



Extracting Calm from Chaos

A dissolute life found sublime expression in Paul Gauguin's art.

THERE IS SOMETHING IMMENSELY UNSETTLING—actually, there are many things that are unsettling—about Paul Gauguin's life, which may be best described in our vernacular as a hot mess. His biography is such a pungent story that no less a writer than W. Somerset Maugham

took it as inspiration for a novel, *The Moon and Sixpence*. For dramatic purposes, it doesn't hurt that Gauguin was a great artist, whose work inspired Picasso, Fauvism and Cubism.

The bullet points: Gauguin traded in a career as a stockbroker

to become a painter. By the late 1880s he had left his wife and children, arguably “lifted” a new style of painting, Cloisonnism, from the younger Émile Bernard, and

BELOW: *Three Tahitians* (1899; oil on canvas, 28¾x37) by Paul Gauguin

