

and cigarette ashtrays. I don't drink and I don't smoke and I shouldn't have to look at such things in my pictures.' I was staggered again. 'But', I protested, weakly, 'if the subject-matter of a picture is going to be what makes it immoral would we have to jettison, for example, most of the work of Toulouse-Lautrec?' She had a magnificent round voice, rather like a penetrating fog-horn. She used it now to terminate the conversation. 'Who is he?'

Whether she meant that he was unworthy of consideration, or just didn't know of him, it was impossible to say anything more except to ask whether she would like to come with me in my car next day. I was going sketching up the Takaka Hill. She accepted with delight; she had told me how she suffered from lack of transport. We took our lunches. When it came time to eat, she went to the farthest part of the space available and ate out of a brown paper bag with her back to me. When we packed up our work to go home she looked at mine and said, 'I've *never* seen anybody use so much colour as that!'

When I came back to Nelson after 1932 and showed Hugh Scott some prints I had bought or been given, he was more displeased with Cézanne than with Van Gogh. I might look at Van Gogh, *he* wouldn't do me any harm; but not at Cézanne, he couldn't draw! Years later I was reminded of that when I came across a remark attributed to Whistler. His response, when someone showed him a drawing by Cézanne, was that 'if a child of five had drawn that on his slate, his mother, if she were a good mother, would have whipped him'. (Incidentally, Hugh Scott claimed to have known 'Jimmy Whistler'.) From then, my friendship with him and his lovely wife had to be conducted without reference to painting. They were our neighbours, after he had had a stroke and come to live in retirement at Ruby Bay.

Nelson prided itself on its reputation of being an art centre. That may have been valid once, in terms of polite colonial gentility; but the refusal to accept influences made it latterly a hollow term. Everything wears out or goes flat without injections of new vitality. In painting, this comes from other painting as well as from the subject the painter chooses. A situation exactly the opposite of the Nelson one was indicated by E. C. Simpson, writing about 1940 in *Art in New Zealand* on Colin McCahon. 'In McCahon', he wrote, 'the influences meet.' If, as many believe, Colin McCahon is our greatest, or our first great, New Zealand painter, Mr Simpson's comment may well indicate why. If it does, then it seems to follow that New Zealand painting thrives on influence.

But there is the other side to it; it has to be strong enough itself to bear the influences without being merely a reflection of them. Maybe it is the fear that this might happen that makes some people