

A Visit to the Louvre

Joachim Gasquet
Paul Cézanne

Danièle Huillet &
Jean-Marie Straub

[*Une Visite au Louvre*] (1)

[Credit sequence]

Dominique Païni of the Louvre provoked this film in 1990.

Joachim Gasquet

A Visit to the Louvre

Julie Koltai

Danièle Huillet

Jean-Marie Straub

William Lubtchansky

Irina Lubtchansky

Jean-Paul Toraille

[Credits continue]

00:38 Traveling left across
the Seine to the Louvre.
Travelling swings back to the
right on the porte cochère of
the Louvre. Traffic heard on
sound-track.

II

THE LOUVRE

'The ideal of earthly happiness? . . . To have a good formula.'

We were leaving the Galerie des Machines at the Salon. We had gone there to have another look at Rodin's Balzac. Cézanne had bought a photograph of it to give to me . . . It was 11 o'clock, we had a quick lunch and went off to the Louvre on the top of the Passy-Hôtel de Ville tram along the quais.

It was a clear, invigorating spring day, a Paris afternoon. The trees were tipped with tender green shoots. The Seine was basking in the sun. Centuries of history glittered in the water beyond the bridges towards the Cité. Shop girls were strolling. We could see them on the benches in the Tuileries finishing their frites. Children ran alongside the carriages offering young couples bunches of violets for sale. Passers-by were making busily towards the hum of the boulevards. But along the river banks all was gentle, spring-like and calm. The Institute, the Louvre, Notre-Dame stood proud in the mild light. After a good cup of coffee Cézanne was expansive and smiling.

CÉZANNE

Well, well . . . Good old France is warming itself in the sun and putting its nose to the window. There you are . . . tradition! I am more traditional than people think. It's like Rodin. They don't grasp at all what his real nature is. He's a man of the Middle Ages who makes admirable pieces, but who doesn't see the whole work. He needs to be set in the porch of a cathedral, the way the old sculptors were. Rodin is an astonishing stone carver, with all the sensibility of our time, who will make all the statues anyone wants, but he hasn't a single idea. He lacks a creed, a system, a faith. His *Gates of Hell*, his monument to hard work, someone gave him the idea for it and you'll see, he will never build it. I think Mirbeau is behind his *Balzac*. He certainly has caught him, fixed him, with his prodigious intellect, with those eyes that devour the world and then close themselves on it passionately, eyes which seem to have gone

1:25 Black Screen.

black from all the coffee he drank the whole time. And the hands, under the greatcoat, which control the whole life of this dedicated man. It's fantastic! . . . And this massive block, you know, it's made to be seen at night, lit violently from below, at the exit from the Français or the Opéra, in that feverish nocturnal Paris where one pictures the novelist and his novels, eh! . . . I don't want to belittle Rodin, really, in saying what I said. I like him, I admire him a great deal, but he is very much of his time, as we all are. We make fragments. We no longer know how to compose.

MYSELF

But don't you think in a portrait like Rembrandt's mother, or a still-life like Chardin's skate, I daren't say like your apples, there is often as much art and thought as in an historical scene, a pagan or Catholic allegory?

CÉZANNE

That depends, that depends . . . Of course if you compare a Chardin with a Lesueur, a portrait by Velasquez or Rembrandt with a feasting scene by Jordaens, my apples to a Troyon landscape, what you say is indisputable. But wait. I'll answer you when we've reached the Louvre. You can't really talk about painting unless you're in front of a picture. Believe me, nothing is more dangerous for a painter than to turn to books. If he takes that short cut he's done for. I know something about it. The harm Proudhon did to Courbet, Zola would have done to me. I'm delighted when Flaubert, if you remember, in his letters, strictly forbids himself to speak of an art whose technique he doesn't understand. That's him all over . . . It's not that I'm in favour of painters being ignorant. Quite the opposite. In the great ages they knew everything. In the old days, artists were the educators of the public. For instance, you see Notre-Dame over there. The creation and the history of the world, the dogmas, the virtues, the lives of the saints, the arts and the professions, everything that was known at that time was taught in its porch and its windows. As indeed in all the French cathedrals. The Middle Ages learnt its faith through the eyes, like Villon's mother . . .

'Le paradis où sont harpes et luths . . .'

That was the true knowledge, and it was all religious art. All those things your friend Abbé Tardif says you find in Saint Thomas – the people looked for them in the statues on the portals of their churches. That form of order, hierarchy, philosophy is as good as the *Summa*, and for

[. . .] I don't
like the primitives. I don't know Giotto well. I would have liked to see him.
[. . .] (2)

I'm too old now to go running to Italy. [. . .]

us it has more reality, because it's more beautiful and, what's more, we can understand it without effort. All the symbolism they* talk about – they maintain that even the Kabbala has its place in the rose windows – all the mystical significance slumbering under the Gothic mould of the stones; I don't know and I don't want to know anything about it. But life is always there . . . What do you expect? When the forms of the Renaissance burst forth with the paganism of that passionate age, the people turned their eyes away in vain from the austere realism of their chapels, they couldn't help remembering it. It gave their lives a tonic sharpness. They were never really comfortable with works in the grand manner. Ordinary people don't like rhetorical painting, any more than I do. Yes, there's the Gallery of the Battles at Versailles, but it's not painting they're looking at there. It's a kind of newspaper, a big mural newspaper they read there, popular images, like the Sainte-Geneviève series in the Panthéon.* But at Versailles in the château, in the park, people are never moved as they are in a church or a stadium. They have a sense of what is great in their bones. In our case, in Provence, that comes to us from the Romans; here in the north, from the cathedrals . . . All the same, it's amazing. For example, here am I, classical; I say to myself, I would like to be classical, but that bores me. Versailles bores me, the Cour Carré bores me. There's only the Place de la Concorde, yes, that's beautiful. Life! . . . Life! . . . And yet, you see how complicated it all is; life and realism are much more evident in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than in the elongated figures of the primitives. I don't like the primitives. I don't know Giotto well. I would have to see him. I only like Rubens, Poussin and the Venetians . . . Let me tell you, it's easier to represent God by a cross than by the expression on a face.

We had arrived, and got off the tram.

MYSELF

If you could see the Duccios in Siena . . . Everything is in those little scenes. Some are dramatic like a Tintoretto, with greens and bluish reds; others, like *Jesus before Pilate*, have a simple tragedy, constructed with the purity of a Racine play; and the women at the tomb facing the great angel – no bas-relief of antiquity has their nobility and their triumphant despair. It's as beautiful as Victory tying up her sandal. If you saw it! . . .

CÉZANNE

I'm too old now to go running to Italy. And besides, it seems to me that

I almost never go into the little room of primitives. It's not my kind of painting. [. . .].

What do you expect me to make of Cimabue's clumsiness, the naiveté of Angelico and even Uccello's perspective? . . . There's no flesh on those ideas. [. . .]

1:59 *Victory of Samothrace*, Wait. Just look at that . . . [. . .] It's an idea, it's a low-angle shot from the left. whole nation, a heroic moment in the life of a nation, but the clothes follow

the body, the wings are beating, the thighs are swelling. I don't need the head to imagine the expression, because all the blood that pulses, circulates, sings in the legs, the thighs, the whole body, has poured into the brain and risen to the heart. It is in motion, the motion of the whole woman, of the whole statue, of Greece. When the head came off, the marble must have bled . . .

2:56 Black Screen. While up there, among the primitives, you can chop off the heads of those little martyrs with the executioner's sword. A little vermilion, some drops of blood . . . they fly straight off bloodlessly to heaven. You don't paint souls. And here look at the victory's wings – you don't notice them, I no longer notice them. You don't think about them any more, they seem so natural. The body doesn't need them to fly off in triumph. It has its own impetus . . .

. But with the halos around Christ, the Virgin and the Saints, that's all one notices. They take over. They annoy me. The fact is one doesn't paint souls.

3:19 *Victory of Samothrace*. One paints bodies; and when the bodies are well painted, damn it all! The soul, if there is one, of every part of the body blazes out and shines through!

4:04 Silence on sound-track as the image holds on the *Victory of Samothrace*.

everything is here in the Louvre, one can love and understand everything here.

MYSELF

Everything . . . except perhaps the frescoes, the Franciscan movement in Umbrian painting, and what developed from it, Masaccio, Gozzoli . . . But what could Italy and this art add to yours? One could say that you stem from it and that you have studied it all your life.

CÉZANNE

I may shock you. I almost never go into the little room of primitives. It's not my kind of painting. I am wrong, I admit that I may be wrong; but what can I do? When I spend an hour contemplating *Le Concert champêtre* or Titian's *Jupiter and Antiope*, when my eyes are full of the whole animated crowd of *The Marriage at Cana*, what do you expect me to make of Cimabue's clumsiness, the naiveté of Angelico and even Uccello's perspective? . . . There's no flesh on those ideas. I leave that to Puvis. I like muscles, rich tones, blood. I am like Taine,* that's what I am, and in addition I'm a painter. I am a sensual man.

We went up the great Escalier des Dames.

Wait. Just look at that . . . The Victory of Samothrace. It's an idea, it's a whole nation, a heroic moment in the life of a nation, but the clothes follow the body, the wings are beating, the thighs are swelling. I don't need the head to imagine the expression, because all the blood that pulses, circulates, sings in the legs, the thighs, the whole body, has poured into the brain and risen to the heart. It is in motion, the motion of the whole woman, of the whole statue, of Greece. When the head came off, the marble must have bled . . . While up there, among the primitives, you can chop off the heads of those little martyrs with the executioner's sword. A little vermilion, some drops of blood . . . they fly straight off bloodlessly to heaven. You don't paint souls. And look here at the Victory's wings – you don't notice them, I no longer notice them. You don't think about them any more, they seem so natural. The body doesn't need them to fly off in triumph. It has its own impetus . . . But with the halos around Christ, the Virgin and the Saints, that's all one notices. They take over. They annoy me. The fact is one doesn't paint souls. One paints bodies; and when the bodies are well painted, damn it all! the soul, if there is one, of every part of the body blazes out and shines through!

We entered the little room where La Source hangs.

4:30 Jean-Dominique Ingres,
The Source, 1855-56. (3)

Ingres is just the same . . . bloodless! He's a draughtsman. The primitives were draughtsmen. They filled in the colours, they were illuminators on a large scale. Painting, what is properly called painting, only began with the Venetians. [. . .]

'Oh! it's beautiful enough, Ingres, Raphael, that whole outfit. I can appreciate them as well as anyone else. I can take pleasure in line if I want to. But there are snags. Holbein, Clouet or Ingres have nothing but line. Well, it's not enough. It's very beautiful, but it's not enough. Look at this *Source* . . .

It's pure, it's delicate, it's smooth, but [. . .]

it doesn't turn in space. The damp stone of the cardboard rock is not reflected in the marble of this moist – or what should be moist – flesh. Where is the surrounding penetration? And since she is the source, she should be emerging from the water, from the rock, from the leaves; instead she's pasted on them. By setting out to paint the ideal virgin, he hasn't painted a body at all [. . .] because of the idea of a system. False system and false idea. David killed painting. They introduced the hackneyed formula. They wanted to paint the ideal foot, the ideal hand, the perfect face and body, the supreme being. They banished character. What marks out the great painter is the character he lends to everything he touches, impulse, movement, passion, for it's possible to be both passionate and serene. They're afraid of this, or rather they never dreamt of it. In reaction, perhaps, to all the passion, the tempests, the social brutality of their time.

6:13 Black Screen.

7:07 Jacques-Louis David,
Death of Marat, 1793.

[. . .] I know nothing colder than his Marat! What a tame, mean hero! A man who had been his friend, who had just been assassinated, whom he should have glorified in the eyes of Paris, of all Frenchmen, for all posterity. Has he patched him up enough with his sheet, watered him down enough in his bath? He was thinking of what they would say about the painter and not what they would think of Marat. A bad painter.

7: 44 Silence on sound-track
as image holds on the *Death
of Marat*.

7:54 Black Screen.

And he had the corpse in front of his eyes. [. . .]

Now, his caricatures, they are nasty. They sudden-

Ingres is just the same . . . bloodless! He's a draughtsman. The primitives were draughtsmen. They filled in the colours, they were illuminators on a large scale. Painting, what is properly called painting, only began with the Venetians. Taine tells us that in Florence all the painters started out as goldsmiths. They were draughtsmen. Like Ingres . . . Oh!, it's beautiful enough, Ingres, Raphael, that whole outfit. I can appreciate them as well as anyone else. I can take pleasure in line if I want to. But there are snags. Holbein, Clouet or Ingres have nothing but line. Well, it's not enough. It's very beautiful, but it's not enough. Look at this *Source* . . . It's pure, it's delicate, it's smooth, but it's platonic. It's an image, it doesn't turn in space. The damp stone of the cardboard rock is not reflected in the marble of this moist – or what should be moist – flesh. Where is the surrounding penetration? And since she is the source, she should be emerging from the water, from the rock, from the leaves; instead she's pasted on them. By setting out to paint the ideal virgin, he hasn't painted a body at all. And it's not because he couldn't. Just think of his portraits and that *Age of Gold* that I like so much. It's because of the idea of a system. False system and false idea. David killed painting. They introduced the hackneyed formula. They wanted to paint the ideal foot, the ideal hand, the perfect face and body, the supreme being. They banished character. What marks out the great painter is the character he lends to everything he touches, impulse, movement, passion, for it's possible to be both passionate and serene. They're afraid of this, or rather they never dreamt of it. In reaction, perhaps, to all the passion, the tempests, the social brutality of their time.

MYSELF

But David was up to his neck in it!

CÉZANNE

Yes, but I know nothing colder than his Marat! What a tame, mean hero! A man who had been his friend, who had just been assassinated, whom he should have glorified in the eyes of Paris, of all Frenchmen, for all posterity. Has he patched him up enough with his sheet, watered him down enough in his bath? He was thinking of what they would say about the painter and not what they would think of Marat. A bad painter. And he had the corpse in front of his eyes . . . And yet I like bits of the *Coronation*, the choirboy, the head between the chandeliers, one thinks already of Renoir . . . He was more at ease with these upstarts than with the sacred heart of that other one that they parade around the streets of Paris. Now, his caricatures, they are nasty. They suddenly

8:20 Jacques-Louis David, *La Distribution des Aigles/The Surrender of the Standard*, 1810. (4) Silence on sound-track.

8:28 Image holds on David's *The Surrender of the Standard*.

8:55 Silence holds on *The Surrender of the Standard*.
ly made me see the grinding mechanics of his mind. (pp. 180-81) He may have been the last who knew his job, but what did he make of it, in God's name? The trouser buttons in *The Surrender of the Standard*. (p. 183) What he should have given us was a psychological study in the manner of Titian, of all those grooms and camp-followers grouped around their crowned scoundrel. Lousy Jacobin, lousy classical painter . . . You know what Taine tells us in his *Origines* about the classical spirit! David is the most appalling example of it. So virtuous! . . . In his art he succeeded in castrating even lecherous Ingres, who adored the female principle all the same. (183-84) But here we have painting.

9:49 Paolo Veronese. *Marriage at Cana*, 1563.

There's painting for you. Detail, ensemble, volumes, values, composition, excitement, it's all there . . . Believe me, it's amazing! . . . What's happening? . . . Shut your eyes, wait, don't you think of anything. Now open them . . . What about that? . . . One sees only a great coloured undulation, isn't that right? A rainbow effect, colours, a wealth of colours. That's the first thing a picture should give us, a harmonious warmth, an abyss into which the eye plunges, something dimly forming. A state of grace induced by colour. You can feel all these shades of colour running in your blood, don't you agree? You feel reinvigorated. You are born into the true world. You become yourself, you become part of painting . . . To love a painting you need first to have drunk it in like this, in long draughts. You must lose consciousness. Go down with the painter to the dark, tangled roots of things and rise up again from them with the colours, open up with them in the light. Learn how to see. To feel [. . .]

My word, there was a happy man. And he brings happiness to everyone who understands him. [. . .]

11:59 Close-up of the Musicians in Veronese's *Marriage at Cana*.

People and things pass into his consciousness through the sun, with nothing in him separating them from the light, without a sketch, without abstractions, everything in colour. In time they emerge, still the same but somehow clothed in a gentle glory. Happy as if they had inhaled a mysterious music. Look how it radiates from this group in the middle, where the women and dogs are listening to it, and the men foster it with their strong hands. Contemplation, delight, health, all combining in fullest measure, that to me is Veronese; the fullness of idea in colour. He covered his canvases with a vast grisaille, yes, they all did it in that period, and that was the starting point of his conquest, like a piece of earth before the rise of day, the rise of the spirit . . . [. . .]

12:40 Long Shot again of *Marriage at Cana*.

made me see the grinding mechanics of his mind. But here we have painting.

We entered the Salon Carré. He planted himself in front of the The Marriage at Cana. He had his bowler tipped back, his overcoat trailing on his arm. He seemed quite carried away.

There's painting for you. Detail, ensemble, volumes, values, composition, excitement, it's all there . . . Believe me, it's amazing! . . . What's happening? . . . Shut your eyes, wait, don't think of anything. Now open them . . . What about that? . . . One sees only a great coloured undulation, isn't that right? A rainbow effect, colours, a wealth of colours. That's the first thing a picture should give us, a harmonious warmth, an abyss into which the eye plunges, something dimly forming. A state of grace induced by colour. You can feel all these shades of colour running in your blood, don't you agree? You feel reinvigorated. You are born into the true world. You become yourself, you become part of painting . . . To love a painting you need first to have drunk it in like this, in long draughts. You must lose consciousness. Go down with the painter to the dark, tangled roots of things and rise up again from them with the colours, open up with them in the light. Learn how to see. To feel . . . Especially before a great construction such as Veronese builds. My word, there was a happy man. And he brings happiness to everyone who understands him. He's a unique phenomenon. He painted the way we see. With no more effort than that. Just dancing. Those torrents of colour gradations flowed from his brain, just as everything I'm saying to you flows from my mouth. He spoke in colours. It's amazing, I know almost nothing about his life! Yet I feel as if I've always known him. I see him walking, coming, going, loving in Venice, in front of his canvases, with his friends. A beautiful smile. A warm look. A sturdy body. People and things pass into his consciousness through the sun, with nothing in him separating them from the light, without a sketch, without abstractions, everything in colour. In time they emerge, still the same but somehow clothed in a gentle glory. Happy as if they had inhaled a mysterious music. Look how it radiates from this group in the middle, where the women and dogs are listening to it, and the men foster it with their strong hands. Contemplation, delight, health, all combining in fullest measure, that to me is Veronese; the fullness of idea in colour. He covered his canvases with a vast grisaille, yes, they all did it in that period, and that was the starting point of his conquest, like a piece of earth before the rise of day, the rise of the spirit . . .



Veronese

The underpainting! That's what I was pointing out. He began with an immense grisaille . . . The bare, anatomical skeletal idea of his universe, the delicate framework he needed, and which he would then clothe with variations, with its colours and its glazes, while building up the shadows . . . A great pale world in rough draft, still in limbo . . . it seems to me I can see it, truly! between the material of the canvas and prismatic heat of the sun . . . Nowadays they build up the paint right away, they go into action crudely like a bricklayer, and they believe that makes them stronger, more honest . . . what rubbish. We've lost this knowledge of preparations, this freedom and vigour gained from the underpainting. To model – no, to modulate. We need to modulate. Look what gets done today! Retouching, scraping down, rescraping, laying on thick paint. It's like using mortar. Or take the most summary of painters [. . .] They brutally surround their people, their objects, with a harsh, schematic, stressed outline, and fill it in right up to the edges with colours. It's as gaudy as a poster, painted like a stencil punched by machine. It has no life in it.

14:27 Close-Up of the Banquet Table in *Marriage at Cana*.

Whereas, look at this dress, this woman, this creature, against this tablecloth; one doesn't know where the shadow on its smile begins, or where the light is toying with the shadow, draining it, drinking it up. The colours all interpenetrate, the volumes all turn as they fit themselves together. There's a flow . . . I don't deny that at times in nature there are abrupt effects of shadow and light in contrasting bands, but that's of little interest. Especially if it becomes a device. The wonderful thing is to bathe a whole boundless composition, immense as this one, in the same soft, warm light and convey to the eye the lively impression that all those breasts are really, like you and me, breathing in the golden atmosphere that saturates them. I'm sure that basically it's the underpainting, the hidden soul of the underpainting, which links everything together and gives this strength and lightness to the whole ensemble. You need a neutral beginning. After that, you see, he could paint to his heart's content. Heavens! the taste, the perfect exquisite taste, the audacity of all

15:17 Long-Shot again of *Marriage at Cana*.

MYSELF

Like you, when you think about the geology of your landscapes, when you sketch them out in your mind . . .

CÉZANNE

Oh, me . . . Believe me, I'm only a child in arms before all that . . . What I can see, you understand, is that formidable technique, which is so natural, so easy, for them. They had it in their hands and eyes, passed on from studio to studio. The underpainting! That's what I was pointing out. He began with an immense grisaille . . . The bare, anatomical, skeletal idea of his universe, the delicate framework he needed, and which he would then clothe with variations, with its colours and its glazes, while building up the shadows . . . A great pale world in rough draft, still in limbo . . . it seems to me I can see it, truly!, between the material of the canvas and the prismatic heat of the sun . . . Nowadays they build up the paint right away, they go into action crudely like a bricklayer, and they believe that makes them stronger, more honest . . . What rubbish. We've lost this knowledge of preparations, this freedom and vigour gained from the underpainting. To model – no, to modulate. We need to modulate . . . Look what gets done today! Retouching, scraping down, rescraping, laying on thick paint. It's like using mortar. Or take the most summary of painters, the Japanese, they brutally surround their people, their objects, with a harsh, schematic, stressed outline, and fill it in right up to the edges with flat colours. It's as gaudy as a poster, painted like a stencil punched by machine. It has no life in it. Whereas, look at this dress, this woman, this creature, against this tablecloth; one doesn't know where the shadow on its smile begins, or where the light is toying with the shadow, draining it, drinking it up. The colours all interpenetrate, the volumes all turn as they fit themselves together. There's a flow . . . I don't deny that at times in nature there are abrupt effects of shadow and light in contrasting bands, but that's of little interest. Especially if it becomes a device. The wonderful thing is to bathe a whole boundless composition, immense as this one, in the same soft, warm light and convey to the eye the lively impression that all those breasts are really, like you and me, breathing in the golden atmosphere that saturates them. I'm sure that basically it's the underpainting, the hidden soul of the underpainting, which links everything together and gives this strength and lightness to the whole ensemble. You need a neutral beginning. After that, you see, he could paint to his heart's content. Heavens! the taste, the perfect exquisite taste, the audacity of all those

those branches, those complementary fabrics, the interlacing arabesques, the extended gestures. Is there anything more needed? Seriously, is there? You can examine it minutely. The rest of the picture will always follow you, will always be there. You'll feel it running through your head, whichever part you're studying. You can't subtract anything from the total . . . they weren't painters of bits and pieces, as we are.[. . .]

But [. . .]

there's something about the moderns that doesn't pass muster. What? . . . Tell me, what? . . . Let's go and see. We'll see . . . Now turn left, there, start from this pillar, is it marble, dear God? And slowly let your eyes travel all around the table . . . Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it alive? . . . And at the same time it's transfigured, triumphant, miraculous, in a different world and nevertheless completely real. The miracle is there, the water turned into wine, the world turned into painting. We swim in the reality of painting. [. . .]

To think that I wanted to burn all that in my time. To invent something new, out of a rage for originality . . . When you don't know anything, you think it's those who do that stand in your way . . . But it's the other way around; if you join them, instead of obstructing you they take you by the hand and help you gently, by their side, to stammer out your little piece. [. . .]

branches, those complementary fabrics, the interlacing arabesques, the extended gestures. Is anything more needed? Seriously, is there? You can examine it minutely. The rest of the picture will always follow you, will always be there. You'll feel it running through your head, whichever part you're studying. You can't subtract anything from the total . . . they weren't painters of bits and pieces, as we are . . . You're always asking me what prevents us, when all is said and done, from loving even a Courbet or a Manet the way we do a Rubens or a Rembrandt, what extra quality there is in this old painting . . . We need to know the truth about it, we need to find it today. To be sure, *The Burial at Ornans* is a staggering thing, so is *The Entry of the Crusaders* and the Apollo ceiling; but compared with this or with Tintoretto's *Paradise* there's something about the moderns that doesn't pass muster. What? . . . Tell me, what? . . . Let's go and see. We'll see . . . Now turn left, there, start from this pillar, is it marble, dear God? and slowly let your eyes travel all around the table. . . Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it alive? . . . And at the same time it's transfigured, triumphant, miraculous, in a different world and nevertheless completely real. The miracle is there, the water turned into wine, the world turned into painting. We swim in the reality of painting. We are drunk. We are happy. For me it's like a wind of colour that carries me away, a music that hits me in the face, my craft running through my blood . . . Oh! they worked in a fantastic tradition, those buggers. We're nothing, I tell you, old fools, nothing. We aren't even fit to understand any more . . . To think that I wanted to burn all that in my time. To invent something new, out of a rage for originality . . . When you don't know anything, you think it's those who do that stand in your way . . . But it's the other way round; if you join them, instead of obstructing you they take you by the hand and help you gently, by their side, to stammer out your little piece. Make studies after Veronese and Rubens, those great masters of decoration, yes!, but do them as you would from nature . . . You see, painting went wrong with David when it tried to be well-behaved and conscientious. That's my greatest horror. He may have been the last who knew his job, but what did he make of it, in God's name? The trouser buttons in *The Surrender of the Standard*. What he should have given us was a psychological study in the manner of Titian, of all those grooms and camp-followers grouped around their crowned scoundrel. Lousy Jacobin, lousy classical painter . . . You know what Taine tells us in his *Origines* about the classical spirit! David is the most appalling example of it. So virtuous! . . . In his art he succeeded in castrating even lecherous Ingres, who adored the female prin-

18:03 Silence on sound-track.

ciple all the same . . . You have to learn your trade. But you have to learn it here, by yourself, in the company of the masters. I am not talking about techniques, or the apprenticeship (lost, alas!) in everything useful, there's nothing to be seen of it here; that good fellowship of craftsmen, which saved so much time, was killed off by this revolutionary. The old ateliers offered that. We need to get back to it . . . But I'm speaking of the masters. Whichever one you happen to prefer, you must not look to him for anything more than an orientation. Otherwise, you'll only be a pasticheur. With a feeling for nature, whatever it may be, and a few fortunate gifts, you must learn to break free; another man's methods or advice must never lead you to change your way of feeling. If for a time you let yourself be influenced by someone older than you, depend on it, from the moment you have your own feelings, your distinctive emotion will always emerge, will take the upper hand and find its place in the sun. Confidence. You must become master of a good method of construction. A drawing is no more than the shape of what you see. Michelangelo is a constructor, and Raphael, great as he is, an artist always controlled by his model. When he tries to become thoughtful, he falls below his great rival. It's Michelangelo one should be, in one's own way, and he's the one the professors shy away from. There's nothing worse than the domination of professors who use force to drum their ignorance, their way of seeing, into your noodle. Oh! it's important to choose our teachers ourselves, or rather not choose among them but have them all, compare them. Like a man with only one book, I would be anxious about a student of one painter. Jean-Dominique is powerful, very powerful! Yet he's very dangerous. Look at Flandrin, look at them all, even Degas . . .

MYSELF

Degas?

CÉZANNE

Degas isn't enough of a painter; he doesn't have enough of that! With a little bit of temperament one can manage to be a painter. It's enough to have a sense of art, and that sense is no doubt what the bourgeoisie fear most. That's why institutes, pensions and honours are intended only for idiots, buffoons and scamps. But I'm not talking about people like that. They're welcome to go to the Ecole and have teachers by the bushel. I don't give a damn about them. What I deplore is that all those young people you believe in and talk to me about don't travel in Italy or spend their days in this place, Even if it means throwing themselves into nature

18:10 Veronese, *Jesus in the Pharisee's House*. (5)

That, for instance, is perhaps even more astounding . . . That range of silver . . . The whole prism melting into the white . . . And, you see, what I love about all these Veroneses is that there's no need to expatiate on them. If you love painting, you love them. If you're looking for something literary besides, if you get excited about anecdote, subject-matter [. . .].

A picture doesn't represent anything, it doesn't need to represent anything in the first place but the colours . . . As for me, I hate that, all those stories, that psychology, that symbolism. Goodness knows, it's there in the painting, painters are not imbeciles, but you have to see it with your eyes, do you understand?, with your eyes. That's all the painter wanted. His psychology is the way he makes two colours meet. That's where his emotion is. That's his personal history, his truth, his depth. For he's a painter, you see, not a poet or a philosopher! [. . .]

later on. Everything, particularly in art, is theory developed and applied in contact with nature. I wouldn't want them to go through the same experiences I did. I know, I know, if the official Salons remain so deficient, the reason for it is clear: they never start work except with more or less long-winded procedures. For a painter, sensation is at the bottom of everything. I will go on repeating it forever. Procedures are not what I advocate. It would be more worthwhile to supply more personal emotion, observation and character. But there's the snag! Theories are always easy. What presents serious obstacles is furnishing proof of your ideas. I believe it is at this point, basically, that the painter begins to think. Faced with nature, he learns to see. It's grotesque to imagine that we spring up like mushrooms when we have all those generations behind us. Why not profit by all that work, why neglect that formidable legacy? Yes, the Louvre is a book which teaches us to read. We must not, however, be content merely to preserve the fine methods of our illustrious forebears. As Delacroix puts it, we have seen a dictionary in which we will find all the words. Now let's go out and study beautiful nature, try to catch its spirit, seek to express ourselves in accordance with our personal temperament. Besides, time and reflection modify our vision little by little, and finally understanding comes to us. God willing, we'll be able – your friends will be able – to produce a masterpiece like this one . . . and to place a silvery harmony like that over there against this rainbow here.

Across from The Marriage at Cana, he pointed to Jesus in the Pharisee's House.

That, for instance, is perhaps even more astounding . . . That range of silver . . . The whole prism melting into the white . . . And, you see, what I love about all these Veroneses is that there's no need to expatiate on them. If you love painting, you love them. If you're looking for something literary besides, if you get excited about anecdote, subject-matter, then you don't love them . . . A picture doesn't represent anything, it doesn't need to represent anything in the first place but the colours . . . As for me, I hate that, all those stories, that psychology, that symbolism. Goodness knows, it's there in the painting, painters are not imbeciles, but you have to see it with your eyes, do you understand?, with your eyes. That's all the painter wanted. His psychology is the way he makes two colours meet. That's where his emotion is. That's his personal history, his truth, his depth. For he's a painter, you see, not a poet or a philosopher! Michelangelo did not put his sonnets into the Sistine

[It is said that] vines all over Palestine blossomed on the night Our Saviour was born. [. . .] We painters would do better to paint the blossoming of those vines than the whirlwinds of angels proclaiming the Messiah with their trumpets. Let's paint only what we have seen, or what we could see . . . Like [. . . him], look here . . .

20:14 Giorgione. *Le Concert Champêtre/Pastoral Concert*, ca. 1509. (6)

Let us embellish, ennoble our imaginations with a great sensual dream . . . But bathe them in nature. Let's not eliminate nature. Too bad if we fail. You see, in his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Manet ought to have added – I don't know what – a touch of this nobility, whatever it is in this picture that conveys heaven to our every sense. Look at the golden flow of the tall woman, the other one's back . . . They are alive, and they're divine. The whole landscape in its brown glow is like a supernatural eclogue, a moment of balance in the universe perceived in its eternity, in its more human joy. And one takes part in it, one notes every living detail.

21:38 Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. *Cuisine des Anges/The Ecstasy of St. Diego of Alcalà*, 1646.

It's like the one down there, come, [. . .] What an extraordinary still-life! Murillo had to paint angels, but look, what young Greeks they are, how well their high-mettled feet are planted on the floor. They are truly worthy of peeling those beautiful vegetables, those carrots and cabbages, and of admiring their reflections in those cauldrons . . . The picture was commissioned, wasn't it? . . . He let himself go, for once. He saw the scene

Chapel any more than Giotto put his *canzone* into his Life of St Francis. That's just the monks' version. And when Delacroix wanted to fit his Shakespeare into his painting, he was wrong, he came a cropper over it. And that's why, when we came in, I drew a distinction between all that art – moving though it may be – of the Middle Ages and my art, the art of the Renaissance. You understand, that type of liturgical symbolism of the Middle Ages is quite abstract. Think about it. The pagan symbolism of the Renaissance is entirely natural. The one diverts nature from its path in order to demonstrate a theological truth which we don't know, while you can feel the other leading abstraction back to reality, and reality is always natural, it has – if I dare say it – a sensual, universal significance . . . I love the way the apple, in primitive painting a symbol in the Virgin's hand, becomes a toy for the Child in the Renaissance. You, as the author of *Dionysos*, must remember Jacques de Voragine's* story of how the vines all over Palestine blossomed on the night Our Saviour was born. Ah, that's already a Renaissance idea, all right! We painters would do better to paint the blossoming of those vines than the whirlwinds of angels proclaiming the Messiah with their trumpets. Let's paint only what we have seen, or what we could see . . . Like this Giorgione, look here . . .

We were in front of Le Concert Champêtre.

Let us embellish, ennoble our imaginations with a great sensual dream . . . But bathe them in nature. Let's not eliminate nature. Too bad if we fail. You see, in his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Manet ought to have added – I don't know what – a touch of this nobility, whatever it is in this picture that conveys heaven to our every sense. Look at the golden flow of the tall woman, the other one's back . . . They are alive, and they're divine. The whole landscape in its brown glow is like a supernatural eclogue, a moment of balance in the universe perceived in its eternity, in its more human joy. And one takes part in it, one notes every living detail. It's like the one down there, come, I'll show you the *Cuisine des Anges* . . . What an extraordinary still-life!

We arrived in front of the picture.

Murillo had to paint angels, but look, what young Greeks they are, how well their high-mettled feet are planted on the floor. They are truly worthy of peeling those beautiful vegetables, those carrots and cabbages, and of admiring their reflections in those cauldrons . . . The picture was commissioned, wasn't it? . . . He let himself go, for once. He saw the

. . . He saw radiant creatures enter this convent kitchen, celestial young porters, with the beauty of youth and dazzling health, among all these worn-out, tormented mystics. See how he contrasts the yellowish emaciated body, the hysterical ecstasy of the saint calmly praying, with the radiant assurance of these fine workmen. And the pile of vegetables! You can run your eye from the turnips and plates to the wings without any break in the atmosphere.
[. . .]

23:02 Tintoretto. *Paradise*, ca. 1564. [. . .] Tintoretto [. . .] – there's the real painter. As Beethoven is the musician, Plato the philosopher.

I've ransacked as many books as I could to find his work. It's gigantic. Everything is there, from still-life to god. It's an immense span. Every form of existence, and with unbelievable pathos, passion and invention. If I had ever gone to Venice, it would have been for him. It seems that one can understand him only there . . . [. . .]

Chaste and sensual, brutal and cerebral, driven by will as much as by inspiration, this Tintoretto, I believe, knew everything, barring sentimentality, about the causes of human joy and torment . . . Forgive me, I can't talk about him without trembling . . . It's his portraits, so extraordinary, that have made him familiar to me . . . The one Manet copied. [. . .]

Gasquet: It's like a Cézanne.

scene . . . He saw radiant creatures enter this convent kitchen, celestial young porters, with the beauty of youth and dazzling health, among all these worn-out, tormented mystics. See how he contrasts the yellowish emaciated body, the hysterical ecstasy of the saint calmly praying, with the radiant assurance of these fine workmen. And the pile of vegetables! You can run your eye from the turnips and plates to the wings without any break in the atmosphere. Everything is real . . . And opposite, this sketch of the *Paradise* . . .

He drew me over to it.

I haven't seen the great *Paradise* in Venice. I have seen very little of Tintoretto, but I'm drawn to him, as I am to El Greco – but more forcibly, because he's more wholesome. People are always talking to me about El Greco, and I don't really know him. I would like to see his work . . . Yes, Tintoretto, Rubens – there's the real painter. As Beethoven is the musician, Plato the philosopher.

MYSELF

You remember Ruskin saying that, from the point of view of painting, his *Adam and Eve* is the greatest work in the world?

CÉZANNE

I've only seen a photograph of it. I've ransacked as many books as I could to find his work. It's gigantic. Everything is there, from still-life to God. It's an immense span. Every form of existence, and with unbelievable pathos, passion and invention. If I had ever gone to Venice, it would have been for him. It seems that one can understand him only there . . . I remember in a *Temptation of Christ* – in San Rocco, I believe – an angel with swelling breasts, with bracelets, a demon pederast offering stones to Jesus with a lesbian lechery, yes, it's the most perverse thing ever painted. I don't know, but when you showed me the photograph of your house, it had the effect on me of a gigantic Verlaine, an Aretino with the genius of Rabelais. Chaste and sensual, brutal and cerebral, driven by will as much as by inspiration, this Tintoretto, I believe, knew everything, barring sentimentality, about the causes of human joy and torment . . . Forgive me, I can't talk about him without trembling . . . It's his portraits, so extraordinary, that have made him familiar to me . . . The one Manet copied in the Uffizi* and which is in the Dijon Museum . . .

MYSELF

It's like a Cézanne.



Mur



Tin

Ah! I wish it were so . . . You know, I feel as if I knew him. I see him, exhausted by work, worn out by colours, in that purple-hung room in his little palazzo, like me in my shambles of the Jas de Bouffan, (7) but he was always working, even in the middle of the day, by the light of the smoking lamp, with the sort of marionette theatre where he prepared his big compositions . . . Yes, that epic puppet show! When he left his easels, it seems, he would go there and drop exhausted, always in a sullen mood – he was a grumbler, devoured by sacrilegious desires . . . yes, yes . . . there was a frightful drama in his life . . . I can't bring myself to talk about it . . . In a profuse sweat, he would get his daughter to help him to sleep, make her play the violin for him, hours at a time. Alone with her, among all those glowing reds . . . He sank into this enflamed world, where the smoke of our real world vanished . . . I see him . . . I see him . . . The light purged of all evil . . . And towards the end of his life this man, whose palette rivalled the rainbow, said that he no longer cared for anything but black and white . . . His daughter was dead . . . Black and white! . . . Because colours had become wicked, tormenting, you see . . . I can understand that yearning . . . Have you experienced it? He searched for final peace . . . This paradise. I can tell you, in order to paint this whirlwind of joyous pink you need to have suffered a great deal . . . a great deal, I can guarantee you that. We're face to face with opposite poles. There, that noble prince Veronese. Here, this overworked Tintoretto. This wretch who loved everything, but in whom a fire, a fever, consumed every desire as soon as it began. Look at this heaven . . . his poor gods twist and turn. Their paradise is not a calm one. Their repose is a tempest. They keep up the excitement which has consumed them all their lives, as it consumed him. But now, having suffered so much from it, they find joy in it. I like that . . .

27:37 Close-Up of Tintoretto's *Paradise*. And look at this white foot, here on the left. The underpainting again . . . he prepared his flesh tints in white. Then a red glaze, whoosh!, look at the edge, he brought them to life. Black and white, I want to paint only in black and white, he shouted at the end. What would he have done? How would he have dealt with his torment? With a man of his sort you can expect anything. In his youth he had had the nerve to proclaim: Titian's colour with Michelangelo's drawing. And he achieved it, with Titian at his side. (8)

CÉZANNE

Ah! I wish it were so . . . You know, I feel as if I knew him. I see him, exhausted by work, worn out by colours, in that purple-hung room in his little palazzo, like me in my shambles of the Jas de Bouffan, but he was always working, even in the middle of the day, by the light of a smoking lamp, with the sort of marionette theatre where he prepared his big compositions . . . Yes, that epic puppet show! When he left his easels, it seems, he would go there and drop exhausted, always in a sullen mood – he was a grumbler, devoured by sacrilegious desires . . . yes, yes . . . there was a frightful drama in his life . . . I can't bring myself to talk about it . . . In a profuse sweat, he would get his daughter to help him to sleep, make her play the violin for him, hours at a time. Alone with her, among all those glowing reds . . . He sank into this enflamed world, where the smoke of our real world vanished . . . I see him . . . I see him . . . The light purged of all evil . . . And towards the end of his life this man, whose palette rivalled the rainbow, said that he no longer cared for anything but black and white . . . His daughter was dead . . . Black and white! . . . Because colours had become wicked, tormenting, you see . . . I can understand that yearning . . . Have you experienced it? He searched for final peace . . . This paradise. I can tell you, in order to paint this whirlwind of joyous pink you need to have suffered a great deal . . . a great deal, I can guarantee you that. We're face to face with opposite poles. There, that noble prince Veronese. Here, this overworked Tintoretto. This wretch who loved everything, but in whom a fire, a fever, consumed every desire as soon as it began. Look at this heaven . . . his poor gods twist and turn. Their paradise is not a calm one. Their repose is a tempest. They keep up the excitement which has consumed them all their lives, as it consumed him. But now, having suffered so much from it, they find joy in it. I like that . . .

He went up closer to the picture.

And look at this white foot, here, on the left. The underpainting again . . . he prepared his flesh tints in white. Then a red glaze, whoosh!, look at the edge, he brought them to life. Black and white, I want to paint only in black and white, he shouted at the end. What would he have done? How would he have dealt with his torment? With a man of his sort you can expect anything. In his youth he had had the nerve to proclaim: Titian's colour with Michelangelo's drawing. And he achieved it, with Titian at his side.

28:24 Silence on the
sound-track.

28:33 View of the Seine
from the Louvre. Silence
on the sound-track.

[. . .] Basically, the painter who could render
that, quite simply, the Seine, Paris, a day in Paris, could be installed here
with his head high . . . You have to be a good workman. To be nothing but
a painter. [. . .]

MYSELF

He's greater than Titian.

CÉZANNE

Yes, I approve of your admiration for the worthiest of the Venetians. Let us honour Tintoretto. Bring your friends to look at him. The need to find a moral, intellectual foundation in works which clearly will never be surpassed keeps you forever on your toes, always searching for a means of interpretation. Make this clear to them. These means of interpretation will inevitably lead them to find their means of expressing nature, and the day they apply them, you can assure them, they will rediscover without any effort and in nature the methods used by the four or five great Venetians . . .

He took a few steps, oblivious of everything.

Oh! to have pupils! To pass on all my experience to someone. I am nothing; I have done nothing, but I have learnt. To link up again with all those great brutes across the last two centuries. In the constant shifts of today, to rediscover a fixed point . . . In vain. It may well be in vain.

He clenched his fists and glared furiously about him.

And all these idiots! . . . A tradition. A tradition could begin again with me, who am nothing. To work with pupils, but pupils you can teach, I mean, not those who aspire to teach you. I've experienced that . . .

He turned round. He drew me, I thought, towards the Salle des Etats, the one he called the Salon Carré of the Moderns.

I don't want to be right in theory, but in nature. In spite of his 'estyle' (as they say in Aix) and his admirers, Ingres is a minor painter. You know who the greatest are: the Venetians and the Spaniards.

He went over to a window and surveyed the lines of buildings caught by the sun.

That's not a bad subject at all . . . Basically, the painter who could render that, quite simply, the Seine, Paris, a day in Paris, could be installed here with his head high . . . You have to be a good workman. To be nothing but a painter. To have a method. To realize.

He gave me a sad, noble look.

30:20 J.-D. Ingres, *The Triumph of Homer*, 1827. Orange-coloured to show Achilles' rage and the flames of Troy, green for the travels of Ulysses and swirling ocean . . . but that's not what I mean by a formula! . . . Yes, yes, a formula that's a straitjacket. [. . .]

Here there are only two: Delacroix and Courbet. The rest are scoundrels. [. . .]

30:47 Silence on sound-track as image holds on *The Triumph of Homer*.

30:53 Eugène Delacroix, *Women of Algiers*, 1834. You can find us all in this Delacroix. When I talk to you about delight in colour for its own sake, well this is what I mean . . . These pale pinks, these furry cushions, this slipper, all this luminous colour – it seems to me that it enters the eye like a glass of wine running into your gullet and it makes you drunk straight away. You don't know how it happens, but you feel much lighter. These shades are uplifting and purifying. If I had done something wrong, it seems to me that I would come and stand in front of this picture to

The ideal of earthly happiness . . . to have a good formula.

Then, abruptly, he dragged me away at a sharp pace to the Salon Carré of the Moderns. He stopped in front of The Triumph of Homer. He made a face.

Yes . . . Orange-coloured to show Achilles' rage and the flames of Troy, green for the travels of Ulysses and the swirling ocean . . . But that's not what I mean by a formula! . . . Yes, yes, a formula that's a straitjacket . . . not for me! All the same, he tries in vain, does Jean-Dominique, to wring your heart with his glossy finish! I said this to Vollard, to shock him, he's very powerful! Nevertheless he's a damned good man . . . The most modern of the moderns. Do you know why I take my hat off to him? Because he forced his fantastic draughtsmanship down the throats of the idiots who now claim to understand it. But here there are only two: Delacroix and Courbet. The rest are scoundrels . . . And I left out another . . . Manet. He'll make it, so will Monet and Renoir.

MYSELF

And you.

CÉZANNE

Oh! me . . . Perhaps I'd be a bad example, don't you think? If one has the privilege of producing something, what one produces is a distortion of what one perceives. And it's terrible. I still haven't done anything that holds up beside those over there. I can tell you . . .

MYSELF

Your *Old Woman with a Rosary*, the large Sainte-Victoires.

CÉZANNE

Tut, tut . . . Maybe people will remember a certain fellow who rescued painting from a false tradition, as wayward as it was academic, and dreamt vaguely of a renaissance of his art . . . however! . . .

He walked up to The Women of Algiers.

You can find us all in this Delacroix. When I talk to you about delight in colour for its own sake, well this is what I mean . . . These pale pinks, these furry cushions, this slipper, all this luminous colour – it seems to me that it enters the eye like a glass of wine running into your gullet and it makes you drunk straight away. You don't know how it happens, but you feel much lighter. These shades are uplifting and purifying. If I had done something wrong, it seems to me that I would come and stand in



Delacroix

put myself straight again . . . And it's dense. One colour passes into the next, like silks. Everything is sewn together, worked on as a whole. And that's why it's so effective. It's the first time since the great artists that anyone painted a volume. And there's no denying that Delacroix has something, a fever, which is lacking in the old masters. I believe it's the healthy fever of convalescence. With him, painting emerges from the stagnation, the sickness, of the Bolognese. He turns David upside down. His painting is iridescent. [. . .]

34:12 E. Delacroix,
Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople, 1840.

Also,
he's convinced that the sun exists and that you can soak your brushes in it, do your washing in it. He knows how to show distinctions. It's no longer like Ingres back there and all those we see here . . . A silk is a fabric and a face is flesh [. . .]. The same sun, the same emotion plays on them, but is different. He knows how to drape the flank of this black girl with a fabric that has a different aroma from the scented breeches of this Georgian slave girl; he knows it and shows it through these tints. He makes contrasts. Just look how all these dots of colour, for all their violence make a clear harmony. And he has a sense of the human being, of life in movement, of warmth. Everything moves, everything glistens. The light! . . . There is more warm light in this interior of his than in all of Corot's landscapes and these battle scenes around us. Just look . . . His shadows are coloured. He gives his diminishing tones a pearly quality that makes everything flow together . . . His *Entry of the Crusaders* is a tragedy . . . you might as well say that it's invisible. We don't see it any more. I who am speaking to you, I have seen that picture die, fade away, disappear. It's enough to make you weep. With each decade there's less of it . . . One day nothing will be left. If you had seen the green sea, the green sky. Such intensity. And how much more dramatic the smoke was then, the burning ships, and how the whole group of riders stood out. When he exhibited it, one couldn't help exclaiming that the horse, this horse, was pink. It was magnificent, glowing. But those damned Romantics, in their lofty way, used atrocious materials. The chemists swindled them. It's like Géricault's *Shipwreck*, a marvellous page with nothing left to see on it.

35:15 Théodore Géricault,
Raft of the Medusa, 1819.

front of this picture to put myself straight again . . . And it's dense. One colour passes into the next, like silks. Everything is sewn together, worked on as a whole. And that's why it's so effective. It's the first time since the great artists that anyone painted a volume. And there's no denying that Delacroix has something, a fever, which is lacking in the old masters. I believe it's the healthy fever of convalescence. With him, painting emerges from the stagnation, the sickness, of the Bolognese. He turns David upside down. His painting is iridescent. Seeing one Constable is enough to make him understand all the possibilities of landscape, and he too sets up his easel by the sea. His watercolours are marvels of tragedy or charm. They can be compared only to Barye's,* you know, the lions in the Montpellier museum. And the still-lives, you remember the one with the hunter, his game-bag and his haul out in the fields; the whole countryside is there. I'm not talking about the great compositions; in a little while we'll go and look at his ceiling . . . Also, he's convinced that the sun exists and that you can soak your brushes in it, do your washing in it. He knows how to show distinctions. It's no longer like Ingres back there and all those we see here . . . A silk is a fabric and a face is flesh and blood. The same sun, the same emotion plays on them, but is different. He knows how to drape the flank of this black girl with a fabric that has a different aroma from the scented breeches of this Georgian slave girl; he knows it and shows it through these tints. He makes contrasts. Just look how all these dots of colour, for all their violence, make a clear harmony. And he has a sense of the human being, of life in movement, of warmth. Everything moves, everything glistens. The light! . . . There is more warm light in this interior of his than in all of Corot's landscapes and these battle scenes around us. Just look . . . His shadows are coloured. He gives his diminishing tones a pearly quality that makes everything flow together . . . And when he begins painting out of doors! His *Entry of the Crusaders* is a tragedy . . . you might as well say that it's invisible. We don't see it any more. I who am speaking to you, I have seen that picture die, fade away, disappear. It's enough to make you weep. With each decade there's less of it . . . One day nothing will be left. If you had seen the green sea, the green sky. Such intensity. And how much more dramatic the smoke was then, the burning ships, and how the whole group of riders stood out. When he exhibited it, one couldn't help exclaiming that the horse, this horse, was pink. It was magnificent, glowing. But those damned Romantics, in their lofty way, used atrocious materials. The chemists swindled them. It's like Géricault's *Shipwreck*, a marvellous page with

35: 25 Silence on
sound-track.

35:37 Delacroix's *Entry of
the Crusaders* again.

[. . .] We can still make out the corrosive melancholy of the faces, the sadness of these knights, but all of this, as we remember it, was in Delacroix's colours; and now that they've lost their depth, his spirit is no longer there. Still, I did see those pale kings for myself. They no longer move in a blaze of light, in that Oriental atmosphere [. . .]

That's the point, that's what proves better than anything else that Delacroix is a real painter, a devil of a great painter. It's not the story of the Crusaders – we're told that they were cannibals – or their apparent humanity; it's the tragic quality of his colours which formed his picture and which expressed the corrupted spirit of these dejected conquerors. Originally the beautiful dying Greek girl, the abandoned silk-woman in her rich attire, the old man's beard, the caparisoned horses and the melancholy standards, all took on their full meaning in a singing blend of colours. Now only an impression of its [sic] remains. [. . .]

37:08 Delacroix's *The
Women of Algiers*, again.

The Women of Algiers hasn't changed. The *Entry* was just as brilliant. [. . .]

Maybe Delacroix stands for Romanticism. He stuffed himself with too much Shakespeare and Dante [. . .]. His palette is still the most beautiful in France, and I tell you no one under the sky had more charm and pathos combined than he, or more vibration of colour. [. . .]

37:46 Gustave Courbet,
*Spring Rut, The Battle of
the Stags*, 1861. (9)

Gasquet: And Courbet?

A builder. A rough and ready plasterer. A colour grinder. He's like a Roman bricklayer. And yet he's another true painter. There's no one in this century that surpasses him. Even though he rolls up his sleeves, plugs up his ears, demolishes columns, (10) his workmanship is classical!

nothing left to see on it. Here, we can still make out the corrosive melancholy of the faces, the sadness of these knights, but all of this, as we remember it, was in Delacroix's colours; and now that they've lost their depth, his spirit is no longer there. Still, I did see those pale kings for myself. They no longer move in a blaze of light, in that Oriental atmosphere, in that legendary land. Constantinople is a sort of Paris, like those streetfronts of the city, look over there, behind the railings. I saw it as it was, as Delacroix, Gautier, Flaubert saw it, and also through the unique magic of colour. That's the point, that's what proves better than anything else that Delacroix is a real painter, a devil of a great painter. It's not the story of the Crusaders – we're told that they were cannibals – or their apparent humanity; it's the tragic quality of his colours which formed his picture and which expressed the corrupted spirit of these dejected conquerors. Originally the beautiful dying Greek girl, the abandoned silk-woman in her rich attire, the old man's beard, the caparisoned horses and the melancholy standards, all took on their full meaning in a singing blend of colours. There was dying, weeping and sobbing. All in the colour. Now only an impression of its remains. There's no substitute for original colour in a painting . . . It's as if a Racine tragedy were translated into prose . . . *The Women of Algiers* hasn't changed. The *Entry* was just as brilliant. Have you seen *The Justice of Trajan* at Rouen? It's disappearing too, peeling off, eaten away. And in Lyons, *The Death of Marcus Aurelius*? What greens there are in that . . . the green cloak! That's Delacroix. And the Apollo ceiling, and Saint-Sulpice! . . . do or say what you like, he's one of the giants. He has no need to blush if that's what we call him, even in the same breath as Tintoretto and Rubens. Maybe Delacroix stands for Romanticism. He stuffed himself with too much Shakespeare and Dante, thumbed through too much Faust. His palette is still the most beautiful in France, and I tell you no one under the sky had more charm and pathos combined than he, or more vibration of colour. We all paint in his language, as you all write in Hugo's.

MYSELF

And Courbet?

CÉZANNE

A builder. A rough and ready plasterer. A colour grinder. He's like a Roman bricklayer. And yet he's another true painter. There's no one in this century that surpasses him. Even though he rolls up his sleeves, plugs up his ears, demolishes columns,* his workmanship is classical!

Underneath his swaggering . . . He's deep, serene, mellow. There are nudes of his, golden as a harvest, that I'm mad about. His palette smells of wheat . . . Yes, it's true Proudhon turned his head with his realism, but actually that famous realism is like Delacroix's Romanticism; he went for it head on, with great brush strokes only in a few canvases, his flashiest and surely his least beautiful. Besides, the realism was more in his subject-matter than in his treatment. His view was always compositional. His vision remained traditional. Like his palette-knife, he used it only out of doors. He was sophisticated and brought his work to a high finish. You know what Decamps said, that Courbet was cunning, that he was a rough painter, but put the finish on top. And what I say is that he puts the power and genius underneath. [. . .]

However broadly he works, he's subtle. (p. 198)

Gasquet: Courbet is the great painter of the people.

And of nature. His great contribution is the poetic introduction of nature – the smell of damp leaves, mossy forest cuttings – into nineteenth-century painting; the murmur of rain, woodland shadows, sunlight moving under trees. The sea. And snow, he painted snow like no one else! [. . .]

That large white landscape, flat under the greyish twilight, without a break, all velvety [. . .] Tremendous, a wintry silence. [. . .]

And the sunset in *The Stag* at Marseilles, the bloody pack, the pool, the tree running with the beast, reflected in the beast's eyes . . . All those Savoy lakes with lapping water, the mist that rises from

Underneath his swaggering . . . He's deep, serene, mellow. There are nudes of his, golden as a harvest, that I'm mad about. His palette smells of wheat . . . Yes, it's true Proudhon turned his head with his realism, but actually that famous realism is like Delacroix's Romanticism; he went for it head on, with great brush strokes only in a few canvases, his flashiest and surely his least beautiful. Besides, the realism was more in his subject-matter than in his treatment. His view was always compositional. His vision remained traditional. Like his palette-knife, he used it only out of doors. He was sophisticated and brought his work to a high finish. You know what Decamps said, that Courbet was cunning, that he was a rough painter, but put the finish on top. And what I say is that he puts the power and genius underneath. You can go and ask Monet what Whistler owes to Courbet, when they were together at Deauville and Courbet painted a portrait of his mistress for him . . . However broadly he works, he's subtle. He deserves his place in the museums. His *Winnower* in the museum at Nantes, the blonde, bushy haired girl with the great russet cloth, the dust from the wheat, her hair knotted at the back as in the loveliest Veroneses, and her arm, that milky peasant's arm extended in the sun, as smooth as a wash-house stone . . . even though it was his sister who sat for him . . . You could stick her beside Velasquez, I promise you she'd hold her own . . . Is it fleshy, resistant, grainy? Is it alive? That comes across. It hits the eye.

MYSELF

Yes, I remember it . . . Courbet is the great painter of the people.

CÉZANNE

And of nature. His great contribution is the poetic introduction of nature – the smell of damp leaves, mossy forest cuttings – into nineteenth-century painting; the murmur of rain, woodland shadows, sunlight moving under trees. The sea. And snow, he painted snow like no one else! At your friend Mariéton's house, I have seen the snowbound coach, that large white landscape, flat under the greyish twilight, without a break, all velvety . . . It was tremendous, a wintry silence. Like the *Hallali* in the Besançon Museum, in which the characters are perhaps a bit theatrical, but who, with their hunting coats, their dogs, the snow, the groom, remind me (and they can stand the comparison) of the grand manner, the heroism, the execution of the masters. There you are! . . . And the sunset in *The Stag* at Marseilles, the bloody pack, the pool, the tree running with the beast, reflected in the beast's eyes . . . All those Savoy lakes with lapping water, the mist that rises from the shores and

the shores and envelops the mountains . . . the great Waves [. . .]
extraordinary, one of the century's inventions, much more exciting, more
wind-blown, with a foamier green and a dirtier orange than the one here,
with its wild surf, its tide coming from the depth of the past, its ragged sky
and pale rawness. [. . .]

41:01 G. Courbet, *Burial at Ornans*, 1849-50. (11) We're told he painted this after his mother's death. He shut himself up for a year at Ornans. These are village people who posed for him, without really

envelops the mountains . . . the great *Waves*, the one in Berlin, extraordinary, one of the century's inventions, much more exciting, more wind-blown, with a foamier green and a dirtier orange than the one here, with its wild surf, its tide coming from the depths of the past, its ragged sky and pale rawness. It hits you right in the chest. You recoil. The whole room smells of spray . . .

He looked at the large forest scene of The Stag Fight, hanging above The Triumph of Homer.

You can't see a thing . . . How badly it's hung . . . When will they ever put in a painter, a real painter, as director of the Louvre? . . . And when will they ever bring the *Demoiselles de la Seine* in here? Where are they?

He half-closed his eyes. He spotted them.

There, what do you think? One could say it was Titian . . . No. No . . . It's Courbet. Let's not get them confused . . . These young women! A dash, a breadth, a blissful languor, an abandon that Manet did not put into his *Déjeuner* . . . The mittens, the laces, the torn silk of the skirt and the russet colours . . . Their rounded napes, the plumpness of their flesh. The surrounding nature has an air of easy virtue. And the low, broken sky, the sweating countryside, the whole tilted perspective that makes one want to pry into it . . . The moisture, the beads of sweat . . . And it's spirited! As meaty as the *Olympia* is thin, delicate, cerebral . . . Perhaps the two pictures of the century . . . Baudelaire and Banville.* The rich technique, the precise workmanship . . . In the *Olympia*, to be sure, there is something more, an air, an intelligence . . . but Courbet is full-bodied, wholesome, alive. He feeds us a great helping of colour. It's more than we can swallow . . .

Look here, it's a disgrace that that canvas should not be here, and that *The Burial* should be sacrificed, buried away in that sort of corridor over there . . . You can't see it . . . It ought to shine out, here, on the line, opposite *The Crusaders*, in place of that academic Homer . . . Yes, yes, it's very fine, those feet, that calm, that triumph, but it's a reconstruction, when all's said and done! Whereas *The Burial* . . . This way!

He took me by the arm and dragged me after him with the ardour of youth. All the while he kept on talking.

We're told he painted this after his mother's death. He shut himself up for a year at Ornans. These are village people who posed for him, with-

posing. He saw them in his mind's eye . . . In a sort of loft . . . They came to see their likenesses . . . He mingled these caricatures with his grief . . . Flaubert . . . but that's the story. Legend is stronger than history. His mother had not died. She sat for him, she's in a corner . . . But that tells you how much feeling went into this masterpiece. By a feat of the imagination, it re-creates life. [. . .]

Yes, as Flaubert in his novels borrowed from Balzac, perhaps Courbet borrowed from Delacroix's romantic intensity, from his expressive truthfulness . . . Do you remember in *By Field and Shore*, when old Flaubert was making that journey, the burial he describes and that old woman whose tears fell like rain . . . Every time I reread that, I think of Courbet . . . The same emotion [. . .].

Dear God, how beautiful it is . . . [. . .]

out really posing. He saw them in his mind's eye . . . In a sort of loft . . . They came to see their likenesses . . . He mingled these caricatures with his grief . . . Flaubert . . . but that's the story. Legend is stronger than history. His mother had not died. She sat for him, she's in a corner . . . But that tells you how much feeling went into this masterpiece. By a feat of the imagination, it re-creates life.

We came to Delacroix's ceiling.

We'll come back and see this . . . Just glance at it! Have a look. It's the breaking storm, the dawn of our renaissance . . . A Michelangelo in gem-like colours . . . You know, the Michelangelo of the Sistine corners, of the *Judith* . . . and what games they're up to! An ode by Pindar . . . The tiger and the woman lying down together, the sand drinking in her hair . . . The whole sea flung onto a beach . . . You can feel its movement . . . The earth climbing up, reaching out in the sunlight, Envy plummeting down, these monsters. And what imagination! I can hear trumpet calls . . . See those arms forging the light with hammer blows . . . Delacroix painted our future with each stroke of his brush . . . And the way it soars above us! . . . We'll come back.

He drew me on.

Yes, as Flaubert in his novels borrowed from Balzac, perhaps Courbet borrowed from Delacroix's romantic intensity, from his expressive truthfulness . . . Do you remember in *By Field and Shore*, when old Flaubert was making that journey, the burial he describes and that old woman whose tears fell like rain . . . Every time I reread that, I think of Courbet . . . The same emotion, expressed in the same way . . . Have a look.

We arrived. He was flushed and beaming. His overcoat, which he was carrying by a sleeve, swept the carpet behind him. He drew himself up to his full height, exultant. I had never seen him like that. Usually so diffident, he cast triumphant looks to right and left. The Louvre belonged to him . . . In a corner he spied a copyist's ladder. He pounced on it.

Here's our chance! . . . Let's have a look at it.

He dragged over the ladder and climbed up.

Come and look . . . Dear God, how beautiful it is . . .

Look at this dog . . . Velasquez! Velasquez! Philip's dog is less dog-like, even though it's the dog of a king . . . You know the one I mean . . . And the choirboy, with his apple-red cheeks . . . Renoir might come somewhere near it . . . [. . .]

Courbet's the only one who knows how to put down a black without making a hole in the canvas . . . There's no one but him . . . See here, in his rocks and his tree-trunks over there . . . With a single stroke he could show us one whole side of life, the dismal existence of one of these tramps, as you can



Courbet, *The Burial at Ornans*, 1849

The guards came running and shouting.

Leave me in peace . . . I'm looking at Courbet . . . Just hang it in proper light and no one would bother you . . .

He stamped on his little platform.

I ask you, look at this dog . . . Velasquez! Velasquez! Philip's dog is less dog-like, even though it's the dog of a king . . . You know the one I mean . . . And the choirboy, with his apple-red cheeks . . . Renoir might come somewhere near it . . .

He grew more excited and exultant.

Gasquet, Gasquet . . . Courbet's the only one who knows how to put down a black without making a hole in the canvas . . . There's no one but him . . . See here, in his rocks and his tree-trunks over there . . . With a single stroke he could show us one whole side of life, the dismal exist-

see, and then back he comes, full of compassion, with the simplicity of a gentle giant who understands everything . . . His caricature is drenched in tears . . . [. . .]

Who is there that understands Courbet? . . . They're imprisoning him in this cave . . . I protest . . . I'll get the press, Vallès, (12) onto it . . . [. . .]



ence of one of these tramps, as you can see, and then back he comes, full of compassion, with the simplicity of a gentle giant who understands everything . . . His caricature is drenched in tears . . . Oh, leave me alone down there! Go and get your director. I'll think up a couple of words for him . . .

A crowd was gathering. He started making a real speech.

It's a disgrace, in God's name! . . . No, but really, it's true . . . We're always giving in . . . It's robbery . . . The State, we are the State . . . Painting . . . I am painting . . . Who is there that understands Courbet? . . . They're imprisoning him in this cave . . . I protest . . . I'll get the press, Vallès,* onto it . . .

He was shouting more loudly all the time.

Gasquet, you'll be somebody one day . . . Promise me that you'll get

[May] (13) this picture be moved to where it belongs [. . .]
in the light . . . So that
people can see it. [. . .]

We've got a mas-
terpiece like this in France and we hide it . . . Let them set fire to the Louvre
. . . right away . . . If they're afraid of something beautiful [. . .]

I am Cézanne.

44:24 Landscape at Buti, Italy
filmed. Panoramic shot, ending
at 46:40. Birds and babbling
brook heard on sound-track.

THE LOUVRE

this picture moved to the place where it belongs, in the Salon Carré . . .
For God's sake, in the Salon of the Moderns . . . in the light . . . So that
people can see it . . .

The guards picked up his overcoat and his bowler.

Leave me alone, the rest of you . . . I'm coming down . . . We've got a
masterpiece like this in France and we hide it . . . Let them set fire to the
Louvre . . . right away . . . If they're afraid of something beautiful . . .
Into the Salon of the Moderns, Gasquet, the Salon of the Moderns . . .
You must promise me . . .

*He climbed down the ladder. He swept the crowd around us with a look
of victory . . .*

I am Cézanne.

*He blushed . . . He fumbled in his pocket and threw some louis into the
guards' hands . . . He hurried away, dragging me with him . . . He was in
tears.*

47Minutes.
Kodak 527
Cinecam

Endnotes by Sally Shafto

1. Transcription of dialogue, and description of the visual and sound tracks of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie-Straub's film by Sally Shafto. Dialogue based on Joachim Gasquet's text "Le Louvre" in his monograph, *Cézanne*, first published in 1921 (Paris: Editions Bernheim-Jeune). Reproduced here is Christopher Pemberton's translation: Joachim Gasquet's *Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations*, translated by Christopher Pemberton, preface by John Rewald, introduction by Richard Schiff (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).
2. Ellipses occur frequently in the original Gasquet text. A bracketed ellipsis signals cuts made to the Gasquet text by Straub-Huillet.
3. Today in the Musée d'Orsay.
4. Today in the collection of the Château de Versailles.
5. In the Gasquet text, this painting is referred to as *Jésus chez le Pharisien*. Since then, the painting has been re-titled: *Christ Revives the Daughter of Jairus*. According to scholar Richard Cocke, the Louvre painting is not by Veronese himself but is a copy of a Veronese original, a lost mural from the Avanzi Chapel in Verona. The original was considered to be Veronese's first masterpiece. See Richard Cocke, *Piety and Display in an Age of Religious Reform* (Aldershot; Ashgate, 2001), pp. 73-74. See too: W.R. Rearick, *The Art of Paolo Veronese 1528-1588* (The National Gallery of Art, Washington and Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989).
6. The Louvre now considers this painting to be an early work by Titian. See the Louvre website.
7. The *Jas de Bouffan* manor originally belonged to Cézanne's wealthy father. After his mother's death Cézanne sold the estate.
8. The translator has misconstrued this last sentence. In the French original, we read, "Et il y est arrivé. Titian l'avait flanqué à la porte," which means "And he achieved it. Titian threw him out."
9. Today in the Musée D'Orsay.
10. During the Paris Commune, Courbet was among a group of protesters who managed to pull down the column in the Place Vendôme. Note by C. Pemberton.
11. Today in the Musée d'Orsay.
12. Jules Vallès (1833-85), writer and journalist who took part in the Paris Commune of 1871 and was exiled to England. He returned to Paris and became a prominent left-wing journalist, denouncing injustice. He would have died 15 years before the visit to the Louvre described here. Note by C. Pemberton.
13. Straub-Huillet have slightly modified Gasquet's text from: "Gasquet, vous serez quelqu'un un jour . . . Promettez-moi, que vous ferez porter cette toile à sa place" (Gasquet, someday you will be somebody . . . Promise me that you'll have this picture moved to its proper place) to [Qu'on le fasse] "porter cette toile à sa place."