



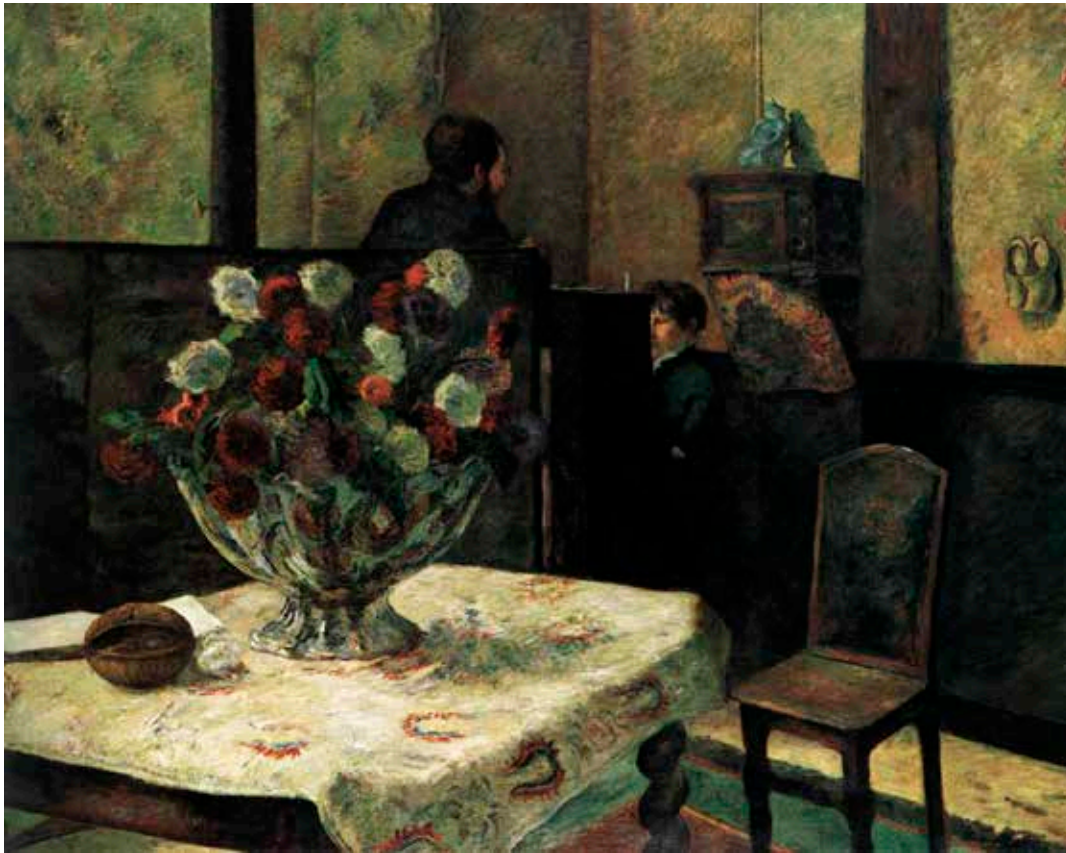
ANIMATION AND PERSONHOOD

GAUGUIN'S STILL LIFES AS PORTRAITS

The word “portrait” originally meant the depiction of an object or a scene, and its scope was only later restricted to representations of a person, with an emphasis on the personality of the sitter and his or her characterization as an individual.¹ In the nineteenth century this psychological requirement led to disputes about certain works being portraits or not, as when style drew more attention to the painting than its subject matter, to the artist’s personality rather than that of the sitter. In his review of the 1868 Salon, Odilon Redon thus warned against imitating Édouard Manet’s *Portrait of Émile Zola* (1868, Musée d’Orsay, Paris): “It is rather a still life, so to speak, than the expression of a human character.”² Similar remarks were often made about portraits by Paul Cézanne: Charles Morice wrote in 1905 that the artist took “no more interest in a human face than in an apple.”³ Ambroise Vollard later claimed, however, that while Cézanne treated his sitter like a still life, he liked painting portraits and considered that “the culmination of art is the figure.”⁴

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Complexities of this kind abound in Gauguin’s oeuvre. The depiction of an unnamed couple in a quotidian environment qualifies *Interior of the Painter’s House, rue Carcel* (fig. 1) as a genre scene, yet Gauguin exhibited this work in 1882 under the title *Flowers, Still Life*.⁵ All the objects in it, not only the bouquet in the foreground, compete successfully for our attention with the two human figures, which are visible only in fragments; a porcelain figurine, sitting on top of the armoire, seems to provide a more complete and self-assured version of the woman at the piano. In *Still Life, Interior, Copenhagen* (1885, private collection, W176/W164



[2001]) the foreground is occupied by a still life including dead birds, while the background, seen through an opening or in a mirror, shows three women and two boys who seem trapped and unable to move.⁶ In *The Flowers of France* (*Te tiare Farani*, ill. xx) two unconnected human figures – a Tahitian boy and a woman in a high-necked black dress – appear relegated to the left of the canvas by the bouquet of oleander sitting on the table, which expands freely into space.⁷

The still-life elements in such paintings seem to compete with the human beings for the qualities of animation, individuality, perhaps even interiority and personhood. Should we then take inspiration from Gauguin's primitivism and extend the meaning of "portrait" back to include the artist's depictions of non-human subjects?

Objects as Attributes and Substitutes

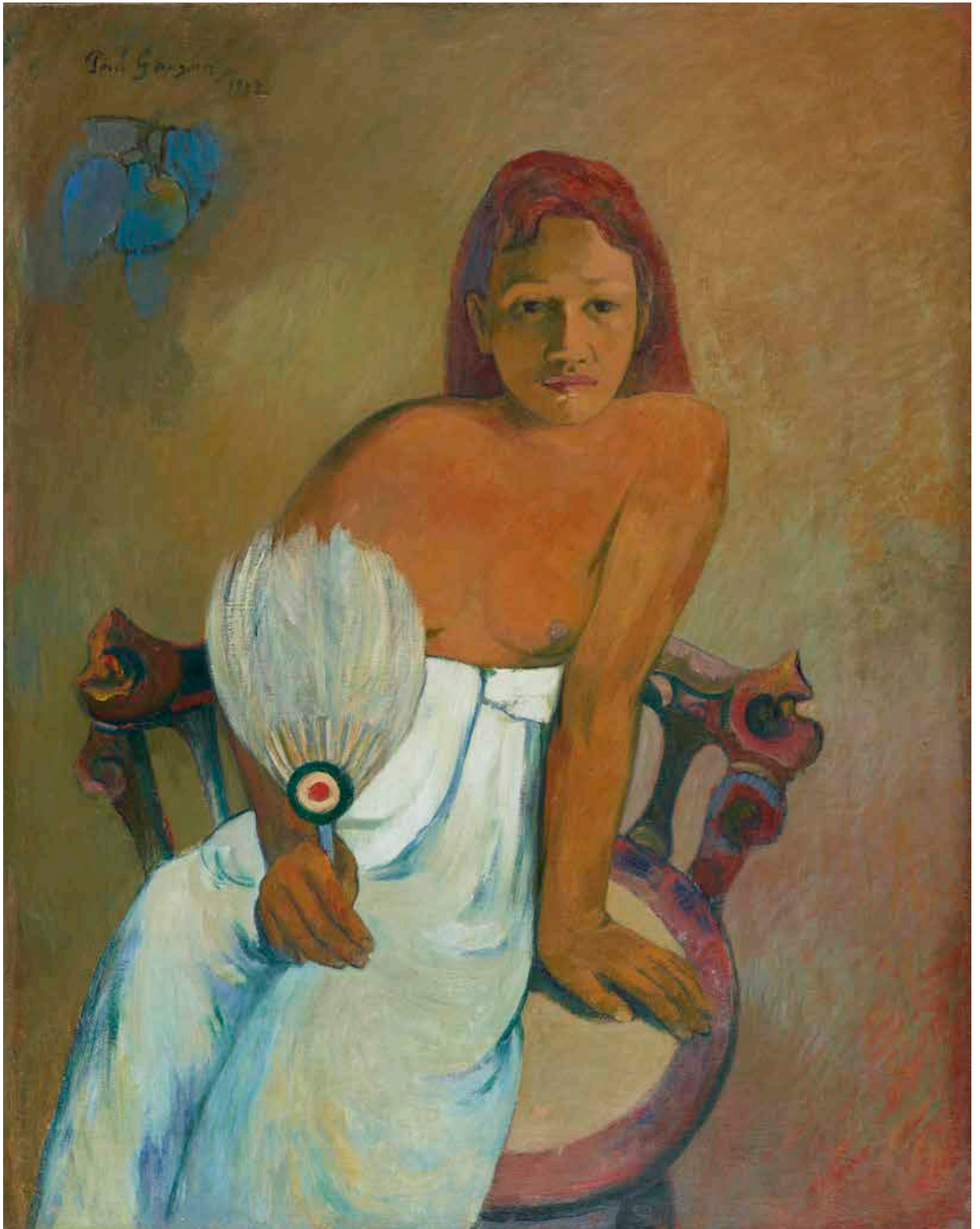
A traditional way of associating an object with a person, which sometimes leads to the depiction of the former replacing that of the latter, is its use as an attribute, that is as "a material object recognized as appropriate to, and thus symbolic of, any office or actor," which in art becomes "a conventional symbol added, as an accessory, to denote the character or show the identity of the personage represented."⁸ Despite Gauguin's critical attitude toward the allegorical tradition, such attributes can be found in his portraits and self-portraits. This is the case in his *Self-portrait with Palette*



of c. 1894 (ill. xx), in which the paintbrush, held almost horizontally, points at the palette with its inchoate areas of yellow, pink and red, a source of future forms as well as a professional emblem.⁹ Polynesian women hold fans in a comparable way in *Tehamana Has Many Parents* or *the Ancestors of Tehamana* (*Merahi metua no Tehamana*, ill. xx), *Young Girl with a Fan* (ill. xx) and in mythological paintings such as *The Noble Woman* (*Te arii vahine*, 1896, Pushkin Museum, Moscow, W542). This prominence corresponds to the value of the fan as a symbol of rank in pre-colonial – and to some extent in colonial – Polynesia; in *Tehamana Has Many Parents*, the plaited palm fan is combined with the missionary dress, the flower hair ornament, the Easter Island glyphs, the mythological frieze in the background and the mangoes to compose an image of the complex identity of the sitter, whose “many parents” include not only her biological and foster parents, but also her ancestors and the historical layers, antagonistic influences and cultural hybridization to which she is heir.¹⁰

A more ambiguous connection between objects and figures is established in *The Meal*, or *The Bananas* (fig. 2). Since the three children, while possessing individual features, are unnamed, the picture has been defined by Charles Stuckey as “half still life and half genre” rather than half portrait.¹¹ The two elements are indeed juxtaposed, giving rise to the notion that the upper part with the children may have been added at a late stage. But the abrupt confrontation of people with fruit and utensils may also be understood as suggesting a parallel between the two planes rather than an interaction. Naomi Maurer saw evidence of the awakening of sexual awareness among the young Tahitians in the “gazes of the two boys directed to the girl between them, taken together with the phallic and uterine shapes of the bananas and bowl.”¹² Such an interpretation is further supported by





the position of the knife, which underlines the centrality of the girl and points menacingly toward her.

A famous example of objects taking the place of people is provided by the paintings *Gauguin's Chair* (1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) and *Van Gogh's Chair* (1888, National Gallery, London) that Vincent van Gogh made in Arles when the two artists lived there together. The two different seats, together with the objects placed on them – modern novels and a burning candle on Gauguin's chair; a pipe and a pouch of tobacco on Van Gogh's one – are intended to convey something of the artists' respective personalities and of the contrast between them.¹³ Gauguin returned the compliment when he included sunflowers, a flower that he associated with Van Gogh (as did the artist himself), in four still lifes painted in 1901, at a time when he was preoccupied with his late friend and their fraught relationship.¹⁴ Three of these paintings also include homages to Redon and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes: Redon is present by way of a sunflower head painted in grisaille with an eye at its centre, which recalls his 1883 lithograph *There Was Perhaps a First Vision Attempted in the Flower* (ill. xx), and Puvis by way of a representation of his painting *Hope* (1871–72, Musée d'Orsay, Paris).¹⁵

The Uncanny Life of Ceramics

The depiction of an artist's work is a common attribute in many portraits and self-portraits, as in Gauguin's *Self-portrait with Manao tupapau* (ill. xx), in which an abstracted image of *Spirit of the Dead Watching* (*Manao tupapau*, ill. xx) in the background summarizes the body of work that he had brought back from Tahiti and, together with the blue and yellow *pareu* fabric, his Tahitian experience.¹⁶ In *Self-portrait with Yellow Christ* (ill. xx), Gauguin's bust is framed by two of his recent works: the eponymous painting (1889, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, W327) is on the left, placed in such a way that one of the crucified's arms seems to protect and sanctify the artist, and on the right, his *Portrait of the Artist in the Form of a Grottesque Head* (*Anthropomorphic Pot*, ill. xx) appears at a scale almost equal to the artist's face and as if coming out of his forehead.¹⁷ The combination of a physical effigy, the image of a three-dimensional self-representation as a "poor devil all doubled up to endure his pain" in "the ovens of hell," and that of a religious painting with autobiographical overtones results in a complex image of the self in psychological and artistic terms.¹⁸ In *Still Life with a Japanese Print* (ill. xx), another ceramic self-representation – *Jug in the Form of a Head, Self-portrait* (ill. xx) – faces a vase containing a lush bouquet, with an *ukiyo-e* image of an actor on the wall between them. Individualized flowers come out of Gauguin's effigy, suggesting life and mental activity, and the expansive shape of the other vessel reminds June Hargrove of *Portrait Vase, Madame Schuffenecker* (ill. xx), so that their juxtaposition may refer to the relationship between the artist and the wife of his friend Émile Schuffenecker.¹⁹







Ceramics by Gauguin – or that he may have made – also appear in his portraits of other people such as Madame Alexandre Kohler (fig. 3) and Louis Roy (ill. xx). In the latter case, the vase, which cannot be identified with certainty, rhymes with the sitter's hair and moustache, while a painted figure appears next to his forehead. The combination of two- and three-dimensional works may allude to Roy's involvement in the printing of Gauguin's *Noa Noa* suite of woodblock prints, which the critic Julien Leclercq hailed as constituting "between sculpture and painting ... an intermediary medium which takes as much from one as the other."²⁰ The ceramic depicted in *Madame Alexandre Kohler* has been recognized – albeit its present whereabouts are unknown – as the *Horned Rats* vase (G57) that Gauguin made after his return from Martinique. The vase is also depicted in *Still Life with Fan*

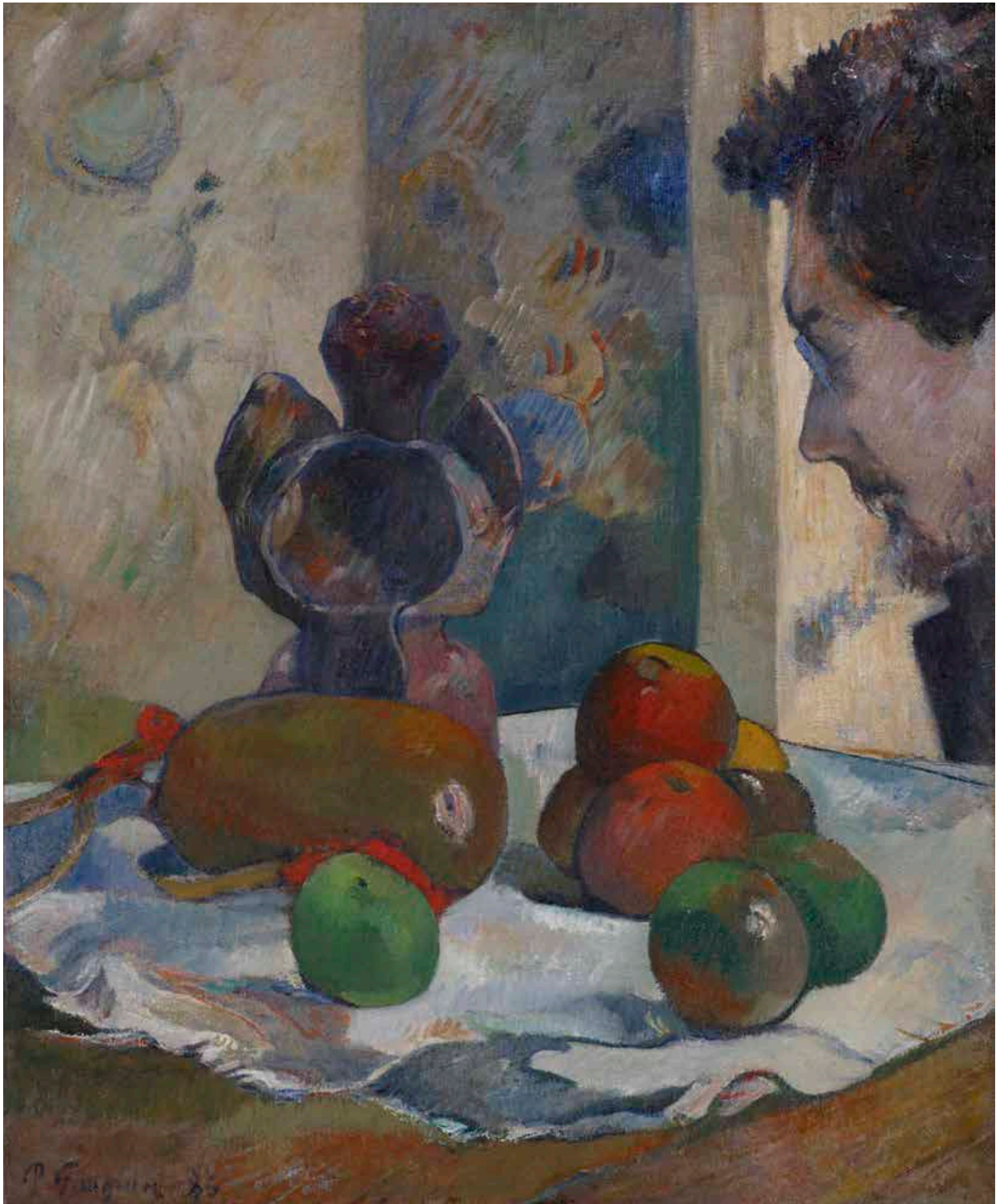
(c. 1889, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, W377), in the same position and combined with the same fan by the artist.²¹ Hovering beside the face of Madame Kohler, the wife of a cashier at the Bon Marché department store in Paris, its grotesque presence adds a disquieting note to her portrait.²²

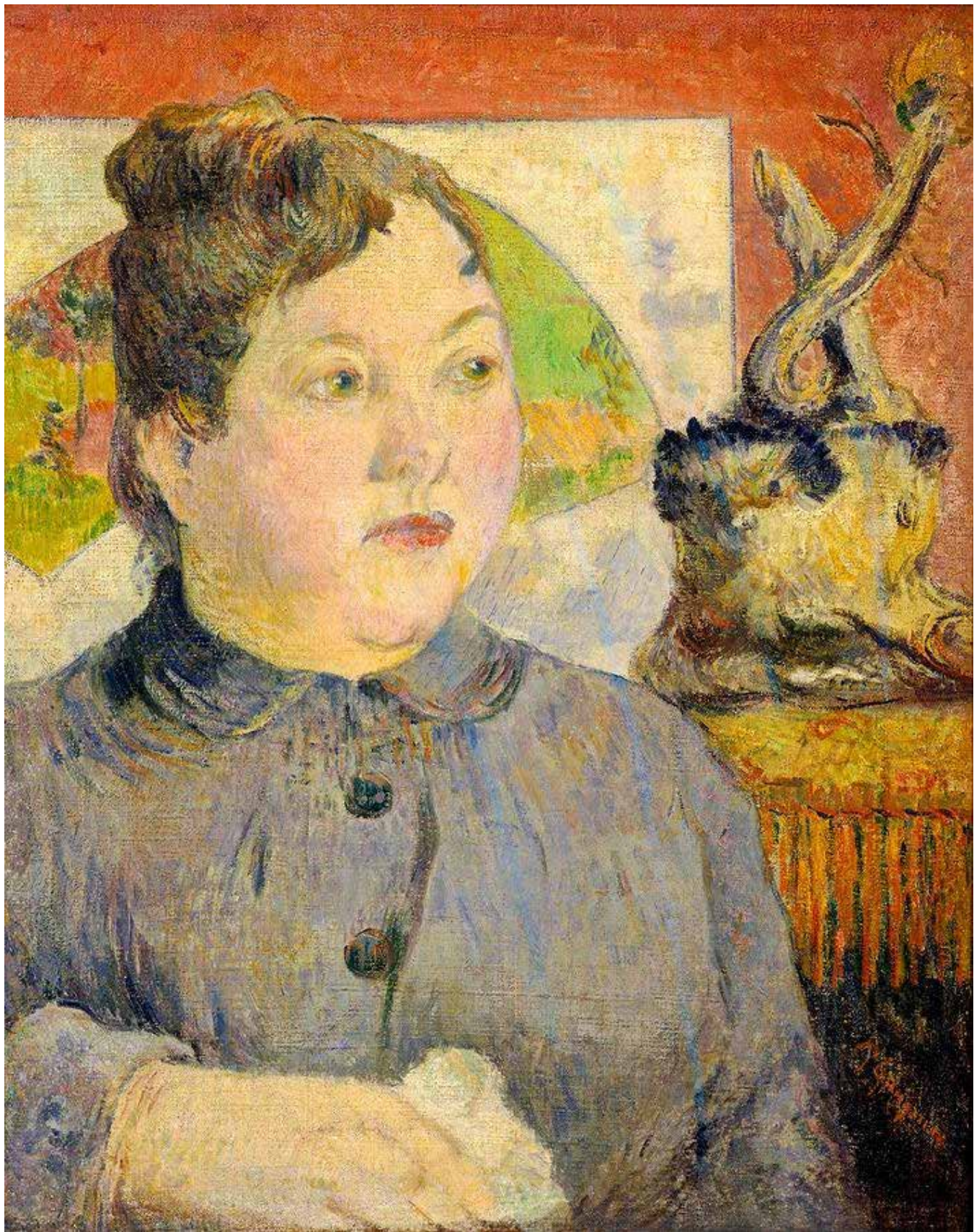


Another ceramic by Gauguin known only from indirect evidence takes pride of place in *Still Life with Profile of Laval* (ill. xx). To some extent, one may say that the painting inverts the positions of human sitter and accessory object found in *Self-portrait with Yellow Christ* or *Madame Alexandre Kohler*.²³ Calling this picture a portrait of a vase seems all the more justified as the strange object not only has biomorphic features reminiscent of plants and animals, but also shares the paradoxical openings of the *Bust-Vase with Exploded*

Head (1887–88, private collection) and – at the back – of the *Double-Headed Vase* (1889, private collection, G68).²⁴ An enigmatic exchange takes place between the two main protagonists and the spectator: Laval looks at the vase, but with a closed eye, and the vase "looks" at the spectator, but with an empty eye. Of the two depicted, the more animated is clearly the one made of clay, a fact further emphasized in their echoes unfolding on a dark surface in the background.

Ceramics that do not appear to have been made by Gauguin – and may be entirely fictional – also feature in some of his portraits. The piece presented in *La Belle Angèle* (fig. xx [Riopelle essay]) and *Young Breton* (ill. xx), frontally and in





three-quarter view like the respective sitters, resembles the figurine from *Interior of the Painter's House, rue Carcel* (fig. 1), with the added element of hair or a head-dress connecting the head with the back.²⁵ The vase mingles Oriental elements with echoes of pre-Columbian – especially Peruvian – pottery and connects the two women with a prototype of spirituality, femininity and fecundity. Anthropomorphic vases also introduce an element of human interiority in works such as *Still Life with Apples, a Pear and a Ceramic Portrait Jug* (ill. xx), in which the resplendent rotundity of the fruit is compared with the equally portly, but hollow shape of the Andean-inspired ceramic, its dark colour and its pensive expression. A similar effect is produced in a more implicit manner in *Vase with Nasturtiums and Quimper Faience* (1886, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, W218 [2001]) thanks to the symmetrically presented flower motifs that endow the Breton feeding bottle with a sort of gaze.²⁶

The special proximity of ceramics to humans in Gauguin's works derives from the analogy he perceived between vessel and body, thanks perhaps to his early exposure to pre-Columbian pottery; in 1889 he argued for the importance of ceramics because of its antiquity "among the American Indians" and of its role in myths of anthropogeny: "God made man out of a little clay."²⁷ The same analogy, however, can be extended to vessels in other materials, a major example being the eighteenth-century *tine* – a Norwegian wooden beer mug – that Gauguin included in *Still Life, Interior, Copenhagen* and in three other pictures.²⁸ In one of these paintings, *Still Life: Wood Tankard and Metal Pitcher* (1880, The Art Institute of Chicago, W47/W60 [2001]), it stands on a white tablecloth beside a pewter pitcher, which it dominates thanks to its superior height and bulk; the work was nicknamed *The Iron Pot and Clay Pot* in reference to a seventeenth-century tale by Jean de La Fontaine, in which two vessels are anthropomorphized and their material opposition moralized. The fact that Gauguin's wife, Mette, had brought the *tine* to Paris must have associated it with her, but in *At the Window (Still Life with Tine and Carafon)*, fig. 4 it appears relatively masculine in comparison to the Danish glass decanter standing next to it. The couple is surrounded by a lemon on a plate, two lumps of sugar and a spoon in a glass, and it is tempting to draw a parallel between this group portrait of objects and the growing Gauguin family, which received its fourth child, Jean, on 12 April 1882.²⁹



Cézanne's Example

Gauguin was, of course, not the first artist to endow the depiction of objects with human connotations and to blur the line between still life and other genres, and he may have been inspired by some of his antecedents and contemporaries. Manet's still lifes and the still-life elements included in many of his portraits are a case in point, and we saw that they prompted Redon – whose flower-eyes have been mentioned in connection with Gauguin's late sunflower pieces – to define his *Portrait of Émile Zola* as a still life. Gauguin's *The Flowers of France* (ill. xx) can be compared to Edgar Degas' 1865 *Woman Seated beside a Vase of Flowers* (fig. 5), in which the portrait of an unnamed sitter – possibly the wife of the artist's schoolboy friend Paul Valpinçon – is relegated to one side of the picture by a sumptuous bouquet.³⁰ The most important model from whom Gauguin learned in this regard, however, was Cézanne, who had the reputation of treating sitters like apples but may also have done the reverse. Gauguin admired Cézanne immensely and regarded his *Still Life with Fruit Dish* (fig. 6), which he owned, as “an exceptional pearl ... the apple of [his] eye.”³¹ He included a translation of the





painting as a background in his *Woman in Front of a Still Life* by Cézanne (ill. xx) and positioned it in such a way that the knife it features points at the unnamed sitter – a first try at the device he used in *The Meal*, or *The Bananas* (fig. 2).

This suggestive use of the background is already present in Cézanne's *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, in which the objects are placed in front of a fictional wallpaper that seems to absorb the glass of the same colour. Gauguin was very aware of its importance for the art of Cézanne, and for his own, writing about the other artist in 1885: "Like Virgil who has several meanings and whom one can interpret as one wishes, the literature of his pictures has a dual-purpose parabolic meaning; his backgrounds are as imaginative as they are real."³² Backgrounds are only mentioned here as an example, and it is clear that Gauguin perceived a co-presence of the real and the imaginary and a "dual-purpose parabolic meaning" – by which he meant the literal and figurative meanings of a parable – in Cézanne's work as a whole, including in the objects depicted in his still lifes.³³



In his 1968 “The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still Life,” Meyer Schapiro interpreted Cézanne’s evolution from the overtly sexual themes of his youth to the still lifes of his mature style as a psychological process of displacement and sublimation, in which the importance of fruit and especially apples could be explained by their association with female nudity.³⁴ He found “a striking example of the defusing of a sexual theme through replacement of a figure by still-life objects” in Cézanne’s *Reclining Nude* (1886/90, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal), in which the predatory bird of *Leda and the Swan* (c. 1880 or later,

Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia) has been replaced by two large pears on a white cloth.³⁵ A similar substitution can be observed in Gauguin's *Still Life with Ceramic Cup* (fig. 7), in which a vegetal motif takes the place of the nude descending into the concavity of the artist's *Cup Decorated with the Figure of a Bathing Girl* (1887–88, Dame Jilian Sackler, G50); one can assume that the erotic appeal of this human figure is confided to the rotund fruit enclosed into the serpentine ceramic, and the conflation of real and imaginary is given free rein in the tablecloth with its motifs of bird and flower.³⁶

Morice asserted in 1907 that Gauguin had “accomplished” what Cézanne had only “indicated.”³⁷ This claim, approved since by Richard Shiff, is especially valid in the genre of still life, which the younger artist clearly identified with his elder.³⁸ Gauguin’s “accomplishment” reconciles Cézanne’s equanimous treatment of face and fruit with his notion that “the culmination of art is the figure.”³⁹ And it agrees with a lesson that Wassily Kandinsky later drew from Cézanne in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1913). Having attributed a “spiritual turn” to the art of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Arnold Böcklin and Giovanni Segantini, who “were looking



New Image to come

for the interior content in exterior forms,” Kandinsky saw this spiritualization take a decisive step with Cézanne:

Using other means, which are closer to the purely pictorial, Cézanne, the seeker after new laws of form, sets himself a similar task. He knows how to create a living being out of a teacup – or rather, how to recognize such a being within this cup. He can raise “still life” to a level where external “dead” objects come internally alive. He treats these objects just as he does people, for he had the gift of seeing inner life everywhere.⁴⁰

To Kandinsky, this step was of crucial importance for the art of the twentieth century, and we may add that Gauguin had a responsibility in it.

Imaginative Perception, Empathy and Animism

The example of Cézanne, however, is insufficient to explain Gauguin’s treatment of objects, and it requires itself an explanation going beyond individual psychology – the conceptual tools of psychoanalysis, to which Schapiro resorted, were forged after all during the period in question. One reason for Gauguin’s tendency to endow objects with human-like qualities was his profound interest in analogies, which sprang from a cultivation of the interpretive, mnemonic and imaginative dimension of perception, and his delight in producing “potential images,” that is images that would become actual through the active participation of the beholders.⁴¹ An instance of this can be found in his *Still Life with Fruit* (fig. 8), in which a formal and positional parallelism is established between the human head at the upper-left corner of the picture contemplating the cornucopia spread on the table and the teapot around which some of the fruit are gathered at the top. The two large oval shapes seem to attract the other elements scattered on the surface in an inversion of gravity underlined by the empty space at the bottom, and the slanted eyes of the face are mimicked by tonal variations in the vessel. On an affective level, the darkness and closeness of the teapot aggravates the air of despondency of the female figure, who finds a narrative context in the painting *Human Misery* (1888, Ordrupgaard, Copenhagen, W304/W317 [2001]). Since the first appearance of this figure, in *Still Life with Fruit*, gives the impression that she was added to the assembly of objects, it is tempting to take a cue from Kandinsky’s remark about Cézanne and imagine that Gauguin “recognized a living being within” this teapot before giving it an autonomous, human existence.

Another factor is Gauguin’s creative interest in objects, some of which he started incorporating in his sculptures from the early 1880s onwards, prompting Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark to speak of “found objects” and compare his appropriating practices to those of Dada and the Surrealists.⁴² Such an attitude implied seeing beyond the functions and “affordances” of objects, even beyond their aesthetic

qualities, to perceive the potential for fiction, reuse and assemblage that inhered in them. Before and beside psychoanalysis, the unconscious animation of objects was seen as a normal trait of perception by the theory of “empathy” (*emföhlung* in German), which exerted a strong influence on Kandinsky and his generation of artists. Similar insights found expression in France in the context of Symbolism and the new science of psychology. Victor Basch, who occupied the first chair of aesthetics, wrote in 1896 about a “symbolic sympathy,” allowing humans to plunge into objects, breathe their vitality into them, and let their feelings make them alive.⁴³ If this was the case for everyday objects, it had to be even truer of artworks and *objets d’art*, which were regarded as an extension of their creator’s personality – a notion at the root of their legal status as *œuvres de l’esprit*.⁴⁴ These conceptions were therefore especially important for Gauguin’s ceramics, their depiction in his two-dimensional works – the animation of an animation – and the revaluation of the so-called decorative arts in general.





The critic Albert Aurier wrote in 1891 that Gauguin had kneaded “more soul than clay” in his ceramics, and his colleague André Fontainas observed four years later that “the decorative work of art is a perpetual provocation to unexpected meditation, to a continuous enhancement, indeed a maturation of the thinking being in us.”⁴⁵ This silent influence of the material world – especially when shaped by art – on the human psyche could be mediated, expressed and reflected upon in the genre of still life, which had once been called in French *vie coye*, “silent life.”⁴⁶

Indeed, Gauguin seems to depict such an influence in *Still Life with Profile of Laval* (ill. xx). It is also the case in *Clovis Asleep* (ill. xx), which shows his son – then four or five years old and still wearing long hair – sleeping beside the *tine*. The wooden mug dominates the child and mediates visually between the surface on which he is lying or leaning and the wall covered with animal and vegetal imagery – a background “as imaginative as [it is] real,” evoking the interior world of Clovis’ dreams.⁴⁷ Gauguin had already used this device to visualize mental activity in a painting of his daughter Aline asleep, which he presented as a genre scene rather than a portrait by turning the sitter away from the spectator and entitling the result *The Little Dreamer, Study* (fig. 9).⁴⁸ No object similar to the *tine*



is shown influencing Aline's dreams, but a bearded puppet with a pointed bonnet and a jester's costume is dangling from the head of her iron bed. Its striking dress and colours relate it to the fictional world of tales and storytelling, which indirectly feeds the child's oneiric one. Close to Clovis' right hand lies another object that is difficult to identify but probably represents a swaddled doll, possibly one made for the child by his parents from materials that he liked, what Donald Winnicott has since called a "transitional object."⁴⁹ If this is the case, the very fact that it does not look like a human or animal body means that the child compensates imaginatively for its lack of resemblance, rendering superfluous and even counter-productive the kind of realism that Gauguin criticized in art as "servile imitation of nature."⁵⁰

The child's imagination was proposed as a model for the artist's creation and the reception of the work of art by psychologists and aestheticians; in 1883, Gabriel Séailles compared it to a wand and wrote that "from an inanimate toy, [the child] makes a living being who resembles and loves him."⁵¹ A major apologist of the "spirit of childhood" was the famous Danish children's writer Hans Christian Andersen, whom Gauguin had every reason to be interested in, at the latest when he stayed unhappily in Copenhagen with his family in 1884–85. Andersen's tales, in which objects similar to the figurine of *Interior of the Painter's House, rue Carcel* (fig. 1) come to life, may have played a role in Gauguin's animated still lifes.⁵² In the author's 1844 tale "The Elder Tree Mother," a girl and a boy turn their father's walking stick into a hobbyhorse:

For the little children, there was life in that stick. When they seated themselves upon it, the polished head turned into the head of a noble neighing horse with a long, black flowing mane. Four slender, strong legs shot out; the animal was strong and spirited; and they galloped around the grass plot.⁵³

This example of what Séailles called the children's "power of metamorphosis" became Gauguin's paradigm of artistic primitivism when he wrote in 1896–98: "As for myself, my art goes way back, further back than the horses on the Parthenon – all the way to the dear old wooden hobby horse of my childhood."⁵⁴

The Sculptor Aubé and His Son Émile (ill. xx), a double portrait presented as a diptych by its passe-partout mount, seems to allude to the kinship of the child's imagination and the artist's creativity, and to the mediation that a product of the latter can effect between the two: the pot on which sits a nude figure modelled by Aubé is placed in the middle and the card mullion separating the child's space from the adult's one passes exactly over the head of the figurine, so that her mind seems to belong to neither or to both. The dedication poem written down by Mette on the mount praises the elder Aubé's hand for "animating at his will women and flowers," announcing Gauguin's later call for "intelligent hands which could impart the life of a figure to a vase and yet remain true to the character of the material."⁵⁵



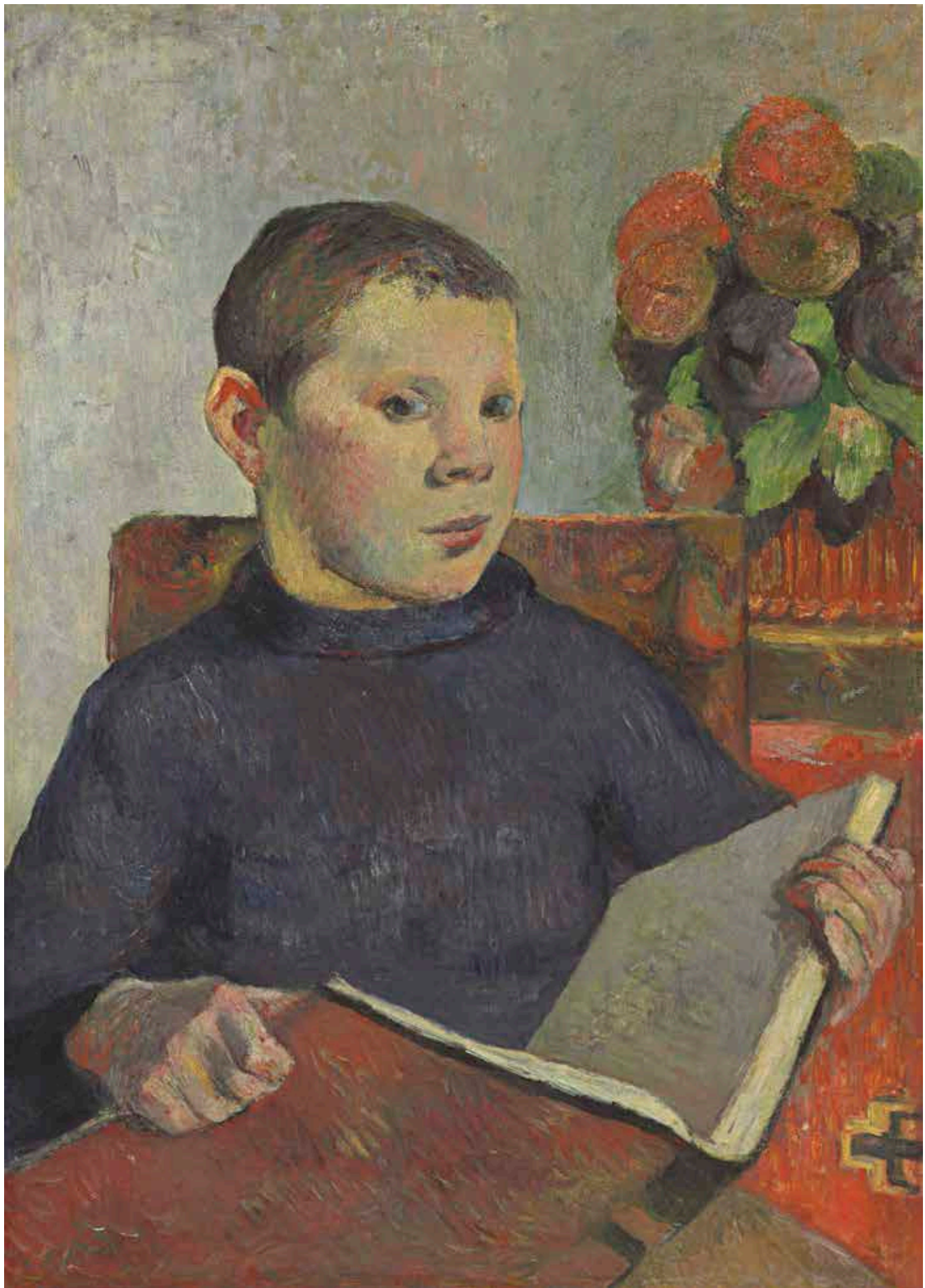
Gauguin's primitivism has already been alluded to above in the discussion of the analogy between the vessel and body that informs his ceramics. He seems to have been fascinated by the ways in which in ancient cultures the human body or part of it – generally the head – could be preserved and thus turned into an image of itself, an “auto-icon” to use the expression coined by Jeremy Bentham.⁵⁶ The best-known example is the Peruvian mummy that Gauguin saw in the Ethnographical Museum of the Trocadéro in 1878 and that he used as a model in many works, including *Life and Death* (1889, Mahmoud Khalil Museum, Cairo, W335), where it sits on the beach and is contrasted with a red-haired bather.⁵⁷ Other objects preserving the memory of their animated state are the mummified heads of the Maori (*toi moko*), which were popular with Westerners since the early nineteenth century and to which Gauguin's painting *The Royal End* (*Arii matamoe*, ill. xx) makes reference. He may also have thought of such antecedents when, in 1881, he decided to model in wax – a material associated with anatomical models – a life-size three-dimensional portrait of his newborn son, Jean (fig. 10).

Finally, Gauguin's Peruvian childhood and extensive travels, his plans for leaving Europe, and his two stays in Polynesia must have contributed to the ontological ambiguity pervading his works. He developed an interest for pre-modern

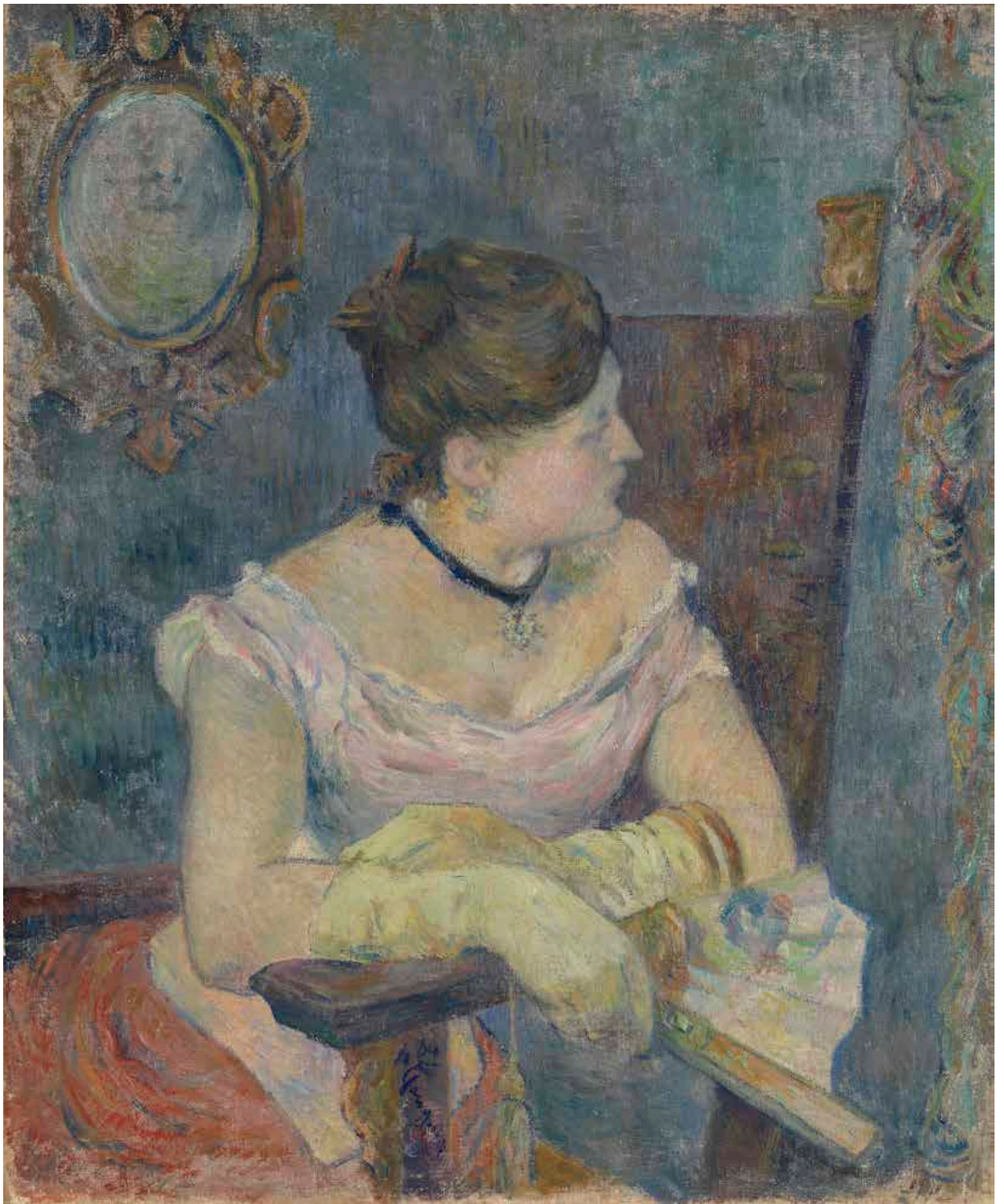


and non-Western modes of thought at a time when the burgeoning discipline of anthropology, in works such as Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) and James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), saw in animism and magic the first phases of development of all religions and cultures. Such ideas were widespread and certainly appealed to Gauguin. They may also have confirmed the results of observations he made on himself, his children and his contemporaries. Whatever the causes, Gauguin not only blurred the distinctions between genres in works like *The Flowers of France*, but gave to his depictions of objects and to the objects he made a quality that calls to mind the notion of "persons other than human," proposed by the anthropologist Irving Hallowell in an essay on the ontology of the Ojibwa people of North America, possessing "potentialities for animation ... under certain circumstances."⁵⁸

The *tine* brought by Mette from Denmark was recognized by Gauguin as a "person" in a similar sense, capable of influencing Clovis' dreams (ill. xx) and of spreading personhood around itself in *At the Window* (fig. 5). The "monstrosities" that Gauguin created out of clay, his "ceramic sculptures," also possessed this



quality for him.⁵⁹ At the end of 1888 he asked Émile Schuffenecker to send his pot *Horned Rats*, which he had depicted in *Madame Alexandre Kohler* (fig. 3), from Paris to Arles because he needed it (one is tempted to say that he needed its company), and we have seen that if the *Still Life with Portrait of Laval* can be regarded as a portrait, it is not as one of Charles Laval.⁶⁰ These insights shed light on Gauguin's relation to objects and especially to the ones coming out of the "intelligent hands" he found must replace the potter's wheel.⁶¹ More broadly, they illuminate the relationships that Western artists and art lovers cultivated with artworks and *objets d'art* at the turn of the century, in parallel to the exploration of the unconscious and the development of anthropology and theories of empathy. And they may contribute to explain the fascination that Gauguin's works in all media exert on us, at a time when the ecological price of the opposition between humans and non-humans has become impossible to ignore and an anthropologist like Philippe Descola can call for a "restoration of animism."⁶²



NOTES

- 1 See "portrait, n., adv., and adj.," Oxford English Dictionary online, www.oed.com/view/Entry/148230?rskey=trQLP6&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed 27 April 2018), and Lorne Campbell, "Portraiture," Grove Art Online, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oa-9781884446054-e-7000068853> (accessed 20 August 2018).
- 2 Redon 1987, p. 56.
- 3 Morice 1905, p. 522, cited in Elderfield 2017, p. 31.
- 4 Vollard 1914, p. 101; see also Elderfield 2017, p. 31.
- 5 See Brettell 1988, cat. 7, pp. 27–28, and Wildenstein 2001/2002, cat. 76, pp. 87–89.
- 6 See further Wildenstein 2001/2002, cat. 164, pp. 195–196, and Gamboni 2014, pp. 270–272.
- 7 See Brettell 1988, cat. 120, pp. 220–221.
- 8 "attribute, n.," Oxford English Dictionary online, www.oed.com/view/Entry/12931?rskey=pT9U2T&result=1&isAdvanced=false (accessed 30 April 2018).
- 9 See Brettell 1988, cat. 159, pp. 304–305.
- 10 See *ibid.*, cat. 158, pp. 288–289.
- 11 *Ibid.*, cat. 129, p. 233.
- 12 Charles F. Stuckey, in Brettell 1988, cat. 129, p. 234. Stuckey paraphrases Naomi Maurer's argument from "The Pursuit of Spiritual Knowledge: The Philosophical Meaning and Origins of Symbolist Theory and its Expression in the Thought and Art of Odilon Redon, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1985, pp. 960–962.
- 13 Druick and Zegers 2001, pp. 209–210.
- 14 W602, W603, W604 and W606.
- 15 See Gamboni 2014, pp. 355–358.
- 16 See Brettell 1988, cat. 164, pp. 311–313.
- 17 See *ibid.*, cat. 99, pp. 177–178.
- 18 See *ibid.*, cat. 65, pp. 128–129, and cat. 88, pp. 156–157; letter from Gauguin to Émile Bernard, Le Pouldu, end of 1889, cited in *ibid.*, p. 128.
- 19 Hargrove 2017, pp. 148–149.
- 20 Leclerq 1895, pp. 121–122. See Lemonedes, Thomson and Juszcak 2009, cat. 31, p. 46, and Ives and Stein 2002, cat. 9.
- 21 See Brettell 1988, cat. 41, pp. 90–91.
- 22 See Gamboni 2014, p. 273.
- 23 See Brettell 1988, cat. 30, pp. 76–77, and Wildenstein 2001/2002, cat. 238, pp. 304–308.
- 24 See Gamboni 2014, pp. 148–150, and Groom 2017, p. 170.
- 25 See Brettell 1988, cat. 89, pp. 158–160.
- 26 See Wildenstein 2001/2002, cats. 217–218, pp. 270–272.
- 27 Gauguin 1889a, p. 86. See Gamboni 2014, pp. 181–182.
- 28 See Wildenstein 2001/2002, cat. 60, pp. 67–68; cat. 92, pp. 103–104; cat. 151, pp. 171–172; and cat. 164, pp. 195–196.
- 29 See Gamboni 2014, pp. 269–270.
- 30 See www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436121 (accessed 3 May 2018); Françoise Cachin, "Degas and Gauguin," in

Dumas 1997, pp. 231–233; and George T.M. Shackelford, in Rathbone and Shackelford 2001, pp. 23, 50.

31 Letter from Gauguin to Émile Schuffenecker, early June 1888, in Gauguin 1984, no. 147, p. 182. See Brettell 1988, cat. 111, pp. 192–193. Richard Schiff has recently proposed to consider that "Gauguin's persistent efforts at explanation" and his praise of Cézanne's genius "caused apples, Cézanne, and the technical abstractions of painting to become linked in the collective imagination, not only at the close of the nineteenth century but throughout the twentieth" (Richard Schiff, "Apples and Abstraction," in Rathbone and Shackelford 2001, p. 42).

32 Letter from Gauguin to Émile Schuffenecker, 14 January 1885, in Gauguin 1984, no. 65, p. 88.

33 On Gauguin's understanding of what he called a "dual-purpose parabolic meaning," see Gamboni 2014, especially pp. 22–26, and Dario Gamboni, "Gauguin and the Challenge of Ambiguity," in Broude 2018, pp. 109–114.

34 Schapiro 1968, reprinted in Schapiro 1978, pp. 1–38.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 12 and figs. 14, 15.

36 See Groom 2017, pp. 166, 174–175.

37 Morice 1907, p. 547.

38 Richard Schiff, "The Primitive of Everyone Else's Way," in Solana 2004, p. 77. On Gauguin's association of still life with Cézanne, see Hargrove 2017, p. 150.

39 Morice 1905, p. 522, cited in Elderfield 2017, p. 31.

40 Wassily Kandinsky, *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, edited by Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: Da Capo Press, 2004), p. 151.

41 See *ibid.*, notably pp. 18–20, 148, and Gamboni 2014.

42 See Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, "Gauguin Creates His World. The Object in a World of Myth and Dream," in Eisenman 2007, pp. 35–47, and Gamboni 2014, pp. 49–50.

43 Victor Basch, *Essai critique sur l'esthétique de Kant* (Paris: Alcan, 1896), cited in Andrea Pinotti, *L'empathie: histoire d'une idée de Platon au posthumain*, trans. Sophie Burdet (Paris: J. Vrin, 2016), pp. 183–184.

44 See Edelman 1989.

45 Aurier 1891, pp. 155–165, cited in Aurier 1995, p. 38; André Fontainas, *Notes et scolies*, unpublished notes, 24 February 1895, pp. 124–125, cited in Laurent Houssais, "André Fontainas (1865–1948), critique et historien de l'art," PhD diss., Université Blaise-Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand II, 2003, p. 422.

46 See Hans J. Van Miegroet, "Still life," in *Grove Art Online*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T081448> (accessed 22 August 2018).

47 See Gamboni 2014, pp. 86–91.

48 See Brettell 1988, cat. 8, pp. 28–29, and Wildenstein 2001/2002, cat. 75, pp. 86–87.

49 See Winnicott 1953, pp. 89–97, and Gamboni 2014, pp. 90–91, 363.

50 Gauguin 1889a, p. 86.

51 Séailles 1902, p. 79.

52 See Gamboni 2014, pp. 264–268.

- 53 Hans Christian Andersen, "The Elder Tree Mother" (1844), The Hans Christian Andersen Center, www.andersen.sdu.dk (accessed 22 August 2018).
- 54 *Diverses choses*, f. 107 r; repeated in Gauguin 1989, p. 27.
- 55 Gauguin 1895b, p. 1, cited in Gauguin 1996, p. 106 (trans. modified).
- 56 See Campbell, "Portraiture," www.ucl.ac.uk/bentham-project/who-was-jeremy-bentham/auto-icon (accessed 4 May 2018).
- 57 See Andersen 1967, pp. 615–619, and Brettell 1988, cat. 79, pp. 145–147.
- 58 Alfred Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View" (1960), in *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell*. Edited by Raymond D. Fogelson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 357–390, citation p. 363.
- 59 Letter from Gauguin to Félix Bracquemond, end of 1886 – beginning of 1887, in Gauguin 1984, no. 116, p. 143.
- 60 Letter from Gauguin to Émile Schuffenecker, 25 October 1888, in *ibid.*, no. 174, p. 264.
- 61 Gauguin 1984, p. 264.
- 62 Descola 2014, pp. 129–142. See also Latour 2002.