantisme' or the 'idées religieuses' of earlier masters.[26] No doubt Van Gogh had directed Bernard to Millet as the preeminent example of such a use of symbolic forms in rural subjects. He was still extolling the virtues of Millet's concealed symbolism when he wrote to Bernard in 1888 warning him of the difficulty of making explicit religious pictures and reminding him that Millet had not painted Christ but instead, Christ's doctrine.[27]

Bernard was quick to follow Van Gogh's advice. His Blé noir of 1888 replaces the bleached barrenness of his Bridge at Asnières with a throbbing red field that is populated by energetic harvesters (figure 15). All but two of its figures seem to have been inspired by a Millet drawing which was reproduced in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts' review of the retrospective of 1887 (figure 16).[28] The erect woman standing in profile on the right of Bernard's canvas reverses the figure seen entering from the left of Millet's drawing. Millet's wood gatherer wearing a hat and leaning forward to pick up a bundle of sticks is copied by no less than five of Bernard's figures which stoop and press themselves against

the crop with the same fluent gesture. Millet's third figure, embracing a thick, upright bundle, is mimicked by the man and woman in Bernard's foreground.

Like Millet's depiction of the collection of dead wood, the actions of Bernard's harvesters evoke an erotic contact with the harvest that reinforces the idea of their immersion in the cycles of nature. Bernard's dense red paint, visually equivalent to Millet's vibrating field of charcoal lines, suggests a living membrane from which his figures seem to emerge. In 1895, Bernard observed that Millet's peasants expressed an 'evangelique beauté' in their bondage to the continuity of human life and to 'la rigueur du châtiment'.[29] His own evocation of a blood red harvest reveals his affinity with Millet's vision of agricultural labour as a metaphor for human destiny.

Bernard reinforced the sense of the imaginary in his Blé noir with an idiosyncratic composition which defines a landscape shaped by its human inhabitants. Whereas the figures of Millet's mature works stand as on a wide stage that frames their stillness with empty space, the field of the Blé noir is divided into irregular fragments, separated by the outlines of the dominant figures. The uppermost band of the composition is punctuated by the forms of working men, while female figures enclose its right and left hand sides. Most strangely, a disembodied head, placed at the base of the canvas, completes the hemming in of nature on all sides. Bernard elaborated this abstract figural arrangement in his other ambitious works of 1888, Madeleine au Bois d'Amour and The Pardon at Pont-Aven, the latter of which he claimed had inspired Gauguin's famous Symbolist landscape of the same year, the Vision after the sermon.[30]

Bernard's heightened representation of rural life evoked an ideal of the countryside that was by no means universally admired by contemporary critics. Huysmans' review of the

1887 Millet retrospective had complained that Millet's exhausted and miserable peasants were irresponsible fictions, apt to distract their Paris audience from the more onerous conditions of life in the city.[31] This argument, which criticised modern painters for recycling outdated rural myths, was reinforced by a remark which Van Gogh made to Gauguin in a letter of 1888. 'Tout en vous isolant en apparence de Paris,' he had written, 'vous ne cesserez de vous sentir en rapport assez direct avec Paris'.[32] The observation was vindicated by the works which he painted in Provence in which he compensated for his alienation from modern urban life by rehearsing Millet's images of rural order.

Like Van Gogh, Bernard lacked the peasant origins to which Millet's art had been persuasively tied by Sensier's influential monograph of 1881, but his extended visits to Pont-Aven played with the idea of a saturation and impregnation with rural life of the kind that had been praised in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts review of the Millet retrospective. Millet had lived 'la vie même de ses modèles', André Michel had assured his readers, and was liberated from the need of working from life by his perfect accord with his subjects.[33] A similar empathy for his rustic environment was evoked in the self-portrait which Bernard painted for Van Gogh in 1888 - one of the set of three self-portraits painted concurrently by Bernard, Gauguin and Van Gogh. Bernard is crowned in his work by a wide-brimmed straw hat like those worn by the peasants in the Blé noir. The artist's serious features address the viewer from within the soft outline of his hair, hat and shoulder (figure 17). As intense as Van Gogh's and Gauguin's contemporary self-portraits (in the guises of a Buddhist bonze and a Romantic outlaw), Bernard's displays himself as an artist and individualist immersed in the new identity of his provincial life.[34]

Bernard cryptically explored his equivocal position between city and country in another of his early Breton paintings, The Pardon at Pont-Aven (figure 18). The subject of this work

is a gathering of villagers on the green after their traditional ritual of Catholic atonement, but it avoids suggesting a narrative and was identified by Van Gogh simply as showing 'Breton women, children, peasants and dogs, strolling about on a very green field'.[35] As Orton and Pollock have demonstrated, the work transgresses the conventions of its subject by including three figures in urban dress, two women and a girl, whose appearance disrupts the expected image of Breton piety.[36] Grouped with little regard for three-dimensional space, the represented group constructs a bold pattern on the picture surface. The standing women at the centre are intersected by the row of smaller figures which are aligned with the top of the canvas, making a rough cross reminiscent of the stone calvaries distinctive of the Breton landscape (figure 19). The work's balance is disrupted, however, by the two women with red parasols, intruders from the modern world who are clearly differentiated from the figures in Breton dress and who seem to evoke Bernard's own desire for escape from his urban experience.

From his early childhood, Bernard had used his fascination with art and religion as a means for transcending his modernity. He clearly remembered being attracted to Catholic rituals as a small boy, and when Schuffenecker was preparing his unpublished biography for Les Hommes d'aujuord'hui, Bernard begged him to mention the holy procession that he had seen as a child in Lille:

> La place était couverte de monde et pas un bruit pourtant! Un soleil intense, un son de cloche au loin [...] partout des garlandes [...] et magistrale, le haut autel où très petit, couvert de la dalmatique un prêtre brûlait de l'encens[37]

Sight, sound and smell were combined in this memory to replace Bernard's modern experience with an alternative mysticism. Something of the same effect, felt in the disorienting flattened space and fluctuating scale of the Pardon at Pont-Aven, suggests his persistent delight in the sensory confusion induced by heightened religious experience. Van Gogh's letters of 1888 tell us that Bernard was not only painting at the

time, but also writing mystical poetry and assiduously studying the Bible.[38] These experiences are blended in the Pardon at Pont-Aven with intense colour and vigorous handling to produce a confusing amalgam. Like Cézanne's Temptation of St Anthony, Bernard's eccentric vision of Brittany combines disparate elements in an 'indécision mystérieuse' that leaves the viewer tantalisingly unsure of his work's meaning.

In Jean Pierrot's authoritative survey of The Decadent Imagination, he identifies the increasing esthetic attraction of Catholic objects and rituals in the last decades of the nineteenth century as the symptom of a contemporary crisis of faith. Citing des Esseintes' fictional collection of devotional objects as exemplary of Decadent taste, Pierrot claims that the loss of inherent meaning in such religious artefacts invited a compensatory fascination with their outward forms.[39] A different but related motivation is apparent in Bernard's paintings of the late 1880s and early 1890s which personalise his Christian motifs by connecting them to his radical and eclectic style. The mysterious effect of Bernard's Pardon at Pont-Aven evokes a private world which seems even more inscrutable than that of Gauguin's contemporary Vision after the sermon, which Bernard repeatedly accused of imitating his Cloisonnism (figure 20).

Gauguin's painting is more persuasively spiritual than Bernard's and includes his self-portrait at the far right of the composition, with the shaved head and praying hands of a Catholic priest. As the agent of the mystical vision of Jacob and the Angel which is witnessed by the depicted congregation, Gauguin appears to share the purpose of the Christian minister, whose attributes he adopts, by thrusting his Biblical vision on the eyes of the spectator. The painting's red background and suddenly enlarged foreground subvert any effect of recession and instead appear to intrude into the viewer's space. This hallucinatory effect was hailed as definitive of pictorial Symbolism by Gauguin's early

champion, Aurier who praised the mysticism of The Vision after the Sermon in 1891 as a needed antidote to modern rationalism and doubt.[40]

The less resolved messages emerging from Bernard's Pardon at Pont-Aven seem closer to the contemporary painting of Van Gogh than to Gauguin's Vision after the Sermon. Writing to Bernard in 1888 Van Gogh had expressed his desire to depict Arles in a style that would be inspired by the exotic elements of simplified outline and solid colour which he admired in Japanese prints. As transformed in his representation, Van Gogh hoped that Arles would evoke the exoticism of more remote places that, he regretted, he would now never reach.[41] Félix Fénéon noted a similarly equivocal formal aspiration to the exotic as a hallmark of the Breton paintings which Bernard showed at the Café Volpini in 1889:

> Les larges traits dont M. Bernard cerne accidents de terrain et êtres sont le reseau de plomb d'un vitrail. En leur dispositif très simple, ses figures rapellerait parfois des poses traditionelles si quelque geste barbare ne déconcertait aussitôt le souvenir.[42]

Fénéon accurately located a source of tension in Bernard's work between his longing for connection with the past and his explicit modernity. The barbarous gestures of Bernard's figures seemed to the critic to disrupt the debt to Gothic art that was made apparent in the style of their construction. Bernard's Brittany thus wavered uncertainly between conflicting suggestions of the present and the past, embodying his wish for a transformed life in an cryptic code of contemporary references and distant memories.

The tensions implicit in Bernard's Breton works were not merely personal but reflected the wider confusion that attended Christian iconography at a time of rapid modernisation. The stark combination of Naturalist detail and hieratic design in Puvis' murals for the Panthéon had been extended in the early 1880s by his admirer, Jean-Charles Cazin with the

introduction of Biblical subjects to plein-air French landscapes. Cazin's Tobias and the Angel, shown at the Salon of 1880, opposes its supernatural figure to an asymmetrical piece of countryside which approaches abstraction in the stretch of water rising like a wall to frame the angelic profile (figure 21). Any spiritual meaning attached to the rhetorical gesture of the visitant is subverted by the more insistent effect of the clash of two distinct landscape types - the composed historical, and the observed modern. Neither form, after Cazin's ingenious collision, seems to have remained intact.

Closer to Bernard, the eminent Naturalist Dagnan-Bouveret engendered a similar confusion in the representation of his Breton subjects. His Bretonnes au Pardon and The Pardon in Brittany were variously interpreted by contemporaries as objective records of provincial customs or as pious manifestations of Catholicism (figure 22). Michael Orwicz has found that conservative critics admired Dagnan-Bouveret for depicting an intense provincial faith, while liberal critics were struck instead by his Naturalistic recording of picturesque details of costume and setting.[43] The artist invited such divergent opinions through the seeming invisibility of his style which allowed viewers to attach meaning to his subjects as they would.

III

The conflicts between Bernard's experiences of Brittany and Paris, between his idealism and his modernism, and between his engagement with the spiritual and the mundane coalesced in the extraordinary portraits which he made of his sister, Madeleine, after she came to stay with him in Pont-Aven in the second half of 1888. Three years younger than Emile, Madeleine was idealised by him as a young woman separated from modern corruption by her devotion to the study and practice of her Christian faith. In his later writing Bernard referred to her as a feminine reflection of himself.[44] In his painting he

portrayed her as experiencing an ideal connection with Brittany of the kind to which he also aspired. In two paintings of 1888, Bernard placed Madeleine against the Breton landscape as before a decorated screen of interwoven horizontals and verticals. In a bust length portrait she faces the viewer, seeming to stand in the open air. The three trees placed behind and around her head read as flat shapes that crown her like a diadem. Linked to the colour of the trees by the warm tones of her hair, face and dress, her figure is clearly detached from the framing green (figure 23).

Still more monumental, Madeleine au Bois d'Amour is constructed around the figure reclining under a screen of trees that fill the upper part of the picture (figure 24). Madeleine, in this work, appears to embody a transcendence of the material world which is obtained through her fixation on the spiritual. Her upward gaze is reinforced by the lines of the trees and underlined by her body, extended in a manner usually associated in Christian iconography with sleep or death. Gothic elongation replaces the full-bodied stereotype of woman as nature, perpetuated even in Cézanne's compositions of bathers, which seem to have been a source for Bernard's architectonic design.

Characteristically, Bernard's representation of the Bois d'Amour, the wood beside Pont--Aven, does not convincingly suggest a three-dimensional space. His sister's connection to her setting is demonstrated instead by her participation in an emphatic composition of horizontals and verticals. The shape of her body echoes that of the river above, and runs perpendicular to the row of trees - one of which seems to grow from her left breast. The landscape, displaying a conspicuous sense of order, appears to emerge from its meditative occupant like a thought. The work's Neo-Platonic suggestion of a spiritual ascent beyond the earthbound body is confirmed by the ascending layers of the composition which end in the insubstantial reflections on the river. As the site of an ideal

love, the Bois d'Amour perfectly evokes the quality of Bernard's relationship to his sister.

Whereas Jules Laforgue had argued in 1883 that the vision of Impressionist painters had progressed to an ephemeral immediacy which was divested of their cultural baggage, in Madeleine au Bois d'Amour Bernard wilfully tempered Impressionist colour with a severely linear design.[45] The oscillation between yellow and green in the extreme foreground, progressing to pink and blue in the middle ground, is closed off by a symmetrical return to green in the distance. This regular pattern contradicts the sense of transience that is implied by the effect of dappled light within each of the separate bands. The apparent painterliness of Bernard's thick and individuated strokes is similarly deceptive, suggesting a looser surface than his precise drawing allows for. Madeleine's position, one quarter of the way up the canvas, perhaps not coincidentally, mirrors the position of the dead Christ in Flandrin's Pietà (1844) in Lyon (figure 25).

In his 1911 'Réfutation de l'Impressionisme', Bernard was to write, apropos of Leonardo's Mona Lisa, that portraits situated in constructed landscapes revealed a truer image of their sitter than those dictated by mere observation (figure 26).[46] The origins of this reference to Leonardo are to be found in his portraits of the late 1880s, and particularly in the 1888 portrait of Madeleine in the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec whose erased eyebrows, pulled back hair and shadowy half-smile evoke a sisterhood with Leonardo's sphinx-like portrait in the Louvre. Reference to the paragon of Renaissance mastery was not inconsistent with Bernard's radicalism and was to be echoed in 1890 by Denis' manifesto of 'néo-traditionnisme' in which he professed to relish the 'arabesques bleues' in the background of Leonardo's painting as 'comme la séduction des violons dans l'ouverture de Tannhaüser'.[47] Bernard, like Denis, would have been aware of Pater's famous estheticist response to the Mona Lisa which was much imitated in France in the 1880s.[48]

Pater's delight in the unfathomable historical and exotic resonances which he sensed in the great portrait was apposite to Bernard's tendency, after 1888, to move his painting away from his direct experience and towards his picture-laden imagination.

After 1888, as if to postpone the task of finding a consistent pictorial language for himself, Bernard resolved the contest between idealist inspiration and naturalist observation in his work in favour of the former. He relinquished the equivocation that had marked his portraits of Madeleine to adopt obviously artificial forms, inspired by decorative and abstract ideas which he derived from earlier art. The ideal scenes of bathers or of medieval courtiers to which he turned at the end of the 1880s were compiled from his teeming memories of the museum. This more intense engagement with imaginary subjects was accompanied by an increasing emphasis on the handling of his medium. The structure of his pictures was now frequently dominated by broad vertical strokes, applied with a loaded brush.

Bernard used his bold technique to underline his self-conscious distance from anything other than the shifting patterns of his imagination and the malleable surface of paint on his canvas. Cézanne is the evident prototype for a work such as the Château de Rustephan (1889) in which the rudimentary framework of the trees, hills and houses is insufficient to pin down the pulsing green and yellow surface that hovers around and through it (figure 27). The Four Bathers of 1890, using a similar technique, disrupts its classical subject with an equally vigorous reference to the handling of Cézanne, reaffirming Bernard's attachment to his first master (figure 28).

Although Bernard was acutely conscious of being drawn to abstraction in 1889, he revealed to Gauguin that he was frightened of the possible loss of boundaries and rules

that seemed to attend it. He spoke of his uncertainty in a letter to the friend with whom he had worked closely the year before and who had referred to his own painting at that time as expressing a dreaming before nature in which he was less conscious of a finished product than of the processes which brought it into being.[49] Although Bernard shared Gauguin's wish for a freedom from fixed esthetic goals, he was worried about the losses it might bring. He confessed to his friend that he was dissatisfied with his latest works which he regarded as 'des commencements d'ébauches'. He felt a connection, he wrote, between his obsession with what he called the 'procédés techniques' of painting - its 'pâte, solidité, fluldité' - and the fear he had of losing himself in 'l'absolutisme le plus complet' of abstraction. 'Plus j'ai ce desir d'une chose très avancée, très travaillée', he complained, 'plus je m'embourbe, plus j'arrive au non-affirmatif, au vide, au creux, à tel point que quand j'ai une chose à peu près bonne à mon oeil, d'une venue, je n'ose plus y toucher de crainte de la gâcher'.[50]

Bernard's persistent need for guidance, remaining after his move away from academic rules, and his rejection of the Impressionist and Naturalist references to nature, haunted his creative disorientation, and his uncertainty and indecision were only aggravated by the variety of the art of the past which he continued to study with a passion. Early in 1889 he had visited the huge Exposition universelle in Paris where he had been impressed not only by the colonialist displays (which are discussed in the next chapter) but by the Palais des Beaux-Arts' retrospective of the previous century of French painting. In the same letter in which he announced his artistic frustration to Gauguin, he wrote of his eagerness to talk about the paintings he had seen at the Exposition, as well as the primitive French works he had admired at the Musée Cluny and in the Louvre. Bernard's response to the 1889 centennial exhibition is also recorded in his review of it for Aurier's Le Moderniste illustré where he professed equal enthusiasm for the works of Ingres and Delacroix,

Courbet, Millet, Daumier, Manet, and Puvis. The eclecticism revealed in this article was to be reinforced by the startling combinations and juxtapositions characteristic of Bernard's paintings of the coming year.[51]

In his Seven Bathers (1889), Bernard attached his radical handling and colour to a group of idealised bathers whose drawing evokes a memory of Ingres (figure 29). As well as referring to the simplified anatomy of the bathers of Cézanne, Bernard's figures seem to recall the unnatural pliability of Thetis in Ingres' Jupiter and Thetis which was shown at the 1889 exposition (figure 30). The breast, arm and back of the figure in Bernard's left foreground trace a serpentine line which pulls against the hatched modelling of the body. The other bathers seem similarly insubstantial, their supple poses elaborated by the twisting lines of the landscape. The strange watery shape that divides the three foreground figures from the rest of the composition underlines the cursive drawing of their bodies and seems to recall the resemblance which Ingres had observed between the outline of Thetis and the swelling clouds from which she rises.

Bernard's developing propensity to produce pictures from his memory of other works of art is suggested by another painting of 1889 in which he represented two nymphs in a composition that appears to derive from the iconography of the temptation of Adam and Eve. Bernard has replaced the central vertical element of the tree and the snake with a length of cloth, but one of his figures is left holding two red flowers which recall the forbidden fruit. The work's apparent Christian source seems to be confirmed by the two arches that frame the top of the composition and evoke a fragmentary memory of Gothic architecture (figure 31).

The contemporary paintings of religious subjects with which Bernard was sufficiently

satisfied to send photographs to Van Gogh towards the end of 1889 make similarly unpredictable uses of the art of the past. The Annunciation is dominated by the Quattrocento device of a perspectival pavement but its function as a marker of pictorial space is ignored by the flatly symmetrical arrangement of figures across the foreground plane (figure 32). Bernard's move to an explicit Catholicism in this work and in the contemporary Christ in the Garden of Olives was admired by Gauguin who praised the latter for the 'volonté' of its 'style imaginatif', and for 'la longueur démesuré de la figure en prière' (figure 33).[52] Bernard should have been prepared, however, for the negative response to the same works which came from Van Gogh and which confirmed the terms of his earlier exhortation to follow the example of Millet. In reply to Bernard's photographs, Van Gogh objected to the anachronism of his subjects, which, he argued, displayed a deliberate resistance to the image of modern life. Van Gogh admitted that he had once also strayed into such territory but claimed to have been corrected by his study of nature. Consciousness of modernity, he wrote, commanded modern artists to address religious sentiments only through their observation of modern reality.

> Undoubtedly it is wise and proper to be moved by the Bible, but modern reality has got such a hold on us that even when we attempt to reconstruct the ancient days in our thoughts, abstractly, the minor events of our lives tear us away from our meditations, and our adventures thrust us back into our personal sensations.[53]

This advice pointed to a rift that was developing at the forefront of the movement of Symbolist painting, as Aurier defined it, between 1890 and 1892. Despite being linked by their wilful transformation of the work of their immediate predecessors, and by their search for the stylistic embodiment of their spiritual beliefs, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Bernard held differing views of their relationship to the overlapping categories of Impressionism and Symbolism. Van Gogh put his position in his reply to Aurier's Symbolist interpretation of his oeuvre which was published in the first issue of the Mercure de France.[54] Ignorant of Aurier's article before its publication, Van Gogh quickly informed him on which points he

disagreed with it. 'It seems to me so difficult', he wrote, 'to make a distinction between Impressionism and other things'. As well as stating his distaste for Aurier's elaborate metaphysical interpretation of his imagery, Van Gogh resisted the critic's penchant for labels. 'I do not see the use of so much sectarian spirit as we have seen these last years', he wrote, 'but I am afraid of the preposterousness of it'.[55]

While Bernard seems to have shared Aurier's Neo-Platonic interpretation of pictorial Symbolism as a style dependent on the theories established by the literary movement, and inspired by the mysticism of Baudelaire's correspondences, he was also attracted to the more practical philosophy of painting espoused by Van Gogh.[56] A point at which his admiration for both men could be reconciled was in his sympathy with Aurier's insistence on the decorative character of Symbolist painting - its vital engagement with the fundamental elements of surface, line and colour. Such a purely pictorial argument was at odds with the usual tenor of Aurier's criticism and suggests that he knew of the famous opening lines of Denis' 'Définition du néo-traditionnisme' as well as of the conversations on art which had occurred between Gauguin and Bernard. The 'decorative' style that Aurier defended was as apposite to the contemporary painting of Bernard as it was to that of Gauguin and Van Gogh, and marked the project shared by the three radicals of revitalising the spiritual effect of their painting through a renewed emphasis on the value of its material properties. Already, in 1889, Bernard had revealed his preoccupation not only with the expressivity of abstract forms but with the processes that brought them into being, which he thought of as having a life of their own.[57]

For all the contempt which Van Gogh expressed for Bernard's use of explicit Christian iconography in 1889, he made a more lasting impression on Bernard's art than Gauguin did, confirmed by the shock of his untimely death in 1890. In Bernard's most conspicuous

tribute to Van Gogh, the series of his letters which he arranged to have published in the Mercure de France in 1893, he revealed him as the exponent of a religious conviction which elevated his art above the moral degeneration of his age. The themes of these letters were echoed in a statement which Bernard made to a journalist for the Echo de Paris in 1891: 'Je suis très chrétien, et j'essaie de rendre les sentiments qui sont en moi. Je rêverais de créer un style hiératique qui s'éléverait au dessus de la modernité, au dessus de l'actualité'.[58] Bernard's claim to a transcendent modern painting began with his assertion of a Christian faith aligned with Van Gogh's contempt for the failings of modern life.[59] The same resistance to modern values had been announced in Aurier's essay of 1890 which relied heavily on information supplied to him by Bernard. Aurier had described Van Gogh as a 'semeur de vérité qui régénerait la décrépitude de notre art et peut-être de notre imbécile et industrialiste société'.[60] This idea was to be restated and elaborated in the final tribute to Van Gogh sent by Bernard to Aurier on the 31 July 1890, the day after his funeral.

In his letter to Aurier, Bernard honoured Van Gogh, not without a hint of envy, as sanctified in death and triumphant over the problems that had burdened him in life. 'Sur les murs de la salle où le corps était exposé, toutes les toiles dernières était clouées lui faisant comme auréole'. The image of the artist as redeemed by his work was one to which Bernard also aspired. Among the pictures that were hung around the body, he was especially attracted to a copy that Van Gogh had made during his convalescence at St. Rémy, 'une très belle page souffrante interpretée d'après Delacroix', the Pietà.[61] With its Christian iconography and Romantic style, it was the closest thing in Van Gogh's recent oeuvre to the resolutely artificial works with which Bernard had been preoccupied in 1889 and 1890, suggesting the extent to which Van Gogh, like Bernard remained in the thrall of earlier painting (figure 34).

Bernard revived the memory of Van Gogh's attachment to Romanticism when he painted a stylised depiction of Van Gogh's burial in 1893 in which he symbolically linked his friend to Delacroix and Christ (figure 35). Van Gogh is symbolised in this work by a displaced halo of lemon yellow which refers to an observation he had written in 1888:

> Delacroix paints Christ by means of an unexpected effect of a bright citron-yellow note, a colourful luminous note which possesses the same unspeakable strangeness and charm in the picture as a star does in the corner of the firmament.[62]

The idea that the modern artist could transcend the circumstances of modern life through self-conscious identification with Christ was developed by Bernard in his contemporary Christian paintings which, he explained in the mid-1890s, had been intended as representations of his own suffering and as testaments to his empathy with Christ's passion.

> ai-je commis une impiété en voulant dans de si grands sujets introduire ma propre souffrance? L'instinct seule me les a dictés, et si j'ai partagé avec notre Dieu de telles douleurs [...] je me suis fait par elles une idée vrai de sa passion et j'y ai reconquis la foi.[63]

Bernard's Pietà of 1891 attaches his features to a dead Christ whose posture recalls the horizontality of Madeleine in the Bois d'Amour. He is mourned in a violet and green landscape whose unnatural colour climaxes in a trail of yellow at the horizon. The richly patterned surface recalls Aurier's homage to Van Gogh's 'paysages qui paraissent l'ébullition de mulitcolores émaux dans quelque diabolique creuset d'alchimiste'. In a suitably archaic reference, the three Marys are duplicated on either side of the work to emulate the conventions of early Christian pictorial narrative (figure 36).

In the period after Van Gogh's death, Bernard's Christian piety was further expressed in his plans for a secret artistic society whose rules he framed to counter the materialism and corruption which he deplored in modern life. Bernard's 'Association des Anonymes' was to have upheld the Estheticist motto, 'l'art pour l'art' and to have commanded each of its

members to renounce his individualism 'pour apporter sa pierre à l'ensemble d'un edifice qui sera la synthèse des efforts de chacun'. Substituting God for Mammon, Bernard proposed the Gothic cathedral as the model for the notional edifice his artists would create.[64] The terms of Bernard's charter suggest that he was aware of the radical esthetic statement that had been published a few months before in Art et critique. 'Celui qui veut peindre les choses du Christ', Denis had proclaimed, 'doit vivre avec le Christ'.[65]

Supporting Bernard's hardening resistance to modern values, Madeleine wrote to him in 1891 applauding his pious rejection of worldly success and insisting that he maintain his artistic convictions:

> Laisse passer les avides de réclame et de popularité, ils n'ont rien à eux, ils cherchent le public, si changeant, comme appui [...] ils marchent vacillants avec l'indécision de ceux qui ne sentent pas en eux le principe de l'idée qu'ils ont imité et non conçue.[66]

These words were addressed to her brother in the aftermath of the rift with Gauguin which occurred in the environment of intense publicity that surrounded the sale of Gauguin's work before he left for Tahiti. While Bernard objected to Gauguin's publicity campaign in principle, he was particularly offended by the status as leader of pictorial Symbolism that had been conferred on Gauguin by Aurier. Apart from Bernard's own claims to have initiated the style which would henceforth be associated with Pont-Aven, the sudden elevation of Gauguin affronted his belief in the communal character of artistic movements. Madeleine's letter ended with a quotation from the recent article on Bernard which had appeared in the Echo de Paris,

> J'ai été heureuse de lire ceci: 'L'impression que nous avons rapporté de notre visite à M. Bernard, c'est que lui, que l'on a accusé de plagier Paul Gauguin, ne lui ressemble pas du tout, mais pas du tout'.[67]

The observation was justified, for although Bernard and Gauguin had developed plans in 1889 to leave France together for a tropical colony, they had soon drifted apart. By the

end of the year Gauguin was complaining that Bernard did not answer his letters. In his last surviving letter to Bernard, written in October of 1890, Gauguin had attacked his friend's plan to organise a commemorative exhibition of Van Gogh's painting in Paris.

> Etant donné la bêtise du public il est tout à fait hors de saison de rappeler Vincent et sa folie [....] Beaucoup de gens disent que notre peinture est folie. C'est nous faire du tort sans faire bien à Vincent.[68]

This response displayed a naked ambition of which Bernard was contemptuous. He later dismissed laudatory articles like those written by Aurier and Mirbeau as cynical exercises in 'éloges mutuels' and 'compléments réciproques', so articulating a contempt for the Paris press that would remain with him to the end of his career.[69] Bernard and Gauguin did not communicate again after February 1891, and both refused Denis' invitation in 1899 to participate in an exhibition that would commemorate their historic group show at the Café Volpini of ten years earlier.[70]

IV

Bernard's search for an alternative to the established mechanisms of artistic exhibition and sale in Paris attracted him late in 1891 to plans for a radical and exclusive Salon that were being devised by the mystic, novelist, critic and dandy, Joséphin Péladan. Bernard may have come to know Péladan, who had been a prominent opponent of modern secularism since the early 1880s, through the Count Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, a painter, patron and collector keenly interested in the avant-garde. La Rochefoucauld's private fortune funded the first Rose+Croix Salon which opened in February 1892. This alternative to the two existing annual Salons of the Champs Elysées and the Champ-de--Mars, taking its name from Péladan's self-styled religious order the Rose+Croix+Catholique, advertised his contempt for modern materialism and his regret for what he called 'la latinité finissante'.[71]

Carlos Schwabe designed the poster for the inaugural Rose+Croix show on which two ethereal female figures of Gothic proportions ascend a celestial ladder (figure 37). This literal representation of the Symbolist ideas motivating the show was less bold, however, than the avant-gardist works of Bernard and Filiger which hung in the Salon proper. Bernard was seduced by Péladan's eloquent contempt for modernity and wrote to Schuffenecker (who declined an invitation to join the group) that the Salon would restore 'l'ideé' and the 'aristocratie du génie' to French art.[72] He must have been disappointed, however, by the esthetic conservatism of most of the Rose+Croix exhibitors whose blend of Naturalist and Renaissance influences would not have been out of place in the regular Salons. The odd effect made by the juxtaposing of the extremely simplified and naïve looking religious compositions of Bernard and Filiger alongside those of the other exhibitors was recorded by an eyewitness who observed that the two misfits were 'assez éloigné sans doute des règles de la beauté', but that they gave the exhibition 'un lustre spécial et considérable'.[73]

Not surprisingly, the esthetic differences between Péladan - who had earlier expressed his contempt for what he called the ugly exoticism of Gauguin - and Bernard and Filiger were quick to surface.[74] Péladan fell out with La Rochefoucauld soon after the Salon opened and immediately expelled La Rochefoucauld's two favourites. In the aftermath of the rift, La Rochefoucauld accused Péladan of liking only 'les choses finies'. He had, La Rochefoucauld claimed, 'l'esthétique d'un honnête bourgeois'.[75]

Other members of the avant-garde were similarly dismissive of Péladan's taste. Denis wrote of the first Rose+Croix Salon as revealing an important distinction between allegorical painting, which he identified as 'la recherche de l'expression par le sujet' - and Symbolist painting, 'la recherche de l'expression par l'oeuvre d'art'.[76] This argument,

which claimed sacred art for the distant past and for the modern avant-garde, dismissed the bulk of contemporary religious painting as insignificant. Less radical critics were also wary of Péladan's esthetic claims. Robert de la Sizeranne, writing for Le Correspondant, thought that the Rose+Croix had been less successful in its search for a modern symbolic language than the English Pre-Raphaelites to whom, he observed, it was philosophically indebted.[77]

Despite his brief association with Péladan's group, Bernard seems to have adhered to a view of Symbolist art which was in accord with that argued for by Denis. After his departure from the Rose+Croix he returned to Pont-Aven where he revisited the subjects he had painted in 1888, reinterpreting the rural and village scenes of his first Breton works in increasingly mysterious ways. The heightened intricacy and strangeness of these paintings suggest Bernard's wish to differentiate himself from the growing group of Gauguin's followers - including Sérusier and Meyer de Haan - who, in their master's absence, produced graceful variations on Gauguin's arabesques. Resisting such fluency, Bernard's compositions of 1892 break along hard edges into uneven compartments. He would probably have been gratified to read that Camille Mauclair thought his works shown at the Barc de Boutteville alongside those of Lautrec, Denis, Bonnard and Anquetin, were singularly 'inharmonieuse et inexpliquées'.[78]

In an important work of 1892, the Bretonnes aux ombrelles, Bernard wilfully subverted pictorial convention by adopting a still-life format to contain his subject of figures in a landscape (figure 38). The band of dark yellow which runs along the base of the composition gives the incongruous impression of the front edge of a table-top whose back edge is defined by the straight line on the far side of the field occupied by the represented women. Beyond this line the landscape appears to rise suddenly like pattern on a

decorated wall. Adding to the artificial appearance of the painting, geometric patterns are repeated across it. The fat curves of the hill to the left and of the dark green shadow in the foreground mimic the manufactured shapes of the parasols. Some of the background trees appear to hang in undulating lines, like the ribbons on the women's bonnets, while others, such as the group of three thin trees on the left, rise weightlessly like the smoke from the neighbouring chimney. The figures of the women themselves exemplify a curious juxtaposition of the old and new. The strict profile of the foremost woman stands out against the background with the severity of an antique cameo while, further back, the face beneath the red umbrella is tinted an incongruous Impressionist blue.

The elements of Bernard's Bretonnes aux ombrelles, however jarring, become slightly more explicable once the work's debt to Seurat's masterpiece of 1886, Sunday afternoon on the island of La Grande Jatte has been observed (figure 39). The profile arrangement of Bernard's standing and seated figures imitates the severe simplicity of Seurat's figures, retaining their left-facing direction despite the omission of the river on which the attention of Seurat's composition converges. Bernard's work also borrows from Seurat's architectonic background of vertical trees and repeats the central accent of the red parasol, highlighted by the surrounding green. Despite his earlier rejection of Seurat's Pointillist technique, Bernard's deliberate reference to his style in 1892 was not entirely out of character. He evidently felt a sympathy for the tension between the image of modernity and the memory of the art of the past which was implicit in the nostalgia of Seurat's stiffly drawn figures and of his carefully measured composition. Although Bernard would chastise Seurat in 1905 for the scientific preoccupations which, he claimed, had compromised his talent, he did not fail to praise the hieraticism of Seurat's design, and by 1936 he had acknowledged the murals of Puvis de Chavannes as an important source for La Grande Jatte.[79]

Bernard's removal of parts of Seurat's composition to the alternative setting of Brittany suggests his sympathy for the underlying sense of loss which lends a note of sadness to the depicted group on the Grande Jatte. The tension between the apparent stability of Seurat's figures and the reality of time and change which shaped their environment seems to echo the melancholy of Watteau's Embarkation for Cythera and, like Bernard's contemporary works, reveals a troubled engagement with the overlapping of old and new in modern experience.

Bernard's engagement with the ambiguous nature of modern life was articulated more directly in the sentiments which he expressed in an article on Cézanne written for La Rochefoucauld's mystic journal Le Coeur in 1894. In this essay, Bernard identified Cézanne as a painter, like himself, in love with the material properties of his art. Cézanne's most mundane subjects, he argued, had been transformed into imaginary forms by virtue of his analysis of composition and colour. The miraculous effect of these peculiar transformations of nature, Bernard continued, was the decorative grandeur, suggestive of tapestry, which Cézanne extracted from something as simple as a still-life of apples. 'Cette qualité qui permet de transformer la vie moderne si souvent aride en beau et en aimable nous paraît la plus magique'.[80]

If the Bretonnes aux ombrelles revealed the strain of Bernard's effort to emulate Cézanne's impressive transformations of ordinary life, his resistance to the supposed aridity of modern experience was more clearly expressed in the contemporary Les Fleurs du mal in which he mysteriously imposed Baudelaire's decadent title on a medieval subject (figure 40). The work depicts a protected garden where romantic pairings of maidens and suitors, recalling the chivalrous iconography of early French tapestry, are invested with a curious modernism. Its title may have been inspired by Huysman's

A Rebours in which a triptych of Baudelaire's poems written on vellum is described as a treasure of des Esseintes' collection.[81] Certainly, Bernard shared Huysmans' fascination with the mingling of modern and ancient forms in the late nineteenth century consciousness. Combining the decorative flatness of tapestry with a modernist emphasis on his means of representation, Bernard's ambiguous composition is constructed from inconsistently proportioned figures superimposed on sharp squares of green.

Among the last things which Bernard wrote before leaving France for Egypt in 1893 was the introduction to the collection of Van Gogh's letters which he published in the Mercure de France. He wrote there with particular enthusiasm of Van Gogh's esthetic transformation of the objects which he had painted, arguing that his friend's intent had been to evoke the sublime. This quality, Bernard insisted, began beyond the real object 'dans la révélation que nous fait cet objet'.[82] The idea was as pertinent to Bernard's work up to 1893 as it had been to Van Gogh's. The critique of modernity which was expressed in Bernard's views of Paris, and compensated for in his pictures of rural and imaginary subjects, was accompanied by his desire for a transcendence of late nineteenth century life which might take on tangible form in the endlessly various medium of painting. Bernard had already constructed an elaborate pictorial world for himself when he was offered a long-term stipend by La Rochefoucauld to study and work abroad.[83] His decision to travel to the Near East and Egypt was probably motivated by the wish to find more exotic materials to add to this construction. As well as enlarging the catalogue of Bernard's pictorial ideas, the journey would aggravate the esthetic contradictions that had been generated in the spaces between his modern experience and his nostalgic imagination.

2 A Visionary in Egypt

Bernard had visited the colonial exhibits at the 1889 Exposition universelle with Gauguin. They had inspected tropical huts together as they made plans to migrate to a French colony in Asia or the Pacific. As they discussed their travel arrangements in their letters of the following year, they continued to refer to the mock villages and exotic pavilions at the 'Exposition des Colonies' as a source of information.[1] The displays on the Esplanade des Invalides had been designed to advertise the benefits of colonisation to France and to attract colonists to distant territories, celebrating with unprecedented richness the revival of French expansionism after the humiliating defeat of 1870. Two major attractions were the partial reconstruction of the temple of Angkor Wat then being excavated by French archeologists in Indochina, and a street 'of Cairo' built from fragments of dismantled Egyptian buildings.

The imported people and animals of the exhibition, along with its architectural fantasies, were compressed in illogical juxtapositions with each other and with the imperial capital. Writing for the Revue des deux Mondes, Emile de Vogüé had evoked the colonial displays as a 'féerie géographique', or a physical 'tentation de St Antoine' that would invade the imagination of the visitor.[2] Bernard and Gauguin must have been particularly prone to such exotic suggestions, implying, as they did, the possibility of an escape from their life in France. Their own exhibition at the Café Volpini, just outside the Exposition proper, had failed to attract the public they had hoped for, and the prospect of making a living from their art was looking increasingly remote.

Although Bernard had soon cooled off the idea of going to the other side of the world with

Gauguin, his dream of escape to an alternative life, stimulated by his experience of the Exposition universelle, continued to haunt him. While working briefly and unsuccessfully as a technical draughtsman in Lille, he informed Schuffenecker of persistent visions of primitiveness which seemed to refer to his memories of 1889:

> fuir un état de société analogue au nôtre n'est pas commettre un acte anti-humain, mais bien très humain [....] Puisque nous croyons que ce monde dans lequel on nous a mis au jour n'est pas de notre complexions [...] que nous croyons être venu trop tôt ou trop tard dans un monde trop vieux [...] n'est-il pas juste que nous remontions jusqu'à l'enfance des civilisations, que nous partions en un mot pour l'inconnu.[3]

The unknown for which Bernard longed in 1890 was no longer, however, the tropical place that had been imagined by Gauguin in, for example, the exotic flowers which grow from the waves of his Breton carving, Soyez mysterieuses (figure 41). The spaces of an imaginary past evoked in Bernard's paintings of the early 1890s, rather, suggest a pre--modern Europe or a mythic golden age, inhabited by perfected Europeans. After Bernard fell out with Gauguin early in 1891 he gave up the idea of a savage paradise with which Gauguin had infused him. Renouncing his previous attraction to the Pacific and the Far East, he decided in 1893 to travel to the nearer exoticism of Egypt and the Levant. The European stereotype of those places as living embodiments of an ancient and Biblical past no doubt played an important part in Bernard's decision to visit them, but his choice was probably also influenced by the growing French interest in the Near East as a site of artistic education.

The Algerian pavilion at the 1889 Exposition universelle had housed the inaugural exhibition of the 'Peintres orientalistes français', a group who, according to their president and publicist Léonce Bénédite, proposed not only to advertise the Orient to France but to preserve and promote the indigenous arts of the French colonies.[4] Members of Bénédite's society tended to illustrate a traveller's brief encounter with the exotic or, in the

important case of Etienne Dinet, to reveal a deeper engagement with Muslim life that was incongruously expressed through a Naturalist esthetic. The renewed interest directed to the Near East by Bénédite's group was also being taken up by more radical artists, however, for whom colonial art suggested deeper possibilities as a stylistic inspiration to French modernism.

Roger Marx published an essay on Symbolism in 1892 which mentioned Gauguin, Bernard, Bonnard and Denis in its assessment of the specific relevance of 'Muslim' art to the French avant-garde. Marx argued that the artisans of North Africa, trained in ancient traditions of applied art, afforded a vital example to modern France. Noting the characteristic Symbolist departure from easel painting to such alternatives as ceramics, mosaic and commercial posters, Marx insisted on the Symbolists' kinship to Eastern artists who, he wrote, regulated their vision instinctively to the demands of decoration. He cited their capacity to see and render nature 'ornamentalement' and to observe the 'lois d'interprétation' as salutary lessons for his radical contemporaries.[5]

Marx' argument was supported by an unsigned article in Le Coeur, probably by Bernard's patron, La Rochefoucauld, in which the 'Peintres orientalistes français' were criticised for their exhibition held alongside the show of Muslim art at the Palais de l'Industrie in 1893. Complaining of the colonists' apparent indifference to the dazzling Oriental objects displayed around them, the author claimed that the orientalists' mimetic vision bore no comparison to the imagination revealed everywhere in the true works of the East. He made an exception, however, for two Algerian studies by Renoir whose extraordinary colour and handling betrayed their peripheral relationship to the other works in the show.[6] Both Marx and La Rochefoucauld suggested that the connection of Eastern artists to ancient traditions afforded them a knowledge of enduring esthetic laws of the kind which

modern French artists would need to rediscover after rejecting their own debased education.

Bernard's decision to leave France for the Orient may well have been suggested by La Rochefoucauld who published an article on Filiger in 1893 in which he acknowledged the strength which that mystic artist had drawn from his self-imposed exile in hermitic solitude in 'un des villages les plus perdus de la Basse-Bretagne'. La Rochefoucauld was to express a similar approval of Bernard's new life in Egypt when he wrote in 1895 that he had made a logical progression from the 'harmonie mystique' of his Breton paintings to the decorative frescoes with which he was now covering the 'murailles des cloîtres' of the Orient.[7]

Bernard left France in March of 1893 intending to make only a brief tour of Italy, Greece and the Near East, but he seems to have underestimated how much his imagination would be affected by the new experiences of his travels. When he arrived in Smyrna in July of 1893, after travelling for four months through Italy and Greece, he immediately wrote to his parents of an Orient which more than fulfilled his expectations.

> Là nous avons vu l'Orient tel que nous le rêvions. Des rues étrangement tapissiés de turcs fumant [...] d'Egyptiens circulant, montés sur des chevaux arabes ou portant sur leurs têtes d'énormes plateaux pleins de fruits, d'esclaves balayant les trottoirs, de races aux faces bizarres chargeant ou déchargeant les bateaux venus de tous les lieux du monde. Là nous avons vu des mosquées, des femmes aux longes voiles cachant leurs visages [...] des chameaux défilant en caravanes, des fontaines sculptées d'arabesques sous les figuiers.[8]

With each detail he enumerated, Bernard celebrated the intensity of his appetite for the exotic. The collision of this new environment with his alien viewpoint would give a new impetus to the conjoining of ancient and modern sources of inspiration which had already been an important attribute of his painting in France. Bernard had been impressed by the

frescoes then attributed to Cimabue, Giotto and Orcagna which he had seen as he passed through Florence, and their influence became apparent in the first major paintings which he executed away from France, a set of Neo-Byzantine murals painted for the Catholic monastery on Samos in exchange for board and lodging.[9] Although these decorations were destroyed during the second World War, surviving photographs record their impressive simplicity and monumentality (figure 42). Bernard's use of Byzantine formulae in the stiff robes of Christ and the Evangelists and in the symmetrical trees in the lower scene of the Agony in the Garden fills the wall with bold patterns that appear to recall Denis' Symbolist exhortation: 'un mur est vide: le remplir avec des taches symétriques de formes, harmonieuses de couleurs'.[10]

Bernard's archaising style was further encouraged by the communal life which he shared on Samos with the Christian brothers. In a letter to his mother in which he gave a detailed account of his daily ritual of work and prayer, he added on the subject of his murals, 'Plus de doute, plus de hésitation, tout s'enlève de premier coup et avec force'.[11] His monastic existence, measured against his renounced European life, seems to have reinforced his understanding of the Orient as a place of retreat from modernity where he might realise a spiritual transcendence of the kind he had dreamt of in France.

Despite the affinity he felt for his new life in Greece and later Egypt, however, Bernard's responses to the new worlds he found on his travels were always to reveal the Frenchness of his viewpoint. In his Egyptian paintings he upheld the implicit laws of orientalist representation by omitting to refer to the presence of colonisation which in reality mitigated the exoticism of his subjects. Egypt had passed from French administration to the English after its army had suppressed a nationalist uprising and had seized control of the 'veiled protectorate' in 1882.[12] When Bernard entered Cairo at the

end of 1893, he found a modernising city whose 'rues', 'boulevards' and 'larges avenues', he complained, 'sont venues d 'Europe'.[13] In his art, however, he represented another place, purged of any signs of recent change that would compromise the sense of its difference from himself. Addressing the audience which he had left behind him in France, his orientalist pictures concretised his anxieties as a displaced modern, seeking solace in his illusions of the past.

The uneasy position between Europe and the Orient revealed in Bernard's paintings accorded with the troubled sense of history which he had brought with him from Paris. When Eugène de Vogüé reviewed the universal exhibition in 1889, he hailed its collections of people, edifices and machines as prefigurations of the world of tomorrow in the 'linéaments d'une civilisation qui s'ébauche'.[14] New technologies, mingling with the memory of the past, had seemed to him to offer the illusion of a better future. But the gallery of machines at the 1889 exhibition had been regarded by others as representing a threat to culture and humanity. The 'Age des Machines', Georges Valbert had warned, was undermining human individuality and creativity.

> l'ouvrier qui les emploie est à leur service, et serviteur d'une machine, il devient un peu machine lui-même. Il doit faire toujours la même chose, se répéter sans cesse, mettre son honneur à tirer cent mille copies parfaitement identiques d'un modèle qu'il n'a pas inventé.[15]

Bernard's writings in Egypt revealed that he shared Valbert's desire for escape from the menace of modern technology, although he attributed the decline he saw in modern creativity to broader philosophical changes of which machines were merely a symptom. The important series of essays that Bernard wrote for the Mercure de France between 1893 and 1895 explained the esthetic renewal he had obtained in Egypt as the product of a spiritual revelation which had been found in seclusion from the materialism and progress

of modernity. The titles of his essays - 'Ce que c'est que l'art mystique', 'Les ouvriers et les artistes' and 'La passion de l'art' - indicate the direction in which his thought was moving, towards an intense mysticism akin to that promulgated by La Rochefoucauld's Le Coeur. While Bernard's writings in Egypt reflected the strength which he claimed to draw from his remoteness from France, they also referred to the theme of resistance to modernity which had begun with the religious enthusiasm of his childhood.

Bernard regretted the decline of modern art in his 1895 essay, 'De l'art naïf et de l'art savant', in which he proclaimed that 'l'homme présent aime et desire l'homme passé, cette graine de lui-meme qui fleurit dans un rétrospectif miroir'.[16] The expressiveness of modern Western art, he argued, had been rendered impotent by materialism and secularism. Accusing the moderns of a loss of faith which had undermined their impressive technical knowledge, he called in reaction for a return to the naïveté of the religious art of the past. Whereas the East was nourished by ancient beliefs passed down in an unbroken line, Bernard thought, the West's modernity constituted a traumatic break with the past. His argument invoked a conservative Catholicism which recalled that of Péladan, but it also suggested a wider spirituality of the kind that had been espoused by the likes of Gauguin, Van Gogh and Denis. Denis had written in 1890,

> Le grand art, qu'on appelle décoratif, des Indous, des Assyriens, des Egyptiens, des Grecs, l'art du Moyen-Age et de la Renaissance, et les oeuvres décidément supérieures de l'Art moderne, qu'est-ce? sinon le travestissement des sensations vulgaires - des objets naturels - en icônes sacrées, hermétiques, imposantes.[17]

Bernard stated in 1895,

> les arts hiératiques, c'est-à-dire purement religieux, m'apparaissent comme tenant la première place, comme étant le langage le plus simple, le plus parfait et le plus haut, et par là j'arrive à conclure - remarquez-le bien - qu'ils sont l'expression de l'art même.[18]

Bernard's insistence on the centrality of religious feeling to artistic expression acquired a radical import when he used it in defence of the styles of his progressive contemporaries in France. Not mentioning names, Bernard's essay, 'Les Ateliers', attacked the art of the Salons and praised the work of certain young independents who were apparently the same group of artists who had been named in Aurier's 1892 essay as 'Les Symbolistes'. The rebels, inspired by the French and Italian primitives in the Louvre, and by the brave few ('Redon, Cézanne, Monet, Sisley, Guillaumin, Gauguin, Seurat') who had rejected official favour, Bernard wrote, promised an esthetic renaissance that would be based in 'la solitude' and 'la prière'.[19]

Although Bernard's Egyptian essays reiterated Aurier's definition of Symbolist art as a divination of spiritual harmonies thought to be concealed in nature, they refuted Aurier's opinion of the relation between his progressive contemporaries and the art of the past. Aurier had admired the art of the savage as 'une très intime communion avec l'immanente pensée de la nature' which he thought should be emulated by modern artists, but had rejected the rules and practices of civilisation as apt to lead artists astray.[20] Bernard, on the other hand, expressed his reverence for the hieratic formulae of Egyptian, Byzantine, Gothic and Arab art in which he recognised traces of 'un souvenir perpetué de la divine harmonie, vue par nos premiers parents'. The study of these ancient patterns, he now claimed, was vital to the success of modern art, as it afforded the foundation on which all innovation must be built:

> Toutes les grandes époques ont eu leurs formules, Grecs, Egyptiens, Byzantins, Gothiques, Arabes [...] Ceux qui, au contraire n'ont point ces bases solides sont destinés à disparaître ou à paraître inférieures peu à peu, après un succès ou une gloire momentanée. La rénovation de l'art est donc dans l'étude des formules qui sont la clef de son langage.[21]

The vigorous reaffirmation of ancient traditions in Bernard's writings of 1895 evoked his

lingering fear of an esthetic doubt of the kind he had confessed to Gauguin six years before when, obsessed by the material properties of his medium, he had tended towards abstraction. His cautionary observation that the lack of solid bases would, at best, lead to only a momentary success, indicated a retrospective view of himself as a precocious talent who had lost his way for lack of a guiding style. Calling on his contemporaries to learn from established rules, Bernard stated his contempt for the new for its own sake which he had come to think of as a dangerous attribute of the avant-garde. The effort to extend innovation without referring back to the past, he insisted, was inimical to his idea of progress.

In mid-1895 Bernard responded to attacks made by Camille Mauclair on the neglect of traditional skills by young Symbolist painters by arguing that those worthy of being called innovators, including himself, Filiger, Gauguin and Van Gogh, had always worked in sympathy with the past:

> je n'approuve ni le bizarre, ni la fausse originalité ni la laideur pour elle-même...s'efforcer vers l'originalité est une bonne tendance, meilleure que celle qui consiste à l'etouffer; mais il faut que cette originalité ne soit pas creuse, ait la tradition, les maîtres, la nature pour appuis.[22]

This reverence for tradition was qualified, however, by Bernard's distaste for the stale rules of the Paris ateliers. His mistrust of the decayed instruction exemplified by an academician like Cormon, as well as of the disorienting freedom of unfettered innovation, reconnected him with the Symbolist desire for a knowledge of eternal esthetic laws that would be found in the study of nature. Artistic rules, Bernard argued, must always be verified by empirical observation which, he thought, in accord with Neo-Classical theory, would discover consistent harmonies, rapports, principles and proportions to all those who searched for them.

Recalling the themes of his correspondence with Van Gogh, Bernard's writings in Egypt revived his dreams of a cooperative group of artists who would work to develop a modern style that would be infused with a spirit reminiscent of the great styles of the past. His isolation in Egypt did not, he thought, sever him from this enterprise and he expected to return to France armed with discoveries that would be relevant to the work of his progressive contemporaries. There was, however, an unacknowledged anxiety in his description of his lonely existence among the ruins. 'J'ai circulé comme un homme perdu dans de vastes cités soudain vidées... Plus rien que le silence'.[23] This statement, with its images of temporal dislocation and historical decay, reveals a sense of isolation from all of his contemporaries which Bernard could not yet express more openly. His solitude in Cairo, as a metaphor for the deeper isolation imposed by his contempt for his age, was as much psychological as geographical.

II

Bernard's first pictures of Egypt borrowed conventional orientalist forms as the raw material for compositions of uneasy effect. While contemporary French colonial painters mastered the description of the landscape or, as in Gérome's case, of painstakingly detailed stagings of decors and figures, Bernard's disruptive vision reformulated the venerable European project of cataloguing the East by evoking an alternative inward journey. Bernard's combination of generic orientalist subjects with elements derived from both modern and ancient art revealed a troubling distance between his pictorial imagination and his physical environment.

An ambiguous position between East and West is implied by Bernard's 1894 watercolour view of Cairo in which his vision of the city seems to have been shaped by a recent source, the mock 'rue du Caire' built in Paris in 1889 (figures 43 and 44). Like the popular

display at the Exposition, Bernard's work presents a theatrical perspective which is terminated by the exotic signpost of a minaret and inhabited by self-conscious types who seem to anticipate the unseen viewer. The artificiality of Bernard's composition, highlighted by the visual rhyme between the static central figure and the towering minaret, reveals an Orient formed for spectatorial consumption, but one made remote by the emptiness and stillness which is substituted for the Exposition's colour and incident. While the intrusion of wandering visitors was encouraged in Paris' version of Cairo, Bernard's painted city excludes explicit evidence of colonisation and places a distance between itself and the implied Western observer. Conjuring half-formed ruins, the blurred washes subvert imaginary entry into the depicted space. This dreamed of Cairo seems neither so tangible nor so real as contemporary French painters succeeded in making it, and hints at unknowable depths in its vague texture.

The lack of resolution in Bernard's pictorial Orient reflected his difficulty in settling on a form for the visualising of it. In his early Egyptian works he resisted making a direct address to his actual environment by seeking reassurance in the imaginary Orient which he had known since childhood through the works of earlier French masters. Bernard's numerous paintings and drawings of women collecting water from the Nile repeated the motif of a woman with a water jug which he had first encountered as a boy of thirteen when he had painted a precocious copy of Delacroix' La Halte des nomades (figure 45). Bernard's Femmes puisant de l'eau of 1893 offers a set of variations on Delacroix' Arab types, which are arranged against a flat ground in a manner recalling the compositions of his Pont-Aven works (figure 46). The towering verticality of the women on the right is starkly opposed to the crouching positions of those sitting nearer the river, suggesting an evolutionary progress from the primordial waters of the Nile, through the foetal figures on the banks, to the erect women dominating the land and sky. This

metamorphic effect, reinforced by Bernard's unresolved technique, evokes objects in the process of coming into being. Bernard was writing an essay on Redon for Le Coeur as he worked on the picture, and he may have sought to follow the mysterious vision through time which he attributed to his singular contemporary.[24]

The sense of historical memory which Bernard extracted from his Egyptian subjects underlined their function as a medium through which he might evade his modern identity. His depiction of women at the water became progressively more abstract until, in the Femmes puisant de l'eau (1894), he filled the surface of his canvas with a shimmering wall of water and placed a frontal female before it in a subversion of spatial logic. Crowned by a swollen urn and seeming to guard the river behind it, this figure, united with its pregnant vessel, affirms ancient associations of women with water. The idea is elaborated by the rippling figure on the right whose outline wobbles as if submerged. A subordinate figure, less clearly defined at the top of the picture, bends over the river and seems to float or swim against its surface. Its head, reduced to a featureless ball trails a squiggle of hair like the tail of a spermatozoon (figure 47). Bernard's idiosyncratic allusion to the Nile's venerable pedigree, in this case, restores an element of surprise to his exotic stereotypes. A memory of Cézanne's early Romantic compositions, particularly of the long ascending perspectives of his orgies, lingers in the improbable construction of Bernard's landscape.

The collision of seemingly ancient subjects with Bernard's modern European vision generated a tension in his work which was obliquely alluded to in a passage of his travel diary where he told of an encounter between modernity, in the form of a rushing train, and a Muslim woman and child whom he described in terms that evoke the figures of his contemporary paintings.

> Une femme musulmane est arrêté sur la route avec son enfant qui, près d'elle porte un pot de terre sur la tête. Elle regarde passer le train avec une sorte de terreur d'étonnement religieux [...] Attitude et majesté de cette femme dans une robe blanche salie qui couvre tout et meurt sur ses pieds comme une mer près du rivage. Elle semble la statue du Silence et du Beau regardant passer avec effroi la Laideur et le Bruit.[25]

An unwilling representative of the civilisation whose intrusive ugliness and noise took the form, in this case, of efficient transportation, Bernard searched for pictorial forms through which to express qualities like those he admired in the Muslim woman. In his works of 1894 he adopted a rigidly conventional style for his Egyptian figures which insistently referred to Byzantine and early Renaissance formulae. The Fête arabe depicts its festive subject with a strange solemnity, insisting on a likeness between the Oriental body and the ancient architecture it inhabits by relating the shapes of the veiled women to the row of pointed arches behind them (figure 48). Cool blues and greens, applied flatly and enlivened only by the sharply drawn lines of the drapery, recall the palette of early Italian fresco.

The place which Bernard meant to occupy within the timeless Cairo of his painting was physically expressed in his occupancy of a ruined palace, his dressing in Oriental robes and his marriage in June of 1894 to a Syrian woman, Hanenah Saati. His attempted assimilation into Egypt was returned to the pictorial realm with the dignified self-portrait with Hanenah which he painted in 1894, probably as their wedding portrait (figure 49). As if reflected on the surface of the historic Nile of his earlier paintings, Bernard appears in this work as part of the ancient world of his imagination. His bright yellow robe and turban, marking him as an ersatz Egyptian, are asserted against a sky blue ground. The orange disc on the wall to the right of his head extends the turban's outline to trace a halo around his simply drawn features. Piercing the strictly drawn surface of the picture, the

painter's glance appears to look back at the viewer and himself. Although the artist's self--image is here embedded in a patterned field which accords with the usual terms of his visualisation of Egypt, he is clearly differentiated from the otherness that is embodied in the figure of his wife. His depicted act of seeing is reversed by Hanenah's heavy-lidded eyes which look downward and inward. Her bowed head, contrasting with his erectness, and her hands held in front of her chest suggest an attitude of homage or prayer.

Bernard described Hanenah to his parents as dignified, introverted and shy. She spoke little French and seems to have attracted him as an incarnation of the self-contained mystery he attributed to the Orient. The psychological distance between the couple is made palpable in their portrait by their failure to acknowledge each other by sign or touch. Their heads are linked only by the balanced lines that rise over and dip under their foreheads and chins, and which tie their faces to the structure of the picture surface. The idealised pair, divested of mundane associations, are removed to a remote level of estheticism.

Despite its potent exoticism, Bernard's 1894 self-portrait with Hanenah also recalls the rustic self-portrait which he had made for Van Gogh in Pont-Aven six years earlier (figure 17). In an odd substitution, Hanenah's placement mirrors the position which is occupied by Gauguin in the earlier work, in a drawing stuck to the wall, in three quarter view, with eyes downcast, apparently deferring to Bernard's image. If Bernard's glance out of the picture seems to have lost none of its self-confidence between 1888 and 1894, the viewer who looks from one work to the other is made aware of the arbitrariness of his adopted costumes, which define impostures limited to the pictorial worlds from which they emerge. The two portraits, representing stages in Bernard's search for style, instate painting, with its endless capacity for transformation, as the necessary medium for his attempted

transcendence of his actual identity.

III

In September of 1895 Bernard's sister came to visit him in Cairo, ending a three year separation. As soon as she arrived, Madeleine contracted the fever that was rife in the city and died, after a brief illness, on the twentieth of November. The tragic event is not recorded in Bernard's Egyptian journal, but its effect can be felt in the transformation of his work and thought that followed. Bernard responded to the loss by leaving Egypt. He organised a trip to Spain in the hope of removing himself and his family from the threat of infection. Embarking in July of 1896 with Hanenah and their infant son, Otse, he had reached Granada by August.

Bernard himself succumbed to fever before he could start painting in Spain, and, in a letter written to his father in 1899, he described this illness as the source of a revelation which had changed his art utterly. He wrote that he had seen from his sickbed an hallucination in which the walls of his room were covered with 'grandes peintures dans une manière très vénitienne (Véronèse, Titien ou Tintoret) que j'avais parafaitement la conscience d'être de moi'.[26] Further, he described his feelings of disappointment and loss when these imaginary paintings vanished and his own works were again revealed to him. At that moment, he recalled, he had renounced his past styles and had vowed to paint pictures like the ones he had briefly imagined.

The dramatic terms of Bernard's account of his esthetic conversion drew on his Catholic imagination and recalled his earlier interpretation of Cézanne's Temptation of St Anthony as a work invaded by the memory of past forms. By recording a single moment of revelation in which the pictures of the old masters had seemed to invade his canvases,

Bernard placed the birth of his second self in the aftermath of Madeleine's death, and not, as some scholars have argued, at the time of his departure for Italy and the Orient in 1893.[27] But the story of his moment of revelation, whatever importance he attached to it, must be weighed against the longstanding evidence of his alienation from modernity. Bernard's sudden devotion to the memory of Venetian painting in 1896 was, to an extent, a logical culmination of the search for a distinctive style which had begun with his journeys away from Paris to Brittany and Egypt.

Even in the remoteness of Cairo, the memory of Pont-Aven and of his feud with Gauguin had never been far from Bernard's mind. The quest for a new identity, revealed in the ambitious experimentation of his early work in Egypt, was guided by his desire for recognition in Paris as a leading modern artist. In his letter to Camille Mauclair in 1895, Bernard had restated his case for stylistic priority over Gauguin, retelling the story of Gauguin's reaction to his Pardon at Pont-Aven as if it were still a matter of urgent importance.[28] As it happened, Gauguin's followers among the Nabis were more interested in painting's future than in its immediate past and had already moved to symbolic uses of line and colour that were more calculated than anything in the work of Bernard or Gauguin.[29]

Bernard revealed how far he still felt connected with the Parisian avant-garde when, in 1893, he sent his mother a roll of watercolour sketches and instructed her to show them to no-one: 'Je ne veux qu'on sache en rien ce que je fais en ce moment'.[30] His friends, it seems, were well aware of his wish to return to Paris with a triumphant new style. When Redon saw the watercolours from Cairo he wrote back:

> les notes à l'aquarelle me plaisent beaucoup. Si vous songiez à faire ici une exposition il serait mieux de n'y montrer que ces travaux récents, postérieurs à votre voyage à l'Italie. Celà finirait la querelle ancienne de vos commencements, car vous êtes maintenant distinct de certains autres.[31]

One of the few critics who saw and discussed Bernard's orientalist works in the 1890s, Andre Mellerio, revealed, however, that Bernard was less in danger of being mistaken for a disciple of Gauguin than of bewildering his critics with the very variety and unpredictability of his oeuvre. Mellerio's brief study of the Symbolist movement, published in 1896, situated the start of the idealist movement, as he called it, with the exhibition held by Bernard, Gauguin and their circle at the Café Volpini in 1889. His estimation of Bernard also included mention of an abundant series of works recently sent from the Orient which, presumably, were the same watercolours that had been admired by Redon. Despite investing Bernard with a 'naïveté primitive, presque d'enfant', Mellerio observed that he had also made references to the art of the masters which, he thought, constituted an 'abdication' of his modernity. At times, Mellerio observed, Bernard's work revealed 'Tout un monde d'impressions' which 'surgit non de la vie usuelle mais de l'art des musées', while at others it demonstrated his attendance to 'la sensation directe'. 'Ces deux courants chez M. Bernard', he continued, 'semblent exister simultanément, sans se confondre [....] l'artiste a l'extraordinaire don, la faculté souple de produire côté à côté des oeuvres d'un ordre tout différent'.[32] Although Melerio spoke of the unpredictable nature of Bernard's oeuvre in terms that were mostly positive, he did not conceal his unease with the apparent lack of logic guiding Bernard's esthetic choices.

Even before his conversion of 1896, then, Bernard had posed problems for modernist critics who, by definition, required avant-garde artists only to address the past from a position of radical critique. The range of past styles evoked in Bernard's oeuvre, on the other hand, suggested his capricious urge to revive remote pictorial standards. As early as August 1890 Gauguin had complained, on the subject of a wood engraving by Bernard, 'Il y a dans ceci une grande préoccupation anatomique à la Michel-Ange qui entre peu dans mes cordes'.[33] The address to recent French and to early Renaissance painting in

Bernard's early orientalist works, extending the scope of his historical references, had given substance to his claim that the seed of his artistic self would be found in what he understood as history's 'retrospectif miroir'. He announced to Mauclair in 1895 that the variety of styles which he discovered in this mirror had mitigated his fear of entrapment in a fixed esthetic. 'J'ai ecrit et dit souvent à bien des critiques [...] qui me demandaient mon esthétique, là voici, la crainte d'en avoir une'.[34]

Although in 1896 Bernard had startlingly embraced that which he had previously claimed to fear, his fascination with the art of the past was to continue to shape his work in unpredictable ways. His supposed obedience to received rules would be as assertive and yet as equivocal as his previous resistance to them had been. A picture of Christ on the Cross which he painted in Granada in 1896 makes use of mannered drawing and dramatic chiaroscuro of the kind that he might have seen in the imaginary works around his sickbed (figure 50,a). While he never named any of the pictures revealed to him in his vision, a number of the paintings of Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto in the Louvre could well have haunted Bernard's fevered imagination. Titian's Entombment and Crowning with Thorns contain tightly packed groups of figures whose sense of stored energy makes them threaten to break from the frame. Tintoretto's Self-Portrait is similarly intense, dominated by a swirling white beard and cavernous eyes. Most directly relevant to Bernard's Christ on the Cross, Veronese's Calvary presents a lopsided composition, dominated by a vast cloudy sky torn with jagged streaks of light (figure 50,b).

Despite their power to charge Bernard's imagination, the expressivity of such works did not translate easily to his own paintings. He was soon to renounce the drama which he had tried to convey in his Christ on the Cross to adopt static compositions whose impassive figures were carefully studied from life. He may well have remembered some

words of Huysmans, in the aftermath of his Venetian vision, that had been quoted to him by Van Gogh in 1888 - 'The most beautiful pictures are those one dreams about when smoking pipes in bed, but which one will never paint'[35] - for the style of his painting after 1896 would be less like that of the Renaissance masters than he claimed it to be. Whereas before 1896 Bernard had enlivened his borrowings from the past with the vivid colour, gestural drawing and thick facture of modernism, his pictorial style after 1896 was characterised by a stark and somewhat unconvincing arrangement of nostalgic elements which at times evokes the incongruity of collage.

Bernard was to find vital models for his new esthetic in Spain, both in its Baroque masters, whom he studied in Seville, and in the work of a successful young painter one year his junior, Ignacio Zuloaga, whom he met in Seville at the end of 1896. Zuloaga's emphatically Spanish portraits borrowed their handling, colour and composition from the Spanish masters (he was a pioneering collector of El Greco) but they display a keen eye for his living subjects which is informed by Impressionism. In the Musiciens espagnols, Bernard's first major canvas executed in Spain, he seems to have drawn strength from Zuloaga's example. The work's humble models are posed with a solemnity worthy of the seventeenth century and placed against the simple background of a blue wall, but Bernard inserts a sense of modernism with the cramped arrangement of his figures in the vertical format (figure 51). The group comes uncomfortably close to the viewer in the arresting stares of the children and in the solicitation of the begging cup. Compressed in this tight composition, vulgar details like the woman's veined hands or the man's white shirt, glimpsed through a loose button-hole, rub uneasily against the classic draperies around the carried child or the folds of the woman's black dress. Similarly unsettling, a strip of fragmentary buildings and of vacant sky is squeezed into the top of the picture in a counterpoint to the cluttered foreground.

Along with his memory of the solemnity of Zurbaran and El Greco, the Musiciens espagnols recalls Bernard's own earlier work in its fusion of old and new elements. Its broad technique, subtly responsive to the different textures of cloth, skin and wood, gives a physicality to its frozen composition which suggests that, in addition to its acknowledged sources, Manet's 'Spanish' works had become an unexpected reference point for Bernard's traditionalist style. Among the thirteen works of Manet which Bernard had seen in the Palais des Beaux-Arts at the Exposition universelle in 1889 there were three Spanish figures from the early 1860s, the Spanish guitarist, Lola de Valence and the Dead Toreador. Their self-conscious poses and abrupt shifts in tone and colour evidently made a deep impression on Bernard, for their memory is marked in his own Spanish group. A more sober descendant of Manet's guitarist, Bernard's is positioned like his predecessor in a simplified field of colour which evokes a theatrical space (figure 52).

Bernard's reference to Manet at a time when he claimed to have been converted to the style of the Venetian masters was not without justification. Although Manet's borrowings from Renaissance and Baroque painting had famously provoked confusion and hostility in the 1860s, he had been accorded general respect by the end of the century for the style with which he had reinvigorated moribund genres. His masterpiece, the Olympia, purchased for the state by Monet's subscription of 1889, was hung in the Musée de Luxembourg where it confirmed his status as a pivotal link between modern painting and the art of the past (figure 53). Gauguin had copied it in 1891 before he left for Tahiti, and Bernard would have been aware of the Tahitian variation of it, Manao Tupapau, which had been exhibited in Paris in 1893 (figure 54). In 1904, Bernard reported Cézanne's opinion of Manet as the last in the line of French painters who 'ont fait des tableaux', a phrase which recalled his own observation in 1901 that Manet was 'le dernier en date des classiques français'. This accolade, directed specifically at Manet's paintings of the

1860s, referred to Bernard's belief that Manet had centralised his art 'à la source du génie générale de tous les pays'.[36] His assessment was to be echoed in 1969 by Michael Fried's study of 'Manet's Sources' which argued for a reading of Manet's references to earlier masters as being guided by his pursuit of a pictorial universality.[37]

Bernard's attraction to Manet in 1897 revealed that his professed engagement with the pictorial heritage of Renaissance Venice was less direct and spontaneous than the account of his vision of 1896 implied it to be. Manet's modern example provided a practical basis on which Bernard could build his retrogressive style, suggesting a way of referring back to the masters through his observation of the posed model. The figures of Bernard's Egyptian works of the last years of the century were to be arranged in groups which recall the orchestrated compositions of earlier history painting but, like Manet's, give the impression of containing new meanings in their old structures.

IV

Seemingly reinvigorated by his esthetic conversion, Bernard returned to Cairo in mid-1897 with plans to produce a series of monumental works that would embody the character of Egypt for the European observer. He undertook the task with a seriousness which he explained to his mother was the product of his new style. 'Je vois de plus en plus que le grand art réclame tout l'homme. Je vais organiser ma vie tout autrement!'[38] The Fellahs au travail, Prostitués de Cairo and Femmes au bord du Nil on which Bernard was soon to commence were notional pendants on a scale beyond anything previously attempted in his easel painting, each being 2 metres x 2.5 metres or larger (figures 55 and 56). In the first in the series, the Fellahs au travail, Bernard celebrated his ideal of the active male body in opposition to the corruption which he ascribed to European industrialisation.

> Tu n'imagines pas comme la vue de la florescence humaine des fellahs m'a donné de grandioses visions. Ces gens presque nus, puissament musclés halés de soleil ont été pour moi une révélation de ce qu'est la vie sous son plus noble et plus simple aspect. J'ai trouvé en eux l'allure libre de l'homme et de la femme loin d'une civilisation contrefaite.[39]

The Egyptian landscape is concealed in Bernard's painting by the heavily muscled bodies of the fellahs, relieved only by a separate group of modestly dressed women, preparing food in a space partitioned off with a curtain. The single digging figure in the left foreground is surrounded by men who appear to carry baskets of earth away from the work's centre. Alternating back, front and side views, these male figures give the impression of the same model posed many times over, their stiff postures forming a row of verticals across the front of the picture. Bernard evidently sought this rigid structure, for he neutralises the jagged motion of the digging figure in the foreground with the stabilising back of the one behind.

The subject of men carrying earth afforded Bernard a masculine equivalent to that of women carrying water which had previously dominated his Egyptian work, and had appeared by 1898 in no less than sixteen of his paintings. The Femmes au bord du Nil, designed as a companion piece to the Fellahs au travail, is the culmination of the series (figure 56). This static group of women collecting water in a stage-like space may have been inspired by the composition of Poussin's Elija and Rebecca in the Louvre (figure 57). The group of three women, forming an architectural entity as they stand back to back on the right side of Bernard's painting, seem to have been assembled for the purpose of supporting their three symmetrical vessels. The monumental hardness of these figures substitutes for the fluid forms of Bernard's earlier Femmes puisant de l'eau of 1893 and 1894 and suppresses his past equivocation behind a rigid clarity. The viewer comparing the frozen figures of the women at the Nile to those of the Fellahs au travail can imagine

that Bernard's nude male workers are similarly fixed in permanent positions, as if made of earth or stone rather than of flesh. The fellahs are displayed in superimposed rows like the layers of a bas-relief, with the heavy shapes of their muscles and of their loaded sacks establishing a slow rhythm across the composition. Contradicting the technological and social progress that was accelerating with the end of the nineteenth century, Bernard's Egypt was constructed as the compensatory site of a timeless and tireless humanity.

Along with his reference to the grand simplicity of Manet's early figure studies, Bernard seems to have been thinking of the frescoes by Puvis de Chavannes in the Panthéon as he painted the architectonic bodies of his fellahs. His Egyptian workers recall the strongly built figures of Puvis' St. Geneviève cycle and imitate the pairing of complementary figures which is a feature of Puvis' classicism (figure 58). As we have previously seen, Bernard had already responded to Puvis' painting in his radical French works of the late 1880s and early 1890s. His return to Puvis' example at the end of the nineteenth century and in the context of his Egyptian subjects would seem to have been a logical expression of his ongoing interest in a modern painting which aspired to a sense of timelessness. Bernard was far from alone in adopting Puvis as a model for this endeavour. Signac's Jeunes Provençals au puits, illustrated in Le Coeur in 1893, had tempered the classical symmetry of Puvis' At the fountain of 1869 with the organic lines of Art Nouveau (figures 59 and 60), and Gauguin had emulated the grandeur of Puvis' frescoes from Tahiti in his D'où venons nous? que somme nous? où allons nous? of 1897 (figure 61). When Denis advocated the example of 'les arts à Rome' in 1898, he was unable to complete two pages before citing Puvis' words: 'Je suis convaincu que la conception la mieux ordonnée se trouve en même temps la plus belle'.[40] Bernard's aspiration to an effect of classic order in his last Egyptian paintings was only one expression of the nostalgia for the art of the masters that was experienced in many forms by French painters at the end of the century.

The unseen background to Bernard's Fellahs au travail, like that to Gauguin's similarly ambitious D'où venons nous? que sommes nous? où allons nous?, was the advance of colonisation in which it participated. While it lacks the overt fantasy of Gauguin's Symbolism, Bernard's work invents a similar space beyond history in which its figures enact their resistance to modern time. After the introduction of electric trams to Cairo in 1904, Bernard had written an alarmist piece for the Nouvelle Revue d'Egypte in which he prophesied the destruction of all that had attracted him to Egypt. The Nile valley, he predicted, would be dotted with factories, while the Nile itself would be choked with steamboats like a second Thames.[41] The unchanging alternative to this unhappy prospect was a pictorial world impervious to the threat of decay. The unusual detail of a figure shown dragging a water vessel into the foreground of Les Femmes au bord du Nil bridges the gap between the painting and the viewer, and so leads the eye into the receding row of figures that ends with the most distant of the women who wade in the luminous waters. On the depicted surface of Bernard's inviting Nile only a slow dhow is allowed passage.

V

As Bernard worked on the Fellahs au travail and its companion pieces, he began making plans for returning to Paris and for exhibiting his most ambitious works to the audience for which they had been designed. His confidence in his new artistic direction was bolstered by the success of one of his Spanish works, Danse de gitanes, which Zuloaga had submitted on his behalf to the Salon of Madrid. Paris, however, remained the ultimate arbiter of his success, and he continued to regard its critics and public as a hostile audience. While travelling in Spain in 1897 he had reasserted his abiding contempt for the modern public, claiming that an aristocracy alone was equipped to appreciate true art.

> l'expansion des arts est nécessairement liée à l'aristocratie [...] Les arts ne relèvent que du goût de celui qui est assez sensible pour les senter et aimer avec passion. En revanche une democratie ne peut rien nocer des arts. Elle donnera des médailles, elle distribuera des bourses et des récompenses [...] mais elle sera inapte à juger.[42]

Bernard's contempt for modern values encouraged his despair of worldly success and intensified his identification with Egypt as a site of refuge from modernity. 'Je me moque de tout succès, tout gloire', he confessed, 'mais je tiens à mes toiles qui représent mon travail et mon talent'.[43] His Catholicism took on grandiose dimensions in this wilful isolation, emerging in the fantastic projects for a cathedral which he published in Le Spectateur Catholique in 1898 (figures 62 and 63). The ecclesiastical architecture, described by the Spectateur as transcending 'le catalogue du styles', advocated the piercing of an Italianate façade with geometric windows of Arab influence.[44] The cavernous interior was to be dominated by giant frescoes. Such freedom of imagination was regrettably lacking, however, in Bernard's contemporary religious paintings. His St Longin, sent to the 1899 Salon d'Art religieux in Brussels, was understandably ignored in Octave Maus' lukewarm review of the show (figure 64).[45]

While Bernard was predisposed to dismiss such a lack of critical sympathy as a mere expression of secularism, his patron, La Rochefoucauld, growing impatient with his apparent aloofness, announced that it was time for his return to Paris and to the judgment of his peers. 'Il [La Rochefoucauld] me conseille beaucoup d'aller à Paris car, dit-il, il est bon que vous vous rendez compte du champ de bataille'.[46] Bernard's original plans to exhibit in 1900 were postponed for fear that he would be upstaged by the concurrent Exposition universelle. Accordingly, he waited until 1901 when Vollard's gallery mounted the first retrospective of his career.

The dealer who was famous for his handling of Cézanne had been purchasing from Bernard's collection for several years, acquiring works by Gauguin and Van Gogh as well as by Bernard. His show of 43 of Bernard's paintings reflected his modernist taste, being dominated by works of the late 1880s and the early 1890s to the almost total exclusion of the artist's most recent stylistic metamorphosis. Choosing to omit Bernard's latest monumental canvases, Vollard represented his style after 1896 with only two works, a Spanish self-portrait of 1897 and a small Egyptian study of 1900, Ombre et lumière (figures 65 and 66). This selection drew attention to the importance of Bernard's Symbolist origins while alloying the conservatism of his new work with the dazzling unpredictability of the old. By complying with Vollard's strategy, Bernard manifested an unspoken anxiety about his new artistic direction, and revealed his continuing need for the prestige that was conferred on him by his youthful association with Van Gogh and Gauguin.

The introduction to the exhibition catalogue written by Roger Marx, who had recently curated the centennial and decennial exhibitions of French painting at the 1900 Exposition universelle, took a synoptic view of Bernard's career and praised his mature Egyptian works as the culmination of a gradual stylistic evolution. Avoiding reference to Bernard's esthetic conversion and to his hostility to his previous radicalism, Marx emphasised what he claimed was a 'unité des recherches' and a 'progrès incessant du métier'.[47] This support for Bernard's eclectic development was in keeping with the critic's characteristic open-mindedness, and was reinforced by his review of the exhibition for the Revue encyclopédique where he illustrated Bernard's two most recent works as evidence of his esthetic progress.

Vollard appears to have been successful in distracting attention away from the intensity

of Bernard's renunciation of his former styles. Even those reviewers who recognised and regretted Bernard's propensity for rapid changes of pictorial style failed to refer to the complete transformation in his latest works. The most detailed review, appearing in the Symbolist Revue blanche, greeted Bernard's paintings with the interest due to an individualist who had long been absent from the local scene, but it had more to say on the works of the Pont-Aven period than on those painted in Egypt. Claude Anet wrote of his excitement by Bernard's early pictures, in which he discovered a summary of the previous decade of French painting, but regretted that their delightful variety was mitigated by the debts they appeared to owe to Van Gogh, Cézanne, Denis and even Sérusier.

Bernard's eclecticism, Anet argued, was a symptom of his lack of individualism, an attribute which, he thought, was not contradicted by the mature Egyptian works of which, however, he admitted, there were insufficient on show to permit a final judgment.[48] Had Anet been able to see more, he would probably have been no more enthusiastic. Bernard's new conservative esthetic was at odds with La Revue blanche's radical taste and would not have been helped by the fatigue with exoticism left by the Universal Exhibition of 1900. Favourable reactions to Bernard's latest works were forthcoming from less progressive periodicals such as the Chronique des arts and L'Ermitage for whose critics Bernard's apparent return to nature in l'Ombre et lumière was an improvement on the earlier styles in which, they argued, he had borrowed too readily from his eccentric contemporaries.[49]

Bernard provoked a more direct response to his new style in 1902 when he showed a striking example of it, Les Trois Races, at the Salon des Indépendants (figure 67). Painted in Cairo in 1898, these three nude figures ('une arabe, une éthiopienne, une saïdienne') are posed against a décor of richly patterned fabrics which apparently alludes

to the settings of the famous Tahitian nudes of Gauguin.[50] Bernard's work, however, replaces Gauguin's surfaces, formed from interlocking planes of colour, with the meticulously painted illusion of bodies arranged in a cramped space. Multiplying Manet's device of a figure whose eyes stare steadily out at the viewer, the Trois races orchestrates a pattern of looking that reinforces its artificial appearance. The angular design of the figures emphasises Bernard's deliberate control of his models and studio props in the production of an effect of elaborate contrivance. The range of historical references in the work, including Manet's Olympia in the boudoir setting and the contrasting black and white complexions, and Michelangelo's Battle of Cascina in the dynamic torsion of the central figure's legs, supports its dissonant style (figure 68). Contemporary critics also discovered allusions to Rubens and Zuloaga and hastily dismissed the picture as a pastiche.[51]

Although the self-conscious address to the fragments of the past made in Les Trois races was disparaged by Bernard's contemporaries as the failing of a merely eccentric perversity, the work could have been more sympathetically interpreted as a symptom of the wider uncertainty in the moderns' relation to their artistic inheritance. The apparent inability of the figures of Les Trois races to connect with one another or to the space they pretend to occupy locates them, in indecipherable attitudes, as the displaced progeny of the past who look back accusingly at the modern artist.

Jules Meier-Graefe, in his landmark overview of modern French painting, published in 1904, offered the most persuasive version yet of the modernist critique of Bernard's career. Meler-Graefe had written to Bernard in Egypt in 1903 and was subsequently invited to visit his mother in Colombes where, he was advised, he could see the history of Bernard's development along with his collection of works by Van Gogh and

Toulouse-Lautrec. Bernard instructed his mother to show Meler-Graefe his early works first and advised her to leave him to come to his own conclusions. His hope for sympathetic treatment, encouraged by the historian's enthusiasm for Manet, was, however, to be disappointed. Meier-Graefe's pioneering study acknowledged the historical value of Bernard's writings ('his literary works offer very important documents for the history of modern art') but dismissed his paintings as pastiches which had fallen into dull respectability after a moment of precocious inventiveness. The conclusive evidence of Bernard's decline from the notoriety of modernism to the oblivion of official favour, he argued, was the purchase of his Fumeuse de Haschisch for the musée de Luxembourg after its showing with the society of the 'Peintres orientalistes français' in 1902 (figure 69).[52]

Bénédite's society, which had revived the history of orientalist painting in the service of colonialist expansion, facilitated Bernard's approbation by the state by connecting him to the venerable lineage of exotic French painting. But the honour accorded to Bernard as an orientalist was as deceptive as his previous status as a modernist had been. His depictions of Egypt are less concerned with the nature of the country and its inhabitants than with his relation to them as indices of his uneasy sense of his place in history. Throughout his Egyptian works, his orientalist subjects were a medium through which he examined his problems as a modern French artist. Even in the officially admired Fumeuse de Haschisch, Bernard's exotic subject is oddly overlaid with a memory of mid--nineteenth century modernism. The summary modelling, reminiscent of Manet, and the allusion to a Baudelairean perversity in the drugged stare of the smoker produce a tension with the Egyptian figure which is repeated in the contrast between Bernard's nostalgic glazes and his modern composition. An uncomfortable disparity arises from the prosaic frozen pose of the model, suggestive of contemporary photography, and the lush texture

of the 'Venetian' technique (figure 70).

While Bernard had left France in search of solutions to the problems which he faced as a painter at the end of the nineteenth century, he returned to it as a self-proclaimed classicist who remained haunted by his modernist origins. The position which he had marked out for himself as an equivocal representative of the Renaissance tradition was to be reshaped when he returned definitively from Egypt in 1904 to the debates and contests of Paris and to the memory of his first stylistic researches, as embodied in the work of Cézanne.

3 Reclaiming Cézanne

Cézanne mediated Bernard's return to the capital of modern art. Bernard visited the artist in Aix on his way back from Cairo in 1904 and recorded his difficult reintroduction to the culture of Paris in the influential articles which he wrote on him in 1904 for L'Occident, and 1907 for the Mercure de France. The significant contradictions between these two famous essays have not previously been written about in depth.[1] I relate them in this chapter to the progress of Bernard's renewed confrontation with French modernist painting and to his increasing need for a compensatory sense of connection with the art of the past.

Bernard's ties to Egypt slackened after 1901 as he began to spend more time in Europe than in Cairo. His affair with Andrée Fort, sister of the Symbolist poet Paul Fort, produced a daughter in 1903 and decided his separation from his wife, Hanenah. Their marriage, which had endured the deaths of three of their four children in infancy, finally ended when Bernard left Egypt in 1904, taking their last surviving child with him. A new life began in the comfort afforded by Andrée Fort's private income, but as a Catholic Bernard could not divorce, and he and Andrée did not marry until 1938 the year after Hanenah's death. Bernard was to travel freely between Italy and France in the coming years, exhibiting his work only occasionally, and publishing his opinions in the Paris press with a candour that seemed indifferent to its effect on his reputation.

In his early twentieth century essays for the Nouvelle revue d'Egypte and L'Occident, Bernard resumed his attack on naturalism, Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism as styles which lacked orginality of the kind that he admired in the work of the old masters

and of a few remarkable contemporaries. Criticising the development of modern painting since his departure for Egypt, Bernard's 1903 review of the 'Exposition de peinture de Venise' observed that the influence of French painting throughout Europe had spawned two opposing but similarly misguided modern schools, one which copied nature with servility, the other which glorified arbitrary distortions. In either case, Bernard complained, artists had abandoned 'les seules choses qui leur auraient été bonnes: les maîtres d'autrefois'.[2] His greatest contempt was reserved for the false audacity of unnamed painters whom he accused of mimicking the assertive colour and handling of the Impressionists and Symbolists in the pretence of a borrowed originality. This charge was probably directed at the Nabis whose search for a modern style, invested with the memory of the past, Bernard thought, had been been superseded by his own traditionalism.

Bernard's renewed interest in Cézanne after 1904 was directly related to his critique of late nineteenth and early twentieth century modernism. His essays of 1904 and 1907 made an undisguised effort to dissociate the modern master from the styles of his would--be followers in the avant-garde. Bernard claimed in 1904 that his first responses to Cézanne, as a very young man, had been confused by the imperfect knowledge of his oeuvre which was imparted to him by the paintings he had seen in Paris. The unfinished works he had found in Père Tanguy's picture shop, he now argued, had been 'quasiment ravies à leur auteur qui certes, les jugeant non conformes à sa vision ne les eut jamais laissé aller hors son logis'. Other radicals of the 1890s, Bernard insisted, had been similarly misled. 'Dévoyèrent vers la fantaisie et la surface', he wrote, they had substituted these modernist obsessions for the wisdom that would have come from a more thorough investigation of Cézanne's oeuvre.[3] The revisionist intent of Bernard's 1904 essay was given pictorial form in an undated copy of a Cézanne still-life which he seems to have painted in 1904 as a sign of his renewed interest in the master (figures 71

and 72).[4] Signed in the same place as the original, 'Emile Bernard - d'après Paul Cézanne', the copy illustrates the extent to which Bernard had come to see Cézanne through the distorting lens of the old masters.

The still-life of a fruit dish, apples, a glass of water, a knife and a white cloth on a chest had already acquired an elevated status within avant-garde painting by the time that Bernard copied it. Gauguin had purchased it in the early 1880s and had used it as the background for his 1890 portrait of a Breton woman in which it serves as a summation of Cézanne's style (figure 73). Gauguin's debt to Cézanne is acknowledged in the regular striations of Cézanne's diagonal brush strokes which are imitated not only in their rightful place on the copied still-life, but also in the skirt, blouse and face of the figure positioned before it. The blurring produced, in this way, between the representation of two and three dimensional objects was an attribute appropriated from Cézanne. In the original still-life a similar confusion is produced by the vigorously painted pattern of the wallpaper which seems to detach with unlikely solidity from the wall it adorns.

Cézanne's tactile handling replaced the solidity of conventional chiaroscuro with an effect of physical substance which could be felt even in radically simplified areas of colour. Gauguin passed this lesson on to the Nabis, and its importance was duly noted when Denis painted his Hommage à Cézanne in 1900 (figure 74). In Denis' painting, the still-life is enshrined as the centrepiece of a group which pays its respects to the absent master. Included are members of the Nabis along with Redon, Mellerio, Vollard and Denis' wife, Marthe. Too perceptive an historian of the 1890s to fail to acknowledge the influential example of Cézanne's handling, Denis simulates it in his copy with his own feathery touches and reinforces the tactile effect with the hands of Paul Sérusier which are shown intruding into the field of Cézanne's work. Contained on three sides by the gold frame,

Sérusier's hands seem to share the fictive space of the copied painting, echoing with the rhythmic curve of their fingers the outlines of the apples they almost touch.

By comparison with Gauguin's and Denis' copies, Bernard's more conspicuously altered version reveals his intent to repossess Cézanne from his rival supporters. Bernard's work avoids Cézanne's diagonal touches and reverts to the conventional tonal values they had subverted. His restitution of traditional techniques of illusion makes the once ambiguous form of Cézanne's glass detach clearly from the surface of the wall behind it, while Cézanne's circular apples are remodelled as shiny spheres. The apple on the far right of the copy metamorphoses from Cézanne's coloured disc into an apparent solid, enveloped in shadow and pressed back by the overlapping fold of cloth before it. Bernard's copy, reworking Cézanne's claim that he wanted to 'vivifier Poussin sur la nature',[5] discovers images of the old masters in Cézanne's work akin to those which Bernard had foreshadowed in his esthetic writings for L'Occident and La Nouvelle Revue d'Egypte.

In his essay on Tintoretto of 1903, Bernard had argued that the moderns lacked style in proportion to the decay that had been imposed on their imaginations by their excessive attachment to direct visual experience. A Renaissance master like Tintoretto, he insisted, exemplified the 'couleur impossible', 'énormes proportions', 'lumière étrange' and 'exécution libre' which were available to those who formed images in their minds before committing them to canvas.[6] Only a few rare figures among his contemporaries, Bernard thought, were blessed with the same gift. One was Boecklin whom he wrote of as untouched by doubt and eclecticism, 'ces deux qualités dissolvantes des hommes de nos jours'. Boecklin's Romantic imagination, Bernard claimed, manipulated forms, colours and objects at will, drawing abstract suggestions from ingenious pictorial arrangements:

> les vagues écumeuses aux blancheurs d'ossements, les murs en ruines d'un vieux

cloître, les cypres, et le vent même, qu'il fera souffler en soupir sur leur cime sinistre[7]

Further, Bernard praised Boecklin's control of his pictorial means in terms which derived from his early hero, Baudelaire. Borrowing ideas from Baudelaire's tribute to Delacroix in his Salon of 1846, Bernard observed that Boecklin's subjects were arranged 'dans le tiroir de sa mémoire ainsi que des bibelots qui seront étalés à leur heure par son imagination consciente'. Invoking the synesthesia of Baudelairean correspondences, he concluded that the artist had opposed Wagner's 'décor par le son' with 'le son par le décor'.

A similar reversion to Symbolist theory was expressed in Bernard's 1903 homage to the idealism of Puvis de Chavannes who, he argued, had relinquished the vulgar and materialist paths crowded by his contemporaries to survey history from the solitude of a secluded hill. Affirming his rejection of Impressionism and Naturalism, Bernard quoted Puvis' account of his working practice. 'Ma façon de travailler est intérieur, si j'ose dire. Avant de rien executer, ma création est presque entièrement achevée dans ma tête'. This process of internalising his subject, Bernard contended, afforded a style that was pruned of 'tout ce qui est contingence, accident, tout ce qui est momentanément inexpressif'.[8] Bernard's deference to Puvis, like that he would soon pay to Cézanne, revealed the strong memory of the 1890s which he shared with younger members of the avant-garde, and which would reappear in his widely read articles on Cézanne.

The Symbolist ideas upheld by Bernard in the first years of the new century were also a conspicuous element of Matisse's 1908 'Notes d'un Peintre' in which the painter revealed his age (he was a year younger than Bernard and a year older than Denis) by reciting the 1890s concept of decoration as a pictorial principle analogous to 'une composition musicale'. 'Tout est dans la conception,' he explained, 'Il est donc nécessaire d'avoir dès

le début une vision nette de l'ensemble'.[9] The 'Notes d'un Peintre' distinguished themselves from the conservatism of Bernard's theory, however, with the importance they attached to spontaneous decisions and to personal esthetic choices made in preference to the following of received rules. Aiming at the most conservative of targets, Matisse attacked Péladan as proof of the moderns' native inability to revive the anachronistic forms of Renaissance art in the twentieth century.

Like Matisse, the young Picasso revealed a marked debt to Symbolism which demonstrated the continuing impact of the late nineteenth century style on the next generation. Although neither Picasso nor Bernard recorded their opinions of the other, they were far from strangers. Vollard had brought them together in 1901 when he opened a show of over 64 of Picasso's works immediately after he had closed Bernard's retrospective on the 22nd of June. Further, the two artists shared a friend in Zuloaga, and an admirer in Apollinaire. Apollinaire was to write to Bernard in 1909 expressing his surprising enthusiasm for his painting as well as for the poetry which he published under the pseudonym of Jean Dorsal. 'Vous êtes un homme admirable, vous connaissez la beauté plastique et le lyrisme. Depuis la Renaissance on n'a pas vu d'homme plus complèt.'[10]

In the protean borrowings of Picasso's painting before 1907 Bernard could well have recognised an echo of the volatility of his own youthful experimentation. Picasso confirmed the resemblance during his first years in Paris by imitating the styles of Puvis, Gauguin and Redon in compositions which at times come strangely close to the early work of Bernard. The mask-like head and decorative field of Picasso's 1905 Boy with a pipe, for example, recall Bernard's 1888 portrait of Madeleine in the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec which Picasso could have seen in the Vollard show (figures 75 and 23). Despite

the resemblance between Bernard's later Egyptian works and the style of Picasso's 'blue period', however, Picasso does not seem to have been aware of Bernard's most ambitious Egyptian and Spanish paintings, which were shown at the 1902 Salon des orientalistes while he was in Barcelona.

Bernard continued to explore his enigmatic understanding of the moderns' salutary engagement with the memory of earlier art in the essay on Redon which he published in L'Occident two months before that on Cézanne. 'Il est sans devanciers comme sans successeurs', Bernard announced of Redon, but he went on to compare him to Leonardo, Rembrandt and Beethoven. The mysterious originality of his imagination, Bernard claimed, was spontaneous, unwilled and uncontrolled by his own consciousness. In evidence, he recounted one occasion when having commenced a portrait of Huysmans, he instead, and to his own surprise, produced the head of a Roman emperor. 'Une autre fois', he continued, 'Huysmans étant en Belgique, Redon fit le portrait d'une manière satisfaisant, sans même le vouloir'.[11] Such clairvoyance made Redon a special case. His subversion of the modern tension between originality and retrospection resolved the uncertain position of the modern artist with inimitable ease.

Bernard concluded his essays on individual painters for L'Occident with his 1904 article on Cézanne in which he emphasised the difficulties that he believed were faced by serious modern painters. Responding to the growing interest in Cézanne stimulated by Vollard's exhibitions of 1895, 1898 and 1899, Bernard's essay gave a vivid description of his recent experience of visiting and watching the master at work in Aix. This first hand account was used in the service of a powerful argument which characterised Cézanne as a follower of Impressionism who was engaged in an untiring effort to transcend the limits of his modernism. Cézanne served Bernard, in this way, as a mirror for himself and his

generation, embodying the difficulty of their struggle to connect themselves with the legacy of the masters. If Bernard's account of Cézanne's transformation of the techniques he had learned from Pissaro and Monet seemed to endorse Denis' view that Impressionism might afford the basis of a new 'Renaissance classique' which would be built on the marriage of 'la tradition' and 'l'experience', Bernard refused to be as clear as Denis was in his prescriptions for modern style and, failing to mention a single individual work by Cézanne, he instead referred loosely to the salutary example of his oeuvre as a whole.[12]

Bernard presented his essay as a logical account of Cézanne's 'méthode de travail' as witnessed by a disciple. Cézanne began work by submitting himself completely to the model, Bernard reported, first tracing relations and proportions, studying contours and setting forms in their place. Next followed a process of exaggeration and transformation in which colour and form were elevated to 'une conception décorative'. The motif was significant in this practice, Bernard argued, as a fixed object of reference and as a starting point for the process of picture making which was generated from it. 'Plus l'artiste travaille, plus son ouvrage s'éloigne de l'objectif, plus il se distance de l'opacité du modèle lui servant de point de départ, plus il entre dans la peinture nue, sans autre but qu'elle--même'.[13]

The story of the evolution of Cézanne's works, as Bernard told it, was one of superimposed layers, a sequence of ever more developed versions which obliterated one another in the progress to the finished painting. 'S'il avait pris autant de toiles qu'il a passé de séances, il résulterait de son analyse une somme de visions ascendantes, graduellement vivantes, chantantes, abstraites, harmonieuses, dont la plus surnature serait la plus définitive.'[14] From his practice of superimposing ever more advanced

studies on a single canvas, Bernard deduced that Cézanne regarded his self-analytical working method as no more than the means to an end. The research which he invested in the production of a final 'synthèse destructive' was, he thought, designed to transcend the layers of study concealed beneath it.

Bernard's account of Cézanne's practice reinforced the claims made at the outset of his essay by invalidating the unfinished and intermediary stages of Cézanne's painting which, he argued, had misguided his radical followers. In his corrective description he demonstrated that Cézanne had emulated the academic process of reforming and correcting nature in a series of increasingly abstract transformations. His description of the gradual location of Cézanne's style through a critical dialogue with the motif affirmed his view of the moderns' inevitable stylistic uncertainty, and asserted their need to rely on comparisons between nature and art as a compensation for their loss of past rules. Bernard's opening quotation from Balzac's Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu – 'Frenhofer est un homme passionné pour notre art qui voit plus haut et plus loin que les autres peintres' – left no doubt as to his view of Cézanne as a problematic figure who was always struggling for a mastery beyond his reach. This image of his master was confirmed by the group of quotations from Cézanne's conversation and letters which he inserted at the core of his essay, evoking a complex relationship between the painter's study of nature and his knowledge of the art of the past.

Bernard chose to repeat statements that were concerned with the question of style and of its relation to Cézanne's observation of the motif. A quotation such as the famous: 'Tout dans la nature se modèle selon la sphère, le cone et le cylindre' suggests Bernard's respect for the deliberateness of Cezanne's technique, with its interminable checking between his direct visual experience and his long visual memory. Although Theodore Reff

has dismissed this statement as a cliché of instruction in the nineteenth century studio, its importance not only for Bernard but for others who met Cézanne in his last years including Denis, and Rivière and Schnerb, indicates that they understood it as an expression of the master's lonely effort to reconcile his idealism and with his vision of nature.[15]

Bernard recorded Cézanne's regret for the decline of old master standards in another quotation: 'A notre époque il n'y a plus de vrais peintres [...] Delacroix, Courbet, Manet ont fait des tableaux'. No doubt Bernard agreed with him, but he went on to observe that Cézanne's peculiar artistic education had only partly equipped him to revive the qualities which he envied in the art of the past.[16] Cézanne's long and intense study of earlier art, Bernard claimed, had been both a hindrance and a help to the formation of his style. His obsessive juvenile regard for museum painting had only gradually been reconciled with his deliberate and painstaking study of nature. The persistent memory of the masters which remained in Cézanne's mature work was visible to Bernard as an underlying structure. Inverting the unwilled affinity which Bernard admired in Redon, Cézanne's painting revealed a modern perception that was shaped by the imprint of the masters through an effort of the artist's will.

II

The extent to which Bernard's essay had been written with the education of his peers in mind is made clear by the alternative image of Cézanne that is offered in a letter to Bernard's mother from Aix of February 1904. In this more candid account, a less educated and rational man appears than the one honoured in L'Occident. 'C'est un homme âgé, simple, un peu méfiant et bizarre', Bernard began. 'Je le juge un peu maniaque [...] avec beaucoup d'idées provinciales et des préjugés en tout genres'. With still more disapproval, he noted that Cézanne had never travelled to Italy and knew the

masters only through his collection of prints and his memories of the Louvre. Most detrimental to his rapturous published account of Cézanne's structured, harmonious tableaux, however, was the observation: 'Ses toiles sont faites de morceaux. Il y laisse partout des blancs.' This comment reveals an artist less engaged with finished syntheses and more concerned with the assemblage of separate fragments of vision than Bernard's essay allows for. Not surprisingly, the pertinent observation was omitted from his published account of Cézanne which was designed, as he informed his mother, to explain his method 'aux generations'.[17]

The success of Bernard's account of Cézanne as a restorer of traditions from which his generation had been severed by Impressionism can be gauged by responses to the question 'Quel état faites-vous de Cézanne?' asked of a wide group of painters by Charles Morice in 1905.[18] At the time of Morice's questionnaire Bernard's was the most persuasive and meticulous interpretation of Cezanne's art yet published. Its argument, vindicated by the artist's own words and by Bernard's first hand account of his working practice, challenged earlier assessments which had emphasised Cézanne's links to the experiments of younger artists (his boldly liberated colour and technique) at the expense of his intense engagement with the art of the past. Among respondents to Morice, seven out of fifty-five shared Bernard's image of Cézanne as classic. These included painters associated with the avant-garde such as Denis, Sérusier and Bernard's patron, La Rochefoucauld. The follower of Matisse, Jean Puy, summarised Bernard's argument in two sentences: 'Il a remis l'impresslonisme dans les voies traditionelles et logiques [...] il me sentir à travers ses oeuvres qu'il voudrait aller plus haut et plus loin qu'il ne va'.[19] Bernard's opinion that many of Cézanne's professed followers had misconstrued his work's fundamental intent was echoed by Maxime Maufra who wrote, 'Il peut tromper les jeunes, qui sont exposés à prendre pour des chefs d'oeuvre complets et définitifs de purs

essais.'[20] A friend of Cézanne since 1900, Charles Camoin supported Bernard's account with his own appraisal of Cézanne's project as a revival of Poussin's classicism, based on nature.[21]

In contrast to a modern who would influence his contemporaries as the exponent of a new manner to be deliberately imitated or radically opposed, the Cézanne of Bernard's essay already bore the characteristics of an old master. He represented an unapproachable model whose patterns of vision were inscrutable even to the disciple who had watched him at work. Bernard noted approvingly that the mature Cézanne had rejected direct borrowings from the masters and had studied them instead for general underlying laws. This, he thought, was also the attitude which Cézanne's admirers should adopt to their master. The strange effect of the style which, by 1904, Bernard regarded as magnificently remote was revealed in his letter to his mother,

> J'ai vu [...] une grand toile de femmes nues, qui est une chose magnifique, tant par les formes que par la puissance de l'ensemble et de l'anatomie humaine. Il paraît qu'il y travaille depuis dix ans[22]

Cézanne's Bathers may have reminded Bernard of his own monumental nude study, the Fellahs au travail. Its interlocking row of figures fused with the two-dimensional architecture of the landscape proposes a more radical transformation of Renaissance style than anything Bernard would attempt in his maturity, but its extraordinary distortions evoke a prodigious imagination of the kind which Bernard had praised in Tintoretto (figure 76). The compelling internal logic of Cézanne's work revealed an idiosyncratic but consistent vision by which Bernard was understandably impressed.

Emphasising his high regard for the Bathers, Bernard used it as the background for a photograph which he took in 1904 in preparation for a proposed painted portrait of Cézanne (figure 77). By posing Cézanne in front of his work, Bernard transported him

into his own pictorial landscape, locating him as the focal point on which the attention of his bathers appears to converge. The assembled female figures turn their heads in Cézanne's direction as if to acknowledge his authority. A second photograph, taken at the same time, shows Cézanne standing in his studio with palette and brushes in hand. His canvases are propped against the wall behind him (figure 78). Both photographs indicate Bernard's plan to depict Cézanne surrounded by his paintings in a format that may have been inspired by Poussin's famous self-portrait in the Louvre. Poussin's work shows the artist framed against a wall of canvases, on one of which appears a solitary female figure like a personification of his oeuvre (figure 79). The improbable solidity of this painted figure and its left-facing direction, balancing the opposite direction of the artist's body, implies a spiritual affinity between Poussin and his progeny. The similarly close relationship established between Cézanne and his pictorial creation in Bernard's photograph implies a persistent wish for connection with the nostalgic world conjured on the canvas.

A second classical reference is implied in the photograph by Cézanne's seated position at the centre of the symmetrical row of bathers, which recalls the place given to Homer at the centre of Ingres' Apotheosis of Homer, painted for the Louvre in 1827 (figure 80). Ingres' ceiling decoration was an apposite source for Bernard in its depiction of a classic lineage which descends from ancient Greece to modern France, and which ends with the prominent figure of Poussin, shown pointing up from the foreground pit to the level of ancients. If Bernard thought of Ingres when he composed his photograph, it was probably to the idea of the historical progress of classicism to which he was drawn. His reference, if intentional, seems ironic in connection with such vulgar details as Cézanne's dirty trousers and the paint on the studio floor, but seems sincere in relation to the forms of the bathers which, in their own way, aspire to the level of Ingres' idealism. Whether or not

Cézanne helped Bernard to stage the picture, its subversion of the classic hierarchy by admitting a modern to the place of the ancient patriarch was in keeping with his ambivalent attitude to his great antecedents.

Bernard noted in his private observations of Cézanne that he 'parle des Maîtres [...] comme beaucoup d'ecrivains parlent d'Homère, de Dante, de Milton et comme s'ils les avaient connus'.[23] This comment underlined Cézanne's paradoxical status for Bernard as a modern artist who had nearly achieved the degree of connection with the past for which he himself was striving. Bernard's paintings of 1904, like the previously discussed still-life, extended the argument of his writings by correcting and completing Cézanne's works to accord with the pictorial standards which he admired in the works of the masters.

In Bernard's Bathers of 1904, a group of seated figures is arranged in a Cézanne-like frieze which is framed by the decorative outlines of trees and clouds (figure 81). Eradicating the gaps and blanks that disturbed him in Cézanne's paintings, Bernard here adapted a planar and symmetrical composition, reminiscent of Cézanne's work, to techniques of tonal modelling and aerial perspective which he derived from his study of the Venetians. Although Bernard could appreciate the 'science de dégradé chromatique' that connected Cézanne's Impressionist palette 'aux grandes colouristes vénitiens', his own work adhered to the darker tonality inspired by his study of the masters.[24]

Bernard distinguished himself still further from Cézanne in another painting of 1904 in which he disrupted the formalism of Cézanne's bathers with an unexpected anecdotal element. Après le bain of 1904 moderates its use of standing and reclining bathers as horizontal and vertical elements with the unexpected detail of answering glances from the two depicted faces (figure 82). Raising a rhetorical hand, Bernard's reclining bather

seems to be engaged in an act of speech that would be impossible for the anonymous figures of Cézanne's compositions. Appropriating Cézanne's 'puissance de l'ensemble et de l'anatomie humaine' to his own purposes, Bernard here restored a memory of narrative to modernist painting and so anticipated, but fell short of, Denis' 1916 call for 'un Cézanne qui serait peintre d'histoire comme Delacroix'.[25]

III

After publishing his Egyptian essays in 1902 as Réflexions d'un témoin de la décadence du beau, Bernard was invited by the Russian expatriate, M. Goutchkoff, to edit a monthly journal of art in Paris. Directed by Goutchkoff and edited by Bernard, La Rénovation esthétique first appeared in May 1905. Bernard was the journal's chief contributor, using it as a mouthpiece for opinions on art which were signed in his own name and in a number of pseudonyms, most frequently that of Francis Lepeseur. This nom de plume suited the judgmental tone of the arch-conservative periodical whose extreme right-wing position rivalled and surpassed the traditionalist bias of L'Occident.

Bernard's mission to correct faults that he found in modern art was pursued in the pages of La Rénovation esthétique with ubiquitous references to Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo and Titian. His reviews of contemporary Salons were mingled with contentious interpretations of the evolution of European art since the Renaissance which gave a more complete exposition of his view of art history than had previously appeared in his essays for the Mercure de France and L'Occident. In his most vitriolic attacks on contemporary art he vented his spleen at the supposed machinations of modern critics, artists and dealers. A fellow contributor, Armand Point, endorsed Bernard's nostalgia for the institutions of the Renaissance with his idealistic account of the 'Education d'un artiste aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles'.[26]

Insisting on his confidence in artistic theories that refused to buckle in the face of external opposition or of their own internal contradictions, Bernard's articles for La Rénovation esthétique betrayed his sense of isolation in a hostile environment, articulating his desire for a mastery which would emanate from his intense identification with the art of the museum. Stating his beliefs in the first issue of the periodical, he identified tradition as a 'suite de gestes' that would always be renewed by new generations who could comprehend the harmonious logic of the past. In the bulk of contemporary art, however, he now found a deviation from this healthy norm, claiming that modern art was dominated by 'routine' (slavish mimicry of the past) and 'anti-traditionnisme' (a dangerous attack on the lessons of history).[27]

Beside its assessment of living painters, La Rénovation esthétique promoted the conservation and study of old master works whose deterioration, it argued, must produce grave consequences for modern art, since they represented 'le lien unique qui rattache notre misère à la splendeur défunte'. Bernard's image of the past's memory as a fragile cord sustaining the creative endeavour of the present echoed the pessimistic view of history which had been asserted since the 1880s by a conservative like Péladan. The critique of modernism in La Rénovation esthétique, supported by its retrograde political and religious opinions, closely resembled Péladan's Catholic veneration for the Renaissance masters as the enduring standard to which the moderns must always aspire. When Bernard referred directly to the masters in the first issue of his journal it was as the dead, lined up in museums, 'classés comme des momies dans leurs sarcophages', and animated by a timeless knowledge. 'A l'âme pieuse ils murmurent soudain: "nous sommes la voie et la vie"'.[28] This grisly metaphor recalled a phrase from Armand Point's 1896 essay on Botticelli in which the Rose+Croix adherent had insisted:

> les choses anciennes vous regardent et vous jugent avant de révéler le secret du Passé. Pour ceux qu'elles dédaignent elles demeurent inutiles, indifférentes ou tristes.[29]

Bernard hoped to bridge the gap between the art of the past and that of the present by passing on to his readers lessons which he had gleaned from his study of the old masters. In 'Sur la méthode picturale', published in August 1905, he justified the modern use of Renaissance techniques derived from Leonardo, Alberti and Titian, with a polemical comparison to fashionable artistic practice. He argued, in this case, that the Venetian technique of translucent glazes was superior to the thick, opaque medium favoured by the moderns, supporting his contention with an account of art history in which periods of enlightenment alternated with those of darkness. The present, Bernard was convinced, occupied the latter. While, in his 1904 essay on Cézanne, he had criticised Impressionist painters for dispensing with traditional rules, he now traced this error further back to the French Rococo painters of the eighteenth century. Those deviant precursors, he claimed, had elevated dexterous handling and superficial effects over the Italian pictorial science that was bequeathed to France by Poussin, Claude and Lebrun.[30]

Bernard's attack on the Rococo was a new element in his theory which may have been inspired by a dispute that had recently appeared in print between Denis and Bernard's old adversary, Camille Mauclair. In his essay, 'La fin du premier Impressionisme', Mauclair had refuted Denis' 'ultramontain' advocacy of Italian Renaissance influence by nominating Impressionism as a classic French style and by tracing its venerable lineage to the French masters of the Rococo. This indigenous tradition, Mauclair claimed, afforded a living model which was preferable to the dead influence of Rome. The Impressionists' preoccupation with subjective responses to nature, he continued, was characteristically French and promised a necessary stimulus to the future growth of French art. Even

Denis' classicism, Mauclair thought, had been able to revive the conventions of Rome only through the medium of Impresslonist colour.[31] Mauclair's attempt to relocate the traditions of French painting away from Italy was, of course, vigorously opposed by Denis whose position was reinforced by the similarly intense invocation to the Italian Renaissance made in the pages of La Rénovation esthétique.

Contradicting Mauclair's version of history, Bernard, in his historical arguments, celebrated the heroic efforts of those who followed both the Rococo and Impressionism to restore lost values to painting. He averred that David in the late eighteenth century and Cézanne in the late nineteenth had relied on temperaments of unusual force to recover the past's forgotten pictorial knowledge. But the master to whom Bernard most often compared Cézanne was Delacroix who, he argued, had revived the memory of Raphael, Veronese and Correggio despite his exclusion from their secret glazing techniques, supposedly lost in the eighteenth century.[32] Venerated by Cézanne as the preeminent model for his own colour researches, Delacroix was owed a debt that was to have been acknowledged in his unrealised painting of the Apotheosis of Delacroix in which Bernard was offered a place previously reserved for the collector, Chocquet.[33] For his part, however, Bernard did not interpret Delacroix' influence as an unmixed blessing. He thought that his achievement had been compromised by his overambitious desire to rival the old masters' luminosity which had resulted, in his later works, in experiments with the hatching of contrasting colours and with the application of a heavy impasto which he held responsible for the more extreme perversity of Impressionism. 'Delacroix ne connut point', he argued, '- et ni David, ni ses prédécesseurs ne le surent non plus - la pratique du coloris, il rechercha la lumière dans l'empâtement, dans le hachis de couleurs, et il n'obtint qu'une peinture opaque, grise ou criarde'.[34] Cézanne, in these terms, was exhorted to correct Delacroix' example even as he learned from it.

As Bernard's theory of art history was being developed in the pages of La Rénovation esthétique a subtle change came over his interpretation of Cézanne. Writing as Lepeseur in 1906, he cautioned, for the first time, that Cézanne, despite his individual merit, was too idiosyncratic an artist to provide even a remote model for his contemporaries. While continuing to acknowledge the vastness of Cézanne's effort to restore past values to modern painting, Bernard insisted that his admirers should learn, like him, by returning to the example of the Renaissance.[35] This matter became a point of contention between Bernard, writing in La Rénovation esthétique, and the young critic and painter, Pierre Hepp, who wrote for L'Occident.[36] In response to Lepeseur's call for the imitation of Michelangelo and Raphael, Hepp argued that although he supported the effort to guide painting from its modern uncertainty, he thought that the Renaissance was too remote a model to be directly relevant to his contemporaries. Cézanne, on the other hand, he thought, presented a new foundation on which modern painters could be expected to build. Hepp supported his argument by citing Bernard's article of 1904 which he interpreted as offering Cézanne as the preeminent model for serious modern painters. For all Cézanne's merits, however, Bernard replied that his technique was too personal and too confusing to be used successfully by anyone other than himself. Further, he added, Cézanne's dependence on nature had restricted the scope of his imagination, determining his inferiority to the more knowledgeable masters of the past.[37]

Cézanne died in October 1906, soon after this debate appeared in La Rénovation esthétique. Bernard honoured him by organising a mass at Notre Dame de Lorette in Montmartre which was attended by only twelve people, including Denis and Schuffenecker. A more public homage to Cézanne appeared in Bernard's long 1907 essay for the Mercure de France in which he gave a history of their friendship, including much material left out of the more theoretical essay of 1904. Coming less than a year

after Cézanne's death, Bernard's second major essay on him reads like a eulogy. Its introduction, announcing his affection for the man as much as for the painter, prepares the reader for a series of intimate anecdotes about the aging master. Bernard's changing opinion of Cézanne's relevance to his contemporaries was readily supported by the more complex image which emerged from this posthumous portrait.

Bernard's published exchanges with Hepp had already expressed his disappointment at the use to which his 1904 essay was being put by a critic more favourable than himself to modernism. Hepp's response to Lepeseur, published in La Rénovation esthétique, had drawn specific attention to the pupils of Gustave Moreau, the most brilliant of whom, Hepp argued, had been attracted to Cézanne as a substitute for the decayed traditionalism of their teacher.[38] Accordingly, in his 1907 essay Bernard now criticised the tendency to abstraction which he detected in Cézanne's work, cautioning that Cézanne had been paralysed by a wilful imposition of logic which, it seemed to him, had attended his every painterly gesture and had hampered the development of his native gifts. This criticism, echoing Denis' response to Matisse's paintings at the 1905 Salon d'Automne as being compromised by 'les vertiges du raisonnement' and 'l'excès des théories', implied Matisse and his circle as targets for Bernard's renewed assault on certain unnamed and destructive followers of Cézanne.[39] The importance of Denis' 1905 accusation that Matisse had succumbed to the tyranny of theories has previously been observed by Roger Benjamin who has recognised it as a salient expression of the rivalry between the innovative generation of the 1890s and that of the following decade.[40]

From the start of his 1907 essay, Bernard stated his opposition to those who were 'plutôt ennemies qu'amis' of Cézanne, and whom he accused of causing 'l'avortement de ce que sa tendance pouvait avoir d'honnête, de régénérateur, de bienfaisant'.[41] As his

'souvenirs' progressed, however, Bernard named only one culprit, the deceased Gauguin whose central influence on French modernism had been asserted by Denis in 1903.[42] In a conversation that seems too good for Bernard's purposes to be true, Cézanne is reported as saying,

> Il [Gauguin] ne m'a pas compris [...] jamais je n'ai voulu et je n'accepterai jamais le manque de modelé ou de graduation; c'est un non-sens. Gauguin n'était pas peintre, il n'a fait que des images chinoises.[43]

Refusing to condemn Cézanne or his art directly, Bernard's essay went on to show how the unique conditions of the production of his work, and the many obstacles preventing its completion, had caused his achievement to be misunderstood.

For the first time, in 1907, Bernard drew attention to the psychological impact of Cézanne's isolation, identifying him as an 'isolé' in the tradition of the Symbolists who had been celebrated in Aurier's essays of the early 1890s. Bernard was surprised, he wrote, on arriving in Aix, at finding no-one in the town who knew Cézanne's name and at being forced to look up his address on the electoral roll. Once he met Cézanne, his solitude had become apparent to him through his obsessive references to memories of his childhood in Provence and of his early manhood in Paris. Bernard eagerly retold these anecdotes as fragments of his intimate portrait. Whereas his earlier essay had described Cézanne's esthetic education as being fixed between the opposite poles of the Louvre and Pissarro, he now traced a more subtle and complex development that was influenced by material ranging from the illustrated magazines, which he had copied as a beginner, to the minor Italian works which he regularly consulted in the Aix museum. In particular, Bernard emphasised the visual culture remembered from Cézanne's first years in Paris, exemplified by the works of Daumier, Delacroix and Couture that were still pinned to his studio wall. This lingering attachment to his artistic beginnings was most bizarrely represented for Bernard in Cézanne's devotion to the rough engravings illustrating

Charles Blanc's Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles in whose 'plus que mauvaises' reproductions he reputedly placed a blind trust.[44]

After admitting the eccentricity of Cézanne's taste, Bernard proceeded to acknowledge the unpredictable and confusing nature of his painting practice. Whereas his previous essay had privileged the logic of Cézanne's method, Bernard now observed that the master's endless adjustments to his pictures, far from indicating a conscious plan, had often seemed to him to be arbitrary, or even destructive. In the case of a still-life with three skulls on which Cézanne had worked while Bernard stayed in Aix, he observed that the picture had come no closer to completion despite changing its colour and form every day. Bernard concluded that the extreme intellectualisation of Cézanne's pictorial production had prevented him from finishing his work. 'Il y avait une extrême volonté dans ce cerveau, qui endiguait peu à peu les dons spontanés jusqu'à faire croire à une impuissance'.[45]

As described by Bernard in 1907, Cézanne's technique was inimitable. The master who had had a horror of being watched at his work had been heard as he made mysterious movements in the studio over Bernard's head,

> Je l'entendais aller et venir dans l'atelier du haut; cétait comme une meditative promenade de long en large de la pièce; Il descendait aussi maintes fois, aller au jardin s'asseoir et remontait précipitamment.[46]

This evidence of his uncertainty about how to proceed was reinforced by Bernard's observation that Cézanne's studio was filled with many partly finished canvases which had been left in a permanently unresolved state. Bernard argued that these works, which Cézanne himself was not sure of how to develop further, should not be included in the estimate of his achievement.

Refuting Bernard's 1904 essay, that of 1907 transformed Cézanne from a modern classicist to a flawed eclectic. But comparison of the two essays reveals Bernard's deeply ambivalent responses to his master who appeared to him both as Romantic and classical, logical and erratic, traditional and Impressionistic. If Bernard, having once identified Cézanne as the giant of his generation had come by 1907 to see him as a failure, it was not in the mould of Zola's Claude Lantier, defeated by his own limitations, but of Balzac's Frenhofer, destroyed by his capacity to see beyond the limits of his medium. Cézanne's apparent effort to reconcile the fragments of observation which he derived from Impressionism with the synthesis he admired in the old masters, Bernard suggested, had finally exceeded the bounds of his endurance. His greatest compositions were undermined, it seemed, by excessive empiricism and self-analysis. Bernard's heroic portrait of Cézanne as the last and most tested in his line of great masters is tinged with the melancholy idea that he saw Cézanne's apparent failure as a reflection of his own. Both artists, overwhelmed by the past to which they looked for guidance, were condemned, in Bernard's account, to the consciousness of their inferiority to distant masterly models.

4 Cézanne's Legacy: Modernism and Classicism

Bernard's desire to produce paintings that would be imbued with the neglected standards of the old masters was compatible with the mood of many of his contemporaries who, in the first decade of the twentieth century, vacillated between new artistic forms and their memory of the art of the past. The new century's expanding diversity of styles illustrated its uneasy sense of occupying an interregnum between a long tradition recently ended and a new one yet to commence. Charles Morice, introducing his 1905 survey of French artists had asked, 'Nous sommes au lendemain de quelque chose. Sommes-nous à la veille de queque chose?' Accordingly, the first question of his 'Enquête sur les tendences actuelles des arts plastiques' was, 'Avez-vous le sentiment qu'aujourd'hui l'art tend à prendre des directions nouvelles?'[1]

The sense of being at an ending and a beginning arrived after decades of accelerating change in French artistic practice. Nineteenth century painting had become an increasingly solitary dialogue between individual artists and their images of tradition as artistic institutions had weakened and the art market had come to be dominated by bourgeois patronage. Eugène Carrière had spoken for many painters when he had complained of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 'si seulement ils nous apprenaient quelque chose'.[2]

For a growing number of early twentieth century artists and critics, Cézanne offered a link between this confusing present and the retreating past. By the end of 1907, Bernard's ambivalent description of Cézanne had been revised in two essays, one by Denis, the other by Rivière and Schnerb, which gave a more positive image of the relationship of his

painting to that of the old masters. In Rivière and Schnerb's account of their visit with Cézanne in 1905, they argued that he had resolved the tension between his modernism and his admiration for the old masters through the logic of his technique. His carefully considered responses to problems of representation, they claimed, had produced a sense of balance and completeness that was comparable to, although distinct from, the style of a Veronese or a Poussin. They admired Cézanne's painting for revealing the distance between itself and the sensations to which it referred, arguing that in this way it had transcended the effect of transience which they found in Impressionism. The gaps and imperfections that had been regretted by Bernard became valuable to them as proof of the depth and sincerity of Cézanne's researches.

> La toile n'était rien de plus pour le maître provençal que le tableau noir sur lequel un géomètre cherche la solution d'un problème, et c'est peut-être autant à cette conception du travail qu'au peu de souci qu'il avait de les faire connaître que tient le grand nombre de peintures que Cézanne a laissées inachevées.[3]

Rivière and Schnerb's tribute to the deliberateness of Cézanne's style looked back to the formalism which Denis had invoked in 1890 as a corrective to the mutability of both outward appearances and inward perceptions. Arguing that the assumed verity of empiricism was undermined by the fragility of the senses and of the material world, Denis had called for modern painters to reassert abstract truths. Among the salutary models which he cited from the art of the past was the 'si heureuse convention' of the Mona Lisa, whose imaginary forms, he thought, should inspire his progressive contemporaries.[4]

Like Bernard's article of 1907, Rivière and Schnerb's demonstrated that the abstract tendencies in Cézanne's painting were intimately connected with his study of the old masters. Impressed by the divided application of red, yellow and blue paint in Cézanne's watercolours, for example, they described this technique as producing an effect like that of a three-colour photograph whose printing had been misaligned. Even such an apparently

modern effect, however, could be traced to the museum. Cézanne justified his use of colour by referring to Veronese. 'Dans son oeuvre de jeunesse, c'est gris; plus tard, les pélerins d'Emmaus, comme c'est chaud.'[5] Aptly, Rivière and Schnerb ended their article with an ambiguous allusion to Cézanne's simultaneous dependence on and resistance to the art of the past. '"Pisarro", racontait-il, "disait qu'il faudrait brûler le Louvre. Il avait raison, mais il ne faut pas le faire"'.[6]

Bernard was also fascinated by the new formulae which Cézanne had derived from his engagement with the art of the past. In his essay of 1907, he drew particular attention to the watercolour of flowers by Delacroix which Cézanne had purchased in the Chocquet sale of 1899, and which he kept in his bedroom with its face to the wall to prevent fading (figure 83). Bernard remarked that Cézanne had 'souvent puisé de bonnes leçons d'harmonie' from this work - an observation that is supported by the direct copy and the several variations of it which Cézanne painted in oils in the first years of the twentieth century.[7] The ambiguities apparent in late works such as these, partly responsible for the equivocal position that Cézanne held for his younger admirers, will need to be examined before I address the differing uses made of Cézanne's example by Bernard and his radical contemporaries.

The watercolour by Delacroix formerly in Cézanne's collection depicts flowers in a roughly oblong arrangement, placed against a field that becomes darker at points to contrast with the brightest blooms and paler at others to silhouette the duller. In Cézanne's copy, painted around 1900, Delacroix' confusion of positive and negative shapes is translated into a fragmented field of colour (figure 84). Cézanne elaborated on this free quotation of Delacroix in a second variation in which he introduced a vase on a plinth, a distant curved wall and an arching canopy of trees to contain the central bouquet. With symmetrical

framing devices his tribute was invested with a monumental effect which may have been inspired by the central placement of the similar bouquet in Fantin-Latour's Hommage à Delacroix of 1864 (figure 85).

The composition of Cézanne's second version of Delacroix' bouquet also resembles that of one of his most ambitious late works, the Large Bathers now in Philadelphia, a major expression of his late address to the painting of the old masters (figure 87). Given the scale and subject of the Philadelphia Bathers, its composition is surprisingly close to that of the 1900 Vase in a garden. The central shape of the bouquet recurs in the diamond-shaped aperture at the centre of the Large Bathers, formed from parting trees and made substantial by Cézanne's handling. The form of the stone plinth at the base of the still-life is repeated in the ochre strip of the stage on which the bathers are assembled. The motif of trees leaning together at the top of the composition recurs in both landscapes.

Such similarities between the Philadelphia Bathers and the Vase in a garden confirm Rivière and Schnerb's account of Cézanne's fixation on the internal logic of his pictorial constructions - an attribute which has been described more recently by Richard Shiff with the term, 'analogies':

> The analogies seem excessive and always at hand. There are more of them than the demands of coherent composition would require, so many more, in fact, that conventional compositional hierarchies - including the 'foregrounding' of figures by less articulated 'background' areas fails to emerge.[8]

This persistent emphasis on the internal logic of Cézanne's painting was supported by his reference to the works he had studied in the Louvre. The structuring presence of the picture frame is a dominant preoccupation of the Large Bathers, whose horizontal banks and upright trees and figures emphatically enclose the central landscape. The evidence of such a nostalgic composition militates against Shiff's claim that Cézanne had meant to put the emphasis on 'sensation' rather than 'classique' when he had told Bernard in 1904

'Il faut redevenir classique par la nature c'est-à-dire la sensation'.[9]

Cézanne's construction of his compositions from framing elements extended even to his copies of old master paintings whose success as tableaux was never in doubt. He made a watercolour copy of the Concert champêtre (c.1878) which consistently squares up and reframes Titian's figures to exaggerate their sense of balance and self-containment (figure 88). The left hand tree in Cézanne's copy is transformed into a vertical line which rises from the back of the standing nymph, while the lines of the hills and of the other tree are straightened to construct a box around the central musician. The back of the seated nymph, turned more fully to the viewer, reinforces its function of closing off the left side of the composition.

The proclivity for such deliberate arrangements in Cézanne's pictures sheds light on a surprising detail of Bernard's essay of 1907, his observation that a reproduction of Couture's Romans of the decadence was among the few works which Cézanne had attached to the wall of his studio (figure 89). Couture's famous painting had provided a source for Cézanne's early depictions of Romantic orgies, but he must have turned to it again in his last years as a compositional model. The rectilinear Romans, presaging Cézanne's bathers, are arranged along the horizontal of the central couch and against the repeated verticals of the columns. Like the Large Bathers they construct a pictorial edifice which encloses a patch of sky borrowed from Veronese. The fruitful tension between such compositional conventions and Cézanne's radical uses of colour and handling was not lost on his first followers.

II

In the first years after Cézanne's death Bernard was among the many contemporary painters who were drawn to the subject of bathers in a landscape, but he varied the terms of Cézanne's painting by replacing his master's meticulously constructed groups and radical handling with a tighter technique and a less balanced sense of composition. Bernard made the legacy of the Venetian masters apparent in the types of his figures, landscapes and draperies, but not in their underlying construction. A work such as Après le bain of 1908 (which I discuss in detail later in this chapter) inverts Cézanne's explicit modernism and implicit classicism with a surface of old master references that only partly conceals its modernness of vision (figure 90). Bernard's pseudo-Venetian style was attacked by progressive critics because it seemed to ignore the instructive example of Cézanne's art. Although in 1907 Jacques Schnerb had acknowledged the 'jugement précurseur de plus en plus clairvoyant' of Bernard's writings on Cézanne, he expressed reservations when reviewing the exhibition of Bernard's painting which was held at the Musée Beaudouin in 1910, his first solo show in Paris since 1904.[10] Specialising in the works of conservatives like Point, Anquetin and Zuloaga, the Musée Beaudouin was a suitable venue for Bernard's exhibition which included Après le bain and a large composition of Wagnerian nudes, Parsifal, along with other recent figure studies and portraits.

In his review of the show, Schnerb announced his disappointment with Bernard's explicit imitation of Venetian painting which, he claimed, was hindering the development of his talent. Acknowledging 'une harmonie incontestible' in Bernard's latest works, Schnerb complained that this harmony was stolen from Giorgione and Titian, whose style and subjects he had openly imitated. Although he approved of Bernard's effort to seek a remedy from present decadence in the art of the past, Schnerb thought that his apparent

failure to undertake 'un travail personnel d'analyse', had reduced him to repeating now outdated forms. He could not forgive the poverty of pictorial invention which he discovered in Bernard's pictorial borrowings. The all too familiar 'figures nues dans la campagne, entourées des mêmes verdures, des mêmes étoffes brillantes, des ciels où s'étendent les nuages crepusculaires de Véronese' evoked an imagination lost under the museum's debris.[11]

The eminent critic for Gil Blas, Louis Vauxcelles, like Schnerb, attacked Bernard's exhibition for the sterility of its conservatism. Famous for his early but qualified support of Matisse, Picasso and Braque, Vauxcelles was dismayed by Bernard's seeming detachment from a modernity which he thought, vaguely, should be expressed in the search for new responses to nature. Classing Bernard with fellow conservatives, Point and Anquetin, he regretted,

> Il leur manque d'être de leur temps. Enivrés de culture classique, ils ne voient la nature et l'humanité que dans les musées. Or les musées n'ont guère d'autre raison d'être que de nous rejeter vers la nature.[12]

Vauxcelles' distaste for 'culture classique', used as a synonym for wilful retrogression, recalled the earlier criticism he had made of Denis' deference to Ingres which, he had argued in 1905, was a foible inconsistent with his professed admiration for Cézanne.[13]

Vauxcelles' dismissal of those who appeared to take shelter from modernity in the museum was, however, selective. It ignored the intense address to museum art being made by the contemporary avant-garde. From Matisse's Bonheur de vivre (figure 91), shown at the Indépendants in 1906, to Braque's one man show at Kahnweiler's in 1908, the most apparently progressive of modern painters were emulating the compositions and subjects of distant masters. Braque's mandolins and guitars invoked the still-life tradition of the seventeenth century and caused Apollinaire to exclaim that 'St Cecilia herself

makes music on his musical instruments'.[14] Matisse's surprisingly literal reference to Agostino Carracci's Love Reciprocated (figure 92) in the figures and landscape of Le Bonheur de vivre went unnoticed by his contemporaries, but it is vital to the wilful artificiality of his composition.[15]

The uses made of the old masters in such modernist works demonstrated the value of remote pictorial conventions to an age dominated by naturalism and photography. Carracci's schematic drawing exercised an understandable fascination for a modern painter who was engaged in reasserting the properties of his medium against modern techniques of illusion. The paintings of Picasso and Braque similarly asserted the strangeness of their medium by invoking the otherness of the museum. Like Bernard, these modernists rejected Impressionist colour in favour of a tonalism verging on grisaille.

Following the lead of Cézanne, the modernists' address to pictorial tradition maintained a careful balance between effects of fragmentation and cohesion. Having gained increasing solidity, Picasso's nostalgic figures were beginning to crumble, by 1906, under their own weight. His Two Nudes appear to come apart at the joins of their arms, necks and breasts, but they retain an effect of monumentality (figure 93). Matisse's Luxe, calme et volupté attempts a parallel disruption of convention, disintegrating its Puvis-inspired design with Neo-impressionist colour (figure 94). In the works of both painters, the unease attending painting's deliberate reference to its own history is expressed in a vacillation between destruction and conservation.

Along with the early twentieth century writings of Apollinaire, Rivière, Schnerb and Bernard, those made by Denis in the first decade of the century were preoccupied with the idea of the modern conflict between the pursuit of originality and the desire for affinity with

the past. Denis began his important 1907 essay on Cézanne with an assessment of Cézanne's painting which calculated the effect that one of his pictures would produce if placed among the typical contents of a provincial museum. Where would Cézanne fit, Denis wondered, in relation to the usual second-rate seventeenth century works donated from old collections, and the modern banalities purchased from the annual Salons? Once apprised of Denis' opinion of these categories of work, the reader can guess at his conclusion.

> C'est alors qu'on est vraiment et ingénument sensible au contraste des anciens et des modernes; et qu'un vieux morceaux d'un bolonaise ou d'un élève de Le Brun, à la fois puissant et synthétique paraît décidément supérieur aux sèches analyses et aux photographies en couleur de nos medaillés.[16]

Cézanne, Denis was certain, belonged in the company of his ancestors rather than of his siblings. His painting contradicted the characteristic failure of style which Denis condemned as the vice of his age with a vision reminiscent of that of the masters.

Denis was hopeful that Cézanne would become the prototype for a future renaissance in which the decadent forms of late nineteenth and early twentieth century painting would be improved by a remembrance of the standards of the past. To fulfil such a function, however, his oeuvre needed to be interpreted selectively. Denis ignored the debt to Delacroix in Cézanne's mature work which Bernard had documented but which threatened to mitigate the classic image of Cézanne with Romantic traits of the kind that Denis associated with the erosion of traditional standards.[17] He also rejected Bernard's criticism of Cézanne's hesitant execution, arguing that the idiosyncratic structure of his surfaces had methodically translated his peculiar vision into the particular form of his medium. Dismissing a pedantic adherence to past rules, Denis advocated a flexible traditionalism that would respond to the experience of the present. Classicism could be revived in modern times, he argued, only if the tension between the standards of the masters and the specificity of individual perception were observed. As Cézanne amply

demonstrated in Denis' analysis, the moderns' relation to the past would need to be problematic in order to be productive.

By 1905 Bernard had renounced the idea of a reconciliation of modernism and traditionalism of the kind proposed by Denis. Although he had hinted at the possibility of a marriage between the memory of the art of the past and the subjectivity of Impressionism in his 1904 essay on Cézanne, he had quickly retreated from this suggestion as it had taken radical shape in the works of his progressive contemporaries. Bernard took the opportunity to refute Denis' progressive arguments when he reviewed his synoptic essay 'De Gauguin et Van Gogh au classicisme', published in L'Occident in 1909.[18] In this important summary of the development of the avant-garde over the previous twenty years, Denis had repeated his earlier call for a modern classicism which would resolve the problems induced by twentieth century individualism. Revealing his conversance with Apollinaire's recent criticism, he noted a classical impulse even in the radical style of Braque. In responding dismissively to Denis' essay, Bernard concluded a decade of disputation between the two former Symbolists.

Bernard and Denis had first aired their differences in 1903 after Bernard had written a provocative history of the Pont-Aven school for the Mercure de France. No doubt remembering Denis' unflattering portrait of him in La Revue blanche as an 'intellectuel intolerant' who was guilty of vulgarising 'le rare talent de Gauguin', Bernard's 'Notes sur l'école dite de "Pont-Aven"' had disputed the notion of Gauguin's paternity of the Pont--Aven school.[19] Denis, Bonnard and Roussel, Bernard perversely argued, had all found their avant-gardist styles in 1888 while their supposed master was still a belated Impressionist.[20] Denis was quick to expose and correct this fiction, writing a letter to the Mercure de France in 1904 in which he reminded its readers that Sérusier had initiated

the Nabis group by bringing Gauguin's doctrine to the Académie Julian in October of 1888. Even if Gauguin's Symbolism owed something to Bernard, Denis insisted, it was the superior 'logique' and 'qualité' of Gauguin's style that had inspired his disciples.[21]

Bernard accepted defeat on this score, shifting his later attacks to the more pertinent question of Gauguin's influence on Denis and of its supposed antagonism to his classicism. When he reviewed Denis' work at the Indépendants in 1905 and at the Société nationale in 1907, he deplored the modernism which he discovered in Denis' lurid palette and which, he claimed, disrupted the apparently classical sources of his inspiration. In the former case, 'discordances' of acid green, violet and carmine pink were accused of subverting Denis' reference to Fra Angelico. In the latter, Bernard observed, 'les inspirations latines' had been incongruously dressed in 'des vêtements de notre temps'.[22] In 1909, Bernard summarised his objections to Denis by opining that classicism must remain beyond his reach as long as he stayed loyal to the memory of his radical past.

> l'étude de M. Denis n'est faite que de contradictions, elle est intéressante, elle prouve dans quelle cercle vicieux se meut cet esprit distingué. Comment sortira-t--il du conflit sans jeter Gauguin et tout son passé au panier?[23]

Denis' attaching of Impressionist colour to designs reminiscent of the works of Puvis inverted Bernard's call for a painting of modern life whose illusory completeness would pretend to a continuity with the past. Bernard found an antidote to this style in the work of the Australian, Rupert Bunny, whose Scène d'Eté, shown at the Société nationale in 1907, he praised for being 'à la fois traditionelle et nouvelle', its figures being 'grecques par leur nudité et contemporaines par leur type' (figure 95).[24] Bunny's work depicts the gathering, on a bathing platform, of a group of young women who are dressed and undressed in modern fashion, but his festoons of rich draperies and evocation of a

glowing, unnatural light reveal a nostalgia for the Venetians which Bernard shared. The pallid sky and luminous half-shadows of Bunny's work, recalling Veronese's monumental Wedding at Cana in the Louvre, are vital to its illusion of an unruffled calm.

The style of Bernard's early twentieth century painting went still further than Bunny's in conjuring an affinity with the past that obfuscated his place in modern time. But the production of Bernard's mature style conspicuously faltered in the unacknowledged gap that appeared between his pictures and the works of the masters to which they referred. Bernard's contemporary critics drew attention to his remoteness from the Venetian Renaissance works he admired by attacking a technical incapacity which, they thought, measured his inferiority to his models. Vauxcelles noted in 1910,

> Les Vénitiens dessinaient avec plus de liberté, de sûreté que M. Bernard dont le dessin est mollement scolastique; il aurait pu sans doute aussi apprendre chez Tintoret et Véronese à equilibrer une composition autrement que par 'paquets'; ses vastes panneaux sont confus, chaotiques, les valeurs y chevauchent les unes sur les autres.[25]

Vauxcelles' detection of Bernard's modernity in the negative form of the shortcoming of his retrogressive style drew attention to the irrationality of his excessive attachment to the forms of the past. The unity and equilibrium for which Cézanne was admired by his radical supporters seemed not to be available to Bernard because he refused to address his place in modern time, except inadvertently. The distortions and lacunae with which Cézanne affirmed the distance between himself and his pictorial models had been sublimated by Bernard, but could not be concealed. His unresolved collections of pictorial borrowings occupied the losing end of Matisse's formulation: 'Tous les artistes portent l'empreinte de leur époque, mais les grands artistes sont ceux en qui elle est marquée le plus profondément.'[26]

III

The unconvincing surface of Bernard's nostalgic style suppressed contradictions which, if acknowledged, threatened to shatter his conservative identity. The relation to the art of the past which he adopted after 1896 could be neither straightforward nor inevitable for one who had begun his career attached to the modernist vanguard and who had redirected his course only after an esthetic crisis. In his autobiographical writings, Bernard frequently drew attention to his radical origins, justifying his mature conservatism with his sense of failings in his previous radicalism. 'J'ai délaissé comme steriles les voies un tantinet puériles, non du symbolisme, mais d'un art rudimentaire volontairement', he stated in 1904, 'afin de remonter vers les complexités du grand art classique'.[27] The perceptive critic for La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne who described Bernard in the same year as a representative of 'L'impressionisme en rebellion contre soi-même' not only detected the memory of nineteenth century modernism in Bernard's 'quasi-classique' works, but associated his reaction to Impressionism with the wider late nineteenth response to the influential style.[28] Bernard's early formation as a follower of Impressionism, and his later assault on it as the barrier which separated him from his chosen masters, located it as the relentless shadow of his stylistic metamorphoses.

Long before the advent of his mature conservative style, Bernard's engagement with his medium's reference to itself had been the salient feature of his painting. Already in his work of the 1880s he had resisted the Impressionist illusion of a lived moment by asserting the distance between his pictures and the things to which they referred. His supposedly Neo-Impressionist works of 1886 and 1887 had contradicted Neo-Impressionism's analytical project by applying staccato points as a mysterious texture to the picture surface (figure 96). Earlier, in his childhood, he had sought to construct alternative environments by covering his bedroom walls and filling his schoolbooks with

exotic and archaic designs. Bernard was still asserting his distance from the modern world in 1911 when he professed his contempt for Impressionism, and compensated for his formation in its wake, by writing his definitive 'Réfutation de l'impressionisme' in which he accused the influential style of reducing all of its progeny to failure. As Rivière, Schnerb, Denis and Matisse had done in their analyses of Cézanne, Bernard revived the conservative distinction between the tableau and the morceau to justify his attack on Impressionist theory and practice. Identifying the tableau as a work elevated by its memory of past standards, he classed it as the noble antithesis of the base morceau, a sketch enslaved to nature's appearances. Accusing the generation which had preceded him of sguandering their esthetic inheritance, he regretted that the Impressionists had been reduced to the endless production of morceaux.

Not content merely to assert Impressionism's inferiority to the standards of an idealist past, Bernard cited the past's authority in impugning the supposed luminosity of Impressionist colour - the basis of its pervasive influence. He argued that the Impressionist palette, inspired by the theories of Chevreul and Rood, involved a negation of the values of chiaroscuro which, he contended, were vital to the appearance of light produced in earlier painting. Although the Renaissance masters, Bernard claimed, had placed a ground of black and white beneath their coloured glazes to ensure a fixed range of tonal contrasts, the Impressionists, contravening this law, had described form instead with complementary colours which undermined solidity and modelling. The much vaunted colour of Impressionism, he concluded, was a failure, apt to lose its density and its supposed veracity under conditions of changing light.

> A certains heures du jour, un tableau peint de la sorte se transforme étrangement. Vers le soir, alors que la lumière rouge du couchant influence les tons chauds jusqu'à les noircir, tout ce qui est lumineux, ou veut l'être, tourne au foncé; et les bleus, représentants des ombres, se creusent, se volatise, deviennent lumineux. Le tableau est comme retourné dans son effet et exprime tout le contraire de son

but. Celà vient de ce que le peintre a oublié volontairement les valeurs, les degrès d'ombre, pour ne considérer plus que les couleurs et leur action réciproque.[29]

An unstable compound on the verge of dissolution, Impressionist colour in this description was in diametric opposition to the longevity which Bernard meant to acquire from his reference to the art of the masters. But the terms of his critique of Impressionism were far from peculiar to his conservative esthetic. As Matisse was professing his rejection of the Impressionists' 'mensongère' superficiality in 1908, Apollinaire was disparaging them on behalf of Braque as 'temperaments attempting to express feverishly, hastily and unreasonably their astonishment before nature'.[30] These arguments, which borrowed their terms from the first avant-garde critiques of Impressionism made by Fénéon and Aurier in the late 1880s and early 1890s, like Bernard's, sought the sense of continuity with the past that was acquired by those who disparaged the influential modern style for its sense of transience.[31] While Apollinaire and Matisse acknowledged Cézanne's revised Impressionism as central to their twentieth century vision, however, Bernard was becoming increasingly estranged from the example of his former master. He wrote of Cézanne in 1909 as disappearing from his view as he continued on the path to classicism.[32]

IV

It is perhaps less surprising that Bernard ultimately rejected Cézanne's style altogether than that he remained loyal to it for so long after his own painting had taken a different course. Cézanne's enduring fascination for Bernard depended on their shared ambivalence to the art of the past, the importance of which, in both cases, Bernard failed to acknowledge in his later writings. Extraordinary works such as Cézanne's late bathers offered subliminal vindication of Bernard's own unpredictable responses to the masters which, in practice, avoided the venerable rules he upheld in theory.

A conservative work like Après le bain, as Vauxcelles observed, is a recognisable product of its time which, for all its explicit nostalgia, contains modern traits beneath its conservative varnish (figure 90). The sudden shifts of tone that are most evident in the overlapping of the Naples yellow bodies and the Van Dyck brown landscape promote a surface pattern of disconnected parts. Without an illusory base on which to lie, Bernard's bathers seem to hang uneasily before the landscape, subverting the ordered calm of a prototype like Giorgione's Sleeping Venus of c.1510. The cloth which is bunched in the foreground corner of Bernard's work replaces the regular folds designed by Giorgione with a disconcerting imbalance (figure 98).

Despite the irregularities of their bodies, the bathers of Après le bain are imaginary figures which combine a memory of Renaissance Venice with references to Ingres' Bain turc - whose three main foreground odalisques they rework in reverse (figure 99). The painting had been the climax of the Ingres retrospective at the 1905 Salon d'automne, and had attracted intense scrutiny from painters after being hidden for decades in private collections. Reconstituted in Bernard's Venetian environment, Ingres' supple group does not so much suggest the monumentality of High Renaissance painting as the incoherence of pastiche. Perhaps unwittingly, the two-dimensional effect of Après le bain looks back to the flatness of a work such as Bernard's Four Bathers of 1890 in which he had already imposed disjointed and flattened attitudes on classically inspired figures (figure 28). The ambiguities of both works suggest that Bernard's nineteenth and twentieth century styles were linked by a conceptual continuity.

Bernard's Venetian hallucination of 1896 had predicted the form of his twentieth century traditionalism at the same time as it had recalled the mock Gothic designs with which he had decorated the walls of his bedroom at Asnières.[33] The dramatic moment of his

conversion gave a conclusive form to the magically altered environment which he had dreamt of since childhood. Bernard extended the masquerades of his early Symbolist paintings in a work such as his self-portrait of 1910, where he generated nostalgic forms around himself - the bright cloud and dark curtain - through a deliberate application of antiquated techniques of chiaroscuro (figure 100). Style, in this case, assumes a material substance which replaces the surface of modern life with the unreal texture of the museum.

The intensity of Bernard's resistance to modernity is nowhere more apparent than in the borrowed parts of Après le bain in which the same mythic landscape that had caused Cézanne to question his pictorial inheritance is used as a setting for a group of three idealised figures whose features recall those of Bernard's companion, Andrée. Bernard's attempted suppression of his modern environment in this work, as in others, however, seems incomplete. The conservative spaces of his painting appear to be haunted by his consciousness of the new world he sought to resist. The insubstantial landscape of Après le bain produces an effect of flatness which is reinforced by its overlapping figures. The three bathers form an improbable interlocking entity whose succession of adjusted postures suggests the consecutive frames of a primitive moving picture.

In his essay 'L'art et le travail', written for La Rénovation estétique in 1906, Bernard attacked the mechanisation of modern industry, claiming that the decay of modern artistic technique and imagination was attributable to the lowering of standards promoted by the greed of modern producers.[34] This complaint, recalling the conservatism of Ruskin's mid--nineteenth century attack on industrialisation, articulated an unwilling subjection to the conditions of modernity which re-emerges in the uncomfortable style of a work such as Après le bain. Bernard's uneasy sense of modernity brought him closer to his modernist

contemporaries than he was able to admit, and had he chosen to, he could have recognised a kinship between his work and Picasso's Three women, also of 1908, which makes plain the conflicts that he sought to conceal (figure 101).

Picasso's group revises the classical form of the Three Graces, but leaves visible cracks in its structure to give an effect of disintegration that is countered only by the pyramidal arrangement of the figures' fragments. Like Bernard's, his semi-classic women recall Ingres' favourite poses with their exposed armpits, tilted necks and thrust hips, but Picasso detaches Ingres' abstract contours from their apparent connection with the body, allowing them to cut across his painted structures. Evoking mechanised rhythms, the sharp angles and blockish fragments of these transformed human figures evoke the tension between the artist's physical envrionment and his esthetic education. A comparable fragmentation, despite the wilful conservatism of Bernard's style, remains in a detail of Après le bain like the isolated foot on the left side, which is severed from its leg and wrapped in a bundle of cloth like the relic of a ruined body.

Bernard restated the Decadent stereotype of woman as a salient image of modernity in his 1906 essay, 'De l'art moderne' in which he announced that 'sa mièvrerie de fleur mourante, son épuisement de plante rare transportée dans une atmosphère morale viciée', offered the essential tableau of 'notre siècle en depart'.[35] Protecting his figures from such modern corruption, his art evoked alternative environments which he imagined with most intensity in connection with the representation of his own family. In La Famille of 1910, Bernard depicted himself, Andrée and their children on a hill overlooking their adopted village of Tonnerre in Bourgogne, south of Paris (figure 102). Classical draperies stand in for modern fashions as the group clusters around the central form of Andrée's back which swells in a fleshy recollection of a figure by Titian like the seated

nymph in the Concert champêtre. Andrée's deformed grandeur seems here to embody the classical ideal to which Bernard's art aspired, but he is shown hovering less substantially at the picture's edge, marginalised and overshadowed as if doubtful of his power to perform the sympathetic magic with which he would ward off the fact of his modern experience.

The progressive critic, Michel Puy wrote an article late in 1910 which made explicit the implicit uncertainty of Bernard's traditionalist style. Puy's 'Le dernier état de la peinture', published in the Mercure de France, told of the supposed successes of the contemporary avant-garde, and of the failures of modern traditionalists like Bernard, Point and Anquetin. Puy claimed that painters of the avant-garde, including Matisse, Braque, Signac, Denis, Bonnard, Vuillard, Derain, and his brother, Jean Puy, were more directly linked to the art of the masters than they appeared to be. Their determination to rediscover the standards of the past through their individual addresses to nature, he wrote, had confused the public who wrongly expected modern artists to perpetuate now outmoded conventions. He accused Bernard and his friends, on the other hand, of a superficial traditionalism with which they had attempted to deny the inevitable transformations in modern life and modern vision. These would-be classicists, he argued, had 'obscurci et enfumé' their canvases, to 'suppléer à la patine du temps', attempting thereby to make masterpieces to order.[36] Although Puy's argument reiterated objections to Bernard's Venetian style that had been raised earlier in the year by Schnerb and Vauxcelles, he added a new charge to the existing ones, that of academicism. Bernard's adherence to past formulae, he claimed, related him to the nineteenth century conservatives who now stood condemned for their resistance to the advent of a Delacroix, a Corot, a Courbet and a Manet.

Bernard replied angrily to Puy's article in a letter to the Mercure de France in which he

countered the charges by accusing the contemporary avant-garde of the very staleness with which he was accused. 'M. Puy croit-il sincèrement que des idées qui ont déjà trente ans de date soient des idées d'avant-garde?' The question was supported by the evidence of Bernard's own juvenilia. Claiming to be a leader and not a follower, and professing his contempt for the Academy to which Puy connected him, Bernard observed that,

> L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts [...] suit la mode; et à la conclusion de la tradition, elle donne aujourd'hui raison aux impressionistes. Presque toute l'avant-garde de M. Puy, ne sort-elle pas de chez elle?[37]

True leaders, Bernard continued, proceeded not from the compromises of such a decayed institution, but from an individualism which was fed by the art of the past. 'La véritable avant-garde c'est le Louvre, lien réel des traditionnistes et de la tradition.'[38]

Bernard's sense of the novelty of the Louvre was an attribute which he continued to share with the avant-garde, but it also harked back to his nineteenth century origins, which are prominently represented in the style and subject of La Famille. The depiction of Andrée's nudity in the public and provincial setting of the open air near Tonnerre recalls the nineteenth century history of unease with the legacy of the Renaissance and classical nude, as exemplified by radicals such as Courbet and Manet. The improbable gestures and unlikely semi-dress of Courbet's Bathers of 1852 (figure 103), and the confronting déshabillé of Manet's Déjeuner sur l'herbe of 1863, are evident protoypes for Bernard's equivocal treatment of Andrée's body, which contradicts its idealism with the practical roles of mother and wife in which it is cast. The dislocation between Andrée's golden flesh and the blue landscape around it embodies a persistent modern conflict between nostalgic figures and their pictorial environments. The children in Bernard's painting seem to address the viewer with the self-conscious poses of a snapshot, but Andrée's eyes look to the horizon as if to the dream of a lost ideal.

5 Art Among the Ruins

As he exposed and responded to the supposed errors of the classicism of his radical contemporaries, Bernard increasingly betrayed his sense of remoteness from the past he was nourished by. He deliberately distanced himself from the addresses to the art of the past that were made by his younger contemporaries in the 1910s and 1920s by denouncing their classicism as being compromised by their debts to the influences of the Impressionists and Cézanne. In his later art and writing he instead referred increasingly to Delacroix as the preeminent model for his own modern traditionalism.

Bernard watched from a distance as many of the prominent radicals of the early twentieth century renounced their former experimentation and turned to forms that were obviously borrowed from the art of the past. The new conservatism came particularly close to him in the form of the work of the Futurist Gino Severini who, in 1915, had married Jeanne Fort, the daughter of Paul Fort and the niece of Bernard's companion, Andrée. In 1916 Severini painted two portraits of Jeanne in 'a simple style reminiscent of our Tuscan primitives' which marked his first departure from Futurism.[1] Severini was in frequent social contact with Bernard before the war, and made the remarkable admission in his autobiography that he had read and approved of the conservative opinions which Bernard published in La Rénovation esthétique between 1905 and 1910.[2] Although this confession was made in 1965, long after the breaking of Severini's Futurist ties, it provides a precedent for the otherwise surprising suddenness of the address to the art of the past made in his paintings of 1916.

The development of Severini's art between 1915 and 1921, the year of the publication of

his 'Du Cubisme au classicisme' offers a useful point of comparison between the renewed retrospection of his generation and Bernard's conversion to traditionalism of twenty years before. Severini's paintings of 1916 evoke his memory of the art of the past as a possible antidote to the mechanised modern destruction which he had depicted in such works of 1915 as War and Cannon in Action. To attribute his departure from his former modernism only to the political and emotional influence of the war, however, would be to ignore the broader tendency of many late nineteenth and early twentieth century artists to adopt conservative forms after moments of radicalism. Derain, for example, moved to classicism well before the war began and, like Severini's, his new conservatism was to occupy the rest of his career.[3]

In Maternité, Jeanne appears with her young son against a bare ground in a pose which recalls the compositions of Leonardo and Raphael through its balanced framework of limbs (figure 104). Despite the apparent conservatism of this work, however, Severini refused to renounce his commitment to modernism and wrote an article in 1917 suggesting that he was still at the vanguard of Cubist innovation. In 'La Peinture d'avant-garde', published in the Mercure de France, he argued for a painting that would draw its subjects from the material world while transforming them in precisely measured ways to construct analogies for time and space on the flat surface of the canvas.[4] At its best, Severini wrote. Cubism resembled classicism:

> nous ne voulons pas représenter l'accidentel, le momentané, mais l'essentiel, l'éternel, et, pour cette raison, lorsqu'un objet se présente à notre esprit, ce sont, ayant tout, ses qualités essentielles que nous voyons.[5]

This insistence on the sense of the eternal in Cubism, despite its destruction of one-point Renaissance perspective, endorsed the opinion of such an early supporter of the style as Metzinger who, in 1910, had likened Braque to Chardin and Lancret and related him to 'the genius of our race'.[6]

After 1916, Severini continued to make pictures in a quasi-Cubist manner alongside works that were apparently more attentive to older formulae. He modified his previous account of Cubism, however, in Du Cubisme au classicisme, by locating it as a style in transition between Impressionism, which he defined as an art of subjective sensations, and the idealism of the future which, he thought, would be regulated by geometry and numbers.

> Je crois sincèrement que le cubisme, tout en constituant la seule tendance intéressante au point de vue de la discipline et de la méthode, et tout en étant de ce fait, à la base du nouveau classicisme qui se prépare, est néanmolns encore aujourd'hui à la dernière étape de l'impressionisme.[7]

The regrettable dependence of Cubism on sensory experience, Severini believed, had impelled his own classicism in the direction of the ideal (figure 105).

Severini's published writings suggest that he had no lack of confidence in the process of his stylistic development, but his autobiography includes a letter written to him by Boccioni in 1913, expressing nagging doubts of the kind which he refused to articulate on his own behalf.

> I am working hard but inconclusively, it seems to me. That is, I hope that what I am doing means something because I don't understand what I am doing. It's strange and terrible but I am calm. I worked for six hours straight today on my sculptures and I don't understand the results. Planes upon planes, muscles and faces sectioned and then what? What about the total effect? Do my creations have a life of their own?[8]

Boccioni's uncertainty recalled the similar trepidation which Bernard had revealed to Gauguin in 1889 when he had also been pushing his pictorial researches to the point of abstraction. The young Boccioni, like the young Bernard, faced the difficulty of finding new pictorial forms which might answer the call of a preceding literary manifesto. The assertive newness of Symbolist and Futurist works only partly masked the troubling memory of the art which they were meant to transcend. The violent rhetoric of Marinetti's 1909 manifesto, for example, which celebrated the cleansing effect of war and called for the burning of museums and libraries, implicitly acknowledged the power of the objects

that it claimed to despise.

Severini's conversion in 1916 was, of course, only one expression of a broad esthetic shift which included such diverse forms as the last works of Boccioni, the Metaphysical paintings of de Chirico and Carrà, the reformed Cubism of Picasso, Braque, Gris, Léger and Metzinger, the Purism of Ozenfant and Jeanneret, and the conservatism of Derain and Matisse. In the 1910s and 1920s, all of these artists came to reject the extreme fragmentation of pre-war Cubism and Futurism and to adopt a genealogy which was dominated on the French side by Poussin, Chardin, Ingres, Corot, Cézanne and Seurat. The classic, evoked as inherent in modernity by contributors to Ozenfant and Jeanneret's Purist journal, l'Esprit nouveau, varied in its modern pictorial expression from the glorification of new technology in the art of Léger to its suppression in that of Derain.

Bernard did not fail to notice the change of heart that was experienced by the younger generation of the avant-garde and to regard it as the symptom of a crisis. He had long ago stood at his own crossroads and had never since deviated from his chosen path. In 1909, he had denounced Marinetti's manifesto as the false assertion of an intellectual progress whose irrational impulse to destroy the past betrayed an unspoken sense of inferiority to it.[9] By 1924 he was addressing the younger avant-garde, perhaps in response to the positive sign of Severini's book, in terms, for the first time, other than those of immediate and total condemnation. Bernard's 'A la recherche de l'art' referred to Cubism as a logical progression from Symbolism, and so tempered his previous dismissal of the style which, in 1919, he had dubbed the 'néo-classique de l'art negre'.[10] His willingness to revise his former opinions came at a time when even Picasso had revealed his impatience with the vogue for African art, replying to a questionnaire in 1920: 'L'art nègre, connais pas'.[11]

In 'A la recherche de l'art', Bernard found virtues in Cubism as well as regrettable flaws, and linked it to the venerable traditions of French art. Reasserting his view of Impressionism as a mere copying of nature, he likened Cubism to Symbolism as a reaction to Impressionism which, he thought, was guided by the memory of the old masters. Symbolism, Bernard wrote, had directed itself to locating expressive meanings in abstract colours and shapes, and Cubism had followed a similar course, deviating as far as possible from the outward appearance of objects by applying mathematics and geometry to the invention of new pictorial laws. Bernard's argument, which established his credentials for advising the younger generation, alluded to Denis' claims of 1909 and 1916 that the distortions of the Cubists and Fauves were ideologically indebted to the experiments of the 1890s.

Although Bernard gave no indication of the type of Cubism to which his article was referring, he may have had nothing more confronting in mind than the mildly geometric compositions which illustrate Severini's treatise (figure 106). Certainly Bernard's linking of Symbolism and Cubism was addressed at a young artist like Severini who had revealed his desire to transcend modern uncertainty through the observance of fixed rules. Bernard endorsed the effort, announcing that,

> Symbolistes et Cubistes out revendiqué - contre le naturalisme impressioniste - les lois de l'abstraction, l'autorité de la convention, de la logique, de l'intellectuality. Leurs revendications sont justes; mais leurs oeuvres égarées dans la difformité, dans l'oubli de la vérité des images sensibles, et dans l'impuissance plastique ont abouti à la negation de l'art qu'ils veulent affirmer.[12]

Classicism, Bernard insisted, offered a way out of this impasse. 'Quant aux aspirations du Symbolisme et du Cubisme, elles trouveront une satisfaction complète dans l'art classique dont je veux faire l'exposé'.[13] In his subsequent definition of classic art, Bernard advocated a style which he illustrated with references to Plato and Quatremère de Quincy,

but which he left vague on the matter of practical details. The empathy with the masters which he sought, avoiding the strictly rational and mathematical techniques proposed by Severini, was guided by his desire for a linkage to the values of the past that would be acquired through a respectful contemplation of museum painting.

The deference to Renaissance and Baroque art advocated in Bernard's writing was expressed in a modified form in the work of younger artists, including Severini, who were looking for more surprising connections between their modern experience and the legacy of the masters. Severini did not regard his invocation to tradition as refuting his modern experience and felt less sympathy with Bernard than with Denis whom he cited in 1917 and again in 1921 as the 'plus élevé' of modern theorists. Moderating beforehand the rigid logic of 'Du Cubisme au classicisme', Severini had claimed in 1917 that reason preponderated over sensibility in modern artistic theory and practice and that modern artists should try, accordingly, to redress this imbalance in their work. Extending the Symbolist fascination with the subjectivity of modern experience, he drew attention to the changes wrought to perception by modern technology, arguing that the modern artist who meant to represent modernity should 'avaler une locomotive et rendre une pipe'.[14] The modernity which, according to this aphorism, would be lodged in the intestines, promised to take unpredictable forms in representation.

Severini's search for a distinctively modern classicism led him to produce a painting like his Two Punchinellos of 1922 (figure 107). Representing Commedia dell'arte figures which look back through Picasso and Cézanne to Watteau, this meticulous work gives the unsettling effect of having been assembled from found parts. The oversized hands of the nearest Punchinello appear to be disconnected from their ruffled sleeves and to be stuck on the surface of the picture like parts of a mutilated doll. Hanging over the table's edge,

the strictly delineated still-life is similarly implausible, evoking a half memory of the more ambiguous space of Cubism. Such details, manifesting the artist's uneasy placement in art history, gave substance to his idea that modern painting must be informed by the attributes of machines. 'La précision, le rythme, la brutalité des machines et leurs mouvements', Severini had announced in 1917, 'nous ont sans doute conduits vers un nouveau réalisme'.[15]

Severini justified the abstraction of his classicist style in his essay 'Cézanne et le Cézannisme', published in L'Esprit nouveau in 1921, where he stated that true classicism began with abstraction and only later passed to the appearance of nature. Whereas classical painters always started with geometry, Severini argued, the Cubists, inspired by Cézanne, had based their art falsely on empirical observation. The Cubist passage 'du bouteille au cylindre', he claimed, had reversed the classical order which his art proposed to restore.[16] In Bernard's later attacks on the art of Cézanne and of his modernist contemporaries he adopted a position that was in sympathy with Severini's theory, but not with his practice.

In several of his essays of the second half of the 1920s, Bernard identified Cézanne as the influential model who was responsible for leading subsequent French painters astray. Like Severini, he argued that Cézanne's famous attempt to reconcile classical inspiration and Impressionist practice had constituted a theoretical impossibility. The Impressionist's subjectivity, inspired by unrelenting doubt in received wisdom, he maintained, was in absolute opposition to the classicist's necessary faith in knowledge received from the past. In 'L'Erreur de Cézanne', published in 1926, Bernard quickly passed from a demonstration of Cézanne's crippling contradictions to a vindication of Poussin's method which, he noted, had wisely deferred to the example of antiquity. A stultifying dependence

on the variety and fragility of sensory perception, he noted, had been passed from Impressionism, through Cézanne, to twentieth century modernism.[17] Extending this argument in 1928, Bernard directly addressed the supposed classicism of the contemporary avant-garde:

> Jusqu'ici ce qu'on nous a proposé comme tel [classicism] est tout simplement une dérision, car elle ne s'établit sur rien. Ce n'est point aux gens qui ont tout accepté de l'Impressionisme, du Symbolisme du Cubisme et du Futurisme à trancher dans cette question, s'ils ne sont point des pèlerins de l'art revenant à ses lois et à ses origines.[18]

Bernard's rejection of a possible compromise between modernism and classicism conformed to his own brittle sense of linkage with the past, and to his fear of the threat posed to it by the apparent antagonism of the culture around him. While he ostensibly differentiated his nostalgic style from the traditionalist works produced by his younger contemporaries in the 1920s, their art was friutfully preoccupied with anxieties of the kind that he sought to suppress.

II

The figures in Bernard's paintings became increasingly solid and fleshy in the 1910s and 1920s as he embodied his address to the past in an ever more tangible substance. His Nu assis of 1922 displays a heavily built body whose size is contradicted by the apparent weightlessness of its half-crouching, half-running pose (figure 108). The lumps and hollows of the painted flesh are modelled by a strong sidelight, conveying a physicality reminiscent of Courbet. Not coincidentally, this development in Bernard's work coincided with the rise of the obviously artificial body in modernist classicism. Although he had been attracted to abstract idealism in an early traditionalist work such as his Madonna and Child of 1898 (which seems to have been built from Cézanne's cylinders, spheres and cones) the comparative naturalism of his later figure style clearly distinguished itself from the distortions explored by his radical contemporaries (figure 109).

As Bernard reasserted the distance between himself and his contemporaries, the problems associated with his address to distant masters were subversively reflected in the mirror of avant-gardism. Picasso's Studies of 1920 represent caricatured fragments of classical figures which are placed alongside six variations on a radically simplified 'Cubist' still-life (figure 110). Classically drawn profiles, eroded by Picasso's rapid texture of touches, are contrasted in this work to bizarre still-lifes whose crisp chiaroscuro incongruously evokes the art of the seventeenth century. The Louvre's Renaissance and Baroque collections in the Salon Carré and the galleries of French painting had been closed during the war and were reopened in January 1920. Aggressively confronting this art historical legacy, Picasso's ironic classicism maintained a link with the radical Symbolism of the 1880s and 1890s in its collapsing of accepted stylistic boundaries.

In Picasso's playful Bathers of 1918, he combined a Puvis-inspired composition with garish modern costumes which evoke a memory of the equivocal traditionalism that had been produced by Denis and Bernard in the previous decade (figure 111). The ingenious collision of old and new forms in this work reveals a tension between the past and the present that had also been suggested by Denis in Les Premiers pas de Dominique, shown at the Société nationale in 1911 (figure 112), and by Bernard in the unconvincing idealism of his Après le bain and La Famille. Like Denis' and Bernard's figures, Picasso's pull against their classical allusions with conspicuously modern bodies. Puvis de Chavannes, who provided a model for the landscape and figures of Denis' Premiers pas de Dominique also attracted Picasso in 1921 as the basis for his Three women at the spring (figure 113). Acknowledging Puvis' example in the chalky stiffness of his classicising figures and his rocky landscape, dominated by interchangeable limbs, Picasso distorted the memory of nineteenth century classicism by fusing his motifs with modernist deformations of alarming power.

The sense of newness to be gained from contact with an endlessly malleable tradition, vital to the wilfully transforming retrospection of a Denis or a Picasso, was absent from Bernard's alternative view of art history as a long decline, punctuated by isolated acts of restoration. Bernard must have recognised that his engagement with the art of the past had more in common with contemporary Italian art than with that of modern France, for he moved to Venice in 1921 where he was paid a respect beyond anything he had known in Paris. A room of the 1922 Venice Biennale was devoted to his painting, where it made a conservative reply to the 1920 exhibition of Cézanne. Bernard sat on the Biennale jury in 1926. His call for a resuscitation of modern art through contact with supposedly unpolluted Italian Renaissance sources was echoed by similar arguments from the Valori Plastici and Novecento groups whose desire for connection with the traditional bases of Italian art involved a like suspicion of modern counterfeits.[19] The salient point of resemblance between Bernard and contemporary Italian classicism was the mournful regret for a vanished past with which they contradicted the principle of progress in French modernism.

Bernard's Nature mort au nu of 1921 resembles a contemporary Italian work like Antonio Nardi's Figure dans mon atelier in the sense of temporal dislocation which is implied in its quotation of a Renaissance image (figures 114 and 115). In Bernard's work, a still-life of flowers is adorned with a reproduction of Titian's Venus with an organ grinder, while Nardi shows a corner of his studio where a seated woman contemplates a book illustration of a Renaissance portrait. In both cases the depicted picture suggests the artist's desire to reconstitute the absent original, while simultaneously revealing the inadequacy of modern technologies of reproduction. In Nardi's work, the gesture of the hand which presses on the flatness of the page draws attention to the fragility of its illusion and

confirms the loss of the past time that it evokes. Bernard's reference to Titian is similarly troubled, haunted by the memory of the earlier canvases, like Après le bain and Le Goûter sur l'herbe, in which he had played with Titian's motifs to turn the hills around Tonnerre into the sites of anachronistic pastorals (figure 116). The flowers of Bernard's still-life appear to look back to the flower studies of Manet and so to insert the idea of nineteenth century decay between himself and the coveted sixteenth.

Both Bernard's and Nardi's works evoke the disquiet attending what Walter Benjamin was to call the loss of the aura of the artwork in the age of mechanical reproduction. As well as usurping the traditional functions of painting, photography's endless dissemination of likenesses had eroded the substance of existing pictures. The new realism which emerged after the war in forms as various as the metaphysical painting of de Chirico, or the nominal classicism of Bernard, opposed the photographic regime by attaching new emphasis to the materiality of paint and to its function as a substitute for the solidity of absent objects. Bernard would have remembered Aurier's Symbolist call to abstraction in 1892 as the necessary response to the advent of a Pierre Petit or a Nadar.[20] By 1919, however, de Chirico was defining Metaphysical painting as the substitution of a new attachment to the 'allure que notre esprit confère à certains objets et certains aspects de la vie' for the late nineteenth century Symbolist preoccupation with dreams.[21]

Bernard became increasingly preoccupied with the handling of his paint after 1910 as he measured his distance both from modernist abstraction and from the mechanical eye of the camera. He had already ironically contrasted photography and painting in 1904 when he had pointed the camera's lens squarely at the thickly worked surface of Cézanne's late canvas, and at the dribbles and spatters of paint on the master's trousers. The bland

evenness of the photographic print is confronted in this case by the strangeness of Cézanne's pictorial vision. The act of painting is similarly the subject of Bernard's Self--portrait with a palette of 1914 in which the unused colours on the artist's palette are offered for the viewer's inspection (figure 117). The relationship between Bernard's active depicted hand and the raw materials that pretend to wait for application to his canvas invokes Velasquez' self-portrait in Las Meninas with its archetypal meditation on the same subject.

By the mid-1920s Bernard had concentrated his desire to revive neglected pictorial standards in his enthusiasm for Delacroix as 'celui qui a le plus travaillé à retrouver les moyens d'expression de la grande peinture'.[22] In 1925, Bernard's concerns about the state of modern painting were aggravated by the exhibition of 'modern decorative and industrial arts' in Paris which celebrated the application of modernist principles to every part of modern life. He referred to Delacroix as a salutary model for modern painters in his response to the questionnaire which was devised for Le Figaro by Arsène Alexandre in the wake of the exposition. Alexandre's 'enquête' had wanted to know, among other things, if modern decorative art had 'complètement aboli tout conception intellectuelle'.[23] Le Figaro published the conservative replies which came back from a number of older artists, including Dagnan-Bouveret, Aman-Jean and Béraud, as well as from Bernard.

Making no secret of his contempt for the exhibition, Dagnan-Bouveret had written,

> à la reflexion il me parut suprenant qu'une obéissance presque générale à un mot d'ordre donné en haut lieu de 'faire avant tout du nouveau' n'eut pas abouti, dans l'ensemble, à encore plus de monotonie, de pauvreté et de laideur.[24]

His hostility proceeded from a fear, which was more openly expressed by Béraud, that the nineteenth century tableau, as they had known it, would cease to exist with the triumph of

modern design:

> 'Le tableau à sujet doit-il disparaître?' Réponse: oui, quand les artistes ne sauront plus dessiner, ce qui serait possible si une réaction vraisemblable ne nous ramenerait pas un jour les principes trop méprisés aujourd'hui.[25]

More surprising, perhaps, was the confession from Signac that he had been left unmoved by the modernity on display in the pavilions of 1925. Complaining of the overinflated importance attached to the work of furniture makers, he had written that

> tandis que j'éprouve tant de joie devant une pomme de Cézanne, un panneau de Seurat, un croquis de Degas, je n'éprouve que de l'ennui devant les oeuvres de nos plus notoires 'ensembliers'.[26]

In Bernard's reply to Alexandre's questions, he lingered wistfully on his admiration for the nostalgic technique of Delacroix which he had argued in 1910 had single-handedly revived the manners of the great Venetians and Flemings.[27] Bernard had formerly held reservations about the murals of Saint-Sulpice, claiming that they had sanctioned the radical experiments of the later nineteenth century, but he now forgave that indiscretion to flout received definitions and to acknowledge Delacroix as the classicist he had always professed to be.

> Pour opérer selon la méthode classique il faut savoir par coeur quasi tout l'univers. Faire un homme avec son squelette, ses muscles, son mouvement, son expression, grouper des figures, y faire jouer l'ombre et la clarté selon l'intérêt qu'elles ont dans le tableau [...] Géricault et Delacroix furent les seuls à suivre cette voie classique et lyrique. C'est par une erreur grossière qu'on les a rangés dans les romantiques. L'art classique ne pourra renaître que lorsque l'accord entre les sens, l'intelligence et la raison se sera pleinement produit.[28]

Bernard's tribute to lost pictorial standards in Le Figaro called for a history painting which would be animated by the memory of Romantic expressivity. It was not by accident that his championing of Delacroix and Géricault came at a time when many of his contemporaries were attracted instead to the classicism of Ingres. While Bernard had paid homage to Ingres' static poses and smooth technique in a work such as his Après le

bain of 1908, he had renounced Ingres' example by the 1920s when the classicist was being claimed as a precursor of contemporary modernism. Roger Bissière's 'Notes sur Ingres', published in L'Esprit nouveau in 1921, had stated that

> Ingres ne met pas forcément le nez au milieu du visage ou les yeux sur la même ligne, si sa sensation les lui fait apparaître autrement placés. De même les éléments du tableau ne se découpent pas arbitrairement sur le fond, mais le fond vit d'une vie inséparable du celle du sujet central [....] Il n'est rien qui ressemble davantage à un tableau d'Ingres que certains tableaux cubistes de Picasso.[29]

Such an endorsement can only have encouraged Bernard to place his sympathies elsewhere. In a private letter written to his friend Auriant in 1931, he revealed that his loss of interest in Ingres was motivated by contempt for his modern followers. Contrasting the Bain turc with the Dormeuses of Courbet, he announced:

> Quel tableau que ces Dormeuses! Pourquoi le Louvre ne l'a-t-il point? Je le rêve au beau milieu de la Salle Française auprès de l'Odalisque et du Bain turc en porcelaine de M. Ingres, l'idole de nos mediocres en tout genre, des élèves de l'école aux fauves de nos salons insurgés.[30]

Imitated by conservatives and radicals alike, Ingres' 'porcelain' figures were at a far remove from the dramatic embodiment of emotion which Bernard had come to demand of classicist painting.

Denis had anticipated the decline of Ingres in Bernard's estimation in his 1916 survey of modern French art in which he had claimed that Ingres' materialist vision, which he thought of as wholly dependent on nature, was inferior to the 'repertoire inépuisable' of Delacroix' imagination, 'abondamment remplie de formes'.[31] Although in 1902 Denis had defined Delacroix as the bearer of 'des germes de décadence' and had upheld Ingres as a representative of 'les principes éternels de notre goût occidental', by 1916 he had reversed their roles.[32] 'La vision personelle', he wrote, 'autorise toutes les libertés, toutes les déformations. Depuis M. Ingres, ancêtre des déformateurs, jusqu'au Cubisme, cette

liberté s'est développé'.[33]

Denis' criticism of Ingres' supposed enslavement to nature ignored the imaginative distortions of his drawing, but conformed to the conservative wisdom which maintained that modern painting had lost its capacity for expression through its neglect of idealism. The absorption of Ingres' licked surfaces, elastic structures and hard outlines into the modernist figures of a Léger or Picasso, identified him as a model for what conservatives claimed were the purely material deformations of modern painting.

In Bernard's letter of 1926 to the Figaro, he complained that ignorance of 'des sciences essentiels d'art' had brought about 'l'abolition de toute conception intellectuelle, de toute vision profonde, de toute drame'.[34] He had voiced similar concerns about the expressive limitations of modern art in 1920 when he had opined that the great events and human catastrophes of the war had inspired no adequate pictorial response. His 'La Méthode de Paul Cézanne' had attributed the shortcomings of modern painting to the limitations of minds impeded by the 'mesquin'. The modernists, he wrote, had revealed themselves, through their merely formalist researches, to be innately superficial and destructive.

> Nous venons de traverser des événements considérables de graves catastrophes humains dignes de faire penser sur l'homme la science et la civilisation; mais [...] rien de véritablement grand n'a répondu, que je sache, dans les arts à ces faits énormes [...] La cause fondamentale de ce mal est que nous vivons d'une imagination purement sensuelle et non d'une imagination animique [...] Les recherches pullulent il est vrai, autour de nous mais elles furent, mais elles sont, mais elles ne peuvent être qu'à la surface du moyen d'expression; abandonnant à l'art même, elles s'adonnent à la déformation, au morcellement, à la destruction.[35]

Surprisingly, this critique of modernism coincided with similar complaints coming from critics within the avant-garde. Ozenfant and Jeanneret, for example, did not hesitate to criticise Cubism in their Purist manifesto of 1919, which Ozenfant recalled ten years later

had been provoked by his fear that the dominant modern style was becoming merely ornamental. 'I realised', Ozenfant wrote in explanation of his secession from Cubism, 'that no carpet, however beautiful, could produce great emotions or great sentiments'[36] The study of Modern French Painters which published Ozenfant's comments also presented Maurice Raynal's assessment of Léger in terms that Bernard would have agreed with and deplored.

> His plastic feeling is concerned only with form and its aspects: he hates the romanticism of Rodin and Michelangelo [...] Some may criticise the latter tendency as leading necessarily to the decorative [...] Fernand Léger believes (if I interpret him rightly) that it is a little silly to plan a palace when you have only odds and ends to build it with.[37]

The modernist return to figuration, associated in Raynal's analysis with an engagement with the physical and an avoidance of extroverted or intense emotion, was an easy target for Bernard's attack on the 'purement sensuelle' modern vision, engaged only with the 'surface du moyen d'expression'.

Like that of Denis, Bernard's critique of the modernism of his radical contemporaries recalled the Romantic terms of Baudelaire's famous comparison of Delacroix and Ingres at the Exposition universelle of 1855. Baudelaire had ridiculed the supposed excess of materiality and absence of feeling in Ingres' painting by likening the atmosphere of his exhibit to that of 'un laboratoire de chimie'. He had remarked of the Apothéose de l'Empereur Napoléon Ier that it was incapable of flight,

> cette apothéose ou plutôt cet attelage tombe, tombe avec une vitesse proportionnée à sa pésanteur. Les chevaux entraînent le char vers la terre. Le tout, comme un ballon sans gaz, qui aurait gardé tout son lest, va inévitablement se briser sur la surface de la planète.[38]

The apparent demise of subject and expression in modern painting, as regretted by the likes of Bernard, Denis and Signac, was, of course, not final. Their call for a new painting

informed by the expressiveness of the past would soon to be answered, but not as they expected, with the rise of Surrealism.

6 Symbolism and Surrealism

The links between Van Gogh, Gauguin, Bernard and Surrealism were traced in Alfred Barr's 1936 diagram of 'The Development of Abstract Art' by a series of arrows which passed from Pont-Aven in 1888 through Fauvism and Expressionism to Surrealism (figure 118). Bernard himself reluctantly claimed paternity of Surrealism in 1936 by virtue of his pioneering role as a pictorial Symbolist.[1] Beyond Bernard's own declaration, however, his relation to Surrealism has not previously been discussed, despite its being evoked by a recurrent theme of the early Surrealist paintings of Dali, his revisions of Millet's Angelus.

Dali painted a series of variations on and contemplations of the Angelus in the early 1930s immediately after he was accepted into the Surrealist group by Breton. These works seem to look back to the uses made of Millet by Van Gogh and Bernard in the 1880s, expressing Dali's simultaneous distance from and affinity with the earlier movement. The uncomfortable sense of history emanating from Dali's responses to Millet is particularly relevant to Bernard as it indicates a link between the Surrealist's polished trompe-l'oeil and melodramatic expression, and the equivocal forms of Bernard's late conservatism.

The analysis of sensory perception made by the successive 'isms' of late nineteenth and early twentieth century painting reached a climax with the inscrutability of early Cubism. The later twentieth century revivals of realism and classicism were to be problematically related to the forward momentum of modernist experimentation. The claim to newness made by such an apparently retrogressive style as Surrealism was based on the opposition of its interior vision to the notional externality it attributed to the art of the past. Surrealism represented its relation to Cubism as like that of radical Symbolism to

Impressionism - an application of discoveries made in the realm of the senses to the supposedly neglected territory of the mind.

The debt of Surrealism to pictorial Symbolism was acknowledged only sparingly in Surrealist theory. Breton's 1928 manifesto, 'Surrealism and Painting', briefly nodded to the precedents of Rimbaud and Mallarmé but dismissed all painters outside of Picasso and Braque as blind to the liberated interior sight it demanded.[2] Despite this representation to the contrary, however, the legacy of Symbolism to Surrealism was significant. Models for the analysis of modernity's subconscious were provided by such precursors as Boecklin and Redon - the former of whom predicted de Chirico's obsession with vacated public spaces, while the latter's 'noirs' initiated the stark encounters between objects commemorated by photomontage. Both styles were fed by their fragmentary memory of the art of the past, which, in keeping with Surrealism's later historical position was represented by its literal references to the museum and the ruin.

As early as 1893, Bernard's Breton women with umbrellas had revealed his sense of the altered meanings that were imposed on the forms of the past by the context of his modern experience (figure 38). The superimposition of still-life and landscape formats in this work, as discussed in chapter one, provides the artificial context for its combination of ancient and modern borrowings. Bernard's vacillation between past and present forms recurred in a number his early works, including Madeleine au Bois d'Amour, where he depicted his sister in a composition of horizontal and vertical lines which removed her to a lonely place at the base of an empty landscape (figure 24). Madeleine's separateness from modern time, in imaginary connection with nature, is expressed in this case in the consonance between her body and the landscape it inhabits. In Bernard's Egyptian works he continued to use architectonic arrangements of the body to imply a reminiscence of

past time. One of his favourite compositions, a paring of standing and fallen figures, metaphorically invoked the idea of the ruin through the living body (figure 119).

As has been observed in the previous chapters, Bernard made use of two distinct techniques for addressing his relation to the art of the past in the phases of his painting before and after 1896. In a work such as Bernard's Blé noir (figure 15), or Van Gogh's Les Sarcleuses (figure 120), figures are twisted and pulled in patterns of moist paint that seem to embody a restless energy. Exemplifying what Richard Shiff has called a modernist 'technique of originality', these pictures demonstrate their origin in earlier painting through the emphatic medium which reinforces their authors' attempt to take possession of their borrowed motifs.[3] After 1896 Bernard altered this representation of his relationship to earlier art by adopting what might be called a technique of homage in which his deference to his chosen masters was expressed through his wilful imitation of their work's colour, handling and texture. The compositions produced in this way seem to contain fragments of old master painting that have been unexpectedly reassembled in new combinations. As we have seen in relation to Après le bain and La Famille (figures 90 and 102) the play between the techniques of illusion which Bernard borrowed from the art of the past and the apparent flatness of his modern style can evoke a discontinuity suggestive of collage.

Dali's Surrealism offers a useful point of comparison with Bernard's oeuvre because it reveals a sense of distance from and nostalgia for the art of the past through techniques which resemble those used by Bernard in a more exaggerated form. When Dali began his series of revisions of Millet's Angelus in 1930, his Surrealist style had just separated itself from his juvenile flirtations with Fauvism and Cubism. He proceeded, in a series of canvases, to associate Millet's work with the conceit of an imaginary graveyard haunted

by pictorial ghosts. Discussions of Dali's Angelus paintings have previously concentrated on his later writings about Millet's famous work in which a copious Freudian interpretation of its sexuallty repeats fin-de-siècle stereotypes of the femme fatale and explores an Oedipal attraction to the maternal figure of the peasant woman. Although it is an intriguing text, The Tragic Myth of Millet's Angelus is far from a transparent gloss of Dali's Millet paintings which appear to be more concerned with pictorial than with sexual reproduction.[4]

Dali's fascination with the Angelus, he wrote in 1963, had been provoked, among other things, by a tea-service that he saw in a shop window which was decorated with an Angelus motif. The mechanical repetition of Millet's composition in the context of this implied domesticity, and on the unexpected surface of porcelain, predicted the transmutations and juxtapositions that were to attend the Surrealist's revision of the Symbolists' nostalgia. In Dali's first quotation of Millet's work, Imperial Monument to the woman child (c.1930), the two figures of the praying peasants are diminished by an apparently vast distance (figure 121). Dali's fascination with the reflecting symmetry of Millet's figures is given a context by its placement beside another prize of the Louvre, the Mona Lisa, which is etched on the towering formation in the foreground. The institutional authority of these copied works is reinforced by the likeness of Napoleon, placed in a niche beside the great portrait purchased for France by François 1er. The borrowed forms of Millet and Leonardo, as painted by Dali, display the thinness and pallor of atrophy. Their emanation from a culture belonging to the time before his birth is confirmed by his quotation, in the foreground of the work, of a set of Boecklinesque cypresses and ruins which furnish the Symbolist context for the other hallucinatory fragments.

The archeological remains of earlier imaginations haunting Dali's painting are made more

horrible by their apparent continuing vigour in the face of his impotence. He visualises himself as the skeletal kneeling figure in the foreground of the composition whose bones are bent in the signature curve of a capital D. A modern St Anthony who appears to be attracted to and repelled by his inherited apparition, his self-image recalls the Symbolist reference to St Anthony, from Redon to Bernard, as a prototype of the modern imagination invaded by remembered forms.

Making use of pictorial quotations relocated to unfamiliar contexts, Dali's revision of the art of the past also employed painterly deformations which ironically revised the accepted modernist techniques of originality. In the Imperial monument to the woman child, the liquid shape of the central monolith seems to have been calcified by time. A fluent outline of fin-de-siècle smoke rises beside it in geological permanence. This petrification of nineteenth century imagery was continued in the Architectonic Angelus of Millet of 1933 in which the barely recognisable forms of the praying woman and the wheelbarrow, now extraordinarily vast, appear to have been cast in a material resembling plaster (figure 122). Dali's reshaping of the Angelus to make the reversed woman and the equally deformed wheelbarrow interpenetrate at the outline of the wheel in the woman's belly absurdly exaggerates the flexible distortions exemplified by the modernism of a Van Gogh or a Bernard, but reconstitutes them in an impossible monument on the verge of collapse.

In his polemical essay, 'Figures of Authority, ciphers of regression', Benjamin Buchloh has argued that,

> Quite unlike the modernist collage, in which various fragments and materials of experience are laid bare, revealed as fissures, voids, unresolvable contradictions irreconcilable particularizations, pure heterogeneity, the historicist image pursues the opposite aim; that of synthesis, of the illusory creation of a unity and totality which conceals its historical determination and conditioned particularity.[5]

The footnote attached to this statement reveals that Buchloh had Dali and Magritte in

mind as exponents of the 'historicist image' which he described. His argument, however, fails to acknowledge the fissures implicit in the work of twentieth century realists whose vacillation between modernist heterogeneity and historicist synthesis encompasses both poles of his dichotomy. Paradoxically, the more complete the solidity of the pictorial illusion generated by the nostalgic techniques appropriated by a Bernard or a Dali, the more insistent is the assertion of their distance from their sources, as expressed in the altered scale, situation and effect of their quotations. In the figure of Andrée Fort in Bernard's La Famille, for example, the body has a singular form that seems to be alienated both from modern reality and from the past figures to which it alludes. While avoiding modernist techniques of fragmentation, Bernard's mature style, in its very insistence on realist modes, embodies the discontinuity of the modern imagination, disrupted and confused by the overlapping and juxtaposing of borrowed forms.

II

As Dali was painting his persistent memories of the pictures of the last century, the radical pictorial style of the 1880s and 1890s in which Bernard had been a youthful innovator was being enshrined in new monuments at the edge of Paris. Dali's ironic contemplation of his esthetic inheritance coincided with Bernard's bemused witnessing of the migration of his once marginal Symbolist style to the centre of French culture. The works that had been hidden outside the 1889 Exposition universelle in the mostly ignored display at the Café Volpini, prefigured the official monuments of 1931. The Exposition des colonies, installed in the Bois de Vincennes, revealed the triumph of the exotic influence on modern decoration that had been inaugurated by the radicals of forty years before.

Already, in 1925, the pavilion of 'L'Afrique français' at the Exposition of decorative arts

had presented a modern colonialist style to the Parisian public (figure 123). Inspired by the mosque of Djenne, it boasted a rusticated dome and a façade of exotic reliefs which recalled the primitivist carvings of Gauguin. The public's taste for the exotic was satisfied on an enlarged scale in 1931, when visitors were invited to admire fashionable avenues of pavilions devoted to the French and foreign colonies. Those who ventured to the Pavilion of French Oceania were to encounter walls stamped with primitive patterns and decorated with a hemispherical fresco showing descendants of Gauguin's mythic Polynesians (figure 124). In the Exposition's souvenir editions French manufacturers advertised deluxe furniture whose exotic mouldings looked back to the Synthetism of Pont-Aven.

Bernard acknowledged the institutionalisation of the style that had once defined his radical retreat from Paris in his 1936 essay on 'Le Symbolisme Picturale'.

> les symbolistes, à l'exemple de Gauguin sculptaient des sabots et des cannes, donnaient des dessins pour broderies, et firent tant et si bien qu'ils provoquèrent la transformation de nos meubles, de nos constructions, de nos monuments, de nos expositions universelles. A la dernière, coloniale, on sentait Gauguin partout.[6]

The sensing of Gauguin everywhere in 1931 must have been alarming for one who had spent his life trying to escape his memory. The ghost of their long past friendship would have loomed particularly large in the temple of Angkor Wat, a more elaborate version of its 1889 predecessor, which had been a centrepiece of Gauguin's and Bernard's exotic dreams (figure 125). Confronting Bernard like a nemesis, the monuments of 1931 recalled the ambitions of his youth while confirming his isolation from a culture which had come to glorify what he had rejected.

In his contemporary painting, Bernard portrayed the imaginary interior of an age whose surface was dominated by collisions of the old and new. In an extraordinary work of 1932, he momentarily and ironically reverted to the memory of his Pont-Aven style, suggesting

the imprint left on him by the Exposition coloniale. The Bretonne à la nature morte displays a set of symmetrical overlapping wings of assertive flatness which part before a sea of wilful naïveté (figure 126). Bernard's youthful handling is reproduced in a mannered layer of vertical strokes that function as quotation marks. This parody of his long past Cloisonnism avoids the unsettling construction of his youthful compositions, however, and is considerably less disturbing than his traditionalist works of the same period.

However unwillingly, Bernard was a denizen of the deformed landscape which obsessed the Surrealists, and his mature paintings clearly reflected the peeling layers of memory and innovation in modern life. The most ambitious project of his later career, the Cycle humain, extended the contemplation of modern loss and dislocation that had begun with his early Symbolist works, in a pictorial language which brought together Michelangelesque quotations with perversely modern compositions. The four vast canvases of the cycle, each 3 metres x 2.65 metres, were painted in Venice in two versions between 1922 and 1924 and represent four stages in human history. The imaginary configurations of The Construction of the Temple of Jerusalem, Heroes and Gods, Christ healing the sick, and Doubt appear to exist in no particular time and place, but are addressed to supposed failings and lacks in the life of the present.

In the first work of the series, The Construction of the Temple of Jerusalem, Bernard connected references to Michelangelo's Last Judgment with a recollection of the idealised Egyptian figures that had been represented in the Fellahs au travail (figure 127). Elaborating his 1898 vision of an ideal humanity divorced from modern technology, the work is dominated by two foreground coulisses of monumental women and children and gargantuan men. On the left, an ascending row of workers struggles to lift a hidden object

from below the bottom of the canvas while, on the right, maternal groups prefigure the advent of Mary and Jesus. Swollen bodies, crowding the foreground, deflect attention from the central vista of the landscape which is populated by diminutive crowds and overpowered by a dark scaffolding evoking Bernard's fear of technology.

Remarkable for its discrete structure, the composition of The Construction of the Temple contains figures that seem to be unconscious of each other or of their relationship to the vast pictorial space around them. The recession indicated by the sudden diminution at the work's centre does not combat the flatness of the foreground groups which are pressed forward as if against the picture plane. These monumental bodies, squashed into symmetrical masses, betray their machinery all too clearly, like a diorama of figures by Michelangelo whose oversized proportions emphasise their static effect.

Bernard's construction of his pictorial field from massive figural groups is also a feature of the third painting of his series, Christ healing the sick, in which a sea of bodies rises and dips together around the central figure of Christ (figure 128). The composition recalls Ary Scheffer's Le Christ Consolateur of 1837 and, like it, evokes a promised salvation from worldly grief through the broken bodies of the oppressed (figure 129). The soft mound of painted drapery and flesh, punctuated by the rhetorical rhythms of gesturing arms, suggests a history painting whose structure has been eroded by time. Like the foreground groups of the Construction of the Temple, the figures of Christ healing the sick seem to be stuck together, their malleable bodies and melodramatic limbs melting as if in soft layers.

Bernard depicted the modern world directly in the final image of his cycle, La Doute, in which a group of nude figures vacillate between submitting to and recoiling from the satanic effigy of their idol (figure 130). In the foreground, an almost cinematic progression

of male bodies falls forward to take up a position of submission beneath the sinister statue. A recollection of Cézanne's hallucinatory Temptation of St Anthony is evinced by the silhouette of the overseeing devil and by the agonised form of the central figure on bended knee which recoils in torment from the surrounding spectacle. Like those of its companions, the static pose and frozen grimace of this figure evoke the painting's remote relationship to the pictorial tradition it invokes.

In their implicit violence, the works of the Cycle humain bear a trace of the Great War whose experience Bernard had complained in 1920 had not yet found an adequate expression in paint. If The Construction of the Temple of Jerusalem alludes to the process of post-war reconstruction, with its hope of a return to lost values, Doubt recalls the fields of battle themselves. Massed in angular piles, its figures inhabit a scarred landscape which is wounded by the gash of the long trench that runs through it. The misery of the work's protagonists, however, would seem to be the product of culture rather than of politics. A blonde female prostitute depicted on the right side of the picture embodies the triumph of commerce to which Bernard attributed the debased conditions of his age. The other brutalised figures are apparent victims of the modern life which he refused to represent more directly in paint.

The few contemporary critics who responded favourably to the Cycle humain praised the bravery with which Bernard continued to confront a hostile world. Claude Roger-Marx began his review of Bernard's retrospective exhibition at the Charpentier gallery in 1926 by recalling the unexpected apparition which the Cycle humain had made at the Tuileries in 1924. Bernard's works had been received, Roger-Marx recalled, as alien exercises in 'peintures d'idées' or as 'peinture de musée', and hence as irrelevant to the modern age.[7] No doubt Bernard would have taken such disparagements as compliments, strengthening

his resolve to oppose the apparent errors of his time. His longtime defender, Arsène Alexandre could admire the Cycle humain as the culmination of his long retreat from modern life.

> Il faut pour que cette explication fut assez claire et complète pour ceux qui vont contempler ces grandes images du Cycle humain, raconter toute la carrière de Emile Bernard, dire son evasion des chapelles pour se diriger vers les Temples, le montrer voyageant et s'arrêtant aux étapes pour laisser dans d'autres pays des oeuvres qui semble d'un autre temps, trouvant en France même, dans la familiale et laborieuse solitude le perfectionnement continu de son métier et la somptuosité mutuelle de la couleur et du relief.[8]

The works which seemed to be of another time, however, belonged to the present and to Bernard's need for a sense of connection with the past that would compensate for his unease with modernity. The wastelands of his allegorical landscapes, like those of the Surrealist, are haunted by fading Romantic skies. They evoke the moderns' possession by the memory of a former life that would be dreamt of but never inhabited.

The nude, the most prominent medium of Bernard's address to the art of the past was also the most obvious expression of his distance from it. Evidence of the gap between his pictorial imagination and his modern experience took on a disturbing appearance in a work such as his nude study, the Torse féminin of 1933, in which a living model is made to substitute for a classical fragment (figure 131). Bernard had already painted the fragmentary Venus which adorned his studio in the quai de Bourbon in his self-portrait of 1932, where he made it a sign of his wilful estrangement from the twentieth century (figure 132). In the Torse féminin, the cutting edges of Bernard's canvas imitate the amputation of the marble, chopping off the living figure at the thighs, forearm and neck. Disturbingly subverting this classical arrangement, the string of pearls and the patch of pubic hair invest the body with a perverse eroticism. This anonymous torso recalls the attraction which Dali professed to have for the 'neutral mechanical sensuallties' of tailors' dummies,[9] and was to be repeated in Magritte's Rape of 1934, in which the body takes on

the expressive functions of the face (figure 133). Its progeny were to be the bodily fragments characteristic of late twentieth century photography.

7 A Modern Life

Bernard's last writings were largely devoted to his articles on individual nineteenth century painters and to the revisiting of his own origins in the autobiographical manuscript, L'Aventure de ma vie. In his late essays on Delacroix, Manet, Van Gogh and Anquetin, he constructed modern art history as an inversion of the progress of Renaissance art as famously celebrated in Vasari's lives. Whereas Vasari recounted a history of the accumulation of artistic knowledge, Bernard described an accumulation of anxiety in painters who were increasingly removed from the sources of their inspiration. Like Vasari's, Bernard's historical scope stretched from the influential figures of previous generations to contemporaries whose efforts and achievements lingered in his personal memory.

A less pertinent model for Bernard's historical writing than that of Vasari was the recent example of the painter/historian provided by Fromentin's Les Maîtres d'autrefois which had first been published in Bernard's childhood. Fromentin, in his accounts of his tours of Northern museums, took delight in bringing admired pictures into the present, painting them as if for the first time before the eyes of the astonished spectator. Bernard, on the other hand, could only write about the art of the past with a sense of loss which revealed his very different idea of the modern painter's relation to his inheritance.

Bernard's 1919 essay for the Mercure de France, 'Charles Baudelaire, critique d'art et esthéticien' is, in fact, the most intense and detailed of his tributes to Delacroix, the master whose defence Bernard regarded as Baudelaire's 'oeuvre capitale'. Through reference to Baudelaire and to his influential links with Symbolism, Bernard revealed his intense sense

of connection to the ideas of modernity and nostalgia which had preoccupied Romantic art. Bernard's 1919 quotation of Baudelaire's response to Delacroix' Pietà as a 'chef-d'oeuvre' which 'laisse dans l'esprit un sillon de profonde melancholie' recalled the memory of his own response in 1891 to the copy of Delacroix' work which hung by Van Gogh's death bed.[1] Bernard interpreted Baudelaire's account of nineteenth century melancholy as referring to a modern separation from the 'nerfs', 'rêve' and 'âme' of the art of the past whose revival, he thought, had been Delacroix' mission. The perturbation of the style which Delacroix applied to his painted recollections of 'Raphael, Titien, Rembrandt et Rubens', Bernard suggested, revealed the intensity which was needed to reanimate the neglected forms of the past. The agitation of Delacroix' line and colour became paradoxically classicist in Bernard's estimation, as it had been for Baudelaire, in its function as a stimulant to the remains of art history.[2]

Bernard was predictably impressed by the importance that Baudelaire attached to Delacroix' estrangement from his century, described in a set of binary oppositions which distinguished Delacroix' imagination and spirituality from the bourgeois materialism of his age. The same oppositions, adopted by Bernard, were to shape the style of both his early radicalism and his later conservatism. In 1893, Bernard had written to his mother from Samos, asking her to send a copy of Delacroix' newly published journal which, he told her, he had already read in fragments.[3] His reading of Delacroix, leaving a lasting imprint on his later writings, encouraged his own attacks on the modern illusion of progress.

Delacroix' production of great painting for a hostile age was continued, in Bernard's history, by Manet who was honoured in a chapter of his book of 1920, Sur l'Art et sur les maîtres. Again, Baudelaire was the medium through which Bernard addressed his subject. His argument began with the famous definition, 'Vous êtes le premier dans la

décrépitude de votre art', which he interpreted as referring to the vices of the Second Empire, and to Manet's transcendent place within them. The artistic malaise of the period, he regretted, was one from which modern painting had yet to emerge.

> C'était le triomphe du petit genre, du médiocre et du commercial [...] L'art du peindre subit ce méfait à tel point que, solt sujet d'histoire ou de religion, on en retrouve partout l'impreinte, et jusque sur les artistes les mieux doués.[4]

The pictorial decline foretold by Delacroix had been visited on Manet who had resisted its influence, Bernard argued, with his retreat into the museum. If Manet had restored 'âme et forme à la peinture dans une époque où elle a perdait toute vitalité', he thought, it was by virtue of his innate sympathy with the painting of the seventeenth century. For all his talent however, Manet emerged from Bernard's account as a victim of history. His achievement, he insisted, rested on the works of the 1860s which, through his mastery of 'la matière même de peinture', had transformed 'la vie ambiante' into forms that were 'quasiment classique'.[5] Later, Bernard argued, Manet had become infected with a doubt and impotence inherited from Impressionism which demonstrated the danger of modernism even to an artist of genius.

The difficult climate surrounding Bernard's own artistic formation was captured in two articles on Van Gogh of 1924 and 1926, in which he honoured his old friend for gifts which had been in constant conflict with the esthetic and moral corruption of his age. The opening anecdote of Bernard's 1926 essay provides a metaphor for Van Gogh's singularity and for his remoteness from his contemporaries.

> L'année 1887 me montre van Gogh dans un sombre atelier d'élèves. Il y a dans cet endroit, sur une table bas, un modèle, symbole de la grossièreté ambiante, et, derrière ce modèle, une étoffe sale, maculée de noms à la craie et au fusain. J'y vois Vincent peignant cette femme nue, substituant à ce fond vulgaire des tapis de sa fantaisie et des tentures de son goût.[6]

The studio was Cormon's, and the substitution which Van Gogh made of fantastic

decorations for a vulgar reality mirrored the contemporary ambitions of Bernard. Bernard argued that the influences of Impressionism and Neo-impressionism to which Van Gogh had consecutively submitted himself were mere detours along a path that was directed to the wilful abstraction of nature. Van Gogh had 'vaincu' Impressionism, Bernard thought, with his mature work in Aries which had returned, by way of intense colour, to the simplicity of his dark paintings in Holland.[7]

The ever more fragile strain of avant-gardist retrospection, as described in Bernard's historical writings, was redirected by Anquetin whose flamboyant reference to Flemish Baroque painting Bernard saw as running parallel to his own classicism. 'La vie de Louis Anquetin', he announced provocatively in 1934, 'offre l'image la plus complète et la plus surprenante de notre époque tourmentée' (figure 134).[8] The pioneering Anquetin whom he had met at Cormon's studio in 1884 had become a prominent radical of the late 1880s, anticipating Bernard's Cloisonnoist style with his Avenue Clichy, le soir and Mower at noon. Bernard acknowledged Anquetin posthumously as an unjustly neglected master in two articles, for the Mercure de France in 1932 and the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in 1934. After receiving a large inheritance from his mother, Bernard recalled, he had become an increasingly solitary figure in the 1890s, pursuing his art with a single mindedness which disdained the mutable standards of his contemporaries. Renouncing the glory 'que notre époque octroie à toutes les facilités ayant la fausse tournure de la nouveauté', he had devoted himself instead to reviving the pictorial language of the past.[9] His Rubensian style had been greeted without enthusiasm by late nineteenth century critics, but had earned him employment in the twentieth century as a designer of tapestries for Gobelins, and of theatrical scenery. Such exercises were well beneath his ambition, however, which, Bernard wrote, had been no less than the liberation of modern painting from the 'pandémonium d'erreurs et de faussetés' into which he thought it had fallen. Like

Bernard, Anquetin regarded himself as a misunderstood genius. He addressed the tragedy of the First World War with a characteristic outpouring of allegory. 'A propos de la dernière guerre, il avait composé un dessin fort émouvante representant aux pieds du Christ en Croix les Allemands massacrant des enfants et des femmes'. Anquetin's ambition, his isolation and his apparent obedience to the old masters likened him to Bernard as one 'persuadé qu'il était le dernier rejeton de la grande tradition oubliée'.[10]

Bernard's selective history of modern art reads like an epitaph for the lost tableau, which he seems implicitly to have acknowledged remained beyond the grasp even of wilful conservatives like himself and Anquetin. As Renaissance forms had been eroded by the new visual experiences of the nineteenth century, the artistic address which Bernard made to the past was increasingly to ideas that were divorced from their original culture and divested of the meanings with which they had once been infused. His works which attempted to borrow their identity from distant masters used a style and iconography which reflected back the preoccupations of modernism, substituting an increasingly insistent backwardness for modernism's progress and wilfully repeating the outmoded forms of the past to compensate for the inexorable passage of time. In Bernard's example, we discover a modern art which is more equivocal than is usually allowed for in modernist and post-modernist theory; one whose loss of conviction in its own techniques goes back at least to the 1890s, and one determined to address its predicament through an ambiguous submission to the authority of the past.

II

In a 1937 exhibition of French painting at the Palais de Tokyo there appeared a landscape painted by Bernard in Saint-Briac which now bore the forged signature of Gauguin. Bernard explained in an article for Le Point that the old and unjust confusion was one to

which he had resigned himself. He subsequently attached an inscription to the back of the painting which stated his authorship, but the owner chose to retain Gauguin's name on the front. The exposure of the forgery did not revive the old rivalry between the two painters, Bernard having decided that 'on a assez parlé' of the subject.[11] Instead, it revealed how the art market had redefined Bernard's early work, from a distance of fifty years, as a pretender to the more saleable name of Gauguin.

Bernard's career, which had taken a course in opposition to the demands for progress made by modernist critics and dealers, ended with his witnessing of the invasion of his renounced past by the collectors of modernism. He had resisted, but could not fail to be deeply imbued with the modern cults of personality, originality and progress. In L'Aventure de ma vie, published after his death, he revived the memory of his origins through an unreliable memoir which pays nostalgic tribute to the Pont-Aven he had known as a very young man. The reclaiming of his youth in his last years extended to his return to Pont-Aven and to his making it the subject of his last paintings. He repainted the Pardon in 1939, placing it this time in a deep illusory space which substitutes recession for the confronting closeness of the 1888 version (figure 135).

In other works, Bernard's reminiscence of his distant past seems more intense. In his seventy-first year he made a copy of one of his early agricultural subjects, Après le récolte de goémon of 1889 (figures 136 and 137). The monumentally stylised original had represented three hooded women seated before a diagonal pile of seaweed and seeming to contemplate its expressive effect. Their resemblance to the three Marys of the lamentation of Christ and to the three Breton women of Gauguin's Yellow Christ is marked. The simplified figures of Bernard's early work are not entirely transformed by his late addition of tonal modelling to their outlines. Floating in the unresolved composition of

1939, the weightless haystack and the rhythmically repeated veils of Bernard's youthful work look like reincarnations of a half-forgotten past.

Modernist painting, despite the simplifications characteristic of some histories of modernism, was far from an amnesiac succession of new-seeming gestures. The oeuvre of Bernard offers a potent example of the modern artist's insistent memory, with its expression of his uncomfortable awareness of his position in history and of his regret for the losses it entailed. While Bernard's first modernist paintings looked back with longing to distant hieratic forms, his last works enshrined the ruins of his early modernism and of his hope for a great modern style formed in the image of the past. If Bernard's development followed a path in opposition to the dominant tendencies of modern painting, he nevertheless embodied the tensions particular to the modern artist. His Venetian-inspired idylls of the twentieth century, like his first startling inventions, explored the territory that remained to painting in an age when the medium had come to be defined and dominated by its relationship to the museum.