

Célia VIEIRA  
CITEI-CIAC/ISMAI  
Maia, Portugal  
cvieira@ismai.pt

Inês SANTOS  
CITEI-CIAC/ISMAI  
Maia, Portugal  
iguerra@ismai.pt

**PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – USES AND  
FUNCTIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CELEBRITIES. THE CASE OF  
ÉMILE ZOLA**

**Recommended Citation:** Vieira, Célia, and Inês Santos. “Photographic Portrait in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century – Uses and Functions in the Construction of Celebrities. The Case of Émile Zola”. *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 6.2, 2020: <https://doi.org/10.24193/mjst.2020.10.09>

**Abstract:** The main goal of this study is to establish a relationship between the use of the portrait and the concept of celebrity, at the end of the 19th century, taking as a *corpus* of analysis a set of requests for photographs sent by letter to Zola, from correspondents located in different parts of the world. It is intended, through a qualitative analysis of this collection, to identify the functionalities and contexts within this set of correspondents requested in these images, in order to understand the role that photography has taken in the symbolic construction process of this figure as a celebrity.

**Keywords:** celebrity, photography, 19th century, Émile Zola.

**Celebrity and photography**

There is no consensus regarding the dating of the concept of celebrity. What is certain is the upcoming interest of literature on the subject. Moreover, if until recently this interest was limited to the American and British context, the culture of

celebrity as a focus of academic interest is now widespread. Despite this common attention, divergent and even opposing positions regarding the origin of the concept remains.

According to Adorno, the concept of celebrity is inseparable from the debate about mass culture, from the moment that the Sociology of Communication started to focus its perspective not on the so-called erudite culture, but rather on the taste of the masses. In the same sense, Boorstin refers that it is from 1900 that the way to “produce” fame is discovered, to the point that, in the United States of America, “overnight, the name of a Man it can become something familiar” (Boorstin 47). Starting from a markedly utilitarian view, some authors, as Ortiz points out, consider that it is only from the mid-twentieth century, and with more evidence from the 1970s, that a true culture of celebrity (Harmon 98-106, Heinich 353-372, Ferris 371-384) is established, in which celebrities become marketing instruments. Schickel also defends the idea that the notion of celebrity is contemporary of the 20th century, not least because celebrities depend on high visibility, visibility that is only possible with an intense and intentional communication flow with the public. This phenomenon is directly related, according to the author, to the popularization of the mass media (initially radio, the press and television, and later the new media).

The *English Oxford Dictionary*, for example, mentions the first use of the term celebrity applied to a person in 1849, while the *Dictionnaire Littré de la Langue Française* refers to a famous person in 1872, identifying him as “a celebrity of our time”, that is, giving it a temporal connotation. Still in an attempt to date, several historians associate the appearance of the concept with urban life, both in the United States of America (19th century), Paris (19th century) and even before in London (18th century). Antoine Lilti considers that the invention of celebrity takes place between 1750 and 1850, a time when theatre writers and actresses are projected in the public sphere, and needs that the concept of famous person implies that the public develops an effective involvement with her, to the point of wanting to access her private life, which justifies an entire celebrity economy based, for example, on the iconography trade or on the press that disseminates news about her private life. Tillyard also highlights, in this context, the determining role that letters, novels and newspapers played in this projection.

The formation of the concept of celebrity in its direct relationship with mass communication coincides temporarily with the emergence and development of the

means of photographic reproduction. It is in a context of massification of the image that, as Gomes points out, it is frequent to collect photographs and, above all, business cards (with photographs) of the famous. At the same time, as stated by Fabris, in the face of growing demand, the need to produce images leads to greater speed of execution and reproducibility, as well as a reduction in costs. Bastos points out that the low cost of the aforementioned cards allowed them to be produced in large quantities, giving rise to an important business of selling celebrity portraits, as these cards allowed swift figures to gain greater visibility and spread their influence. It should also be noted that, as the same author points out, one of the greatest desires of photographers of that period was to have a collection of photographs of celebrities. Mathew Brady (1823-1896), later responsible for the construction of the *Gallery of Illustrious Americans*, brought together one of the most important collections, reaching an average of 3,000 portraits a year.

The vulgarization of this type of portrait was also reflected, however, in the appearance of a group of photographers, who wanted to escape the stereotype of photography printed on a business card by considering it lifeless and unnatural. The assets of these photographers testify not only to the existence of an avid market for this type of iconography, but also to the evolution of photographic art itself. Indeed, many photographers, such as Disdéri, in France, developed their own style for the individual representation of personalities, especially from the artistic and literary world. For this, and opposing to the photographs who are focused on the face, Disdéri, for example, begins to photograph the client in full body and preferably in scenarios appropriate to the social status of the photographed, using touch-ups and colourings to correct the images. Gomes points out Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, better known for Nadar, as a paradigmatic case of this movement. Nadar was a supporter of simple, authentic and sober portraits, preferably on smooth, monochromatic backgrounds, with half-body poses in three quarters, slightly illuminated by a skylight. Nadar looked for an intimate approach, which, for him, presupposed to be able to express the character and the true personality of the portrayed. This photographer thus assumed a very different attitude from that of Disdéri, considered the prototype of the industrial photographer, defending, in contrast, an emotional and not just a mechanical relation with the camera. It should be noted that the evolution of the photographic portrait art reveals a tendency towards theatricalization of the representation, placing the figures in scenarios that

endow the image with a narrative potential. Heir to the art of the pictorial portrait and often reproducing their poses, composition and lighting, the art of the photographic portrait reveals a desire to express feelings and emotions through the image and also to create a symbolic image.

The question that arises is therefore to understand what was the relationship between the production and diffusion of portraits and the recognition of the celebrity, that is, to perceive the way in which the means that facilitate visibility (photography, photogravure, card visits, and later, cinema, television and the Internet), were decisive in the consolidation of a figure as public and famous. In this context, as Boorstin demonstrates, at first, photographic production has as its preferred audience anonymous masses, looking for a record that biographically perpetuates family and private history, not establishing a direct relationship with the aspiration to celebrity. The production and diffusion of portraits, in the 19th century, results after a media selection that brings to public the political, artistic and cultural icons recognized as relevant. This means that, on the one hand, not everyone could access visibility, since it depended on the media filter. On the other hand, the search for an iconography of famous figures stemmed from a desire to appropriate the public figure and to introduce that representation in the personal history itself<sup>1</sup>.

### **The case of Émile Zola**

Dabhoiwala states that the popularization of French literature in the last decades of the 19th century, alongside an increasingly broad readership (not only of novels, but also of newspapers), led, on the one hand, to the appearance of new celebrities and, on the other, to a growing interest in their private life. Zola's case is, in this context, paradigmatic, insofar as he was one of the most media figures of the last decades of the 19th century.

The thousands of articles on Zola and Naturalism that circulated in the world press, highlighting the close relationship between literature and the press, made him, especially from the 1880s, a literary figure known worldwide. This image was promoted among his contemporaries, certainly through the dissemination of his works and articles, but also through the development of a biographical criticism that, in the early 1880s, was mainly intensified by comments on his novels, published in

---

<sup>1</sup> The same author even points out that the first family albums were nothing more than volumes full of photographs of celebrities, royalty members or politicians.

French magazines of large circulation, such as the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; or the information contained in disclosure works such as the *Dictionnaire Universel des Contemporains* de Vapereau; Maupassant's *Célébrités Contemporaines* or two works from 1882 that functioned as a privileged source in the configuration of Zola's international image as a famous person: the volume of one of the writers of the *Soirées de Médan*, Paul Alexis, *Émile Zola. Notes d'un ami*, and Edmundo de Amicis's travel impressions, *Portraits littéraires*, who, by disclosing the writing processes and the daily life of the naturalist master, also reveals the backstage of the production of the naturalist novel. Thus, in the early 1880s, Zola's name already corresponded to that of a renowned author and naturalism was no longer a literary novelty, but a movement that was institutionalized both in literary criticism and in the creation of naturalistic works, after a whole decade of battles and controversies in the world press.

Since the publication of *J'Accuse*, his image has gone beyond the artistic field to become universally a moral and political symbol over which the spirit of humanism and the essence of Human Rights converged. In the period when Zola becomes a world-famous writer, we witnessed a proliferation of the production and dissemination of famous photographs, both in illustrated newspapers and in the edition of volumes specialized in the biographies of celebrities, as well as through the circulation of photographs sent by private correspondence or sold in bookstores. At the time of the Dreyfus Affair, support for Zola also included the production of portraits, in small formats, but with an evident change: the portrait card is no longer a technique for capturing the image, but rather a method of reproducing, in small format, images captured in single photos and also allowing printing in large format. A significant number of photographs of Nadar date from that period, reproducing images in business card format, but with a new logic: that of political positioning in the public space. This fact justifies that, on several occasions, Zola's correspondence witnesses the requests, addressed by different friends and even strangers, for him to send them his portrait. In fact, the analysis of the correspondence received by Zola, between the end of the 1880s and 1900, shows the common practice at that time, of requesting a photograph of the famous figures or considered worthy of admiration. Through photography, senders sought to create closeness and even a certain intimacy with the recipient, through requests that are simultaneously imbued with emotional and relational symbolism.

## Methodology

The purpose of this analysis is to identify the functionalities and contexts in which correspondents write to Zola to request portraits, in order to establish a relationship between the use of the portrait and the concept of celebrity. The analysis *corpus* consists of 2,000 letters sent from all continents to Zola, between the late 1880s and 1900s<sup>2</sup>. As this *corpus* is already digitized and systematized, the identification of the letters whose subject had to do with requests for photographs was made through the internal search engine of the E-man platform. The following documents were identified in which correspondents request or send portraits to Zola, to whom a qualitative analysis was applied:

<b>Autor</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Local</b>
Charles Warren Cram	1887_02_14	USA
Julio Torres Cardenas	1889_03_16	Venezuela
Candido Patiño	1890_05_23	Cuba
A. Dufriermois	1893	England
Elliott and Fry	1893_08_05	England
Mme May de Torre-Hermosa	1893_09_19	England (Scotland)
Fred Turner	1893_09_23	England
Alex Bassano	1893_09_23	England
W.A. Weil	1893_09_24	England
Oswald Crowfurd	1893_09_30	England
Gilbert Dalziel	1893-09-08	England
F. N. Johnson	1894_08_01	USA
Alice Moderno.	1894_10_30	Portugal
Jane Schwirman	1898	Holland
Robert Crawford	1898	USA
Henri van der Linden	1898_01_17	Holland
Liechti	1898_01_25	Switzerland
P. Ferd. Götte	1898_01_31	Holland
Paul Wauvermans	1898_02_00	Belgium
Paul Meystre	1898_02_25	Switzerland
Herri Wiberg	1898_02_28	Sweden
Hedig Odman	1898_02_28	Sweden
R. T. Kempers	1898_04_03	Holland
Francisco Medina	1898_05_13	México
Anónimo	1898_05_23	Turkey

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Sébastien Macke, Olivier Lumbroso, Alain Pagès, Céline Grenaud-Tostain, Jean-Michel Pottier, *Correspondance générale d'Émile Zola*, Plate-forme EMAN (Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes, CNRS-ENS) : <http://eman-archives.org/EMAN/items/show/10>. All the letters quoted on this paper belong to this archive. Authors thanks to Docteur Brigitte Émile-Zola for allowing this collection of letters sent to Zola to be consulted, through the private area of the E-man platform held by the Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes (ITEM).

Pierre Krausa	1898_05_30_02	Russia
Anónimo	1898_06_03	Turkey
Guillermo Obando	1898_12_05	Costa Rica
Sylvino de Amaral	1898-01-01	Brazil
Thessaloniki admirers. (Document album. It contains 6 handwritten letters)	1898-05-06	Greece
Bartolomé Losada	1899_01_25	Venezuela
Marcos B. Espinel	1899_06_26	Ecuador
Marie Elise Touffe-Lauder	1899_07_04	Canada
Reynold Decker	1900_05_29	Switzerland
E. H. Stricklemet	s/d	USA

### Outcomes

The analysis of these documents has made it possible to identify two types of correspondents in the request for photographs: correspondents who address to Zola as professionals (photographers, photo studios, journalists) and correspondents who write in a personal interest. The results also indicate that the functionality of the use of photography in its relationship with the celebrity depends not only on the type of correspondent, but on three types of use of photography, often interdependent in a logic of self-promotion, as already identified by Wrona: a professional use that illustrates the modes of image circulation and the close relationship established between photographers, journalists, booksellers and a famous figure in the building of a whole trade of celebrity image; an affectional and emotional use, that results from a desire for closeness or from an *in absentiae* appropriation of celebrity, and as a form of political/ideological positioning in public space.

Regarding the photographs requested by professionals, the requests of some well-known British studios are present in the *corpus* under examination. This is the case of a letter from the studio Elliott and Fry, dated August 5, 1893<sup>3</sup>, which requests an appointment with Zola, on his next trip to London, with the aim of photographing him for a series dedicated to celebrities<sup>4</sup>. The collection also includes a letter from W. A. Weil, dated 24 September 1893<sup>5</sup>, sent from England on behalf of the Hills and Sanders studios, requesting a photographic portrait. It should be noted that this

<sup>3</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #1251 : ANG Elliott 1893\_08\_05.

<sup>4</sup>This studio, founded in 1863, was one of the most active and relevant firms of the Victorian era, having employed several photographers, and in whose legacy are the portraits of figures such as Prime Minister William Gladstone, the painter John Everett Millais, the pianist and composer Franz Liszt, in addition to several famous or known personalities at that time as British actors, singers, musicians or clergymen..

<sup>5</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6051 ANG Weil 1893\_09\_24.

studio was responsible for most of the photographic records of the members of the royal house, including in its archive photographs of the most respected figures in English society<sup>6</sup>. Also a photographer of Queen Victoria and of the most eminent personalities of the time, Alexander Bassano<sup>7</sup>, on behalf of the Brighton Studio, wrote to Zola, on September 23, 1893<sup>8</sup>, with the same purpose: to make a photographic portrait of the writer, to integrate a “complete collection of eminent personages”. These letters, all dated 1893, coincide with Zola's stay in London from 20th September to 1st October as a guest of the Institute of English Journalists to present a communication at the Congress of English Journalists. On this date, the year the Rougon-Macquart monumental series was completed, Zola was recognised as a writer and journalist, embodying the model of a progressive and modern intellectual.

The productions of these photographers nourish the still active tradition, at the end of the 19th century, of making albums, collected by consumers of this iconographic market. The requests sent by private correspondents often emanate from the desire to receive an autographed photograph that could integrate these collections. This type of request reflects a cultural tradition, that of the *album amicorum*, very much in vogue in Romanticism, which consisted of asking a guest to leave a record on these pages: an autograph, a dedication, a thought, a drawing or a transcription of a poem. Often an expression of sociability and sentimentality, these albums are today original sources for networking social relationships, as well as for learning about the cultural contexts that this genre has assumed. Letters like that of Charles Warren Cram to Émile Zola dated February 14, 1887<sup>9</sup>, in which he thanks Zola for the photograph and autograph that he was kind enough to inscribe in his wife's album, emphasize the fact that the album establishes a network of communication and social recognition, because by requesting a collaboration of Zola, the album owner knows that the collaborator will read the previous inscriptions and that it will be read by future collaborators. His status and image will therefore be exposed, given the public nature of this medium, as well as its circulation.

---

<sup>6</sup> File available at National Portrait Gallery: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person?LinkID=mp07109&search=sas&sText=Hills+%26+Saunders&OOnly=true&wPage=0>

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Bassano's legacy at the national Portrait Gallery includes 3680 portraits: cf. <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait-list.php?search=sp&sText=Alex%20Bassano>

<sup>8</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #1238. ANG Bassano 1893\_09\_23.

<sup>9</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6184. AME 1887\_02\_14 AM1880.01. Cram.14021887.cartedevisite1.

At the same time, several correspondents attest to the taste at the time for the collection of celebrity images, such as Marcos B. Espinel letter, of June 26, 1899, who requested a photograph to be included in his “álbum de hombres celebres y escritores famosos”<sup>10</sup> or of F. N. Johnson<sup>11</sup> (letter of August 1, 1894, Maine, USA), who requested a photograph to complete a collection. This pantheonization of the celebrity, embodied in these collections, lies between private circulation and public dissemination, insofar as the quality and quantity of the portraits gathered in these collections contribute to the prestige of the collector, who, aware of the social value of this iconography, publicly displays it. This is shown, for example, by reading E. H. Stricklemet's letter, in which he indicates that the requested portrait will integrate “a large and valued collection of autographs ...which I am preparing with portraits to present to our State Library”<sup>12</sup>.

In fact, it is the image of a world-famous writer that justifies the request for objects that allow the correspondent to participate in Zola's aura of fame and, at the same time, to iconically transport him to his private sphere. By his totemic power, the letter, the portrait card, the autograph, the portrait are the physical means of approaching and attempting a communion with the famous figure. In the *corpus* under consideration, there are multiple requests for portraits, if possible, accompanied by an autograph, addressed by ordinary citizens, such as, for example, Alice Moderno, a Portuguese signatory who requests a photograph of Zola for her office<sup>13</sup>, or Mme May de Torre-Hermosa<sup>14</sup>, a correspondent from Scotland. Highlighting the role women are beginning to assume in society and their progressive autonomy, these letters accentuate an affective and emotional use of photography. In a time of massive and mechanical production of the image, the possession of an image sent personally by the portrayed person, highlights the desire for appropriation of a unique, exclusive image, an image that establishes a personal bond in the general context of a society where individuals are dissolved into the anonymous mass. In a letter dated 28 February 1898, a young Swedish woman, Herri Wiberg, describes this while begging for the favour of a portrait: she explains that it is obvious that she could buy it in any shop, but that the gift of an image in which the

---

<sup>10</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6310 : EQU Espinel 1899\_06\_26

<sup>11</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6240. AME 1894\_08\_01 AM1890.16.Johnson. 01081894.Maine.

<sup>12</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6773 AME SD\_sd\_sd LEA.79.Strictclemet.ND.Michigan.

<sup>13</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6449 POR1894\_10\_30.

<sup>14</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6046 : ANG Torre-Hermosa 1893\_09\_19.

author had written a few words with his own hand would attest to a special attention, while at the same time acting as a kind of reward for the admiration she devotes to him<sup>15</sup>. In other words, the link established by an answer, by the famous figure, is the price to be paid for maintaining the loyalty of the audience. Apparently, Zola, in the solidification of his image as a famous figure, has been sensitive to the need to nurture this kind of emotional pressure from the audience, since in many of the letters the signatories accuse the reception of the photograph they so much desired and write to express their appreciation for this object. This is the case of Sylvino de Amaral, secretary of the Brazilian Legation in Madrid, who, on January 1, 1898, at the same time as expressing good wishes for the New Year, evokes the autographed photograph that Zola had offered him, described as a “souvenir que je garde méticuleusement”<sup>16</sup>.

Curiously, it is mainly during the Dreyfus Affair that there is an increase in this type of private correspondence, since, for most of the signatories, Zola's image is equivalent to that of a figure who embodies the principles of justice, freedom and truth. In the context of the Dreyfus Affair, Henri van der Linden, from the Netherlands, writes to Émile Zola to express his admiration and to request the honour of receiving a photograph and an autograph; as does Hedig Odman<sup>17</sup>, from Sweden, who states that the image would be “un bien cher souvenir pour toute ma vie”; Paul Meystre<sup>18</sup> and Liechti<sup>19</sup>, both from Switzerland, underlining the latter that his “cause est suivie par la civilisation du monde entier”; or Pierre Krausa<sup>20</sup>, from Russia; or Marie Elise Touffe-Lauder<sup>21</sup>, from Canada.

The *corpus* in fact shows the extraordinary dynamics of the image market, accelerated by the evolution of telecommunications and mass communication itself. Journalists and photographers, pressured by the demand for the writer's effigy, write to Zola with urgent requests to feed an avid audience of the writer's images, especially following his involvement in the Dreyfus Affair. In a letter from 1898,

---

<sup>15</sup> «Certes on peut l'acheter dans chaque boutique mais ça je ne veux pas, je veux avoir un portrait que vous m'avez envoyé vous-même et auquel vous avez écrit quelques mots avec votre propre main. Je puis bien comprendre que vous ne pouvez pas prendre intérêt pour moi et que vous n'avez pas beaucoup de temps à penser sur telles choses; mais je serais si triste si vous ne voulez pas le faire car je vous admire tant.». Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #7033. SUE WIBERG 1898\_02\_28.

<sup>16</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #449 : BRA 1898-01-01.

<sup>17</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #7047. SUE ODMAN 1898\_02\_28.

<sup>18</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6957 : SUI MEYSTRE 1898\_02\_25.

<sup>19</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6943 : SUI LIECHTI 1898\_01\_25.

<sup>20</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6119 : ALL 1898\_05\_30\_02.

<sup>21</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #1260 CAN Lauder 1899\_07\_04.

Robert Crawford, explaining that from one day to the next he had gone from being a journalist for the *London Daily News* to a representative of *New York World*, thanked the previous day's meeting, asked for a meeting for the next day and asked for a portrait that he would immediately be send by cable to the *American Daily*, described as “un journal immense – 32 pages par jour, tirage plus de 200,000”<sup>22</sup> and as a newspaper that defends Zola's cause “passionnément aux États-Unis”. The *corpus*, while testifying to a mode of private iconographic circulation, makes it possible to understand that the network of image dissemination is articulated with the public sphere and with a continuous process of illustration of the press throughout the 19th century, following the very mechanisation of the image and the acceleration of its reproductivity. As Rafael Gomez Alonso points out, this iconographic support broadens the public, as the image has a substitutive character of the text for the great mass of an illiterate population. Zola's portraits therefore circulate through various interdependent media, as indicated in a letter from Candido Patiño to Émile Zola of 23 May 1890<sup>23</sup> from Cuba, where the correspondent asks for a photograph, but also describes a portrait of Zola published in the periodical *La Ilustration Española y Americana*, from Madrid.

It is clear, therefore, that the legal battle of the Dreyfus Affair is, apart from anything else, a communicational battle, to which Zola and his supporters have concocted all the channels and resources that the celebrity iconographic market had improved since the mid-1860s. The *corpus* documents the creation of iconographic formats that were intended to define the political/ideological positioning in the public space not only on Zola's part, but also on that of the correspondents themselves. The creation of letterheads and portrait cards alluding to the Dreyfus Affair and Zola's positioning witness this. This is the case with the letterhead, used by a lawyer, Paul Wauvermans, on a letter to Émile Zola, on February 1898<sup>24</sup>. The letterhead includes on the left a photograph of Zola, with the quote: “La verité est en marche et rien ne l'arrêtera!”. It is understood that the intention of this correspondent in communicating with his readers is to publicly declare that his ideological affiliation identifies with the values that Zola embodies in this affair: truth, progress, justice. And for Zola, the circulation of this letter paper is part of a campaign conducted on a global scale to promote his image. The same happens with

---

<sup>22</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6714 AME SD\_sd\_sd LEA.80.Crawford.ND.NL.

<sup>23</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6326. CUB Patino 1890\_05\_23.

<sup>24</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #1023 BEL 1898\_02\_00-09.

the following examples of portrait cards, both sent from Turkey, on different dates, which reproduce an image of the writer, with an autograph, and designed to mark the date of May 23, 1898<sup>25</sup>. The two documents illustrate a use of the portrait card that is not restricted to the simple promotion of the public image, but that goes beyond that, since, besides instituting this format as a campaign support, adapted to the various stages of a communication plan, it involves the signatories of the card in the same row of the struggle. This is all the more extraordinary because we are referring neither to a party, nor to an election, nor to a specific ideology. By activating all the media he has learned to master, Émile Zola succeeds in the prodigy of concentrating a set of values in himself and in his name. To sign together with Zola's name is to say that one is for truth and justice, against corruption and against an image of France which embodies the degeneration of modern civilisation. No one has ever undertaken such a campaign, least of all on a global scale. To this extent, the case of Zola, in the context of the Dreyfus Affair, anticipates a use of the celebrity image that would only be fully exploited in the following century: that of the public image as a cause.

### **Final Considerations**

From a sociological point of view, celebrities are daughters of modernity, so it is said that modernity frees itself from the bonds of tradition and thus opens the way to the phenomenon of celebrity as we understand it today. Equally decisive was the appearance of a bourgeois public sphere that allowed an individual, going beyond his private sphere, to become recognizable in the public sphere, as well as the technological development that allowed the reproduction and circulation of the image in various media and on a global scale. Focusing on the case of a public figure from the late 19th century, throughout this article we analysed the relationship between celebrity and photography, based on a *corpus* of letters sent to Zola, and we sought to demonstrate three interdependent uses in the way the image of the writer and intellectual integrates a communication plan in all its forms unique to the era and anticipating strategies that would have full echo in the 20th and 21st centuries.

---

<sup>25</sup> Plateforme E-man, reference: contenu #6388 TUR 1898\_05\_23 e Contenu #6389. TUR 1898\_06\_03.

**References:**

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Teoria da cultura de massa*. Paz e Terra, 1982.
- Bastos, Ana Rita. “A fotografia como retrato da sociedade”. *Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, Vol. XXVIII (2014): 127-143.
- Boorstin, Daniel. *The Image: or What Happened to the American Dream*. Atheneum, 1971.
- Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*. Vintage Books, 1986.
- Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. *As origens do sexo – uma história da primeira revolução sexual*. Editora Globo, 2013.
- Fabris, Marcos. “Literatura, fotografia e o retrato da modernização de Paris, a capital do século XIX”. *Lumen et virtus – revista de cultura e imagem*, v.1. (2010).
- Fernandes, Daniel Cruz. “Literatura e fotografia: algumas abordagens”. *Uniletras*, v. 36 (2014): 33-44.
- Ferris, Kerry O. “The Sociology of Celebrity”. In *Sociology Compass*, 1/1 (2007): 371-384.
- Gomes, Ana Filipa de Sá Alves. *Memória do Tempo - Tipologia de um retrato*. Faculdade de Belas Artes, Universidade de Lisboa, 2011.
- Gomez Alonso, Rafael. “El apoyo iconografico en la prensa española del siglo XIX”. *Icono14*, Vol1, nº1 (2003).
- Gunthert, André. “Photographie et célébrité”. *Études photographiques* [online], 32, Printemps. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/3512> (2015).
- Harmon, Kristine. “Celebrity Culture: Bibliography Review”. *The Hedgehog Review*, 7/1, (2005): 98-106.
- Heinich, Nathalie. *De la Visibilité. Excellence et singularité en régime médiatique*. Gallimard, 2012.
- Heinich, Nathalie. “La culture de la célébrité en France et dans les pays anglophones”. *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 52/2 (2011): 353-372.
- Lilti, Antoine. *Figures publiques. L'invention de la célébrité, 1750-1850*. Fayard, 2014.
- Ortiz, Renato. “As celebridades como emblema sociológico”. *Sociol. Antropol.*, Volo6.03 (2016): 669-697.
- Schikel, Richard. *Intimate strangers: the cult of celebrity*. Doubleday, 1985.
- Sontag, Susan. *Ensaio Sobre Fotografia*. Quetzal, 2012.

Tillyard, Stella. "Celebrity in the 18th Century London". *History Today*, 55/6, (2005).

Wrona, Adeline. "Le portrait carte, de la photographie au journal", in *COntEXTES* [online], 14|2014, URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/contextes/5942> (2014).