

Interior Portraiture and
Masculine Identity in France,
1789–1914

Edited by Temma Balducci, Heather Belnap Jensen and
Pamela J. Warner

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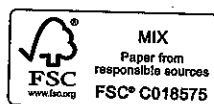
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Cézanne, Manet and the Portraits of Zola

André Dombrowski

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Edouard Manet and Paul Cézanne debated in paint two very different constructions of modernity, two distinct possibilities of experiencing its overstimulation and adaptive demands, two competing forms of socialization. One of these options—Manet's—maintained that the new conditions of modern life perpetually propel us outward, towards the social and its utilitarian control of self-image and expression.¹ The other model—Cézanne's—endorsed a privatized self, entailing an inner life not reducible to the outer-directed forms of cultural self-production. This retreat into the walled garden of selfhood, if we believe both pre-Freudian and Freudian thinkers, was perhaps the necessary and dialectical counterpart to modernity's seemingly total exteriorization of life and experience, and thus became early Cézanne's passionate if short-lived riposte to Manet's modernist play with surface. This distinction marks many, if not all, of the adaptations Cézanne made after Manet's major 1860s Salon contributions, like his two versions of *A Modern Olympia* (c. 1869–70, private collection; 1873–74, Paris, Musée d'Orsay), his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (c. 1869–70, private collection), as well as the other scenes of sexual violence that distinguish Cézanne's early oeuvre. In them, he knowingly reframed Manet's urbane aloofness and self-restraint in scenes rife with psychosexual tension and desublimation.

The two scenes Cézanne painted in response to Manet's *Portrait of Emile Zola* (Plate 16)—group portraits referred to as *Paul Alexis Reading to Emile Zola*, generally dated between 1869 and 1872 (Plates 17, 18)—also redirect Manet's depiction of Zola away from public posturing towards an intimate and privatized exchange.² Manet's *Zola*, shown at the Salon of 1868, deflated its already delimited pictorial space and pressed all its elements, including the sitter, flat towards the picture plane. The painting de-emphasizes Zola's ostensible centrality among a superfluidity of objects and images, denying the sitter his primacy.³ Manet constructed the portrait as if Zola, too, like the mass-produced objects that surround him, was subject to the conditions of reproducibility. He is represented almost as flat, framed and color-contrasted

as the pamphlets, prints, photograph and screen that clutter and compete for the viewer's attention. Zola emerges in the portrait as more "sign" than substance. The painting thus announces more self-consciously than most early modernist portraits that it cannot open onto the sitter's interiority—invisible to the eye in any case—but that it must establish selfhood in paint exclusively through surface, through the careful inflection of the sitter's surroundings. What we know about Zola's interiority is all exterior to him; Zola is what surrounds him. Or, as Odilon Redon said about the painting in 1868, Manet had sacrificed the "man and his ideas for fine technique, for the successful accessory," shown Zola "rather [like] a still life, so to speak, than the expression of a human being."⁴ There was no better painter of the Second Empire than Manet, that is, to turn even the portrait—and the bourgeois ideals of autonomous subjectivity and interiority it promised to shore up—into an exercise in objectification.

Shortly after the portrait was shown at the Salon, Cézanne revised Manet's principles of portraiture markedly in his own attempts at painting Zola.⁵ In his two versions showing Zola with Paul Alexis—the young poet and journalist from Aix—Cézanne moved Zola from center stage. He introduced elements of narrative by choosing a moment of intellectual exchange between two of his closest friends. Grounding Manet's suspended scene, Cézanne anchors his figures in their own environment, offering a view into their room. He gave more weight to the figures and less to the accessories, cooling the over-stimulus of Manet's claustrophobic spatial arrangement. Finally, Cézanne bestowed more substance to the painting's ostensible subject, the author himself, even in the unfinished state in which Zola remained in the first version. Gone, therefore, is the sense of "instantaneousness" and "at-onceness" that Michael Fried, invoking the tissue of the temporal as adjunct to the social, argued marked Manet's achievements of the 1860s.⁶ In his portraits, Cézanne instead positions the author within an inter-subjective, rather than an intra-pictorial exchange. The consequences of this choice are far reaching: Manet's version is relativist, in which the sitter gains distinction almost exclusively through surrounding objects and attributes, while Cézanne sets up a more dialogic structure, in which the sitter individuates through active participation in his or her (homo)social relations. This essay will attribute these diverging approaches to the early modernist portrait to contemporary debates over the aesthetic politics of selfhood as they circulated within Zola's inner circle.

The structuring differences between selfhood and objecthood, interiority and exteriority, that I invoke for the two painters, speak in the gendered cadences that marked such oppositions at the time. To withdraw artistic practice and exchange so completely into the interior—in opposition to what Naomi Schor, citing Michel Burton, described as the naturalist novelists' "inclination ... towards a position of complete exteriority"⁷—might be perceived as playing to the so-called risk of a certain degree of effeminization of the masculine intellect, especially in Cézanne's images. Cézanne in turn, I hope to show, in fact redefined the tropes of femininity (of the interior) and

passivity (of the listener) to his advantage in the homosocial competitions he placed at the core of his portrait practice, between Alexis and Zola, himself and Zola, as well as himself and Manet. In Cézanne's almost anti-naturalist drive towards a romantic version of "complete interiority," then, the feminine is a category not carefully held in check, but welcomed and instrumentalized in the hierarchical relations—and discontents—of masculine artistic rivalry.

During the time under consideration here, the 1860s and 1870s, the portrait offered a specific set of challenges not faced by any other genre. For one, painters' growing insistence on painting's expressivity and autonomy—on the pictorialization of "temperament" in Zola's terms—threatened to mute a sitter's individuality in favor of the artist's.⁸ As Benjamin Buchloh succinctly put it: "[The] correspondences of the epistemic and the pictorial attest to the inextricable relationship between rapidly changing conceptions of the subject and the equally rapid disintegration of the traditional pictorial categories."⁹ Portraiture revealed, that is to say—often explicitly and more frequently than in prior centuries—the competition between painter and sitter as one of its central structuring devices. Cézanne's re-composition of Manet's portrait could become a thematic option for modern painting only under the conditions of that competition.

Moreover, Manet and his followers made the flux of public life a metaphor for the imbrication of the self in the social. For Manet, public life meant that there is no private "I," which is to say no possibility of a selfhood that is not always already conceived in dialogue with the public. Theodor Adorno, in his study of Kierkegaard, called this never fully and authentically privatized self, the "*intérior* as the prototypical cell of abandoned inwardness" and wrote that "inwardness presents itself as the restriction of human existence to a private sphere free from the power of reification. Yet as a private sphere it itself belongs, if only polemically, to the social structure."¹⁰ For Manet, as for Adorno, there is no self except a public one under the illusion of privacy, echoing sentiments already expressed in the 1860s and 1870s as in Charles Garnier's famous statement that "everything that occurs in the world is but theater and representation."¹¹

Portraiture thus became arguably an even more incoherent genre than ever before, seeking to make evident a public face camouflaging a private one.¹² By contrast, in his Zola-Alexis portraits, Cézanne returned to a conception of deep selfhood and autonomous interiority. In picturing friendship and creative exchange, Cézanne explicitly refuted Manet's radical version of social life as a perpetual play of mirrors and offered a more traditionally conceived notion of privatized selfhood at home, a setting that functions in this case as a refuge from the public. Narrative portraiture in an interior, I will argue in what follows, therefore offered Cézanne a crucial means to redirect the focus of modern painting from the retina to the psyche. This essay, then, studies the links between the politics of identity and the politics of form in a specific pictorial competition between two Second Empire painters. As an early advocate for the liberation of pictorial form and exponent of a quasi-scientific exploration of the

human mind, Zola appeared as an obvious subject—a test case—for two very different painters each seeking to lay claim to the writer's sympathies.

Zola–Alexis

In 1869, Alexis had just turned 22.¹³ He was 7 years Zola's junior, an age-difference very much erased in Cézanne's canvases. Alexis, shown sitting to the left of Zola and reading to his new friend and mentor in the first portrait, had just arrived in Paris in September of that year.¹⁴ At this time, Zola lived with his family in a pavilion-style house with a small garden at 14 rue de la Condamine, and the scene supposedly took place in this house. Alexis had befriended Zola just a few months, maybe even weeks, prior to the moment depicted. Cézanne, however, had met Alexis much earlier, in the Aix Collège Bourbon in 1857. We can even assume that Cézanne painted his two versions as gifts to the author and that the double portraits were viewed exclusively by the very close knit circle that they in turn depict, rather than by a Salon audience like Manet's portrait (both versions belonged to Zola, and one was sold from among Zola's possessions after his death in 1903 when the figures were first identified).¹⁵ Thus, as literally private images depicting private exchanges, Cézanne's paintings trade more deliberately than Manet's in interpersonal dynamics and seclusion, which makes them—along with Cézanne's other early works—rare examples in the canon of paintings of modern life.

Alexis had humbly approached Zola in Paris and, though he would go on to become a close collaborator and assistant to the senior novelist, in 1871 he still considered himself “the dilettante of [Zola's] work.”¹⁶ His very first poems, after a few attempts at poetry and journalism in the Aix student newspaper *Le Grognon provençal*—“A l'amphithéâtre” and “Les Lits”—had just appeared in January of 1869 in *Le Figaro* and *Le Gaulois*, the latter edited by Zola.¹⁷ He had earlier read his heavily Baudelaire-inspired poems to Cézanne in Aix, as the artist reported in a letter to Numa Coste of 1868 (“Alexis was kind enough to read me a piece of poetry that I thought very good indeed”).¹⁸

Both versions of Cézanne's portraits of Zola and Alexis, which at first glance seem pulled directly from the reality of intellectual life on rue de la Condamine, are moreover reformulations of Manet's more provocative portraits and figure studies of the 1860s. In Cézanne's first version of the double portrait, Alexis is humbly, yet massively perched on a balcony chair that is far too small for him. The yellow metal bends underneath his weight. Curiously, Cézanne gave Alexis the posture of Zola in Manet's portrait, thus shifting their positions and implying a reversal of their status. The one major difference is that Cézanne moved Alexis's right hand from his knee closer to his crotch (similar to Olympia's hand covering her genitals), thus turning Manet's cool portrayal of Zola at once more awkward and more sexual. And even though Alexis appears in Zola's former position, Cézanne is able to

imbue him with a sense of agency by making him read aloud to Zola who appears to listen intently (while Zola in Manet holds a book but gazes into the distance).

Furthermore, again in the first version, Cézanne took Zola and put him onto a mattress on the floor as if to make him into Manet's Olympia, which itself figures so prominently in the background of Manet's *Portrait of Zola*. Zola now becomes Olympia's mirror image, resting on pillows as she does. This role reversal is further emphasized by the fact that Manet changed Olympia's gaze in the image on the back wall so her eyes meet Zola, and no longer the viewer.¹⁹ This is one of the few moments in Manet's painting in which a concrete “inter-psychic,” and not just formal, connection is forged between two primary elements of the portrait, even if Zola does not return the look. By making Zola into Olympia, Cézanne staged a substitution of a flesh and blood sitter (Zola) for an iconographic referent (*Olympia*, the print). He thus unmasked and counteracted Manet's decision to animate the image on the back wall while Zola receives no such agency from the painter. Cézanne, in turn, imbued Zola with presence despite the fact that he represents a “quotation” from Manet. The substitution suggests that Cézanne could personalize and activate Zola even if he appears in the guise of Olympia—and thus *as image*—even while listening passively to Alexis. Here, Cézanne's reversal of Manet's priority between image and interiority comes full circle.

It would have been a loaded enterprise for any painter to portray Zola after Manet set a new benchmark for portraiture in 1868, but perhaps most so for Cézanne, because he had known the author since childhood. Cézanne thus refused Manet's aggressive co-optation of Zola into his pictorial project, transferring Manet's play with surface into an interpersonal meditation on intimacy and friendship, precisely those characteristics Cézanne must have felt elevated his longstanding relationship with Zola ahead of Manet's. Moreover, this depiction of a complex internal life was as much, if not more, Zola-like than anything in Manet, as Zola's early psychological novels show (*La Confession de Claude* or *Thérèse Raquin*, published respectively in 1865 and 1867).²⁰ Cézanne therefore attempted to pictorially articulate Zola's project better than Manet, which is to say more sympathetically, because it seems clear that Zola had earlier mentioned Cézanne in his aesthetic writings more out of nostalgia for their shared childhood than from any serious desire to engage with or defend Cézanne's art. This desire to lay claim to Zola's sympathies was an active and deeply charged act. While Zola dedicated his review of the 1866 Salon when it appeared in book form “to my friend Cézanne,” for Cézanne, Zola must have been more than a childhood friend and dedicatee.²¹ He was an intellectual comrade as well as ideological fellow traveler and, not least, a man from his own circle who had made it. Yet, the degree of their shared interests never became evident in Zola's public statements about Cézanne. Zola was much more dedicated to promoting Manet's artistic achievements than Cézanne's, whose work he hardly ever mentioned in his assessment of the current state of art.

Cézanne's adaptations after Manet's portrait are thus pictorial annexations that at heart turn on his greater intimacy with Zola, his more nuanced knowledge of and closer friendship with his childhood friend. The double portraits take as their theme the intellectual and artistic rivalries and alliances among Zola, Alexis, Cézanne and Manet, and stage a seemingly more authentic scene of the friendship and mentorship networks surrounding Zola. In Cézanne, the "anxiety of influence" within his close knit circle is no longer subtext—as it was in Manet's painting with its covert competition between painter and sitter—but the principal text of, indeed the primal scene for, the paintings.²²

The question remains, however, why Alexis entered the scene and not Cézanne himself (for shy Cézanne had never been good at inserting himself into Manet's paintings; it is often claimed that the client in *A Modern Olympia* is a self-portrait of the painter). To place Alexis into the double portrait next to Zola served two related and important functions regarding authoriality and interiority: here is a young artist in the making, struggling for authorial equality before the more established figure. Alexis, then, is in the picture, in part because in his subservient status within their circle, he could be made a stand-in for Cézanne's complicated relation to both Manet and Zola. As well, in seeking to lay claim to a deeper and truer ideological bond with Zola than Manet's, Cézanne, paradoxically, had to avoid the exclusive invocation of mere friendship, lest it be said that biography alone linked them.

Cézanne's transference of his own relation with Zola onto Alexis has other consequences as well for the art of male artistic rivalry that lies at the heart of the two paintings. Cézanne, in making Zola—the author—a passive, reclining listener in the intellectual exchange pictured, placed him in one of the most recognizable positions of feminine display then available in modern painting, Olympia's pose. In reading to him, this Alexis/Cézanne-figure inverts the recognized power dynamic, and reveals himself to be an author with something significantly interesting to say, such that even Zola will listen. But most importantly, in selecting the much younger and less experienced writer Alexis to take his place in this complex triangulation, Cézanne naturalized through an age difference the stark difference in professional recognition separating him from Zola, although they were roughly the same age. Not that any of these gendered pictorial maneuvers occurred necessarily on a conscious level on Cézanne's part. But certainly in the first version—and this is perhaps a reason for abandoning it—Cézanne's re-engineering of the power dynamic between Zola and himself in his favor appears fully symptomatic, both formally and thematically. The gendered complications of masculine interior portraiture—which is to say the subtle recalibrations of authority accrued in the move from public to private and from active to passive—are welcomed by Cézanne in order to smooth over—if only fictitiously, imaginatively and as art—the professional hierarchies between the four figures.

Interior-interiority

The modern portrait is often marked by a productive conflation between two fundamentally different spatial parameters: the sitter's interiority and the depicted interior. Cézanne's Zola-Alexis portraits establish a fully mutual metaphoric connection between the two spatial registers, one that Manet in turn expressly refuses. The interior becomes event in Cézanne's paintings, marked by anthropomorphized, billowy curtains and dramatic shadows on the ground in version two. Cézanne's portraits not only open onto their interiors more widely than Manet, especially in his second version, which reduces the size of the protagonists in order to lend the room greater pictorial impact, but they also shift from mere setting to active protagonist. From the first version to the second, where Zola turns his back towards us, Cézanne lengthened the distance between his sitters, creating a greater gap between them, and thus relaxed the implicit power relation between the two writers while making their surroundings more prominent.²³ Unlike Manet's painting, in which the sitter mimics the compression and ambivalence of his surroundings, the interiors in Cézanne's images physically contain and clearly situate the protagonists.

That this conflation between the interior and interiority arose during the historical moment that saw the psychic interior systemically and scientifically mapped in the half-century before Freud is hardly surprising, as several scholars have shown.²⁴ While the painted face did not seem to deliver any credible access to this newly charted self, the literal spaces of portraiture—sitting rooms, studios or *cabinets de travail*—remained a more reliable point of entry to the sitter, albeit an oblique one. In Camille Lemonnier's *Salon de Paris* of 1870, for instance, the author wants to read any sitter's mind through spatial metaphors, through "windows onto the street":

The artist formulates the inside through the outside and that which one does not see through expressions, which make the invisible visible ... For a portrait does not come alive through exterior facts: it lives through sentiment and thought. A portrait that feels nothing and expresses nothing is worth nothing.²⁵

Lemonnier here metaphorizes the depicted self to an actual interior. The sitter's mind can open and close, be entered and its contents pushed quite literally onto its façade. But in admitting that the portraitist's failure in this regard is possible, perhaps even likely, the critic exposes his own paradigms as more wishful thinking than a readily achievable pictorial truth.

The conflation between interior and interiority seems to have found expression in the poetic circle around Baudelaire, and especially Stéphane Mallarmé (Figure 9.4).²⁶ The modern poet's withdrawal into the interior was a deliberate attempt at conflating the real and an artificially induced dream-state: both became essential retreats of the creative mind. The contrast to the parallel rise of modernist painting in Manet and his Impressionist followers—with its emphasis on public life and experience, often mapped onto suburban

landscape—could not be more striking. Listen, for instance, to Mallarmé in a letter of 5 December 1866:

I don't have to tell you how I suffer at home! I have but half of my apartment, and do not live as if I had my own room, all to myself, furnished with my own thoughts, the window panes bulging with interior dreams like drawers of precious stones in an expensive piece of furniture, like draperies falling in familiar folds.²⁷

Mallarmé's semantic leap goes against the typical nineteenth-century belief that the interior was a perfect physiognomic index of its inhabitant. In that traditional model, the mind maintains a position of priority to the traces and signs it leaves of itself in the interior. Manet's *Portrait of Zola* is based largely on this indexical belief system, allowing the attributes to signify metonymically for the sitter (even if they do not necessarily add up). In contrast, Mallarmé offers a mapping of interior space parallel to the processes of subjectification itself, making the room not only coterminous with mind, but with the process of self-understanding, as if coming into knowledge of the self is like entering a room. Roger Pearson aptly remarked that in much of Mallarmé's work, rooms become "a symbol of our situation in the universe and the site of our own consciousness."²⁸ For Mallarmé, the dream-chamber (his "chambre meublée de ma pensée"²⁹) becomes a poetic space—born of the physical surroundings, but also psychically segregated from them—through which an inner sense of self becomes mapped, and thus meaningful and knowable to itself. He thus fundamentally reversed the accepted hierarchy between selfhood and spatial interior, establishing the latter as a key structuring device for the self.

These two models of the interior/interiority bind are broadly applicable to the two painters at hand: for Manet, exterior traces and attributes constitute selfhood, while for Cézanne, the interior is interchangeable with the self. Manet's two-dimensionality and lack of space gave rise to the common perception that it was too flat and neglectful of its sitter. In Cézanne's model, the room's walls and architectural elements (doors, window frames, curtains) materialize, frame and condition the creative exchange, which stands at the center of the paintings. Cézanne thus took up the cudgel of the critics' attacks, "correcting" Manet's painting. Cézanne opened Manet's dense pictorial structure and turned it into persiflage. His paintings are thus in themselves a form of art criticism.

Manet-Zola

A specific portrait of a public figure proved far different from Manet's usual depictions of modern metropolitan typologies.³⁰ His Zola portrait equates likeness almost entirely with context, and Zola, the individual writer, with the typology of the modern art critic in general. Manet transformed even the portrait of a specific and well-known writer like Zola into a typology of the modern author, and not a study of a private self, suggesting that the

individuated portrait was a definitional impossibility and portrait typologies the only form of portraiture viable for modern art. He sought to re-engineer our expectations towards the portrait and understand the individual in it as first and foremost a social actor. That seems also why he felt compelled, paradoxically, to name Zola fully in his title.

As a consequence, contemporary viewers of the Zola portrait expected to receive information about the self on display that the painting did not deliver, and much of the criticism directed at the portrait in 1868 is invested in giving back individuated specificity to the type. Several major concerns arose immediately from Manet's peculiar notion of portraiture, and these were voiced, expressly and repeatedly, by several Salon critics and caricaturists. As the distinction between sitter and attributes grew less significant, the traditional equation between the two became increasingly incoherent. Manet's paintings (and the Zola portrait in particular) attracted criticism more than other painters of his time, since his paintings took the loss of individuality that marked modernization to be their central theme.

Manet was often accused by his critics of treating everything he transferred to canvas with a radical equality. His assertive refusal of facial expression in his paintings, which marks the Zola portrait as well, has been accused from the beginning as leveling the distinction (and hierarchy) between portraiture and still life, subject and object, life and death.³¹ The prominent caricaturist André Gill bemoaned the fact that the viewer was hardly able to make out Zola's figure in the generalized darkness surrounding him, calling him "lost in his dark thoughts" (Figure 6.1).³² Gill thus compensated for Manet's refusal by giving the sitter the very interior life the portrait itself seemed to disavow. Jean Quatrelles in *La Vie parisienne* reattached Zola's right foot—cut-off in Manet's portrait—and let it inappropriately enter, in a gesture that seemed to fit the public's perception of "Zola," Jules Lefebvre's tantalizing Salon nude, *Femme couchée* (Figure 6.2). Zola's gaze, unfocused before, now meets the object of his desire. Quatrelles thus remade Manet's expressionless depiction of Zola to convey the sense of the author's psycho-sexual urges, equating him with the mischievous and sexually unequivocal persona that had made the author of naturalist fiction and criticism a household name.

The critic B. de Renjarde, writing for *Le Petit journal*, put the same sentiment—that Manet had somehow neglected to actually paint Zola, to give him a viable presence and "life"—into the following words:

[Zola's] eyes focus on nothing in particular, neither on the book that our friend holds in his hand, nor on the prints that decorate his apartment ... all the parts of the painting have the same tonality and form a heavy ensemble, without truth, without air, without "life" in a word. What we feel to be most negated in these works therefore is truth and liveliness, which is to say, precisely those qualities that their authors pretend to have instilled in them.³³

6.1 André Gill
[Louis Gosset de
Guines], "C'est
toi, Zola, ou
l'auteur de *Mes
Haines*, perdu
dans ses idées
noires, ou le
meilleur portrait
du Salon, par
Manet," in "Le
Salon pour rire,"
Gill revue 1 (1868)



*C'est toi, Zola, ou l'auteur de Mes Haines, perdu dans ses idées
noires, ou le meilleur portrait du Salon, par MANET.*

This is a complex and unexpected assessment of what this portrait fails to deliver. To be sure, Renjarde detects the loss of the sitter's primacy in the non-hierarchical arrangement of the picture's elements. Following more traditional models of what a portrait should deliver, he looked for signs of "life" and individuality precisely in the wrong places and could not find such self-affirming and self-establishing pictorial maneuvers in the portrayal of the sitter, where of course they would be most expected. Renjarde also concluded that the portrait's failure depended not just on the fact that Zola seemed rather unfocused and lifeless, but also on the environment in which he had been placed, and on the way in which that painted environment reinforced—perhaps even created—this impression.



The primary relationship set up in Manet's *Zola*—the means to establish the author's self—is the one between sitter and the images/objects that surround him. The accessories parade as unusual and programmatic additions to a painted portrait and were placed under the critical microscope for that fact, to no avail. Many critics simply gave up trying to make sense of the relation between sitter and things, utterly refusing the idea that the accessories could describe a type, and not offer exclusive access to Zola himself.

Bertall, in his caricature of the portrait for *Le Journal amusant*, acknowledged Manet's fascination with the flatness of Asian imagery and made the figure disappear among a forest of unintelligible calligraphy (Figure 6.3). A certain "Chassagnol neveu," in his caricature for *Le Tintamarre*, found it more important to give Zola more concrete spatial parameters than to include accessories (Figure 6.4). Both thereby declared final interpretive defeat. As did many other critics: "But why give such exaggerated import to the accessories?"³⁴ "The arrangement of small scraps of paper is out of tune in the foreground because of their shrill tonalities."³⁵ "The numerous accessories, feathers, writing utensils, dusty antiquarian books, Chinese imagery, all form but an utterly confusing sense of space."³⁶ Some critics even commented directly on the painting's lack of space, as Ben Aymed did in *L'Indépendance parisienne*: "Jumble of brochures, superimposed sketches, rick-knack accessories ... [but] the capital fault is that the background is without sufficient perspective."³⁷

That none of these descriptions and criticisms can elucidate Cézanne's Zola-Alexis paintings is telling and suggests the length to which the painter went to distance his work from Manet's, even while explicitly referencing it. In line with the critics' expectations, Cézanne remade Manet's painting and returned individuality and intimacy to the portrait, thus confronting Manet's modern portrait typology with the actual textures and practices of Zola's intellectual life. It is curious to note, however, that Zola was among the few who contradicted the tenor of the press and asked other painters to place a sitter into an interior as successfully as Manet had done: "I challenge every other portraitist to place a figure into an interior with an equal energy, and without the surrounding still-lives encroaching on the head."³⁸

6.2 Jean
Quatrelles [Ernest
L'Epine], "LE
PORTRAIT
DE M. ZOLA,
par M. Manet,
destiné à illustrer
la chanson
populaire
'Ote donc tes
pieds d'là' " in
"La Foire aux
peintures—
deuxième série,"
La Vie parisienne
(30 May 1868)



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A LA SCABIEUSE.

CABINET DE CHINOISERIES DE GRAND DEUIL

visité par un employé des pompes funèbres, par M. MANET.

6.3 Bertall [Albert d'Arnoux], "A la scabieuse. Cabinet de chinoiserie de grand deuil, visité par un employé des pompes funèbres, par M. Manet," in "Promenades au Salon de 1868," *Journal amusant* (6 Jun. 1868)



MANET. — Portrait de Zola.

Ne poussez pas tant de : oh! là!
Devant ce portrait de Zola!

M.

6.4 Chassagnol neveu, "Manet.—Portrait de Zola. Ne poussez pas tant de: oh! là! Devant ce portrait de Zola!" in "Salon de Tintamarre," *Le Tintamarre* (28 Jun. 1868)

Cézanne, indeed, seems to have taken this statement as literally as possible, creating two paintings that show the same sitter in an actual and, to him, familiar interior. He also painted a black clock (at least in the second version) as one of the very few objects he allowed into the space, which now literally overlaps with Zola's head. Yet, he manages nonetheless to make that contact appear secondary to the intellectual exchange at the painting's center.

Conclusion

Alexis went on in 1870 and 1871 to become a political correspondent and feuilleton writer, along with Zola, for *La Cloche* and *L'Avenir nationale*. Among the other poems he published at that time, we find one published in *L'Artiste* in 1870 aptly entitled "Les Excessives—à Emile Zola," written at roughly the time of the double portraits. Its key section, entitled "MOI," reads:

I am a modern man and I love flesh
Where blood circulates and life pulsates;
Red flesh, pink flesh, pale flesh,
Flesh that withers or turns golden outside ...

It's your exquisite sensual pleasure that I envy,
Your extraordinary dreams and your feverish passions.
Like you, magisterial violin of genius,
I am a sensitive and excitable instrument.³⁹

The overtones of the *Fleurs du mal* are striking here, as is the insistence on authorial presence (especially the subjective experiences of nerves and fevers) and on authorial negation. Here, Cézanne's choice of Alexis comes full circle: he is the very author—and "Les Excessives" the poem he is perhaps sharing with Zola in the paintings—who embodies within their circle the voice insisting explicitly on the poetic potential of interiority, on the dream and sensual passion as poetry's primary material. Alexis, then, is in the paintings as the embodiment of such literary tropes, guaranteeing—at least to the inaugurated few who saw Cézanne's images—the counter-Manetian thematic of the intellectual exchange at their center.

To be sure, Manet shared much with Zola, aesthetically and ideologically. "He is above all a Naturalist. His eye sees and renders objects with an elegant simplicity," Zola famously said about the painter, using the same stylistic marker he would use for his own writing.⁴⁰ It was therefore not all too difficult a maneuver for Manet to annex Zola to his vision of social typology, because in part Zola's fiction lent itself to such readings of milieu and type. But as the preface to *Thérèse Raquin* makes clear, the book was also divided so that "each chapter is the study of a curious case of physiology," invested in the deep psychic structures that in turn generate the very exterior signs of selfhood that were Manet's focus.⁴¹ In this sense, both Manet and Cézanne could legitimately establish their own Zola.

Cézanne's claims of understanding Zola better in his two Zola-Alexis paintings, of making art closer to the author's ideological principals, was based, finally, on the following two interlocking claims: first, he created paintings that emphasized proximity and intimate access to Zola's thought and inner circle. Secondly, he paralleled that biographical privilege with a Zola-ian emphasis on psychic structures (and made interior and interiority interchangeable). In so doing, Cézanne made two paintings that at the same time exposed the utterly "public" character of Zola's relation to Manet while emphasizing his own private proximity to the author's life and thought.

Notes

This essay represents a revision of chapter 1 of my dissertation, "Modernism and Extremism: The Early Work of Paul Cézanne (1865–1875)" (University of California, Berkeley, 2006). Please see the acknowledgements there for the full list of individuals and institutions to whom I owe my deepest thanks. I wrote this essay during a course release at Smith College in the spring of 2008 and a non-residential Getty Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania in 2008–2009, and I thank these institutions for their support of my scholarship. My special thanks go to T. J. Clark, Richard Shiff and the audience of his 2008 CAA panel where a version of this paper was presented, Holly Clayson, Terry Dolan, Nancy Locke, Hélène Valance, the editors and anonymous readers of this volume for their helpful and thought-provoking suggestions, and most of all to my partner, Jonathan D. Katz, who tirelessly edited and refined the arguments of this essay from start to finish. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the French are my own.

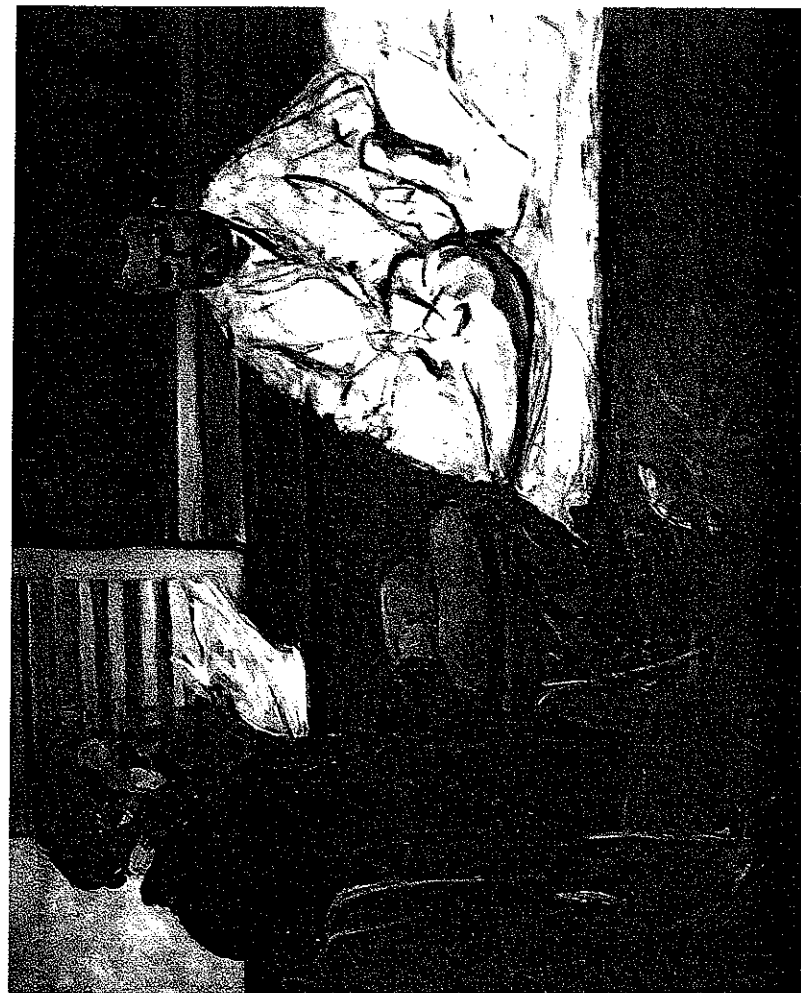
- 1 One of the most persuasive accounts of Manet's modernism in relation to the developments of modernity remains T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984).
- 2 For a rare extensive treatment of the two paintings, see Christian Klemm, "Paul Cézanne Paul Alexis liest Zola vor," in *Manet, Zola, Cézanne: Das Porträt des modernen Literaten*, ed. Katharina Schmidt, exh. cat. Kunstmuseum Basel (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje 1999), 173–83; see also Mary Tompkins Lewis, *Cézanne's Early Imagery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 138–41; Lawrence Gowing et al., *Cézanne: The Early Years 1859–1872*, exh. cat. Royal Academy of Arts, London (New York: Abrams, 1988), 156–7, 164–5 and Inken Freudenberg, *Der Zweifler Cézanne* (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2001).
- 3 On the relation between sitter and the meaning of the accessories, see Theodore Reff, "Manet's Portrait of Zola," *Burlington Magazine* 67, no. 862 (Jan. 1975): 35–44. The most updated account of the scholarship on the portrait can be found in Manuela B. Mena Marqués (ed.), *Manet en el Prado*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo nacional del Prado, 2003), 272–3, 470–71.
- 4 Odilon Redon, "Le Salon de 1868," *La Gironde* (9 Jun. 1868): 3, qtd. in George Heard Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics* (New York: Norton, 1969), 128–9.
- 5 The exact dates of the two paintings are disputed, and even the order in which they were created is not certain. John Rewald dates both to 1869–70 and avoids the question of their order (even though, in his Cézanne catalogue raisonné, he lists the São Paulo version after the one in private hands). I believe a date for

- both between late 1869 when Alexis arrived in Paris and the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War is most likely, and that the São Paulo version (hereafter referred to as the "first version") was painted first and abandoned before the second was started (John Rewald, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols [New York: Abrams, 1996], vol. 1, nos. 150, 151).
- 6 See Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism or, the Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 280–302.
 - 7 Naomi Schor, *Zola's Crowds* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 132.
 - 8 Zola himself was famously among the first to recognize the ways in which Manet's style and manner of painting objectified him when he wrote in 1868: "Par moments, au milieu du demi-sommeil de la pose, je regardais l'artiste, debout devant sa toile, le visage tendu, l'oeil clair, tout à son oeuvre. Il m'avait oublié, il ne savait plus que j'étais là, il me copiait comme il aurait copié une bête humaine quelconque, avec une attention, une conscience artistique que je n'ai jamais vue ailleurs" (Emile Zola, "Mon Salon, 1868," in idem, *Écrits sur l'art* [Paris: Gallimard, 1991], 199). The passage suggests that even the sitter himself, at least rhetorically, was willing to subordinate his sense of self to the needs and expressive desire of painter and picture. Cézanne's later portraits, especially those of Hortense Fiquet, have been taken by Kurt Badt and more recently by Susan Sidlauskas as the epitome of a fundamental incongruity: that modernism's formal logic and preoccupations always and necessarily stood at odds with the crucial promise of portraiture, to make an individual come to "life" on canvas (see Kurt Badt, *The Art of Cézanne* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965], 131–94 and Susan Sidlauskas, *Cézanne's Other: The Portraits of Hortense* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).
 - 9 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Residual Resemblance: Three Notes on the Ends of Portraiture," in *Face-Off: The Portrait in Recent Art*, ed. Michelle Feldman, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 54.
 - 10 Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic* [1933] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 46–7.
 - 11 Charles Garnier, *Le Théâtre* (Paris: Hachette, 1871), 2.
 - 12 The sense of incongruity between the traditional portrait and the aspirations of early modernist painting can be seen clearly in Pierre Petroz's 1868 Salon review: "Les gens du monde, ceux qui vivent de la vie oisive et raffinée, ont en général une sobriété de geste, une rectitude d'allure, une certaine impassibilité de visage qui constituent ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler l'air distingué, et dont l'art s'accommode assez mal. Aussi les peintres ne les prennent-ils pour modèles qu'avec hésitation et répugnance, et leur préfèrent-ils d'ordinaire les paysans ou les ouvriers dont les mouvements ont plus de franchise et d'accent" (Petroz, "Salon de 1868," *Revue moderne* 46 [25 May 1868]: 540–41). Therese Dolan has recently analyzed Manet's *Portrait of Zacharie Astruc* as subverting the genre of modern portraiture itself in "A Model Complicated by an Artist: Manet's *Portrait of the Poet Zacharie Astruc*," in *Women in Impressionism: From Mythical Feminine to Modern Woman*, ed. Sidsel Søndergaard, exh. cat. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (Milan: Skira, 2006), 135–55, esp. 148.
 - 13 Alexis was born 16 June 1847, Zola on 2 April 1840 and Cézanne on 19 January 1839. On Paul Alexis's career and his friendship with Zola, see B.H. Bakker, introduction to "Naturalisme pas mort:" *lettres inédites de Paul Alexis à Emile Zola, 1871–1900*, by Paul Alexis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 3–33, 555–66. See also the dossier on Paul Alexis of *Les Cahiers naturalistes* 61 (1987) as well as Mary Louise Krumrine, "Parisian Writers and the Early Works of Cézanne," in *Paris: Center of Artistic Enlightenment: Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University*, ed. G. Mauner et al., vol. 4 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 188–221.
 - 14 Zola to Antony Valabrègue (4 Sep. 1869), in Emile Zola, *Lettres d'un enthousiaste: lettres d'Emile Zola à son ami Antony Valabrègue*, ed. O. Alberti (Aigues-Vives: HB, 1997), 143–4. The letter concerned Alexis's difficulties with his family when leaving Aix-en-Provence.
 - 15 The second finished version was auctioned after Zola's death in 1903 under the title *La Lecture de Paul Alexis chez Zola*, which might have been given to it by Zola's widow, who lived with him in the rue de la Condamine in 1869–70.
 - 16 Alexis to Zola (30 Jun. 1871), in Alexis, "Naturalisme pas mort," 47. He described his feelings when meeting Zola in the fall of 1869 in his biography of his mentor, written a little more than a decade later, in 1882: "Quelques pas dans la première rue à gauche, et nous voici sonnant au 14 rue de la Condamine. Le coeur me battait" (Paul Alexis, *Emile Zola: notes d'un ami* [Paris: Charpentier, 1882], 91). Zola also remembered their first encounter in a short essay in *Une Campagne* (see Alexis, "Naturalisme pas mort," 12).
 - 17 For the complete poem "L'Amphithéâtre," see Alexis, "Naturalisme pas mort," 7, and for "Les Lits," see Emile Zola, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. H. Mitterand, 15 vols (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1966–70), 10:776; see also Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence: The Painter in His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 53–5.
 - 18 Paul Cézanne, *Letters*, ed. J. Rewald, trans. Marguerite Kay (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 123.
 - 19 This was first noted by Reff, "Manet's Portrait of Zola," 41.
 - 20 Carol Armstrong has similarly proposed that Manet is in fact not a Zola-ian painter, and that Zola is not a Manetian writer, and claims the Goncourts to be a closer parallel to Manet's 1860s artistic achievements. In this context, the early work of Cézanne offers yet another challenge to the overused Manet-Zola connection (C. Armstrong, *Manet Manette* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002], 49–68).
 - 21 Emile Zola, *Mon Salon, augmenté d'une dédicace et d'un appendice* (Paris: Librairie Centrale, 1866), 8–9.
 - 22 The most recent extended critical discussion of the friendship between Manet and Zola is Manuela Biele-Wunsch, *Die Künstlerfreundschaft zwischen Edouard Manet und Emile Zola* (Tübingen: Driesen, 2004); on Cézanne and Zola, see Wayne Andersen, *The Youth of Cézanne and Zola: Notoriety at Its Source, Art and Literature in Paris* (Boston: Fabiart, 2003).
 - 23 Moreover, in the three surviving preparatory drawings for this second version, Cézanne seems mostly interested in the distance between the two figures, pushing them further and further apart as his composition developed. On the drawings, see Adrien Chappuis, *The Drawings of Paul Cézanne*, 2 vols (Greenwich, NY: Graphic Society, 1973), 1:98–9 and Wayne Andersen, "Cézanne's Portrait Drawings from the 1860s," *Master Drawings* 5, no. 3 (1967): 276–8.

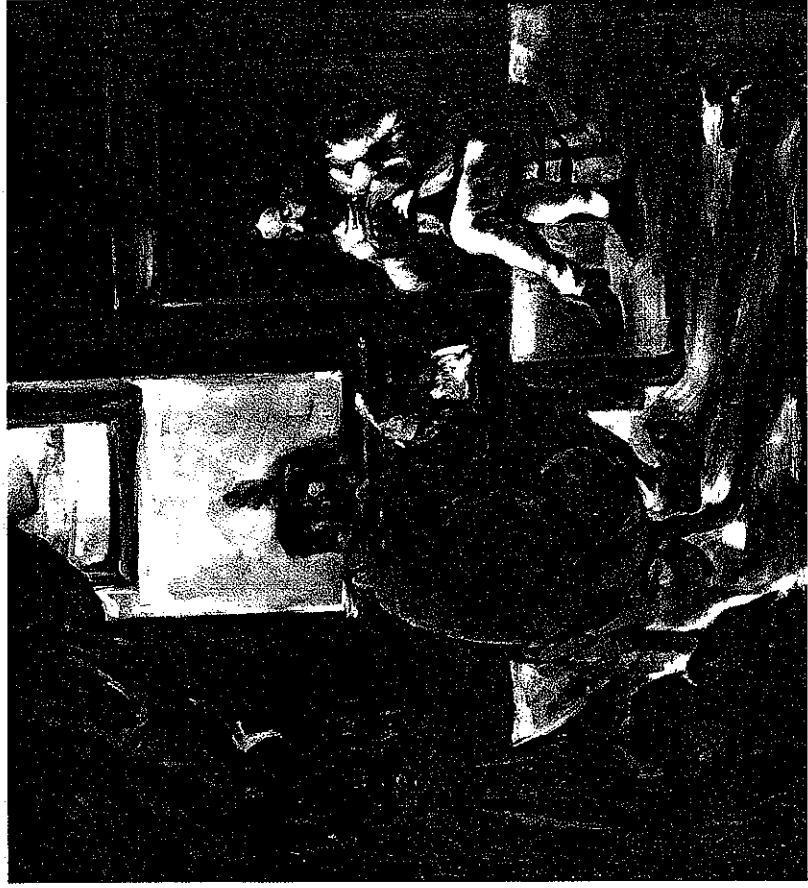
- 24 In addition to Walter Benjamin, see Susan Sidlauskas, *Body, Place and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Felix Krämer, *Das unheimliche Heim: Zur Interieurmaleret um 1900* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007); Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin de Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Heather McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 25 Camille Lemonnier, *Salon de Paris* (Paris: A. Morel, 1870), 44–5.
- 26 Claudia Becker, *Zimmer-Kopf-Welt: Zur Motiengeschichte des Intérieurs im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1990), 47–68 and Didier Jean Maleuvre, "A Cabinet of Curiosities: Encyclopedism and the Collection in the Nineteenth-Century French Novel," PhD diss. (Yale University, 1993), 66–184, esp. 156–65. I thank Pamela J. Warner for pointing me to this study.
- 27 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 11 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1959–85), 1:233.
- 28 Roger Pearson, "Mallarmé's Interior Designs," *Romance Studies* 22, no. 1 (Mar. 2004): 9; see also Dee Reynolds, "Mallarmé and the Décor of Modern Life," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 268–85.
- 29 Mallarmé to Paul Verlaine (Dec. 1866): "Je me sens si fatigué, n'ayant pas encore une chambre meublée de ma pensée, mais vivant dans un corridor, que je préférerais les dernières luttes à celle d'écrire une lettre" (Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 1:236).
- 30 Nancy Locke, *Manet and the Family Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 147–71; Armstrong, *Manet Manette*, 135–72.
- 31 See, among others, Louis de Laincel, "Revue des beaux-arts," *Revue cosmopolite* 20 (2 Jun. 1867): 166 and Adrien Paul, "Beaux-arts: Salon de 1863: les refusés," *Le Siècle* (19 Jul. 1863): 1–2. The best source for the criticism of the painting remains Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics*, 112–29, where the following critics echo the sentiments cited above: Marc de Montifaud, *L'Artiste*; Théophile Gautier, *Le Moniteur universel*; Paul Mantz, *L'Illustration*; Théophile Thoré, *L'Indépendance belge*; Castagnary, *Le Siècle*. On the criticism regarding Manet's contribution to the 1868 Salon, compare also Arden Reed, *Manet, Flaubert and the Emergence of Modernism: Blurring the Genre Boundaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20–55.
- 32 On Gill's caricature, see Bertrand Tillier, *Cochon de Zola! ou les infortunes caricaturales d'un écrivain engagé* (Biarritz: Séguier, 1998), 24–7.
- 33 B. de Renjarde, "Salon de 1868," *Le Petit journal* (28 May 1868): 3.
- 34 Etienne Carjat, "Salon de 1868," *L'Eclair* 21 (24 May 1868): 4.
- 35 Ch. Norma, "Le Salon," *Le Hanneton* 25 (18 Jun. 1868): 2.
- 36 E. Roger du Tranois, "Flaneries au Salon," *Figaro-programme* 164 (12 Jun. 1868): 1.
- 37 Ben Aymed, "Exposition des beaux-arts," *L'Indépendance parisienne* 46 (5 Jul. 1868): 4.
- 38 Zola, "Mon Salon (1868)," 200.
- 39 Paul Alexis, "Les Excessives—à Emile Zola," *L'Artiste* 24 (1870): 118–22.
- 40 Zola, "Mon Salon (1868)," 199.
- 41 Emile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin*, trans. R. Buss [1867] (London: Penguin, 2004), 4.



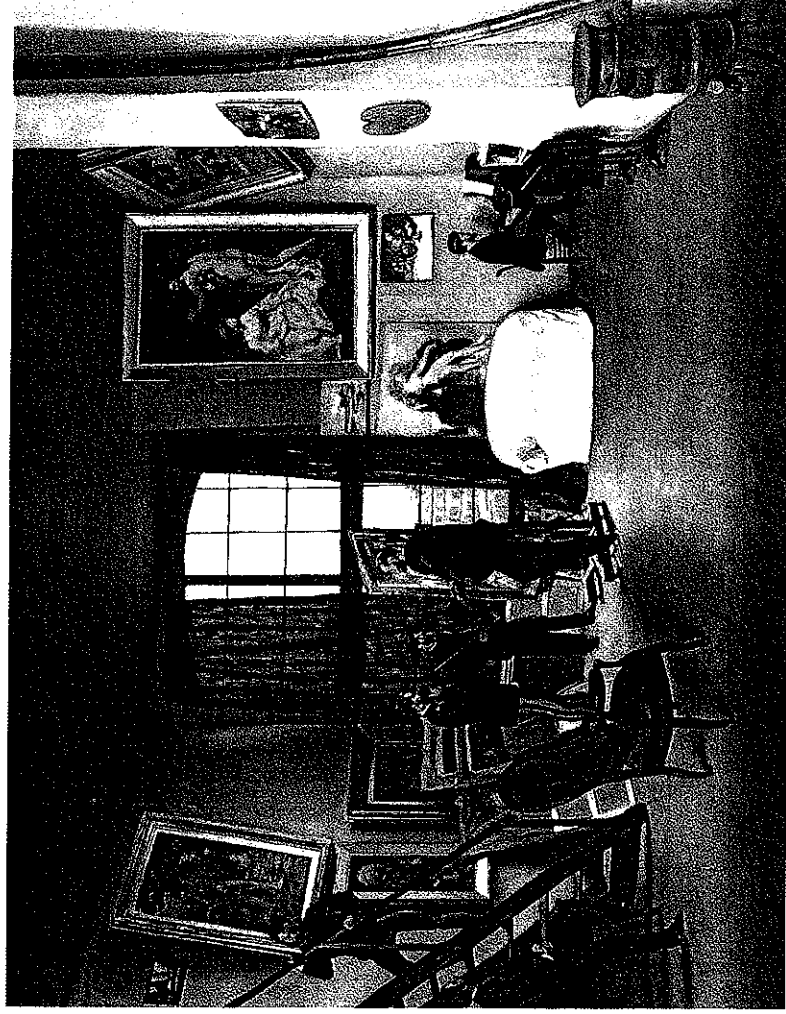
16 Edouard Manet, *Portrait of Emile Zola*, 1868. Oil on canvas, 146 × 114 cm.
Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY



17 Paul Cézanne, *Paul Alexis Reading to Emile Zola*, c. 1869-70. Oil on canvas, 130 × 160 cm. São Paulo, Museu de Arte. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY



18 Paul Cézanne, *Paul Alexis Reading to Emile Zola*, c. 1869–70. Oil on canvas, 52 × 65 cm. Switzerland, private collection. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY



19 Frédéric Bazille, *The Artist's Studio at 9, rue de la Condamine*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 98 × 128.5 cm. Paris, Musée d'Orsay. Réunion des musées nationaux / Art Resource, NY