ual saints for Gospel- or Epistle-based Sunday lessons, a strategy that would have reinforced for their audiences the connection between Christ and the saints.

While a Protestant Devotion in Late Medieval England is very much about the audiences and functions of the English images, it is more recitative when it comes to the issue of reception. Admittedly, it is one thing to theorize about the reception of and response to an image when one can connect this image to a particular audience in which more has evidence concerning "age, social status, gender, occupation, health, wealth or poverty, literacy or illiteracy, [oral] personal history," and other relevant "cultural determinants" (p. 25); it is another thing entirely to attempt to reconstruct reception when image or viewer are known only through fleeting, formulaic documentary references, as is true for most of the material Marks discusses. Nevertheless, one wishes Marks had drawn more extensively on sources like sermons, liturgical texts, prayers, and devotional literature, all of which could have been utilized productively to speculate, even if only in a general way, about the meaning of images for "Lady Katherine Bray, Alys Cooke, John Ruddie, Cuthbert Culat and their fellow-parishioners in Eaton Bray and elsewhere," those late medieval English laypeople to whom Marks has, poignantly, dedicated his book. Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England promises to inspire continuing focused studies that draw on its wealth of documentation, wide-ranging methodologies, and thoughtful engagement of a most difficult body of material. For this, and for his admirable book, Richard Marks is to be heartily thanked.

KATHRYN A. SMITH is associate professor in the Department of Fine Arts, New York University [303 Silver Center, 100 Washington Square East, New York, N.Y., 10003-6688].

Notes
1. I have taken the phrase "art of devotion" from the highly acclaimed exhibition of that title held at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, in 1994-95, which included no English works; see Henk van Ost et al., The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe 1340-1500, trans. Michael Hové (London: Merrell Holburn in association with the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1994).
8. For the saints on the rood beam at Alberbury church (Herefordshire), see Marks, Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England, 87. For the images of surviving East Anglian rood screens, see Duffs, The Stripping of the Altars, 157-60.

JOHN HOUSE
Impressionism: Paint and Politics
New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 256 pp.: 63 color illus., 117 b/w. $60.00

JOACHIM PISARRO
Pioneering Modern Painting: Cézanne and Picasso, 1865–1885
New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005, 256 pp.: 163 color illus. 29 b/w. $60.00

A number of features make a comparison between these two beautifully designed and ambitious books enlightening. One is that Joachim Pissarro, recently appointed curator of paintings at the Museum of Modern Art, has generously acknowledged John House as his teacher, even though most of us in North America think of Pissarro as the younger of the two (as at the University of Texas, Austin). House, who is professor at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, very much fulfills his role as teacher, mounting the podium particularly in the last chapter of his book to pass judgment on previous Impressionist scholarship. Another feature of the comparison is that both books are related to exhibitions. House's originated at least partly in an exhibition he organized in 1995, Landscapes of France/Impressions of France (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Hayward Gallery, London), although this current book goes well beyond it. (The exhibition had its own catalog.) Pissarro's book served as the catalog to last summer's exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. I was clear that the present comparison does not consider either exhibition itself in any detail, both of which have been extensively reviewed. I approach the books as independent publications, because underlying the connections I have cited is something more profound. Both studies claim as their basis close study of how these two books, in fact, one might argue that Impressionist art history has come full circle. How useful the results are is a question I shall keep in mind.

The thesis of Impressionism: Paint and Politics is that Impressionism's development can be explained only by the changing politics of the 1870s; "it is no coincidence that their most experimental and controversial work coincided with the social and political repression of Marshall Mahon's 'moral order' regime of the mid-1870s, or that the group effectively broke up with the installation of the 'opportunistic Republic' of the early 1880s" (p. 2). This thesis seems to provide the framework for House's chapters, which otherwise rehash familiar topics in Impressionism studies, such as "Sketch and Finished Painting"; "Modemising the Landscape: The Environments of Paris"; "The Viewer of Modern Life"; "Making a Mark: The Impressionist Brushstroke." Disappointingly, they do not cohere.

It is certainly correct that in the late 1860s, a relaxation of the Salon criteria that paralleled an upsurge of liberal Republican sentiment under the Second Republic gave hope and a modest degree of access to the young painters who would become the Impressionists. These hopes were dashed when, two years after the Paris Commune (1871), Patrice, comte de MacMahon came to power. Under his leadership, the director of fine arts, Philippe de Champaigne, called for landscape paintings that would represent the eternal values of "la France profonde" as an antidote to a genre that had become contaminated by Realism. The regime lasted until 1877. The first Impressionist exhibition occurred in the middle of it. House's aim is to show that, given their
diverging interests, the Impressionists remained united mainly because of Mac-Mahon's repressive policies.

The thesis aroused my skepticism from the start. For one thing, the vicissitudes of those four years of the Third Republic are a brainy career, friendships, and rivalries that extended over decades, and Impressionism's general coherence has been long lasting. The premise of unity/disunity is itself highly debatable unless more clearly defined, but the more one tries to define it, the more it becomes a red herring. How united is united? Should participation in group shows be the main or only criterion? How static a group have to be in order to retain identity? Was a forced unity the primary impact of the Mac-Mahon regime? How true is it that after 1878 they simply fell apart? Given the spotty participation of the twelve principal Impressionists, unity was never fixed, yet the exhibitions lasted until 1886, with more following the three under Mac-Mahon, and most of the relationships lasted even longer. Prior to 1873, the Impressionists' various plans had long been brewing, even during the seemingly liberal last years of the Second Empire, as had the ideas and techniques that characterize them. House himself is quite persuasive in adducing many of these points, whereas he does little to demonstrate a direct causal effect of the changed political situation of the mid-1870s. Nor was Chennevières's proclamation itself especially new; Achille Fould's speech to the Salon medalists of 1857 was quite similar. Their common enemy was what they regarded as Realism. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

House's method is debatable, too. How convincing is it to justify a claim by critiquing alternative explanations? That is a circumstantial argument at best. Were there not other seminal events, such as the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, or the stock market crash? What about actors such as Émile Zola, Théodore Duret, or Paul Durand-Ruel, without whom Impressionism might have taken a different aspect? It's a bit like explaining today's American culture primarily by the administration of President George W. Bush, but less convincing because positive proof is lacking. Infected by politics, sure. No one will argue with that. But a sine qua non? Is submitting work to the liberalized Salons after 1878 a sign of disunity or necessity, of abandonment or simply ambition? To be meaningful, House's thesis requires him to cite specific examples and identifiable effects. Rather, he dwells on particularities and nuances between works and artists that could be argued to have made breakups (if that's what it was) inevitable no matter what the political situation. So why is the factor he proposes more important than so many of the others already in play? How does it help us look at Impressionism differently? What makes it worth writing a book about? The problem with this kind of argument arises in a nutshell in House's first chapter. He is consistent with phrases such as "no single definitive reading can be given" or "it is difficult to pin down the position that" (p. 42). When concluding that the Bagnolles group (Édouard Manet and his followers in the late 1860s) was highly diverse, he begs the question of why they were considered a group at all. Zola called them "Activists," committed to modern life. Such a conclusion is now a platitude. House would like to go beyond it, to make politics the catalyst more or less by default, by eliminating other commonalities, but his mises en garde are neither useful nor convincing, because he never really follows them up with a positive argument. To the contrary, rather than pressing his claim, he embarks on a series of excursions into areas where his contributions are more like footnotes than insights or discoveries that support his overview. It is true that House's erudition is unquestionable. Fine examples are his explorations of terminology—avant-garde, flâneur, curiosité, to choose just a few from chapter 1—but the pattern persists throughout the book. He also makes many comparisons between Impressionist works and conservative paintings, reflecting much of his research at the Courtauld's Witt Library, photograph archive into reproductions of works for sale by dealers during the 1860s and 1870s or exhibited at Salons concurrent with the Impressionists' careers. Here is where House acknowledges the expansion of his 1995 exhibition Landscapes of France. That it is, but in quantity, not breadth of concept. To be sure, such comparisons shed light on how the Impressionists both used and challenged conventional art. But other than this general and already well-accepted fact, one is far from House's specific thesis. How are the differences between their challenges of the mid-1870s and those of the late 1860s related to politics?

Chapter 2 outlines the vocabulary for various types of paintings, small and large, including beaurocratic, impression, esquisse. House reminds the reader of the variety of levels of finish and that the Impressionists sold works from among these many different kinds. House also lists the different vehicles and strategies the Impressionists used to sell their works. This chapter would have worked well with chapter 5 ("Making a Market"), which concentrates on technique. However, the intervening chapters 3 and 4, while filled with interesting observations, diverge into the well-mined territories of Paris environs and the painting of modern life. Even chapter 5, in which House's observations derive from his area of strength through wide travel and vast exhibition experience, is less specific than Anthea Callen's close studies of the topic, such as The Art of Impressionism: Painting Technique and the Making of Modernity (2000) and less rich with understanding than Richard Brettell's superb Impressionism: Painting Quickly in France, 1860–1890 (2001). As in the chapters in which he focuses on subject matter, House distinguishes one artist's practice from another, venturing even to make a lengthy discussion comparing Camille Pissarro and Paul Cézanne, but with no sense of what his former student, Joachim Pissarro, had in store.

I found the most value and originality to be in House's work on Impressionist marketing and exhibition strategies. This should be the topic of a book-length study, as it may have as much to do with Impressionist subject matter as politics. Returning at the end of that same chapter finally to Mac-Mahon's "moral order," he writes as if he has proven his point: "No single explanation is adequate to explain why the Impressionist group could accommodate such diverse interests in the years 1874-7, only to be torn apart by them between 1878 and 1882." He goes on to cite a number of other factors—biographical, professional, economic—as well as a theory of group dynamics. Yet he insists: "However, this change must be viewed in a wider historical and political context. As we have seen, the years of concerted group activity coincided with the Presidency of Marshal MacMahon. . . ." (p. 197). Still, this is no more than a reminder to take account of politics, as in chapter 1: surely valid, but again vague and underdemonstrated. Limited to this particular chapter, the thesis might make more sense, but as an interesting factor that remains to be fit into the more extensive study of exhibition and marketing practices toward which this book offers a promising start. It is one of many diverse pieces, all of which constitute the whole. Perhaps it is even a mistake to think of Impressionism in terms of unity or singularity at all. I think of it as a variable set of people, practices, events, ideas, and commitments: many are shared or overlap, but not necessarily all of them, nor even all of the time. Despite the diversity of style, exhibition, and sales records during the 1880s, the Impressionists' responses (with the exception of Pissarro from 1886 to 1889, but including him, eventually) to the next generation of artists, Georges Seurat and his circle, reaffirmed their identity as Impressionists, as did that later generation's critique of them.

In spite of House's care in examining definitions, a definition of what he means by "politics" is missing. Although it is part of the book's title and at the heart of its thesis, politics is never distinguished from ideology. The latter is a realm of belief, the former of action, in which belief is sometimes compromised by pragmatism. One should also distinguish between political intention and political reception. Which is
it that determined government policy? Which is it that determined individual artists' decisions? Or in what combination? Is it fair to say that Impressionism was more radical or controversial during the Mac-Mahon years, or was it just that it was more bitterly attacked from the Right than before? To what degree did any consideration of the Impressionists lie in their art or in their exhibition tactic? Unfortunately, House makes no systematic interrogation of the individual artists' beliefs or political practices, useful though such additional information and clearer insight would have been. So although he claims to be concerned with artistic agency, the structure of House's argument points to the deterministic effects of regime policies. That must be why, despite his generosity toward relatively obscure academic painters, House never once mentions the name of Armand Guillaumin, a perennial member of the Impressionist group who spent much time with Pissarro and Cézanne and whose working-class background and representations of labor could certainly be given some sort of political read.

The book is frustrating in part because House insists on showing so much of what he knows and on making so many fine distinctions that it is hard to see the forest for the trees. There are signs of confusion, as well, over the audience for which the book is written. House's discussion of technical vocabulary adds little not covered in Brettell's book of 2001 or Albert Boime's groundbreaking The Academy in French Painting (1971). Such pages might be justified as background for the general reader, but the book is certainly aimed at the specialist scholar. Its detail and plethora of quotations could not possibly sustain the general public's interest, and House's engagement with debates and previous scholarship on Impressionism belies any consideration for the needs of such readers. House's coda, in which he metes out criticism to some scholars and offers kudos to others, is disappointingly anticlimactic and embarrassingly patronizing.

For understanding Impressionism and politics, Philip Nord's Impressionism and Politics: Art and Democracy in the Nineteenth Century (2000) remains the more succinct and nuanced account. Nord is careful to approach politics from its different angles, and he doesn't claim to have some final answer. There can be no doubt that politics affected readings of Impressionism at different times and by different people. But that would be to focus on reception, an approach House specifically criticizes in his introduction and, again, one that is explained more cogently by, for example, Stephen Eisenman in his well-known essay on the Intransigenus. House's book fails to establish the kind of relation between politics and Impressionist technique or imagery that it rhetorically claims. Better models, at least for imagery, can be found in Boime's Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution (1995), Jane Mayo Roos's Early Impressionism and the French State, 1860–1874 (1996), or Patricia Mainardi's The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic (1993), whose studies of the effects of official institutions on the arts are far more precise both in explaining state policy and its direct consequences on art and artists. Although it is admittedly hard to argue with many of House's caveats, they are inconclusive. The book's contribution is much the same, lacking a sustained thesis that, as exemplified by T. J. Clark's work, one can sink one's teeth into, even if its truths are, as Charles Baudelaire once said, "from an exclusive point of view."

Joachim Pissarro's Pioneering Modern Painting does not come to focus on politics, but it turns out to be more interesting and credible for the relation between paint and politics than is his teacher's book. It is more than that, but I shall begin there. At the core of Pissarro's essay are three subchapters that contribute significantly to understanding how politics gets translated into paint: "A Yardstick of Modernity: The Importance of Emile Zola;" "Serious Workers of the Art World, Universe;" and "From Painting with a Knife to Painting with a Gun." For one thing, these chapters provide the best account to date of Camille Pissarro's politics during the 1870s, before he joined Alfred Meyer's Artist's Union (about which I think scholars would like to know more) and before his letters and illustrations clearly reveal his anarchist sympathies. These chapters demonstrate how Pissarro and Cézanne valued the relation between art and labor, viewing themselves as workers—a concept directly traceable to Gustave Courbet and his relationship with the anarchist thinker Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. (I wish Courbet's seminal influence had been given more space, and I do have reservations about the treatment of Zola's relationship to Hippolyte Taine, to whom I believe Zola owed far more than the author maintains, but these quibbles do not go to the heart of the book's thesis.) Even better, Pissarro lays the groundwork for understanding the collaboration of artists as a social model for the collective enterprise the Impressionists flirted with when they began their association. The relation to the Paris Commune cannot be missed, although Pissarro does not articulate it. (Neither does House.) This radical idea helped determine the form of the Impressionists' independent exhibitions, for which they conceived their group as an economic association. Its bylaws were drawn up by Camille Pissarro. Thanks to the author's cogent argument, one need no longer hesitate to say that the artist's left-wing political leanings were fully present in the work of the early part of his career.

A key picture in understanding the relationships between Pissarro, Cézanne, and Zola is Cézanne's Portrait of the Artist's Father (1866, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). The father, as yet unconvinced of the value of Cézanne's career choice, is seated in an armchair, attentively reading what one presumes to be Zola's defense of the group of young Impressionists in the left-wing newspaper Le Temps. (Why else would a conservative banker read that paper, save for an article about his son by a family friend?) One of Zola's points was to argue for the serious commitment of these artists to the "work" of making art. "Work" functioned as a code word within anarchist thinking, particularly the strain descended from Proudhon, whom Courbet and Pissarro admired. At the same time, it was meant to appeal to public sentiment and especially to a self-made bourgeois like Louis-Auguste Cézanne. The portrait itself is carefully painted, less confrontationally than many of Cézanne's other paintings of the period, but nonetheless with bold and broad brushstrokes that index the artist's process. Behind the father in the portrait is the son's Still Life with Sugar Bowl, Pears and Blue Cup (1865–66, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence). This modest composition reflects both a contemporary revival of interest in Jean-Siméon Chardin as a master painter and an emerging discourse on still life that held it to be paradigmatic for all artistic practice. Zola himself was to claim that Manet treated figure painting as the academics treated still life. The picture's careful organization of forms combines with its meaty Impasto technique to exemplify the dialogue between intellectual and physical labor. It embodied at that moment the principles that Zola advocated. These were the aesthetic and ideological grounds for the bonds that connected Pissarro, Cézanne, and Zola at the time.

In the rest of the essay, Pissarro follows the pictorial dialogue between Cézanne and his friend Pissarro. His description of the latter's early effort on Cézanne's simple and eloquent:

What Pissarro had understood is that a subject that presents too much interest (great novelty, sentimentality, horror, prettiness) risks overspeaking the artist's own sensations.

The immediate and radical importance of this particular principle for Cézanne was that it allowed him to transfer the energy of his earliest subjects into a manner of painting that retained the original force of these subjects, while internalizing that particular force and transforming it into a new way of painting. (p. 40)

To be sure, scholars have understood this effect of Pissarro's friendship with Cézanne for some time, but rarely has it been so con-
vincingly linked to a particular principle. From there, the author shows that Cézanne was not always the tutee and Pissarro the master or, indeed, "the therapist" for Cézanne ("the patient," in some interpretations) (p. 16).

As Pissarro follows the daily realities of this relationship in his book, he retrieves it from simplified myth to bring it back to earth and into paint through, among other methods, analysis of the artists' portraits of each other and their families and of letters from Cézanne to Pissarro. (Pissarro's end of the correspondence is lost.) He shows how together, even with Cézanne sometimes in the lead, they made their individual contribution to the Impressionist dissolution of the traditional distinction between line and color. He coins the somewhat awkward term "painting in reserve" (pp. 52-55) to designate passages where blank space alongside an object signifies its contour. (At first I thought the term was a misprint for "painting in reverse.") This is described as "blooming out and juxtaposing planes of color with little or no modeling at all and without the auxiliary of drawing" (p. 59). The method might also be called "drawing by form," or "painting without contour," but these have the disadvantage of using words that designate what the artists were trying to eliminate in their practice. Time will tell whether this formulation has the staying power of Theodore Reff's term "constructive stroke," which describes another technique developed, this time by Cézanne, but during his collaboration with Pissarro. Finally, the author gives a new and convincing interpretation of Cézanne's critique of Neo-Impressionism by showing that it referred neither to Seurat nor to Cloisonnism (as John Rewald thought, since Cézanne objected to the return to the use of linear contour) but to Pissarro's brief flirtation with the new technique, in which lines appear alongside forms in places the two of them had previously left blank.

In the conclusion to his essay, Pissarro suggests why the collaboration between Cézanne and Pissarro, long mentioned but never closely enough studied, has been neglected. To blame are Émile Bernard's early essay on Cézanne, along with the heroic rhetoric of the isolated genius, encouraged no doubt by Paul Gauguin, who wanted to divert attention from traces of both Pissarro's and Cézanne's influence on himself. I propose adding that the emphasis on themes of leisure in modern Impressionism studies (perpetuated by House's book, too) has contributed inadvertently to suppressing Impressionism's association with work or, say, productivity, which is, after all, the condition for leisure. With this essay, Joachim Pissarro not only has contributed to a far better understanding of the Impressionists' collectivist politics and practices, at least in their formative years, but he also sets the stage for closer study of other collaborations, such as those involving Guillaumin, Gauguin, Paul Signac, and Vincent van Gogh, to mention only those of the Impressionist generation. In addition, he lays important groundwork for reconsidering the exclusivity of the relation that currently dominates the academy between Impressionism and leisure. I am writing from a bias, for such a reconsideration is an important theme in my own forthcoming book on Impressionism. Pioneering Modern Painting is a book that opens doors, in other words. Even for those scholars who are more concerned with politics or other forms of history, understanding how artists think politically and express themselves through their medium is valuable and de-mystifying, challenging them to make the connections work within the physical properties of the artwork itself. Joachim Pissarro, limiting himself to his case study, has established a model for any such future enterprise.

Referring to the question I posed earlier, I conclude that returning to the close analysis of paintings as objects is indeed all to the good. Even if that means the pendulum seems to have swung back toward such an ostensibly traditional art historical practice, the creaky apparatus that contains it has itself moved considerably forward. Thanks to art history's development over the past several decades, looking closely at modernist painting no longer excludes theory or ideas. To the contrary, the experiences of social art history, critical theory, and the various "isms" that have encountered and been absorbed by the discipline make viewers all the more conscious that pictorial decisions are not made in isolation. Pissarro shows how true that is even when two painters are engaged in an intensely visual dialogue, however insulated it appears. For the circumstances that led to and legitimate that sort of practice are an important piece of the modernism that such practice exemplifies. It is also true for the art historian. For example, Joachim Pissarro calls on a wide and eclectic range of writers from Sigmund Freud to Jürgen Habermas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Hannah Arendt to illuminate the dialogue between Cézanne and Pissarro. He has put such authors to practical use, rather than simply name-dropping, although perhaps there are more instances than necessary of this strategy so popular and current among art historians.

This conclusion raises the question of the audience for Pissarro's book, an issue I raised for House. Pissarro bravely attempts to address two very distinct and only occasionally overlapping audiences—the scholarly community and the ordinary, at best moderately versed museum attendee attracted by these two great names. I think he has been relatively successful in doing so, even though he has had to make some sacrifice. I have avoided commenting on the exhibition itself, its choices, installation, and juxtapositions, but one cannot help noticing its didactic preferences in the catalog. Pairs of paintings are reminiscent of traditional classroom presentations, and commentaries on the pictures themselves seem sometimes forgetful of the introductory essay. The assumption is that the two will connect in the viewer's mind, for those who read both. I am aware that an author cannot reiterate his theses with each commentary, yet I would have liked the commentaries to refer more often to the framework of ideas and context that the introduction argues are implicitly embedded in the works. For those who have taken the time to look carefully and read, Joachim Pissarro's focused analyses of the paintings and the broader explanations in his introduction do provide something very close to the firsthand, authentic experience of art to which both he and House aspire. Fortunately, Pissarro has done as his former teacher has taught.

JAMES H. RUBIN is professor of nineteenth-century European art at Stony Brook, the State University of New York [Department of Art, Staller Center for the Arts, Stony Brook, N.Y. 11794-5400].

Notes

1. This view is substantiated in a new and highly original study by psychologist James E. Cutting, Impressionism and Its Canon (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2006).


3. Cézanne originally showed his father reading the more conservative Le Siècle.


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