

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NEO-REALISM IN THE WORK OF  
HAROLD GILMAN AND CHARLES GINNER

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of  
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THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NEO-REALISM IN THE WORK OF HAROLD GILMAN AND CHARLES GINNER.

This thesis explores the development and promotion of the theory and practice of Neo-Realism by Harold Gilman and Charles Ginner. Published during 1914, Neo-Realism presented a reactionary response to recent developments in European art, particularly Cubism which was heavily censured. The Neo-Realists rejected 'Post-Impressionism' as the 'enemy' of progress in contemporary British art, dismissing the theories put forward by Roger Fry and Clive Bell and warning that British artists were in danger of sacrificing national identity in favour of a narrow dependence on European, particularly French, art. During the years immediately following publication of Neo-Realism, the theory underwent a decisive reconstruction, incorporating greater attention to design in terms of colour, form and composition. The Neo-Realists' involvement in the London Group, which brought them into contact with the Vorticists, and the influence of the critical writings of T. E. Hulme, contributed significantly to this development; it was in this sense that Neo-Realism played an important role in the debate between abstraction and realism which characterised this period in British art. During 1917 Ginner published a second article, Modern Painting and Teaching, which called for the creation of a 'great national art' through the combination of a commitment to representation with a greater attention to elements of design which played a significant role in the work of those artists, including Vorticists, who employed abstract or semi-abstract forms. Coinciding with a rejection of abstract art by a number of British artists, this perception of a dialectical approach, encompassing a commitment to representation allied to the strong sense of design which was the legacy of Vorticism, ensured Neo-Realism's significance in vividly encapsulating the spirit and consciousness of a range of artists at a crucial moment in the development of modern British art.

**To the Memory of  
Dr. Donal Byrne (1943-1988)  
of the History of Art Department in the  
University of Aberdeen**

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(Prince Marshall, Wheels of London. London, 1972, p.133)

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1908 the work of Charles Ginner (1878-1952) was seen in England for the first time. Born and brought up in the South of France, he was then living and working in Paris. He sent five works to the first exhibition of the Allied Artists Association (AAA), brainchild of Frank Rutter (1876-1937), a juryless exhibiting society modelled on the *Artistes Indépendants* in Paris.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that the exhibition comprised some four thousand works, Ginner's contributions were noticed by Spencer Gore (1878-1914) who told Rutter: "This man is a painter."<sup>2</sup> The comment may have been delivered somewhat ironically for, although the works which Ginner exhibited have not been traced, Rutter recalled that the paint was applied so thickly that they were "a nuisance to handle because the paint stood out in lumps and was still wet!"<sup>3</sup> Following the AAA's first exhibition it was decided that all members be eligible to serve on the Hanging Committee on a rotating basis, invitations to be issued alphabetically.<sup>4</sup> In 1910 it was the turn of the 'Gs' and Ginner served alongside Gore and Harold Gilman (1876-1919).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> London, Royal Albert Hall, Allied Artists Association, July 1908. Cat. nos. 1847A A Study of A Head; 1847B The River Marne. Near Paris and three illustrations to the work of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), 2790 Silence: A Fable; 2791 Eleonora and 2792 The Black Cat. (Dates and locations unknown). Ginner's address was given in the catalogue as 46 Rue Vaugirard, Paris.

<sup>2</sup> F. Rutter (1922), p.43.

<sup>3</sup> F. Rutter (1927), p.190. There can be no doubt, however, of the genuineness of Gore's remark. Reviewing the AAA exhibition in 1910 he wrote: "Mr. Charles Ginner ... is a painter who seems to me to represent the best tendency in modern painting. His colour sense is vivid and his drawing without fear." (S. Gore (1910b).)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.189.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.190. There is some doubt as to the exact date of Ginner's arrival in London. Rutter (1922), p.144, stated that he came over "on purpose from Paris" in 1910 to serve on the AAA Hanging Committee and, on meeting Gilman and Gore, decided to settle in London permanently. This suggests a date of around June 1910. Ginner himself (1945), p.131, recorded that he arrived from Paris "in the year 1910" while J. Rothenstein (1957), p.189, who knew Ginner, gave a specific date of January 1910. However, Ginner's Notebooks, vol.1, p.xi, record that Chelsea (Sotheby's 2 March 1988, lot 110), a study for the large painting A Corner in Chelsea (private collection) [I], was executed during 1909. The leafless trees indicate that the finished painting, which is dated 1910 and was exhibited at the AAA in July that year (583), was executed during the winter or early spring. It depicts the Gothic Revival church of St. Luke on Sydney Street, viewed from the east. F. Hall (1965), p.30, who also knew Ginner, wrote: "For a short time after his arrival in London, Ginner had a studio in Chelsea not far from where his mother and his sister were both living." Ginner's mother, widowed in 1895, had married Arthur Best, an engineer, while his sister, Ruby, a dancer, married Alexander Kidd Dyer. An unpublished letter from Ginner to Lucien Pissarro (1863-1944), dated 2 January 1911, gives his address as 10 Beauclere Buildings, College Place, Chelsea (Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). The scene portrayed in A Corner in Chelsea was evidently viewed from here, either from a high window or rooftop. College Place, now Elystan Place, lies several streets to the east of St. Luke's and the minutes of a meeting of the Chelsea Borough Council, held during 1913 (Chelsea Library), refer to street traders' barrows located on College Street, now Elystan Street, which met College Place, and these appear in Ginner's painting. We may surmise that, while visiting his mother and sister during 1909, Ginner took a studio in College Place, perhaps with a view to painting a London scene for the forthcoming AAA exhibition. Given the AAA's alphabetical selection system, Ginner would have known that it was his turn to serve on the Hanging Committee

Gilman and Gore had known each other at the Slade School of Fine Art which they attended during 1897-1901 and 1896-9, respectively. A small pencil drawing by Gilman of Gore, aged twenty, survives from this period.<sup>6</sup> Although they were both in Madrid during 1902 there is no evidence that they met.<sup>7</sup> They had evidently drifted apart after 1899 when Gore left the Slade which Gilman attended for a further two years. Their friendship was renewed when both became founder members of the Fitzroy Street Group, formed in 1907 by Walter Sickert (1860-1942).<sup>8</sup> Rutter recalled that the three artists became close and that Ginner, in particular, regarded this meeting as crucial to his future development as an artist: "Charles Ginner ... told me that ... it was the turning point in his life when, through the Allied Artists, he got to know Gilman and Gore."<sup>9</sup>

Less than four years later Neo-Realism, a document of some two-and-a-half thousand words, was published in The New Age.<sup>10</sup> The signatory was Ginner but we may also confidently impute the opinions expressed in the treatise to Gilman. There is a good deal of evidence in support of this assumption. When they exhibited at the AAA in July 1913 and at the eighth Goupil Gallery *salon* in the autumn, the title 'Neo-Realist' was included in brackets after the names of both Gilman and Ginner in the exhibition catalogues.<sup>11</sup> Gilman defended the theories contained in Neo-Realism in two subsequent letters to The New Age and during April 1914 Gilman and Ginner held a joint exhibition at the Carfax Gallery entitled Harold Gilman, Charles Ginner (Neo-Realism).<sup>12</sup> Ginner's article was reprinted as the catalogue introduction. Gore never called himself a Neo-Realist and was never regarded as such. This thesis is therefore concerned only indirectly with his work. His importance for this study lies chiefly in his role as a catalyst who helped to shape Neo-Realist theory, both through his published writings and by the practical example of his work. Gore was among the first English artists to recognise the unity of representational and decorative principles in the work of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists', a notion implicit in his published criticism as well as in his art.<sup>13</sup>

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and that he was thus due to visit London the following year. He may have returned to France for Christmas before settling in London in 1910. Rutter clearly did not meet Ginner until the summer of 1910 and assumed, when writing his book, that Ginner had come over from Paris on purpose to serve on the Hanging Committee. Ginner, himself, probably gave a date of 1910 because that was the year in which he decided to settle in London. Rothenstein's date of January 1910 was given either because he knew that Ginner arrived in winter and, on the evidence of both Ginner and Rutter that he settled in 1910, assumed that it was January, or because Ginner returned to Paris for Christmas before settling in London in the new year. At any rate, it is clear that Ginner may be placed in London during late 1909 and that by 1910 he was definitely living and settled in London. A letter from Ginner to Gore, dated 9 May 1912, indicates that he had, by this date, moved to 9 Tadema Road, Chelsea (collection of Frederick Gore).

<sup>6</sup> Portrait of Spencer Frederick Gore, 1898-9 (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum), inscribed: "drawing of Spenser (sic) Frederick Gore at the age of 20."

<sup>7</sup> F. Gore and R. Shone (1983), unpaginated.

<sup>8</sup> The formation of the Fitzroy Street Group is discussed in W. Baron (1979).

<sup>9</sup> F. Rutter (1927), pp.190, 199.

<sup>10</sup> C. Ginner, "Neo-Realism", The New Age, vol.14 (1 January 1914), pp.271-2.

<sup>11</sup> London, Royal Albert Hall, Allied Artists Association, July 1913, cat. nos. 190-192 (Gilman) and 544-546 (Ginner). London, Goupil Gallery, Goupil Gallery Salon, October - December 1913. Cat nos. 95, 103 (Gilman) and 97, 164 (Ginner).

<sup>12</sup> H. Gilman (1914b) and (1914c).

<sup>13</sup> S. Gore (1910c).

Another aspect of Gore's importance to the study of Neo-Realism lies in his commitment to co-operative group endeavour which expressed itself in his active membership of numerous groups and societies of artists. While Ginner clearly preferred to adopt the role of rank-and-file member, both Gore and Gilman were, more often than not, prime movers and were Presidents, respectively, of the Camden Town and London Groups. The latter institution, formed during October 1913, is especially relevant to the study of Neo-Realism for it was largely contact with the work of some of the more avant-garde elements of its extremely diverse membership which contributed to a radical reworking of Neo-Realist theory during the years which followed.

Literature dealing specifically with the work of Gilman or Ginner is comparatively scarce. After 1919, the year in which Gilman died, when Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) and Louis Fergusson (1878-1962) published a memorial volume and Ginner an article on Gilman, and until 1981, accounts of Gilman's work were confined to articles, including R. Bevan (1946) and J. Palmer (1955) and (1964), and short exhibition catalogues, the most significant of which were the Arts Council exhibition in 1954 and J. Agnew (1969). Literature on Ginner published during this period is particularly thin, the most useful accounts being H. Wellington (1952), which was reprinted as the introduction to the Arts Council exhibition of Ginner's work held in 1953, and an excellent article by M. Easton (1970). The only publication to deal jointly with their work has been F. Hall (1965) which contains not only useful biographical information and a bibliography, but also reprints the text of Neo-Realism and includes a portfolio of thirty-six outstanding reproductions of paintings and drawings by Gilman and Ginner, then in the collection of Edward Le Bas (1904-66). General accounts of the period containing useful chapters on both Gilman and Ginner are F. Rutter (1922) and J. Rothenstein (1957). The really significant publication on Gilman, which remains the standard work on this artist, is the excellent catalogue by A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981) for the Arts Council exhibition, Harold Gilman 1876-1919, which has been an invaluable source of reference in the writing of this thesis. It is a matter for some regret that no exhibition on this scale has been devoted to the work of Ginner. The art of this period has been the subject of a number of important studies during the past thirteen years. W. Baron's seminal work on the Camden Town Group (1979) provides a history of the group's formation together with a catalogue containing valuable information on the work of individual group members, including Gilman and Ginner.<sup>14</sup> S. Watney (1980), an excellent and pioneering study of the period as a whole, contains a chapter on Neo-Realism.

As this survey of literature demonstrates, comparatively little work has been done on Gilman and Ginner as individual artists. But the most significant gap in the literature is the dearth of material dealing with the theory of Neo-Realism itself in terms of its role within contemporaneous art theory and practice. D. Thistlewood (1979) and (1984) represents the only attempt to tackle head-on the issues presented in and by Neo-Realism, siting the theory within the context of the arguments for

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<sup>14</sup> This book was an extended version of the catalogue by W. Baron and M. Cormack for the Fine Art Society's exhibition, Camden Town Recalled, held during 1976, which in turn built upon valuable work done by M. Easton for his catalogue of the exhibition Art in Britain 1890-1940 from the Collection of the University of Hull held at Hull University during 1967.

abstract art presented in The New Age by the philosopher T. E. Hulme (1883-1917). Thistlewood approached the theme obliquely, however, with Neo-Realism occupying the status of an early influence on his main interest, the philosophy of Herbert Read (1893-1968). J. Bullen (1988) reprinted the text of Neo-Realism although discussion of the theory was given very little space. S. Tillyard (1988) discussed Neo-Realism in more detail, locating it within the debate conducted in the English press on the subject of the modern movements in art. It is the intention of this thesis to focus on Neo-Realism both in terms of its practical significance for the work of Gilman and Ginner and its theoretical implications for a particular moment in the history of British art. The theory of Neo-Realism as it developed post-1914 may ultimately be regarded as a dialectic in which the figurative and abstract elements present in contemporary British art, instead of existing in mutual opposition, could be combined to create what Ginner termed a "great national Art."<sup>15</sup> For this reason, a cut-off point in the mid-1920s has been adopted for this thesis for, although Ginner lived until 1952, the significance of Neo-Realism lay in its role as an integrator of diverse elements at a time when British art was undergoing a crisis of identity. The Neo-Realists' achievement was to build not only a theoretical framework to accommodate the notion of a combination of Realism and abstraction in contemporary art but, in practical terms, to realise this ambition by promoting diverse elements within the membership of the London Group. The few years following Gilman's death saw Neo-Realism's validation in terms of its appropriateness in epitomising the attitude of a generation of artists who, having turned away from the use of abstract forms, retained in their work the pure colour and strong design elements which were the legacy of their earlier attachment to abstraction. Neo-Realism was a somewhat insular, even reactionary and certainly uncompromising document. It is therefore all the more remarkable that three years later when Ginner published a second article, the rejection of abstract and semi-abstract forms in art implicit in his earlier remarks on Cubism had been replaced by a positive acceptance of the strong design elements which he found to be characteristic of the work of, among others, the group of artists known as Vorticists, at the head of which was Lewis.<sup>16</sup> This implied no small adjustment to the Neo-Realists' stated position in 1914 and it is the aim of this thesis to chart the development of Neo-Realism as an essentially evolutionary aesthetic.

Gilman and Ginner did not coin the term 'Neo-Realist'. It had appeared in 1894 in its French formulation, 'néo-réalisme', in a review of an exhibition at Toulouse which included work by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901).<sup>17</sup> While this is clearly too early to have come to the attention of Ginner, then a boy of sixteen living in the South of France, it is possible that, by 1914, Gilman and Ginner were aware that the term had been used in this context. Thomson has drawn attention to a review by Arthur Huc, writing under the pen name 'Homodei', in which he divided the young generation of progressive artists who had emerged since 1890 into 'néo-traditionnistes' such as Maurice Denis (1870-1943), largely concerned with the fantastic and mystical elements of Symbolism, and the 'néo-réalistes', among whom he included Lautrec, who chose themes of modern

<sup>15</sup> C. Ginner, "Modern Painting and Teaching", Art and Letters, vol.1 (July 1917), p.19.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Exhibition organised by La Dépêche de Toulouse, May, 1894.

life which they treated with acute, even caricatural, observation.<sup>18</sup> As Thomson points out, the term did not become a critical topos which explains why Gilman and Ginner were able to appropriate it without incurring any reference to Lautrec in critical response to Neo-Realism.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, Lautrec's name was not included in a list of key 'Realists' contained in the treatise, possibly because Gilman and Ginner did not wish to draw attention to the source of their chosen epithet which might lead critics to compare them unfavourably with Lautrec or anchor them to a particular tendency. There is certainly evidence that both Gilman and Ginner admired the work of Lautrec. Several early illustrations dating from the latter years of Ginner's period in Paris suggest his influence. Scene at a Café Bar, 1909 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum) [2], depicting two dancers with an audience of café customers, is close to the type of subject matter favoured by Lautrec as is the acid colour and bold poster style of the drawing and the strong element of caricature in the treatment of the figures. Marjorie Lilly (b.1891), who knew both Gilman and Ginner, wrote of the "profound effects" of Lautrec's "morbid and intense" art on Gilman and recalled that a reproduction of Lautrec's A la mie, 1891 (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) hung on the wall of the studio which he and Ginner rented at 16 Little Pulteney Street in Soho.<sup>20</sup>

The first two chapters of this thesis will be devoted to a detailed analysis of Neo-Realism in terms of its historical context and theoretical implications. The fact that the name which Gilman and Ginner chose for themselves originated in France was not entirely fortuitous. Ginner was of Anglo-Scottish descent and both his parents were British.<sup>21</sup> But as a Paris-trained artist who had spent all his life in France, his opinions on art were formed very much within the context of French art and criticism. Chapter one of this thesis will attempt to establish what Neo-Realism owed to nineteenth-century French Realist theory, particularly with regard to issues of subject matter. Ginner divided the art historical canon into 'Realists' and 'formula painters' according to whether or not he regarded individual artists as having made an original contribution to altering the way in which subsequent artists perceived and interpreted the visible world. It was this criterion, or rather the prejudice underlying it, which led Ginner to identify, for example, the brothers Le Nain, Antoine (c.1588-1648), Louis (c.1593-1648) and Mathieu (c.1607-77), as Realists while condemning their contemporary Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) as a 'Formula-machine' who, in the discourse of Neo-Realism, had inhibited the progress of French art by plagiarising the work of Italian Renaissance artists.<sup>22</sup> Ginner identified as 'academic' all art of which he disapproved and chapter two will discuss his understanding and usage of this term which was heavily censured by Sickert who objected to Ginner's dismissal of Poussin. Ginner's use of the term will be explored with particular reference to the work of several other key artists in his list of 'formula painters', including Annibale Carracci

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<sup>18</sup> R. Thomson, "Rethinking Toulouse-Lautrec", essay included in Toulouse-Lautrec, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Hayward Gallery, London during 1991, p.26. ('Homodei' [Arthur Huc], La Dépêche de Toulouse (21 May 1894), p.1.)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> M. Lilly (1971), pp.129-30.

<sup>21</sup> J. Rothenstein (1957), p.189.

<sup>22</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

(1560-1609) and Giulio Romano (c.1499-1546) and in relation to his apparent opposition to the academic system of art education. This chapter will also explore Neo-Realism's implicit nationalism, apparent in Ginner's preference for art which in some sense expressed national characteristics, specifically with regard to landscape, and which could thus be seen to possess a vivid national identity. The influence on Ginner's thought of a recently published monograph on Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606-69) by C. J. Holmes (1868-1936) is evident here for it will be seen that both Ginner and Holmes evaluated the art of the past in terms of its degree of dependence on Italian Renaissance art, a dependence which they clearly regarded as anathema.

Chapter three will examine the early careers of Gilman and Ginner in light of the commitment to a Realist aesthetic expressed in Neo-Realism. Particular attention will be paid to the early work of Gilman which was characterised by an adherence to broadly Realist principles during the period immediately following his graduation from the Slade where his strongest influence was not the work of his teachers but that of his fellow student William Orpen (1878-1931). Orpen was, in turn, chiefly interested in the work of artists such as Jan Van Eyck (c.1390-1441) and Jan Vermeer (1632-75) who were regarded by nineteenth-century theorists as the precursors of the Realist movement. Gilman's admiration for the work of Diego Velazquez (1599-1660), a key factor in his early development, was motivated by similar interests. It will be seen that the influence on Gilman of the work of James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) was a logical development in that his art offered a solution to the problem of how to apply the spirit of Velazquez's work to a modern idiom. However, Whistler's use of thin colour washes, an accompanying slightness of form, the inclusion of imagined details and his habit of working from memory threatened to carry Gilman too far from Realist principles. It will be suggested that his association with Sickert in the Fitzroy Street Group was a turning point in his art. One of Sickert's main contributions to the development of Gilman's art was his public rejection of much of Whistler's art and teaching, the other was his choice of subject matter which produced a lasting influence on Gilman's art. It will be pointed out, however, that while Sickert's definition of Realism was, during the period of his strongest influence on Gilman, predicated upon an almost exclusive portrayal of more or less sordid themes, Gilman, although initially attracted, abandoned this definition in favour of one involving the portrayal of the ordinary aspects of his own daily life and surroundings.

Chapter four takes the discussion of Neo-Realism into the historical present with a study of the Neo-Realists' attitude toward so-called 'Post-Impressionist' art and their implied attack on the theories of Clive Bell (1881-1964) and Roger Fry (1866-1934). Ginner regarded 'Post-Impressionism' as the 'new Academism' and warned that British artists were in danger of sacrificing national identity and originality in favour of imitating the work of European, particularly French, artists. It is clear that, with reference to the argument presented in chapter two, Ginner regarded France as having replaced Italy in this role. In light of Ginner's argument, this chapter will discuss the work which British artists contributed to the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, organised by Bell and Fry during 1912. Both in Neo-Realism and in a review of the 1911 *Artistes Indépendants*

exhibition, Ginner clearly placed himself in opposition to the work of the Cubists and such artists as Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and it is against this reactionary stance that we may measure the development of Neo-Realist theory over the next few years.

Chapter five, returning to the work of Gilman and Ginner before the publication of Neo-Realism, will explore their increasing interest in Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist art. Ginner's influence on Gilman is evident here and it will be seen that an increasing preference for pure colour took Gilman further from the influence of Sickert. A major factor in this interest, shared by Ginner, was the work and advice of their fellow Fitzroy Street and Camden Town Group member, Pissarro. The scientific control of colour and form evident in the work of European Neo-Impressionists was to be rejected in Neo-Realism and it will be seen that Gilman's and Ginner's own brand of Neo-Impressionism was a considerably watered-down version, as indeed was Pissarro's own. Influenced by Gore, both Gilman and Ginner began, during 1912, to apprehend a combination of decorative principles and a commitment to Realism as compatible within a single work of art. Although Gore had achieved this realisation during 1910, a fact evidenced by his review of the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, and although he allowed it to influence his art during 1911, it was in the series of landscapes which he executed at Letchworth during the late summer of 1912 that he fully embraced its implications. The designs which he executed for the Cabaret Theatre Club, a commission in which Ginner was also involved with equally far-reaching, although less spectacular, effects on his own art, were the catalyst for these works. This chapter will examine Ginner's designs for the commission and their influence on his art will focus on Piccadilly Circus, 1912 (London, Tate Gallery) [3] which combines an interest in both 'Post-Impressionist' and Futurist art. The unity of decorative and Realist principles which was hinted at in Neo-Realism subsequently became the linchpin of the theory and guaranteed its relevance for the future development of British art.

In chapter six it will be suggested that, during 1912, Ginner came close to affiliation with the coterie of artists surrounding Fry but that both he and Gilman sought ultimately to carve out a separate identity for themselves, the result of which was the publication of Neo-Realism. It will be seen that, in the absence of a fundamental theoretical objection to the ideas contained in the treatise, Sickert's resentment focussed on the issue of thick paint, a penchant for which was implied in Neo-Realism and evident in the work of both Gilman and Ginner during this period. The long-running debate over Neo-Realism in The New Age will be treated in some detail and will be seen to be predicated almost exclusively on the technical issue of more or less *impasto*, a strategy which served to disguise the real issue which was Sickert's distaste for the more avant-garde elements which Gilman was gathering together in the London Group, specifically Lewis and Jacob Epstein (1880-1959).

While the previous chapter focusses on the distracting debate over quality of surface expressed in the Neo-Realists' quarrel with Sickert, chapter seven is concerned with the criticisms of Neo-Realism presented by Hulme who specifically targeted the rejection of abstract forms in art implied by Ginner's derogation of Cubism. He argued that, contrary to Ginner's assertion, such art

did not rely on 'formulae' based on a misconception of the work of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), but indicated the beginning of a new way of looking at the world. He perceived the existence of two entirely different types of art, abstract or 'geometrical' and realistic or 'vital' and argued that the emergence of the former in contemporary art signalled the beginning of a corresponding attitude to the world and the final break-up of attitudes which had prevailed since the Renaissance.<sup>23</sup> It will be suggested that Hulme's criticisms exerted a powerful influence on the Neo-Realists whose art underwent a decisive reconstruction as a result. This process was assisted by the influence of the Vorticists and others with whom the Neo-Realists associated in the London Group and it will be suggested that, as President of the group, Gilman's apprehension of the validity of abstract forms was already influencing his decision during 1913 to encourage the involvement of these artists. This chapter will trace the development of Gilman's art onwards of 1914 to take account of the bold simplification of form which was characteristic of such art. Hulme criticised the work of Gilman and Ginner for relying too much on random conjunctions and 'found' compositions and he advocated a much more interventionist approach to the process of picture making.<sup>24</sup> Under his influence, Gilman pared his compositions of incidental detail to achieve a tighter, much more controlled image while forms were rigorously simplified.

Chapter eight will focus on attempts by Gilman and Ginner to promote Neo-Realist theory. During late 1914 or early 1915 they established the Cumberland Market Group which evidently represented an attempt to recruit disciples and supporters within the parameters of a rather more intimate society than that afforded by the London Group. Their involvement with Rutter and Read in the publication of the illustrated quarterly Art and Letters was similarly motivated. The publication in this journal of Ginner's article Modern Painting and Teaching during 1917 was significant for it provided documentation of the development of Neo-Realism to take account of the influence of abstract and semi-abstract art on an intrinsically Realist aesthetic; a combination which was to prove extremely fruitful. It will be suggested that, as a member of the Leeds Arts Club with both Gilman and Ginner, Read had participated in the evolution of Neo-Realist theory from its beginnings and, as Thistlewood has suggested, his own philosophy was conditioned by the dialectic between Realism and abstraction which it proposed.<sup>25</sup> Through his mediation the theory continued to exert an influence on British art during the 1930s and '40s.<sup>26</sup> This chapter will pursue the implications of the prescription for the future development of British art laid down in Modern Painting and Teaching. It will be suggested that the Group X exhibition, held during 1920, evidenced a modification or rejection of abstract principles by certain artists which concurred with Neo-Realist theory and practice and was, in some cases, directly influenced by it. Ginner's own contributions represented a practical application of the principles laid down in his 1917 article and it will be suggested that during this period the work of Edward Wadsworth (1889-1949), particularly his series of Black

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<sup>23</sup> T. Hulme (1914b).

<sup>24</sup> T. Hulme (1914c), p.661.

<sup>25</sup> D. Thistlewood (1979), p.340.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Country landscapes, represented an interest in elements of design combined with an attachment to Realism which presented a complete vindication of Neo-Realist theory in the sense that these works might almost be said to have been executed to Ginner's specifications. In Modern Painting and Teaching he had proposed the "great industrial towns of the north" with their "monumental clusters of houses and factories" as the perfect vehicle for the exploration of the strong sense of design which he now advocated.<sup>27</sup> Wadsworth's portrayals of the slag-heaps and smoking factory chimneys of the Black Country conformed to this prescription, combining as they did an attention to elements of design and pattern-making within a framework of Realism in the sense that they portrayed a recognisable location; what Ginner defined as "the interest of the place."<sup>28</sup>

In the process of unfolding and interpreting the theory of Neo-Realism, previously unknown or unutilised material will be introduced. This includes Ginner's review of the *Artistes Indépendants* and New English Art Club (NEAC) exhibitions of 1911, published in The Art News, and his article The New Movements in Painting published in The Link during 1924.<sup>29</sup> Extracts from unpublished letters relating to the quarrel between Gilman and Sickert over teaching at the Westminster Technical Institute will also be quoted.<sup>30</sup> Other relevant material includes letters from Gilman and Ginner in the Pissarro Archive at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and a letter which Ginner wrote to the Curator of Manchester City Art Gallery during 1925. In addition, a previously unknown reproduction of the lost poster, Piccadilly Circus [4], which Ginner executed for the Cabaret Theatre Club commission is included among the illustrations and discussed in the text.

It is the aim of this thesis to demonstrate the evolution of Neo-Realism from the reactionary statement contained in the published manifesto of 1914 to a prescription for the future development of British art which represented an enlightened compromise between an intrinsic commitment to Realism and a perception of the positive aspects of abstract and semi-abstract art. In this process it is hoped that Gilman and Ginner will emerge not, according to received opinion, as minor figures within a supremacist hierarchy, but as key personalities in the development of British art at a crucial moment in its history.

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<sup>27</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.20.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> C. Ginner (1911a), (1911b) and (1924). J. Bullen (1988), pp.10, 36 (n.21) attributes to Ginner a review in The Art News, vol.1 (21 April 1910), p.194 entitled "Note on the International Society". Signed 'Neo-Impressionist', it was in fact one of a series of regular articles contributed to the journal by Gore.

<sup>30</sup> Letters from J. B. Manson (1879-1945) to Pissarro held by the Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and a letter from Lewis to Rutter in the Tate Gallery Archive, London.

## CHAPTER ONE

" ... The great tradition of Realism."<sup>1</sup>

As the prefix 'Neo' suggests, Gilman and Ginner hoped to convince their audience that they had something new to offer, yet one of the most consistent and immediately arresting features of Neo-Realism is its clear debt to French nineteenth-century Realist theory. The writings of, among others, Charles Baudelaire (1821-67), Gustave Courbet (1819-77) and Théophile Thoré (1807-69) are palpably the source for a number of the statements made in the text of Neo-Realism. While Ginner's intention was to "develop the ideals that must guide Neo-Realism, the New Realism", it is important to realise that his notion of Realism was predicated upon and defined by the term in its French context.<sup>2</sup> This was consistent with Ginner's French background and the fact that nineteenth-century Realist theory had helped to shape what had been the most influential development in French art in recent history, Impressionism, which Ginner described as "the latest and most important realistic movement".<sup>3</sup> Its French context would not have been lost on those who read Neo-Realism for British art was, as indeed the art of this period continues to be, defined very much in terms of previous developments in French art. The interest in so-called 'Post-Impressionism' following Fry's two 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions in 1910 and 1912 rehearsed a pattern of British artists looking to the work of the French which was already familiar. Paris was regarded as the art capital of Europe and a large proportion of the generation of British artists born during the 1850s and '60s had studied there. This was reflected in the fact that when the formation of a progressive exhibiting society was mooted in London during the 1880s, proposed titles included the 'Society of Anglo-French Painters'.<sup>4</sup> In the event it was christened the New English Art Club (NEAC) and of the 44 artists who joined during 1886, at least 25 had been students in Paris, chiefly at the *Académie Julian* or the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*.

Despite Neo-Realism's clear debt to nineteenth-century Realist theory, Ginner attempted early on in the text to establish a context for the concept of Realism stretching back to the "early Egyptians".<sup>5</sup> The treatise opened with the words:

All great painters by direct intercourse with Nature have extracted from her facts which others have not observed before, and interpreted them by methods which are personal and expressive of themselves-this is the great tradition of Realism.<sup>6</sup>

As a definition of Realism this is interesting, if somewhat idiosyncratic. The key phrases in Ginner's delimitation of the term are "direct intercourse with nature" and "facts which others have not

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.272.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> A. Thornton (1935), p.3.

<sup>5</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

observed before ... interpreted by methods ... personal and expressive of themselves." According to Ginner, the work of all 'great painters' resulted from continued observation of nature, as opposed, one must assume, to the imagination or the work of other artists. Furthermore, the chief characteristic of such art was originality. Rather audaciously, Ginner equated "All great painters" with "the great tradition of Realism", implying that he would describe all art of which he approved, and only art of which he approved, as Realist. It immediately becomes clear that Ginner wished to replace a narrow art historical definition of the term with the concept of Realism as a recurring theme throughout the history of art and a necessary precondition in the creation of 'great' art.

One is forcibly reminded of a definition of the term 'Impressionism' proposed by Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942) in a lecture to the Art-Workers Guild in 1891:

Impressionism is not a new thing ... Impressionism in art has always existed from the time when Phidias sculptured (sic) the Parthenon frieze and Giotto and Donatello created saints and madonnas and Tintoret (sic) and Veronese decorated Venetian palaces and Velasquez painted poems from crinolines and dwarfs and later when Reynolds and Gainsborough dignified their sitters till they became goddesses. So Impressionism is of no country and of no period; it has been from the beginning.<sup>7</sup>

Like Steer, Ginner perceived the typical features of a localised art historical movement or group as recurring throughout the history of art. A list of artists who apparently conformed to Ginner's Realist model reinforces such a view. Vague references to the "early Egyptians" and the "early Greeks" disposed of the earliest period while each succeeding century from the fourteenth to the present was represented by at least one artist whose work Ginner felt justified in describing as Realist. A precedent did exist for Ginner's definition of Realism in a book which had recently been published on the work of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779) by Herbert Furst who took a similarly comprehensive historical line in his use of the term:

It is perhaps inexact to speak of Realism as a modern conception of Art, when in fact it is very much older. Giotto was a Realist; Carpaccio, Van Eyck, Holbein, Pieter Peasant Brueghel and many others were Realists - Realism being a mental attitude found in all ages...<sup>8</sup>

Ginner's own list of 'Realists' included Pieter Bruegel (c.1528/30-69), Cézanne, Chardin, Courbet, Jan Van Eyck, Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-94), El Greco (1541-1614), Vincent Van Gogh (1853-90), the Le Nain brothers, François Millet (1814-75) and Rembrandt. The French Impressionists were included along with the "early French Primitives of the Ecole d'Avignon".<sup>9</sup> From an extremely

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<sup>7</sup> Reprinted in D. S. MacColl (1945a), pp.177-8.

<sup>8</sup> H. Furst (1911), p.95.

<sup>9</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271. Between 1305-77 Avignon was the seat of the papal court and many artists gathered there including Simone Martini (c.1284-1344) who was employed to decorate the magnificent papal palace. A school of painting combining Italian and northern influences developed at Avignon during the fifteenth century and Ginner would have been familiar with two examples of work by the School of Avignon in the collection of the Louvre: The Man of Sorrows Standing in the Tomb, with St. Agriculus Presenting A Donor, known as 'The Retable of Boulbon', 1457 which was presented to the Louvre in 1904 [5], and Three Prophets which had been in the collection since 1799. Ginner specifically referred to the 'Pietà' of the Ecole d'Avignon by which he meant The

eclectic list Ginner evidently felt able to assemble an apparently coherent consensus approach to the process of picture-making. Only two of the named artists in this list, Courbet and Millet, strictly belonged to the French nineteenth-century Realist movement while Cézanne, Van Gogh and the Impressionists followed and were influenced by it. The remaining artists evidenced Ginner's historical approach to a definition of the term Realism and it is significant that of the five paintings which Ginner cited as key Realist works, none belonged to the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

While Ginner's historicist approach to defining Realism apparently contradicts the notion that Neo-Realism was indebted to French nineteenth-century Realist theory, in fact a precedent for this perspective did exist in the writings of nineteenth-century Realist critics and theorists. Several of the artists in Ginner's list of 'Realists' were advanced as precursors of, or exemplars for, the movement in a number of Realist texts. Jules Antoine Castagnary (1830-88) who, in 1863, coined the term 'naturalist' to distinguish the new generation of young painters from the older Realists, gave the term a historical context.<sup>11</sup> He argued that 'naturalism' was not a new tendency, being evident in the work of all artists who took "the interpretation of surrounding life as the immediate subject of painting".<sup>12</sup> Castagnary included the Van Eyck brothers, Jan and Hubert (1366/70-1426) in his list of 'naturalists', specifying the so-called 'Ghent Altarpiece', The Adoration of the Lamb, 1432 (Ghent, Church of S. Bavon). According to Castagnary, the Van Eycks, "under the pretext of a religious legend, painted the people of their times and surrounded them with rural vistas borrowed from the soil of Flanders".<sup>13</sup> In other words, although their theme was biblical, the Van Eycks sought to give it contemporary and, particularly, local significance. The remaining artists whom Castagnary chose to illustrate his argument differ from Ginner's list but he was making precisely the same point; that Realists or 'naturalists' went directly to nature for their inspiration, as opposed to consulting the work of other artists. In this context Castagnary chose the work of Cimabue (c.1240-1302?) as an example of the grafting of a more naturalistic manner onto the prevailing Byzantine tradition, noting that he left behind "... the traditional cartoons of his predecessors, [and] took it into his head to have a living person pose before his easel ..." <sup>14</sup>

A growth in artistic revivals which emerged during the middle years of the nineteenth century was very much part of this search for the precursors of Realism. It was made possible largely, as

Lamentation of Christ, with a Donor, known as 'The Pietà of Villeneuve-les-Avignons', c.1455 which was purchased by *Les Amis du Louvre* in 1915. The painting is now attributed to Enguerrand Quarton (active 1444-66).

<sup>10</sup> They were, in the order in which Ginner listed them: Quarton's Pietà, Jan van Eyck's Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami, 1434 (London, National Gallery), Ghirlandaio's Portrait of an Old Man with a Young Boy, c.1488 (Paris, Louvre), Bruegel's Blind Leading the Blind, 1568 (Naples, Gallerie Nazionale di Capodimonte) and Louis Le Nain's Repas du Paysans, 1642 (Paris, Louvre).

<sup>11</sup> J. Castagnary, "Salon de 1863", originally published in Le Nord, Brussels, 1863. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), p.63.

<sup>12</sup> J. Castagnary, "Salon de 1868", originally published in Le Siècle. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), p.66.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.67.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Meltzoff has pointed out, by the renewed interest in themes of contemporary, especially working class, life engendered by Realism. Comparing Courbet's After Dinner at Ornans, 1849 (Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts) with Louis Le Nain's Repas du Paysans, Meltzoff suggested that: "The appearance of a new style permitted the Le Nains to be seen with new eyes. The revival of the Le Nains began when they were chosen as the ancestors of a favoured modern school."<sup>15</sup> The 1848 Revolution and the events which led up to it meant that the political and social climate of France was peculiarly suited to such a revival, given that the art of the Le Nains reflected the life of the peasantry. Writing in 1860, the Realist critic Champfleury (1821-89) summed up the appeal which their work held for him:

They liked the poor, preferred to paint them rather than the powerful, had the aspirations of a La Bruyère for the fields, were not afraid of the baseness of their subject matter, found men in breeches more interesting than courtiers in lace, obeyed their own internal feelings, fled academic teaching in order to put their own sensations better on canvas ...<sup>16</sup>

Meltzoff summarised this as "... an explicit sociological esthetic based on the literal truth and a preference for the lower classes."<sup>17</sup> Chardin's preference for humble interiors and the unpretentious items he chose as still-life subjects placed his work in the same category; indeed it was the subject of a similar revival. Chardin also figured in Ginner's list of 'Realists' and Conisbee has chronicled the retrieval of this artist's work and reputation from the virtual obscurity into which it had fallen during the sixty-five or so years between his death in 1779 and the rediscovery of his work in the mid-1840s.<sup>18</sup> Thoré was one of the most indefatigable revivalists of neglected and forgotten art and artists during the nineteenth century, rescuing the work of Vermeer from total obscurity while Champfleury was largely responsible for a renewed taste for the work of the Le Nains.<sup>19</sup> Two other artists on Ginner's list of 'Realists', Bruegel and El Greco, were also subject to revived interest and reappraisal during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Bruegel, his preoccupation with scenes from peasant life was no doubt a major factor in this process.

Attempts to define all but the most localised art historical groups or movements are fraught with difficulties and the central problem with regard to Realism is one of delimitation: which artists or works of art one chooses to rule out and which to rule in, bearing in mind that, used in its broadest sense, the term, as Ginner suggests, may be applied to a very wide range of artists throughout the history of art. Realism may be used to describe a set of principles which were the exclusive property of a specific group of artists working in France during the nineteenth century. Or, as Ginner did, the term may be given a broader context and used to describe the work of a much wider range of artists who are more generally categorised otherwise. Thus Edgar Degas (1834-1917), frequently described

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<sup>15</sup> S. Meltzoff (1942), p.264.

<sup>16</sup> Champfleury, Les peintres de la réalité sous Louis XIII. Paris, 1862. Trans. S. Meltzoff (1942), pp. 272-3.

<sup>17</sup> S. Meltzoff (1942), p.273.

<sup>18</sup> P. Conisbee (1986), p.9.

<sup>19</sup> This aspect of Realism is discussed in S. Meltzoff (1942).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.259.

as an Impressionist, is also classified as a Realist by virtue of his preoccupation with subjects from contemporary life and by his innovative attempts to approach a more realistic image by defying, in some degree, the limitations imposed by canvas. In paintings such as Carriage at the Races, c.1877-80 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) Degas severed his composition at unexpected junctures in order to preserve the illusion that the spectator was being presented with an authentic 'slice of life'. Degas, like the other Impressionists, differed from Realists of Courbet's generation in his treatment of the subject from a technical point of view, rejecting the more conventional approach of the mid-nineteenth century Realists who, in spite of their repudiation of the content of much of the work exhibited at the annual Salons - idealised female nudes, scenes from classical mythology and so forth - were tied to the technical means by which such works were produced. The Impressionists' discovery that the shadows cast by objects, far from being uniformly black, grey or brown, were actually composed of reflected surrounding colour and the Neo-Impressionists' scientific investigation and practical application of colour theory were all attempts to approach reality, to depict nature as truthfully as possible. The question is not how nearly did these artists succeed in attaining their goal, bearing in mind that any such judgement must be purely subjective, but to what extent was this, in fact, their aim.

Bezucha suggests that it is more useful to regard Realism as an artistic tradition rather than a school of art, pointing out that as early as 1855 Champfleury was expressing both his dislike of schools and his horror of the "pedantic terminology" implied by the term Realism.<sup>21</sup> In the same year Courbet, possibly with the assistance of Champfleury, published his so-called Realist Manifesto in which he complained that the title Realist had been 'imposed' upon him and that it did not give "the right idea of things".<sup>22</sup> The following year another art critic, Edmond Duranty (1833-80), wrote: "Realism is the opposite of a school, to speak of a 'school' of realism is nonsense; realism is a frank and total expression of an individuality that attacks precisely the conventions and imitation of any kind of school."<sup>23</sup> The point, as Weisberg suggests, is that Realism did not imply any stylistic consensus which is precisely what makes Realism so difficult to pin down for it has much more to do with fundamental questions concerning the nature and purpose of art, particularly with regard to subject matter, than with purely technical issues.<sup>24</sup> Adherence to Realist principles was by no means limiting; on the contrary, it offered artists a very wide remit indeed. Compare, for example, the work of Alphonse Legros (1837-1911) and Claude Monet (1840-1926) who, at their most typical, apparently have little or nothing in common stylistically yet both may be seen to conform in some degree to a broad definition of Realism.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to George Sand (1804-76) published in l'Artiste (2 September 1855). Trans. R. Bezucha, "Being Realistic about Realism", essay included in G. Weisberg (1982), p.1.

<sup>22</sup> G. Courbet, Introduction to catalogue of Exhibition et vente de 40 Tableaux et 4 dessins de M. Gustave Courbet, avenue Montaigne, held at 7 Champs-Élysées, Paris, 1855, unpaginated. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), pp.33-4.

<sup>23</sup> E. Duranty, "Réalisme", Réalisme, no. 1 (15 November 1856), p.1. Trans. G. Weisberg, "The Realist Tradition: Critical Theory and the Evolution of Social Themes", Cleveland Museum of Art, The Realist Tradition. French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900. Cleveland, 1980, p.1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The term Realism gained currency in France during the 1840s to describe recent developments not only in the visual arts but in the field of literature as well. Taken at face value the term connotes a certain degree of fidelity to nature in the desire to make an accurate visual record of appearances; a concern manifest in Ginner's rejection of abstract art and his strenuous advocacy of direct contact between the artist and nature which finds expression throughout the text of Neo-Realism. As Nochlin points out, however, the pursuit of verisimilitude alone would not differentiate the French nineteenth-century Realist from such predecessors as Jan Van Eyck, Michelangelo da Caravaggio (1571-1610) or Velazquez.<sup>25</sup> Nor would such an interpretation of Realism serve to distinguish the work of one of its leading exponents, Courbet, from that of a contemporary such as Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) whose work was severely criticised by Thoré.<sup>26</sup> Gérôme specialised in detailed, highly finished historical scenes and it is chiefly this preoccupation with history which sets him apart from the Realists for they were unequivocally concerned to portray contemporary life. In 1855 Courbet wrote: "To be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my epoch, according to my own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well; in short to create living art - this is my goal."<sup>27</sup> Six years later he made the point more forcefully:

An epoch can only be reproduced by its own artists, I mean by the artists who lived in it. I hold the artists of one century basically incapable of reproducing the aspect of a past or future century - in other words, of painting the past or the future.<sup>28</sup>

It was a point which Baudelaire made as early as 1846 when he called for an art which would depict the "heroism of modern life". Referring to the "epic side of contemporary life", Baudelaire observed:

... since all centuries and all peoples have had their own form of beauty, so inevitably we have ours (...) the life of our city [i.e., Paris] is rich in poetic and marvellous subjects. We are enveloped and steeped as though in an atmosphere of the marvellous ...<sup>29</sup>

Following these dicta, Realists concentrated on the portrayal of contemporary life, whether it was Courbet's views of the countryside and its people in and around his native Ornans, the Parisian café interiors depicted by Edouard Manet (1832-83) or Millet's peasant workers. A commitment to the portrayal of contemporary life was also a central tenet of Neo-Realism: "Each age has its landscape, its atmosphere, its cities, its people. Realism, loving Life, loving its Age, interprets its Epoch ..." <sup>30</sup> The key use of the word 'Epoch' in this context suggests that Ginner's source was Courbet's Realist Manifesto. It is interesting to note that Ginner's addition of a codicil stressing the importance of

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<sup>25</sup> L. Nochlin (1971), p.20.

<sup>26</sup> T. Thoré, "Salon de 1861", originally published in Le Temps. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), pp.12-14. Thoré was critical of Gérôme's Phryne Before the Areopagus, 1861 (Hamburg, Kunsthalle) [6], a scene set in ancient Greece, because he believed its sentiment to be inappropriate to the age portrayed, an obvious pitfall awaiting the artist who attempted to move outside his or her own epoch.

<sup>27</sup> G. Courbet, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> G. Courbet, letter to the Courrier du Dimanche (25 December 1861). Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), pp.34-6.

<sup>29</sup> C. Baudelaire, The Salon of 1846. Trans. J. Mayne (1965), pp.117, 119.

<sup>30</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

personal interpretation also derived from Courbet's published writings. Having posited the record of contemporary life as the purpose of art, Ginner maintained that each artist must interpret what they saw "according to the individual temperament".<sup>31</sup> Making a more personal rather than overtly didactic statement, Courbet wrote that he wished to "translate" his epoch according to his "own estimation".<sup>32</sup>

The portrayal of contemporary life was clearly one of the chief criteria whereby Ginner identified artists as Realists and caused him to denigrate the work of Adolphe William Bouguereau (1825-1905) and Gérôme whose interest in the customs of another age amounted, in Ginner's opinion, to a "shrinking from the Life around them".<sup>33</sup> Ginner evidently subscribed to the avant-gardist view of their work which was already current in 1861 when Thoré criticised Gérôme's portrayal of a scene set in ancient Greece. Almost exact contemporaries, Bouguereau and Gérôme fall into the category of *pompier* artists whom Burolet describes as having been ostracised by "the received opinion of the period between the two world wars" which led to "... the separation of the painters who flourished in the years between 1850 and 1914 into two distinct camps: the "noble" Impressionists and the "villainous" official painters, guilty of the sin of academism".<sup>34</sup> Both Bouguereau and Gérôme concentrated on history painting and genre scenes executed with a high degree of finish. It is clear that a shift in Bouguereau's choice of subject matter from history painting to genre subjects which took place around 1863 was prompted by a change in taste on the part of the collectors who bought his work.<sup>35</sup> These did not, however, take the form of depictions of contemporary life. Apart from Indigent Family, 1865 (private collection) [7] which evidently represented some sort of attempt to chronicle the sufferings of the urban poor, Bouguereau's genre subjects comprised idealised bucolic scenes of peasants, frequently attired not in contemporary dress, but in a kind of timeless peasant garb.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that even Indigent Family indulges in physical idealisation and that Bouguereau has replaced the buildings which actually enclose the Church of the Madeleine in Paris under which the family shelter with the Palace of the Campidoglio Plaza in Rome, presumably in order to ennoble his subject.<sup>37</sup> While Bouguereau's dependence on Renaissance models was paramount, Gérôme was more directly interested in antiquity, both stylistically and as a source of subject matter. Ackerman has described Gérôme's own portrayal of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> G. Courbet, Introduction to catalogue of Exhibition et vente de 40 Tableaux et 4 dessins de M. Gustave Courbet, avenue Montaigne, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>34</sup> T. Burolet, "Pompier Art". Essay included in Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1984), p.31.

<sup>35</sup> L. d'Argencourt, "Bouguereau and the Art Market in France". Essay included in Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1984), p.100. In an interview with L'Eclair published on 9 May 1891, Bouguereau said: "Here's my *Angel of Death*. Opposite is my second painting *Dante's Hell*. As you can see, they are different from the paintings I do these days ... If I had continued to paint similar works, it is probable that, like these, I would still own them. What do you expect, you have to follow public taste, and the public only buys what it likes. That's why, with time, I changed my way of painting ..."

<sup>36</sup> R. Isaacson (1975), p.77.

<sup>37</sup> Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1984), cat.37.

antiquity as "...witty, erotic, frivolous, precious and trivial: instead of ancient history pictures, Gérôme painted ancient genre scenes".<sup>38</sup> Into this category come works such as The Cockfight, 1846 (Paris, Louvre), while apparently more elevated themes such as Phyrne Before the Areopagus and King Candoules, 1859 (Puerto Rico, Museo de Arte de Ponce) also indulged Gérôme's taste for the erotic. Gérôme was the acknowledged leader of a small group of artists working in Paris between 1847 and 1863 known as the *Néo-Grecs* who specialised in painting genre scenes in Greek and Roman settings.<sup>39</sup>

In the past twenty years, attempts have been made to rehabilitate the reputations of both Bouguereau and Gérôme after a long period of neglect.<sup>40</sup> These tend to take the form of attempts to reconcile their work with definitions of Realism, yet it is difficult to accept Ackerman's unsupported claim that Gérôme was a leading Realist when confronted with evidence of his vilification by Realist critics such as Thoré.<sup>41</sup> Arguing for the designation of Gérôme's history paintings as Realist art, Ackerman observed: "It is a curious and poorly based prejudice of 20th century critics to bestow the title of "realism" only upon pictures concerned with that which the artist could see in his "everyday life".<sup>42</sup> Of course, this is not simply a twentieth-century prejudice as Thoré's criticism of Gérôme in 1861 makes clear. Rather it was a fundamental tenet of nineteenth-century Realist art and theory. Ackerman has argued that "scientifically" or "archaeologically" accurate reconstructions of the past by artists like Gérôme were appreciated by a scientifically-minded audience which attended Realist plays and read Realist novels.<sup>43</sup> In 1912 Sickert identified the requirement that artists portray modern life as a preoccupation of the contemporary "advanced critic" who had decreed that "you may not paint a picture of a scene that is supposed to take place at any period but that in which the painter lives". He described this as "a most disputable doctrine [which] would sweep off the face of the earth most of the masterpieces of the world".<sup>44</sup>

What is at stake here is one of the key principles in defining Realism, the stipulation codified by Baudelaire that Realist art must represent contemporary life. We can identify many examples of work by artists generally accepted as Realists which depart from this criterion. Millet, for example, painted a number of works depicting scenes from the Bible and mythology. But these tend, on the whole, to be the exception rather than the rule. In 1868 Gérôme painted The Death of Marshall Ney (Sheffield City Art Gallery) [8], based on Francisco Goya's (1746-1828) Third of May 1808, 1814 (Madrid, Prado) which was also the model for Manet's Execution of Emperor Maximillian, 1867

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<sup>38</sup> G. Ackerman (1972), p.9.

<sup>39</sup> G. Ackerman, The Neo-Grecs; A Chink in the Wall of Neoclassicism. Essay included in J. Hargrove (1990), p.168.

<sup>40</sup> G. Ackerman (1986) and Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1984).

<sup>41</sup> G. Ackerman (1972), p.13. "During the second half of the [nineteenth] century the persistent major movement was Realism, and Gérôme was a leader among the realists". Ackerman revised this opinion in his 1986 study of Gérôme on the basis of documentary evidence that Gérôme himself rejected the designation Realist. (G. Ackerman (1986), pp.58-9.)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> W. Sickert (1912), p.492.

(Mannheim, Städtliche Kunsthalle). Ackerman claims that Gérôme intended the painting to serve as a criticism of Manet's work. According to Ackerman, "Manet either did not know or chose to ignore the realist dictum - that it was better to show the moment before or after the deed than the deed itself ..."<sup>45</sup> Gérôme chose the moment immediately after the event but it was nevertheless he who departed from that most important Realist dictum that artists should confine themselves to the depiction of contemporary events. While Manet began work on the first version of the Execution of Emperor Maximilian a matter of weeks after the event, the episode which Gérôme recorded in 1868 had taken place fifty-three years previously. Gérôme's scenes of contemporary life in Egypt and other Near Eastern countries have also been offered in support of the claim that he was a Realist.<sup>46</sup> Detailed, highly finished and frequently characterised by an element of eroticism, these scenes were overwhelmingly ethnographic although it has been pointed out that Gérôme frequently departed from strictly anthropological accuracy in favour of the picturesque.<sup>47</sup>

The question of subject matter is bound up with the issue of contemporaneity, a requirement which naturally precludes historical, mythological, biblical or literary themes. Apart from landscape, still life and portraiture, Realist painters concentrated on depictions of the everyday life around them whether in town or country. There was also a tendency to favour humble subjects or those people or aspects of life which had been marginalised by the culture which created them. So, for instance, we have Manet's portraits of prostitutes, Millet's paintings of gleaners and Courbet's stark portrayal of unremitting labour in The Stonebreakers, 1849 (destroyed). Such themes of poverty and work point to some sort of sociological concern and, indeed, much Realist art dealt with contemporary political issues and events although it should be pointed out that a preoccupation with themes such as peasant labour tends to suggest, in the context of French nineteenth-century Realism, a motivation in radical politics which was, in fact, frequently absent. Weisberg suggests that nineteenth-century French Realists may be divided into three groups: those such as Courbet whose work was regarded by the administration as a threat to the social order; artists such as Jules Breton (1827-1906) who, although they tackled social themes, were never regarded as subversive; and those such as Alexandre Antigna (1817-78) and Isidore Pils (1813-75) who "painted official propaganda and, in the process, formulated an official realism palatable to the bourgeoisie and the government".<sup>48</sup> Weisberg concludes that Realist art, while not necessarily politically radical, did imply a degree of social consciousness.

There is no evidence that the work of Gilman and Ginner was politically motivated and certainly no such overt allusions occur in the text of Neo-Realism. Yet there is a sense in which this emphasis on contemporaneity is inseparable from the political context of Realism. By recording and, in the process, commenting upon the events and conditions of contemporary society, Realists

<sup>45</sup> G. Ackerman (1972), cat.21.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>47</sup> R. Ettinghausen, Jean-Léon Gérôme as a Painter of Near Eastern Life. Essay included in G. Ackerman (1972), p.25.

<sup>48</sup> G. Weisberg, "The Realist Tradition: Critical Theory and the Evolution of Social Themes". Essay included in Cleveland Museum of Art (1980), pp.13-14.

sought to make art less exclusive: in other words to democratise art. Weisberg notes that Gabriel Laviron and Bruno Galbacio, in a review of the *Salon* of 1833, called for an art accessible to everyone which could only be achieved if artists avoided the abstruseness of allegorical and literary allusion in favour of recording the contemporary visible world.<sup>49</sup> Laviron advocated the development of a national art through the careful recording of regional characteristics.<sup>50</sup> Much Realist art recorded peasant culture and customs and as such represented an attempt to capture a way of life which was already beginning to disappear.<sup>51</sup> Such art may be regarded on the one hand as a concession to the requirement of an art for the people, and on the other as a species of antiquarianism. It was with the latter function that Neo-Realism was primarily concerned for Ginner clearly regarded socio-historical documentation as a primary function of art: "Neo-Realism, based on its tradition of Realism, ... must interpret that which, to us who are of this earth, ought to lie nearest our hearts, i.e., Life in all its effects, moods and developments."<sup>52</sup> The passage previously quoted which alluded to art's function to interpret its 'Epoch' followed and Ginner went on to observe: "Realism is thus not only a present intimate revelation of its own time, but becomes a document for future ages. It attaches itself to history".<sup>53</sup> Ginner therefore makes his point quite unequivocally and his use of the phrase: "Neo-Realism, based on its tradition of Realism", clearly points to his source in nineteenth-century Realist theory.

An important aspect of nineteenth-century French Realism was its rejection of idealism, one of the basic ingredients, if not the linchpin, of much so-called 'academic' art. The hierarchy of the genres codified in 1667 by André Félibien (1619-95), Secretary of the French *Académie*, remained largely intact well into the nineteenth century as history painting continued to be generally regarded as the highest branch of art. In 1857 Achille Fould, Louis Napoleon's Minister of State, addressed the prize-winning artists of the *Salon*, exhorting them to seek their subjects in "Poetry, morality, religion, history - those divine well-springs where the masters found inspiration ..." <sup>54</sup> Fould was critical of the Realists' choice of subject matter and warned his audience that art was:

...close to being lost when, abandoning the high and elevated regions of the beautiful and traditional paths of the great masters to follow the teachings of the new school of realism, it no longer seeks for anything but a servile imitation of the least poetic and least elevated aspects of nature ...<sup>55</sup>

Among the medal winners at the *Salon* in 1857 were Bouguereau and Paul Baudry (1828-86). Both artists showed works which conformed to Fould's stipulation regarding subject matter. Bouguereau

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1. (G. Laviron and B. Galbacio, Le Salon de 1863. Paris, 1833). Y. Weisberg and G. Weisberg (1984), p.1, observe that this review laid down many of the points later taken up by other critics such as Thoré and Castagnary to form the theoretical basis of Realism.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> L. Nochlin (1971), p.115.

<sup>52</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> A. Fould, Address to the prizewinners of the 1857 *Salon*, Le Moniteur Universel (16-17 August 1857), p.898. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), pp.3-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

received his medal for The Return of Tobias, 1856 (Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts), a scene from the apocryphal Old Testament text, while Baudry was honoured for Venus et l'Amour, exh.1857 (Paris, Louvre), inspired by the Fables of Jean de La Fontaine (1621-95). The Realists' insistence on contemporaneity and their preference for treating the humbler and more ordinary aspects of life were not compatible with the demand for apparently more elevated subjects and the two tendencies continued to compete throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Courbet's response to the pre-eminence of history painting in the hierarchy of genres was to treat contemporary themes relating to the daily lives of 'the people' on a scale hitherto considered appropriate only to historical subjects, thereby raising them to the level of history painting.<sup>56</sup> A Burial at Ornans, 1850 (Paris, Louvre) [9] is an enormous canvas with life-size figures, each one a portrait of an inhabitant of Ornans. The painting was given a mixed reception when it was exhibited at the *Salon* in 1850, largely owing to the significance accorded to the figures by the large scale and detail of the canvas, an issue addressed by Champfleury in 1855:

... the aristocracy is infuriated to see so many feet of canvas devoted to common people; only sovereigns have the right to be painted full size, with their decorations, their embroideries, and their official faces. What! A man of Ornans, a peasant lying in his coffin, has the temerity to gather a large crowd at his burial - farmers, low-class people ...<sup>57</sup>

Courbet's rejection of idealism was expressed in his description of Realism as "... la négation de l'idéal ..." <sup>58</sup> For Courbet and other Realists of his generation, the everyday facts of contemporary life could provide sufficient material for artistic expression and any attempt to embellish such material was deemed inappropriate. As Nochlin writes:

Courbet, in the Burial at Ornans has expressed the progressive spirit of his time by representing an event in the lives of "le peuple" in a style which itself is a metaphor of the specificity, the concreteness and the randomness of ordinary life, on a scale hitherto reserved for the representation of elevated or distant events in a suitably idealised style. In this fact lies the revolutionary nature of the painting, and of realism itself.<sup>59</sup>

There is nothing within the text of Neo-Realism which can be interpreted as advocating a specific type of subject matter. On the contrary, Ginner states that artists must extract from their 'Epoch' "all it contains of great or of weak, of beautiful or of sordid, according to the individual temperament".<sup>60</sup> Yet there is a specific agenda encoded here for Ginner's very insistence on contemporaneity precluded, to some extent, the type of subject matter most susceptible to an idealising treatment; scenes from history, mythology, literature and, of course, biblical themes. The

<sup>56</sup> According to Champfleury, Courbet advertised the canvas as a history painting: "It is simply, as I have seen it printed on posters when Mr. Courbet exhibited his paintings in Besançon and Dijon, the HISTORY PAINTING of a funeral at Ornans." ("L'Enterrement d'Ornans", included in J. Champfleury, Grandes Figures d'Hier et d'aujourd'hui. Paris, 1861. Trans. P. Chu (1977), p.68.)

<sup>57</sup> J. Champfleury, letter to Sand dated September 1855. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), p.39.

<sup>58</sup> Le Précurseur d'Anvers (22 August 1861). Reprinted in P. Courthion (1948), vol.1, p.160.

<sup>59</sup> L. Nochlin (1976), pp.145-6.

<sup>60</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

Neo-Realists' membership of the Camden Town Group, the bulk of whose members resolutely rejected such subjects in favour of contemporary themes, is clearly in keeping with this attitude. And to lay aside the theory for a moment, it is apparent from the actual works produced by both Gilman and Ginner that their work consisted exclusively of themes from contemporary life. In this context another parallel between Neo-Realism and nineteenth-century French Realist theory lies in the revival in the taste for genre painting which resulted from the Realists' preference for less elevated subject matter. This is reflected in Ginner's list of 'Realists', several of whom were genre painters.

Neo-Realism has been described as a "wholesale ransacking of Romantic art theory".<sup>61</sup> It is an assessment which in no way diminishes the extent of Ginner's debt to nineteenth-century French Realist theory for, as Berger pointed out, "the boundaries between romanticism and realism are rather fluid", although taken at face value the two movements would appear to be totally opposed.<sup>62</sup> One could argue that Realists strove to depict life as it really was while Romantics sought to idealise. In this context we might compare two images of revolution: Liberty Leading the People, 1831 (Paris, Louvre) [10] by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) and a lithograph by Honoré Daumier (1808-79) entitled Rue Transnonian le 15 Avril 1834, of 1834 [11]. While the former presents an idealised image of revolution, a heroic vision in which the aspirations of the people are personified in the figure of a bare-breasted woman clutching the tricolour in one hand and a rifle in the other, Daumier's print is a piece of sombre reportage. There is nothing heroic about the dead bodies which litter the floor, the bloodstains, the hiked-up nightshirt of the central figure and the pathetic domestic details of nightcap and striped bolster. Yet there is a sense in which the two images, separated by a period of only three years, may be said to stem from a single purpose for both artists sought to express their feelings about the political situation. While Delacroix chose to speak of the heroism of revolution, Daumier expressed its horrors. Delacroix achieved his effect through an entirely imaginary conception of a non-specific event, or rather the personification of an abstract ideal, while Daumier chose to document an incident in the struggle, a point he emphasised by including the date in the title. Furthermore, his report of the massacre is historically accurate, concurring with the published depositions of survivors.<sup>63</sup> This would indicate that, for Daumier at least, Realism implied a degree of research and close attention to detail; that the recorded facts of the case played an important role in the picture-making process and, far from diminishing, could actually be used to heighten the powerful emotional drama of the image.

An emphasis on the portrayal of contemporary life was a common feature of both Realist and Romantic art theory. Boas has demonstrated that a preoccupation with contemporaneity existed within the Romantic movement, its importance to both Romantics and Realists being articulated in

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<sup>61</sup> S. Watney (1980), p.120.

<sup>62</sup> K. Berger (1943), p.34.

<sup>63</sup> L. Nochlin (1971), p.255.

the words of Daumier: "il faut être de son temps".<sup>64</sup> He points out that this injunction formed the burden of Preface des études français et étrangères by Emile Deschamps, spokesman of the Romantic movement.<sup>65</sup> The notion of the uniqueness of each historical epoch in terms of its dominant philosophy as well as superficial details of costume and manners did exist in pre-Romantic thought but it was in the nineteenth century that the depiction of one's own epoch came to be regarded as a positive step.<sup>66</sup> While Romantic artists chose to emphasise their otherness not only by representing contemporary life but also by rebelling against the Neo-Classicism of artists such as Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) in choosing Christian rather than Greek or Roman history, Realist artists were more or less exclusively committed to the portrayal of contemporary themes. In this sense Realism may be seen as a development of the Romantic movement, given that several of its chief theorists, among them Baudelaire and Champfleury, and a number of Realist artists, including Courbet, were associated with Romanticism earlier in their careers. A feature of many Realist texts is the proviso that Realist art ought to reflect the artist's feelings about the images portrayed rather than simply holding up a mirror to nature. Laviron and Galbacio's review of the 1833 *Salon*, which formed the basis of nineteenth-century Realist theory, stressed the view that artists must not simply copy nature, for "... art does not consist simply in fooling the eye, but in rendering the particular character of each thing one wants to represent".<sup>67</sup> In 1866 Emile Zola (1840-1902) wrote: "... I don't care a fig for more or less exact observation if the powerful individuality which brings the picture to life is not there ..."<sup>68</sup> It was Zola who coined the much-quoted phrase: "A work of art is a corner of the universe viewed through a temperament."<sup>69</sup> Although a supporter of Realist artists and generally regarded as himself a Realist writer, Zola was a great admirer of Romantic art and of the work of Delacroix in particular, as was Champfleury.<sup>70</sup> He evidently perceived no inherent contradiction in such a combination of tastes, writing: "I admire the worlds of Delacroix and of Courbet. Faced with this declaration, no one, I believe, can stick me into any one school".<sup>71</sup>

The collusion between Romanticism and Realism can be extended in respect of the fact that personal expression was the keynote of both movements. Duranty defined a Realist as one who "renders sensations that his nature and temperament lead him to feel when he confronts something."<sup>72</sup> Zola's phrase, "a work of art is a corner of the universe viewed through a temperament", is a summary of this ideal. Any attempt to depict the visible world necessarily entails

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<sup>64</sup> G. Boas (1941), p.52. (Found in the frontispiece of Arsène Alexandre's Honoré Daumier, l'Homme et l'oeuvre. Paris, 1888).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> L. Nochlin (1971), p.104.

<sup>67</sup> G. Laviron and B. Galbacio, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> E. Zola, Mon Salon, 1866. Trans. E. Holt (1966), p.386.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.388.

<sup>70</sup> D. Flanary (1980), pp.47-8.

<sup>71</sup> E. Zola, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup> E. Duranty, "Réalisme", Réalisme, no. 1 (15 November 1856), p.1. Trans. G. Weisberg, "The Realist Tradition: Critical Theory and the Evolution of Social Themes". Essay included in Cleveland Museum of Art, (1980), p.1.

some degree of interpretation; the artist's temperament and personality must always intrude in some measure to shape - or distort - the image. Even the constraints of the medium must, as Nochlin points out, intervene to influence decisions on the part of the artist, even the photographer, concerning how in the one case to transfer three-dimensional space and form to a two-dimensional picture plane, in the other in choice of viewpoint, length of exposure and so forth.<sup>73</sup> Inevitably the work of Bouguereau and Gérôme was no more a mere mirror of surface appearance than that of Courbet and, equally inevitably, any judgement regarding which had the greater claim to the title Realist must be purely subjective. It is the belief of at least one recent art historian that it was actually these so-called *pompier* painters who interpreted what they saw as "socially committed artists" while Degas and Lautrec painted women ironing and prostitutes sprawled on beds with an "entomological eye".<sup>74</sup>

The issue remains unresolved and must ultimately devolve largely on questions of personal taste, not to say prejudice. And it was Ginner's prejudice that neither Bouguereau nor Gérôme were Realists according to his own definition of the term.<sup>75</sup> It may be surmised that his objections to their inclusion in the Realist canon were threefold: that they departed from the Realist convention of depicting contemporary life, that they idealised their subject matter and that they plagiarised the work of the Old Masters. Bound up with the latter point was the notion, articulated in Neo-Realism, that art was a matter of personal expression allied to a careful study of nature:

The aim of Neo-Realism is the plastic interpretation of Life through the intimate research into Nature ... The artist who, with his personal ideal, his personal vision of nature and attitude towards life, makes an intimate study of what is round him is bound ... to reveal an interesting work.<sup>76</sup>

In other words, it was Ginner's conviction that to be of value Realism must be tempered by the artist's personality: Realism must not merely record, it must interpret. Ginner's chief objection to what, in the text of Neo-Realism, he described as 'Naturalism' was founded on this belief. He was anxious that Naturalism and Realism should not be confounded in the minds of his readers, describing the former as "a kind of poor relation of Realism".<sup>77</sup> "The Naturalist", according to Ginner, "goes out to [Nature] and copies the superficial aspect of the object before him. He only sees Nature with a dull and common eye, and has nothing to reveal. He has no personal vision, no individual temperament to express, no power of research".<sup>78</sup> Before examining precisely whom Ginner was attacking here, and why, it is necessary to distinguish Naturalism from Realism.

The distinction is not, and never has been, well defined and, as Lacambre has observed, artists and critics during the nineteenth century often used these concepts interchangeably.<sup>79</sup> The problem

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<sup>73</sup> L. Nochlin (1971), pp.14-15.

<sup>74</sup> T. Burollet, "Pompier Art". Essay included in Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1984), p.34.

<sup>75</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.272.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.271.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.271-2.

<sup>79</sup> G. Lacambre, Toward an Emerging Definition of Naturalism in French Nineteenth-Century Painting. Essay included in G. Weisberg (1982), p.229.

frequently reduces itself to a question of semantics. Often when writers discuss Naturalism they mean Realism or its equivalent. Castagnary defined Naturalism, just as Ginner defined Realism, as a tendency which had existed throughout the history of art. As he himself said, he chose to use the term Naturalism in order to emphasise the historical rather than contemporary context of the term Realism.<sup>80</sup> Sloane has observed: "Most of the authors with whom we are dealing left the understanding of their terminology up to the reader, expecting him (sic) to get the sense of it from the context and the pictures to which it was being applied."<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, Sloane himself contributed to the confusion. While Lacambre cites Castagnary as the critic who recognised and defined Naturalism and became its "key spokesman", Sloane observed that Castagnary was unable to follow the change from "realism, which he admired, to the more subjective form of naturalism which succeeded it. He either failed to understand its aims or did not approve of them ..."<sup>82</sup> It is clear that by the term Naturalism, Lacambre and Sloane mean two quite different things.

The problem is also one of chronology. Nochlin states that Castagnary coined the term Naturalism as early as 1863.<sup>83</sup> In fact Duranty used it in 1857 in the final issue of the short-lived journal *Réalisme*, asserting that Realism had died and been replaced by Naturalism.<sup>84</sup> Weisberg characterised the emergence of Naturalism as a split which occurred much later, during the late 1870s, between painters such as François Bonvin (1817-87), Breton and Théodule Ribot (1823-91), who followed the older tenets of Realism, and the younger Impressionists.<sup>85</sup> The latter, Weisberg claims, were influenced by Realist concepts but "divided between the pure landscape painting and colour theory advocated by Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir and the Naturalism espoused by Edgar Degas and Jean François Raffaelli [1850-1924], a painter then regarded as the perfect Naturalist".<sup>86</sup> Weisberg identifies the portrayal of modern life as one of the chief characteristics of Naturalism.<sup>87</sup> It is a view shared by Lacambre but it hardly serves to distinguish Naturalism from Realism. Baudelaire had, after all, advocated contemporaneity as a principle as early as 1846. The transference of Realism, through the eyes of the Impressionists in particular, to a more urban *milieu* did, however, signify a shift in emphasis.

Lacambre locates the fundamental difference between Realism and Naturalism in the rejection by the latter of the "tradition and models of the past", specifically the rejection of the timeless light of the studio in favour of the shifting outdoor light of nature.<sup>88</sup> Certainly a preference for *plein air* painting which characterised the work of the Impressionists marked a decisive break with the past. Yet there is an inherent contradiction here for the attention to detail which characterised the work of

<sup>80</sup> J. Castagnary, *Salon de 1868*. Trans. L. Nochlin (1966), pp.66-8.

<sup>81</sup> J. Sloane (1951), p.74.

<sup>82</sup> G. Lacambre, *op. cit.*, pp.230, 232; *ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>83</sup> L. Nochlin (1966), p.63.

<sup>84</sup> E. Duranty (1857), p.81.

<sup>85</sup> G. Weisberg, "The Realist Tradition. Critical Theory and the Evolution of Social Themes". Essay included in Cleveland Museum of Art (1980), p.188.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.188-9.

<sup>88</sup> G. Lacambre, *op. cit.*, p.231.

Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-84), for example, meant that he preferred, when working outdoors, a steady grey light rather than shifting sunlight. Lacambre also points to the advocacy of "scientific accuracy, photographic verisimilitude and largeness of scale" as further defining and differentiating Naturalism from Realism.<sup>89</sup> The problem of defining Naturalism as opposed to Realism is compounded, and to a large extent predicated upon, the fact that both tendencies and their supporters laid claim to the same primary definition. It may be more accurate to say that both occupied the same moral high ground for there is a degree to which each set of artists and their supporters saw themselves as the torchbearers of that obligation to express rather than merely illustrate which was the claim of Romantics, Realists and Naturalists; and indeed ultimately the linchpin of Fry's interpretation of what he called 'Post-Impressionism'. Zola's aphorism has been used here, as elsewhere, in support of a broad definition or indication of the aims of Realism; but in fact Zola was much more the spokesman of Naturalism than of Realism and, as Boas points out, his aesthetic, in contradistinction to Realism, was essentially individualistic.<sup>90</sup> In Courbet he found a personality, the 'temperament' of the quotation, unlike Proudhon who regarded Courbet as the spokesman of his epoch and for socialism.<sup>91</sup> Thus we have another distinction between Realism and Naturalism; the former spoke for an age and from a political standpoint while the latter expressed the individual. This was essentially a Romantic attitude and, indeed, Castagnary identified Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) as "the vigorous initiator of Naturalism".<sup>92</sup>

Like Realism, Naturalism found its equivalent in other branches of art including literature: both Zola and Castagnary were not only art critics but, as novelists, themselves exponents of Naturalism. Weisberg and Weisberg have defined the difference between Realism and Naturalism in literature:

At first, realism strove for a simple rendition of the truth by recording nature as it actually appeared. As Naturalism emerged (in the writings of Castagnary and Zola) psychological characterization and sociological factors also became significant.<sup>93</sup>

This definition is also applied by both Lacambre and Sloane in a fine art context. Sloane, however, complicates the issue by introducing an alternative terminology, using the terms "objective naturalism" to define what Lacambre, for example, would call Realism and "pure painting" where she would use Naturalism.<sup>94</sup> But he is making a similar point, observing that the former "looked at nature for the sake of looking at it" while the latter "implies a shift in interest, in emphasis, from the object (ie. nature) to the artist".<sup>95</sup> The absence of a time scale in Sloane's analysis does nothing to clarify the situation.

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.233.

<sup>90</sup> G. Boas (1967), p.55.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.55-6.

<sup>92</sup> G. Lacambre, *op. cit.*, p.230. (J. Castagnary, *Les Livres Propos*. Paris, 1864, p.244).

<sup>93</sup> Y. Weisberg and G. Weisberg (1984), p.xi.

<sup>94</sup> J. Sloane (1951), p.75.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

No doubt there was a point in the history of the usage of these terms when the distinction between Realism and Naturalism was clearer, when it could be seen that the exponents of Naturalism were diverging from what was then clearly understood by the term Realism. But it is a distinction which the passage of time and the incursion of later commentators with a combination of semantic perplexities and misconstructions have dimmed and blurred. It seems sensible, while acknowledging the distinctions implied by Naturalism, to regard it as an aspect or development of, rather than a break with, the Realist tradition. The spirit of caution which inhabits the title of Lacambre's essay, Toward an Emerging Definition of Naturalism in French Nineteenth-Century Painting is fully endorsed here.<sup>96</sup>

With the hindsight granted him by his vantage point in 1914 Ginner, was able to perceive the Impressionist movement as a development of the ideals which had guided Realists of Courbet's generation. While acknowledging the technical innovations introduced by the Impressionists, it is clear that he did not regard their work as in any way constituting a break with what he understood to be the fundamental tenets of Realism. Ginner was evidently not familiar with, or refused to recognise, the distinction between Realism and Naturalism drawn by Castagnary during the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed his use of the term Naturalism was, both quantitatively and geographically, an extremely narrow one for he applied it to a comparatively small group of largely British artists working during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the present one. A clue to his usage lies in his observation that "It is in the R.A. that the last embers of this short-lived Naturalism are burning out".<sup>97</sup> This may be taken as a reference to the group of artists, many of them members of the Newlyn School, who, having dominated the NEAC during its early years, had largely defected to the Royal Academy.<sup>98</sup>

The artists whom Ginner referred to as Naturalists were indebted, by and large, to the work of Bastien-Lepage who, in turn, derived much of his inspiration from the rural scenes of Millet and the artists of the Barbizon School.<sup>99</sup> They included members of the Newlyn School and a group of Scottish artists known as the 'Glasgow Boys'. Their work was characterised by a combination of devices derived ultimately from the work of Bastien-Lepage. They tended to choose outdoor figure subjects which they painted *en plein air* and frequently from a standing position, giving a high viewpoint and often excluding the sky altogether. There was a tendency to make figures confront the spectator by placing them on the edge of the picture plane.<sup>100</sup> A talented draughtsman and painter, Bastien-Lepage's work has a photographic clarity which was emulated by his followers. This close

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<sup>96</sup> G. Lacambre, *op. cit.*

<sup>97</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>98</sup> Of the 44 founder members of the NEAC, at least eleven may be described as Naturalists and many more joined in the years which followed. Of the original eleven, all had exhibited at the Royal Academy by 1905 and by 1914 seven were either Associates or full members of the Academy.

<sup>99</sup> K. McConkey (1989), pp.28-9, makes the point that from 1880 onwards Bastien-Lepage's work was regularly exhibited in London, capturing the interest and admiration of a number of young artists who, as a direct result, went to France to study or work in the manner of Bastien-Lepage's *plein air* Naturalism.

<sup>100</sup> R. Billcliffe (1985), p.34.

attention to detail required a steady, unvarying light with the result that his paintings are characterised by a uniformly grey atmosphere.<sup>101</sup>

There are two key elements in the list of characteristics rehearsed above which marked a departure from Neo-Realist doctrine. One was the Naturalists' preference for painting out-of-doors. The Neo-Realist practice, largely inherited from Sickert, was to make drawings and colour notes on the spot which were then worked up into a final drawing back in the studio to be squared and numbered for transfer to canvas, when the colour notes would be brought into play. Many of Gilman's and Ginner's surviving drawings exhibit squaring and numbering, often with colour notes in the margins, while preparatory drawings are frequently jotted all over with copious colour notes. A photograph taken around 1911-12 does show Ginner painting out-of-doors but it was a practice which in later years he largely abandoned.<sup>102</sup> The second and most significant area of divergence resided in the element of photographic verisimilitude which characterised the work of the British followers of Bastien-Lepage. It was Ginner's chief criticism of their work: "Naturalism", he wrote, "is the photography of Nature".<sup>103</sup> He used this phrase advisedly for there is no doubt that photography played a vital role in the creation of much of what Ginner called Naturalist art. Comparisons between the work of Bastien-Lepage and the art of photography are frequently made and for obvious reasons. Sharply-defined foregrounds contrast with somewhat 'out of focus' backgrounds, detail is rendered with an accuracy which is virtually *trompe l'oeil* and the necessity of painting in an unvarying grey or sunless light which the length of execution required, produced what Billcliffe has described as "a consistent clarity of vision which can seem unreal. It is the clarity of the photographic image ..." <sup>104</sup>

While there is no evidence that Bastien-Lepage actually used a camera as an aid, the link was made early on in criticism surrounding his work. In 1892 Sickert, highly critical of his art, described it as "the sterile ideal of the instantaneous camera", the production of a "photo-realist", a term which McConkey credits Sickert with having coined.<sup>105</sup> There is certainly evidence that Bastien-Lepage's British followers made use of photography. Billcliffe has found that a number of the 'Glasgow Boys' utilised the camera, chiefly as an aid to drawing or composition.<sup>106</sup> John Lavery (1856-1941) trained in Glasgow as a photographer's assistant and at least one of the 'Glasgow Boys', James Paterson (1854-1941), was a keen amateur photographer, using photographs not to replace work done on the spot but as additional sketchbook material.<sup>107</sup> An interest in the work of Bastien-Lepage was not confined to the 'Glasgow Boys' or members of the Newlyn School. George Clausen (1852-1944), T.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34-6.

<sup>102</sup> M. Easton (1970), fig.2. Two further photographs show Ginner painting out-of-doors. One (collection of W. Baron) is reproduced in *British Art in the 20th Century*. Royal Academy, London, 1987, p.430; the other (collection of Mrs T.C. Caldicott) in A. Robertson (1977), fig.5.

<sup>103</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>104</sup> R. Billcliffe (1985), pp.35-6.

<sup>105</sup> W. Sickert, *Modern Realism in Painting*, included in A. Theuriet (1892), pp.135-9; K. McConkey, "Rustic Naturalism in Britain." Essay included in G. Weisberg (1982), p.225.

<sup>106</sup> R. Billcliffe (1985), p.22.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.181,164.

F. Goodall (1856/7-1944) and H. H. La Thangue (1859-1929) all knew the East Anglian photographer Peter Henry Emerson (1856-1936) whose treatise on naturalistic photography may have been influenced, as McConkey suggests, by their ideas.<sup>108</sup> McConkey quotes from Emerson's summary of the difference between Naturalism and Realism: "By Naturalism it will be seen that we mean a very different thing from realism ... the work of the realist would do well for a botany class, there is no scope for fine art in realism, realism belongs to the province of science."<sup>109</sup> It is clear that Emerson was rehearsing the familiar notion of the Naturalist's social and psychological characterisation as opposed to the Realist's scientific record of appearances. Ginner's comments regarding Naturalism and photography suggest that he was well aware of the links which existed between Emerson and members of the Newlyn School, in fact as well as perception; he may even have been familiar with Emerson's theories. His own views were, however, diametrically opposed to those of Emerson. For Ginner it was the Realist - and Neo-Realist - who produced a personal vision of nature while the Naturalist copied only "the superficial aspect of the object before him".<sup>110</sup>

It is interesting in this context to note that, although partisan, Clausen's view of Bastien-Lepage's work was closer to Ginner's than to Emerson's. In 1888 he observed that Bastien-Lepage, while striking up a "sympathetic intimacy" with his subjects, portrayed his figures "*without comment, as far as possible, on the author's part*".<sup>111</sup> Doubtless Clausen was stressing the rejection of sentimentality which characterised the work of Bastien-Lepage and many of his British followers, but the comment is significant of the web of complication which surrounded, and continues to surround, attempts to define and separate these terms. Although Clausen was later to deny the value of photography as an aid to painting, there is no doubt that he did use it as such at one stage in his career.<sup>112</sup> He owned a camera and McConkey has drawn parallels between his photographs of Hertfordshire peasants and those which appear in his paintings.<sup>113</sup> McConkey makes a specific comparison between Emerson's Coming Home from the Marshes [12] and La Thangue's The Return of the Reapers (private collection) [13], both dated 1886.<sup>114</sup> One is struck, however, not so much by individual comparisons, although these do occur, but by a coincidence of subject matter, of composition, of light and of the disposition of tones.<sup>115</sup> One gains the impression that a constructive

<sup>108</sup> K. McConkey, Rustic Naturalism in Britain, *op. cit.*, p.222.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.222-3. (P.H. Emerson, Naturalistic Photography for Students of the Art. London, 1889; Arno Reprint (1973), p.24.)

<sup>110</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), pp.271-2.

<sup>111</sup> G. Clausen (1888), p.114.

<sup>112</sup> G. Clausen (1913), p.44.

<sup>113</sup> K. McConkey, Rustic Naturalism in Britain, *op. cit.*, p.222. G. Weisberg (1992), p.109, states that Clausen purchased the new portable Marian Miniature "Academy" camera sometime in the early 1880s. It contained a carriage with prepared small glass plates which dropped down in front of the lens and allowed Clausen to produce some of the earliest unposed photographs of field labourers. These photographs provided valuable first-hand information which, as Weisberg points out, Clausen incorporated into paintings such as Winter Work, 1883 (London, Tate Gallery).

<sup>114</sup> K. McConkey, "Rustic Naturalism in Britain", *op. cit.*, p.222. G. Weisberg (1992), p.113, draws a comparison between Goodall's The Bow Net, 1886 (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) and Emerson's photograph, Setting up the Bow Net, c.1885 (Bath, Royal Photographic Society).

<sup>115</sup> A number of reproductions of Emerson's photographs are included in N. Newhall (1975).

dialogue took place between artist and photographer, one of which Ginner, while he did not approve, was fully aware.

In rejecting British responses to the work of Bastien-Lepage, Ginner was also rejecting a type of art which many artists and critics in this country defined as Realist. Clausen, who was Bastien-Lepage's most vociferous British apologist, had written an article entitled Bastien-Lepage and Modern Realism in which he praised Bastien-Lepage's 'realism' in terms of both his originality and his accuracy in the detailed rendering of objects.<sup>116</sup> Ginner's opinion of the work of Bastien-Lepage and his British followers may have been shaped, to some extent, by Sickert who, in response to Clausen's article, criticised not only the 'photographic' appearance of Bastien-Lepage's paintings but also his preference for painting *en plein air*. Sickert's objections to *plein air* painting were based on the fact that figure subjects were forced to stand still for hours on end, producing what he regarded as a contrived, wooden effect. Comparing the work of Bastien-Lepage with that of Millet, he noted that the latter "knew that if figures in movement were to be painted so as to be convincing, it must be by a process of cumulative observation".<sup>117</sup> He quoted a saying of Millet's in this context: "La nature ne pose pas".<sup>118</sup> Sickert maintained that painting *en plein air* placed the artist under a number of restrictions. Subject matter was limited, difficulties experienced in posing groups of figures meant that artists tended to confine themselves to a single figure, and the movement of the sun, rendering a consistent light impossible, meant that artists preferred a grey light to any other.<sup>119</sup> He concluded that the work of Bastien-Lepage was, in effect, simply photography with paint. In the following quotation we may substitute the term 'Naturalist' for 'so-called realist':

The tacit assumption on which the theory and practice of the so-called realist rests, is that if photography, instead of yielding little proofs on paper in black and white, could yield large proofs on canvas in oils, the occupation of the painter would be gone.<sup>120</sup>

Somewhat ironically, in view of Ginner's antipathy toward the artists whom he characterised as Naturalists, the term is now generally understood to include the very art which Ginner applauded as "the latest and most important realistic movement ... the impressionist movement in France".<sup>121</sup> The definition of Naturalism recently proposed by Lacambre included "... Manet and the Impressionists, who can rightfully claim the naturalist label ...".<sup>122</sup> Among the criteria which she used to define Naturalism were a preference for natural outdoor light and themes from modern life. Precedents for Ginner's identification of Impressionism with Realism existed in contemporaneous accounts of Impressionism. In 1875 Jules Claretie declared: "The Impressionists proceed from

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<sup>116</sup> G. Clausen (1888), p.114.

<sup>117</sup> W. Sickert (1892), p.136.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140.

<sup>121</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>122</sup> G. Lacambre, *op. cit.*, p.236.

Baudelaire".<sup>123</sup> Two years later another critic made the link between Impressionism and the Realist requirement that artists portray modern life, observing that the Impressionist exhibition of 1877 "shows this much, that painting is not uniquely an archaeological art and that it accommodates itself without effort to 'modernity'".<sup>124</sup>

While Realists of Courbet's generation provided the theory upon which Neo-Realism was based, it was to a younger generation that Gilman and Ginner looked for both technical guidance and inspiration in the actual picture-making process. Applying the criteria for Realism set out in the text of Neo-Realism, close study of nature combined with fresh insight and originality, Ginner described the Impressionists' "searching study of light" and "colour values" as "impressionistic realism".<sup>125</sup> While critical of much of the work shown at Fry's 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions, Ginner regarded Cézanne, Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and Van Gogh, whom Fry had attempted to separate from the Impressionist movement, as "children of Impressionism" and therefore, by definition, also Realists.<sup>126</sup> The influence of the Impressionists' technical innovations is evident in the work of the Neo-Realists in their use of bright colour, their application of the principles of divisionism and their observation of colour in the shadows. Equally important was the Impressionists' preoccupation with the portrayal of modern life which was, of course, a staple of Realist theory. In 1846 Baudelaire had called on artists to depict the "heroism of modern life", a concept which he illustrated with reference to contemporary habits of dress which, he claimed, possessed quite as much "poetic beauty" as "a Greek cloak and a parti-coloured vesture".<sup>127</sup> Significantly, he also alluded in this context to the "political beauty" of these garments "which is an expression of universal equality".<sup>128</sup> At bottom, the preoccupation with contemporary life was here predicated upon class-consciousness as was Courbet's Burial at Ornans which, as Champfleury tells us, aroused hostility because of the status it accorded to the peasants who figure in it. It is certainly no coincidence that both Baudelaire and Courbet were actively involved in revolutionary politics.

As the events of 1848 receded, Realism, while adhering to the portrayal of contemporary life, became less of a political tool. This crude analysis is intended only to suggest a real shift in emphasis and by no means to intimate that political motives were always present in Realist art during its earlier phase or entirely absent during the later years of the nineteenth century. Indeed, to what

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<sup>123</sup> J. Claretie, "Salon de 1875" in L'Art et les artistes français contemporains. Paris, 1876. Trans. T. Clark (1990), p.21.

<sup>124</sup> 'Jacques', "Exposition impressioniste", L'Homme Libre (12 April 1877). Trans. T. Clark (1990), p.21.

<sup>125</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. In the introduction to the catalogue of the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, it was stated that the works included represent "a reaction against Impressionism". R. Fry and D. MacCarthy (1910), p.8.

<sup>127</sup> C. Baudelaire, The Salon of 1846. Trans. J. Mayne (1965), pp.117-18.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.118. Baudelaire went on to characterise the poetic beauty of these garments as "an expression of the public soul, an immense cortege of undertakers' mutes (mutes in love, political mutes, bourgeois mutes). We are each of us celebrating some funeral". T. Clark (1973), p.181, observes that Courbet obliged this image in his Burial at Ornans which he describes as "the best image of the 1848 revolution".

extent, if at all, should we read into Impressionist art a critique of the State? As Clark has it: "Are we to take Impressionism's repertoire of subjects and devices as merely complicit in the spectacle - lending it consistency or even charm - or as somehow disclosing it as farce or tragedy?"<sup>129</sup> A similar reservation applies in the case of the Neo-Realists. What, for instance, are we to make of Gilman's portrait of his Maple Street landlady Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table, 1916-17 (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) [14] or his Girl with a Teacup, 1914 (private collection) [15]? The former is particularly susceptible to constructions of a crudely socio-political nature.<sup>130</sup> It was Gilman's friend and sometime patron, Fergusson, who sounded a note of warning in this respect when he recalled that Gilman confided to him that "one of his greatest ambitions was to create a character in painting" and that it was this intention which informed his paintings and drawings of not only Mrs Mounter but also his own mother.<sup>131</sup>

A clue to the Neo-Realists' attitude toward their subject matter is provided in Ginner's conversion of the Realist commitment to the portrayal of modern life to a largely documentary function. Neo-Realism adopts an almost ethical tone at this point, giving the impression that Ginner regarded the obligation to depict contemporary life as a duty in the interests of future generations of social historians. It follows that Ginner envisaged an interdisciplinary role for art historians in which art history, social history and the image as document would collude to provide a simulacrum of the historical present, a projection curiously predictive of post-modernism. It seems plausible in this context to attribute a similar motive to his decision to record his work in a series of Notebooks giving details of titles, dates and dimensions along with information on exhibitions, prices and buyers. In this way Ginner built up a small archive of material which has proved invaluable to the study of his work. In applying the principle of documentation directly to Ginner's work, we may note in passing that the Science Museum and the London Transport Museum confirm that in his oil painting, Piccadilly Circus, he provided a precisely accurate record of the livery and gadgetry of the London General Omnibus Company's latest model B-type bus.<sup>132</sup> All this does not, of course, intend to suggest that the Neo-Realists construed the role of art as purely documentary or that they were not moved or delighted by their subjects which clearly they were. They perceived a dual role for art as both decoration and documentation, functions which they regarded as by no means mutually exclusive; indeed, crucially, "of equal importance".<sup>133</sup> It was this combination which Ginner detected in the work of Van Gogh, observing that a room hung with the "works of this great realist ... makes one of the finest decorative wall-spaces I have ever seen".<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> T. Clark (1990), p.15.

<sup>130</sup> M. Lilly (1971), p.129, for example, while reserving the opinion that Gilman was not "deliberately recording pathos", maintains that Mrs Mounter "speaks for all the chars in Christendom".

<sup>131</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), pp.30-1.

<sup>132</sup> The Tate Gallery Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1980-82. London, 1984, p.100.

<sup>133</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

The Neo-Realists' choice of subjects was both limited and specific. With few exceptions they consisted, in the case of Gilman, of portraits, landscapes, interiors and still lifes; of Ginner, landscapes, still lifes and scenes of inner London. The omission of portraits in Ginner's *oeuvre* was no doubt conditioned by the fact that, as one of his rare essays in this genre, Annabel and My Wallpaper, 1914 (private collection) [16] suggests, they were not his *forte*. Where figures occur in his street scenes they are frequently wooden and ill-conceived. Similarly, no nude studies by Ginner are extant. Gilman painted a number of accomplished female nudes but these were apparently confined to the period 1911-13.<sup>135</sup> Realists of Courbet's generation had achieved status for themes from lower class contemporary life and artists such as Degas and Lautrec had explored this freedom by frequently selecting what their critics agreed to be degraded themes of prostitution and vice. But even when he was most influenced by Sickert, Gilman never subscribed to his equation of Realism with degraded female nudity. The range of both Neo-Realists' subject matter was circumscribed on the whole by the limits of their own personal experience: landscapes on painting holidays, portraits of family or friends and paintings of the interiors of their own homes or the surrounding streets. In this way Ginner was able to combine the documentary role of art with the artist's individuality and desire for self-expression. The Neo-Realists' choice of subject matter was consistent with their role as founder members of the Camden Town Group which, on one level, identifies them as being at the forefront of attempts to establish a Realist movement in modern British art.

This chapter has established a context for Neo-Realism in French nineteenth-century Realist art and theory in terms of its emphasis on contemporary subject matter, its rejection of elevated themes and its advocacy of art's role as socio-historical document. A parallel has been drawn between the Realist canon put forward by Ginner and the precursors of nineteenth-century Realism proposed by French Realist critics. In addition, it has been seen that a degree of verisimilitude, or truth to nature, was in both cases combined with an emphasis on self-expression and individuality on the part of the artist. Furthermore, the point has been made that, although Neo-Realism was indebted to French Realists of the mid-nineteenth century, the working practice of both Gilman and Ginner was informed by more recent Impressionist and 'Post-Impressionist' sources. Chapter two will clarify Ginner's definition of Realism by exploring the type of art which he characterised as being opposed to this definition and his reasons for doing so.

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<sup>135</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.51.

## CHAPTER TWO

"To Art, Academism means Death".<sup>1</sup>

Neo-Realism was not only prescriptive but also resolutely prohibitive and the list of artists whom Ginner commended as Realists, "great artists" who knew that "great art can only be created out of continued intercourse with nature", was set against another list of what Ginner termed "Formula-machines".<sup>2</sup> These, variously characterised as "weak or commercial painters" and "copyists", were, in Ginner's opinion, artists who had relied on the methods by which other artists interpreted nature instead of looking at their subjects with a fresh eye and attempting to create their own artistic language.<sup>3</sup> Ginner perceived an opposition of what he termed "creative artists" and "Academic painters".<sup>4</sup> The use of the word 'academic' in this context occurs several times throughout the text of Neo-Realism. It is clear that Ginner perceived a direct correlation between what he regarded as decadent art and that inculcated in academies of art. This chapter will explore Ginner's use of the term 'academic' with reference to the type of art which he vilified in Neo-Realism.

The chief criterion which Ginner used in compiling his list of 'Realists' was, to put it at its simplest, originality. The work of each artist gave evidence of the "direct intercourse with Nature" resulting in the extraction of "facts which others have not observed before" which was, for Ginner, a necessary precondition in the creation of Realist art.<sup>5</sup> Each artist in Ginner's list had revolutionised, to some extent, the way in which nature was portrayed and had thus exerted enormous influence on the work of their contemporaries as well as that of subsequent artists. They each exhibited a degree of independence from the prevailing artistic culture which marked them out as highly individual, original and ultimately influential. To take just two examples from Ginner's list of 'Realists', Jan Van Eyck and the artists of the *Ecole d'Avignon*. The former dispensed with the uniform gold background employed by fourteenth-century painters in order to portray his figures three-dimensionally in a naturalistic setting. Plants were drawn with botanical accuracy and, in portraits such as Cardinal Nicolas Albergati, c.1431 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) he introduced the three-quarter profile as distinct from the traditional full profile, achieving a degree of characterisation previously unknown. He introduced technical innovations in the use of oil paint which gave a richer depth of colour; indeed he was widely credited during this period with the invention of oil paint.<sup>6</sup> Van Eyck's work represented a break with the prevailing tradition of the Middle Ages, purely as a result of his close observation of nature and he created his astonishingly naturalistic effects without access to the knowledge of the laws of anatomy and perspective gained by his Italian contemporaries, Leon

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> J. Meier-Graefe (1968), p.23. (First published 1908).

Battista Alberti (1404-72), Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) and Masaccio (1401-28). It was by constant observation of the fall of light and close attention to detail that he achieved his convincing spaces, rather than an application of theoretical knowledge or received precepts. To adopt Ginner's tone, he may be described as an artist who "by direct intercourse with Nature ... extracted from her facts which others have not observed before" and interpreted those facts by methods "personal and expressive of [himself]".<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the *Ecole d'Avignon* marked a decisive break with the national school in France. During 1904 Ginner may well have seen the large exhibition of French 'primitive' art held in Paris, where he was living, which included Quarton's *Pietà*.<sup>8</sup> While the haloes and extensive use of gold in the background link the painting to an established tradition, the convincing spatial structure and the degree of characterisation in the heads, especially the portrait of the donor kneeling at the left, mark a new departure. Fry, who described it as the "greatest and most impressive" work in the exhibition, observed that the expression of profound emotion through compositional tensions as much as facial expression, unmatched elsewhere in French primitive art, indicated Italian influence.<sup>9</sup> Given Ginner's preference for art which expressed a strong national identity, he may have been unwilling to attribute the departures of this and the two other *Ecole d'Avignon* paintings in the Louvre to Italian influence, preferring to regard them as the products of a vigorous and innovative native school.

Ginner's list of 'Realists' was set against a roll of what he termed "formula painters":

The Italian Renaissance going to Rome and not to nature ended in the quagmire of Giulio Romano, Carracci, etc. Poussin, Lebrun, and others, going to the Italian Renaissance, stultified French Art for hundreds of year (sic) until it finally ended in the "débacle" of Bouguerau (sic), Gerome, of the British Royal Academy, and of those of all the nations.<sup>10</sup>

Ginner felt that all the artists on this list had either looked to Italy for inspiration or had attempted to codify art in some way, to establish a system of rules and formulae which he believed inhibited creativity. These assumptions involved Ginner in a number of sweeping generalisations, not the least of which related to the Italian Renaissance. By "going to Rome and not to nature" we must assume that Ginner was referring to the interest in the Antique which was an integral part of Italian Renaissance art. Surviving Graeco-Roman statuary, coins, medals, architectural remains, sarcophagi and other artifacts all provided rich source material for Renaissance artists and much of the work produced during this period was indebted to antique models. Any adaptation of elements from the art of previous centuries was bound to smack of 'formula painting' to Ginner, and the Renaissance fascination with Graeco-Roman art was no exception. But while the range of artists who merely adapted classical forms without regard to the underlying convictions which motivated the artists who originally carried out these works were guilty of a species of 'formula painting', those artists with a

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<sup>7</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>8</sup> Musée des Arts Décoratifs and Bibliothèque Nationale, *Exhibition of French Primitives*, April-July 1904, cat. no.77.

<sup>9</sup> R. Fry (1904), p.379.

<sup>10</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

genuine humanistic conception of art were denigrated by Ginner for different reasons. Lee has defined humanistic art theory as the adaptation of classical literary theory to the visual arts.<sup>11</sup> Horace's famous aphorism, "ut pictura poesis", was frequently quoted in order to sanction the notion of a close relationship between the 'sister' arts.<sup>12</sup> Central to the whole humanistic conception of art was the belief that the function of art was to portray life, not as it is, but as it ought to be. Babbit, in his New Laokoön, published in 1910, paraphrased Aristotle in his description of such art as the depiction of human nature "raised above all that is local and accidental, purged of all that is abnormal and eccentric, so as to be in the highest sense representative".<sup>13</sup> Renaissance artists evinced a tendency, tempered albeit by their own Christian beliefs, to regard the age of Antiquity as a golden age, both in terms of art and morality. They largely confined themselves to themes from the Bible and the Graeco-Roman classics, seeking to achieve an ideal of human beauty and moral perfection. Practical examples of the former existed in Antiquity. According to Pliny, Zeuxis (464-60-396 BC), when commissioned by the people of Agrigentum to paint an image of Helen for the Temple of Hera Lakinia, had selected five of the city's most beautiful women and combined the best features of each in a single figure.<sup>14</sup>

Lee has highlighted a disconcerting ambiguity in Renaissance critical theory in which he implicates both writers and artists, for, like Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Giorgio Vasari (1511-74), Renaissance artists were frequently both. Going hand in hand with the notion of art's function to idealise ran a deep admiration for the literal imitation of nature which found frequent outlets, notably in the writings of Vasari.<sup>15</sup> In spite of extolling, in the preface to the third part of Lives of the Artists, something other than the literal imitation of nature, what he defined as 'spontaneity', Vasari continued, in the passages which followed, to discuss art in terms of its likeness to nature.<sup>16</sup> Raphael's (1483-1520) Liberation of St. Peter, 1511-14 (Vatican, Stanza d'Eliodoro) was commended because "... the arms of the soldiers shine so resplendently that their burnished lustre appears more lifelike than the real thing (...) one can hardly believe this is merely a painting ..."<sup>17</sup> Again precedents existed in Antiquity, for while Zeuxis idealised his figure of Helen, he was, according to tradition, capable of painting a bunch of grapes with such accuracy that they attracted birds.<sup>18</sup> Ginner would have had very little sympathy with either view, for Neo-Realism was opposed both to idealisation of nature and its literal imitation. Italian Renaissance artists had, according to Ginner, fostered the former tendency by emulating the masterpieces of Graeco-Roman Antiquity

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<sup>11</sup> R. Lee (1967), p.vii.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>13</sup> I. Babbit (1910), p.10.

<sup>14</sup> K. Jex-Blake (Trans.), The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art. London, 1896, p.109.

<sup>15</sup> R. Lee (1967), pp.9-10.

<sup>16</sup> G. Vasari (1977), p.250.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.300.

<sup>18</sup> K. Jex-Blake (1896), p.111.

instead of looking directly at nature, while the group of artists whom he identified as 'Naturalists' had adopted a method of painting which he described as "photography of Nature".<sup>19</sup>

Ginner maintained that the tendency of Italian Renaissance artists to emulate the achievements of antique art "ended in the quagmire of Giulio Romano, Carracci, etc."<sup>20</sup> He was rehearsing what to his readers would have been a familiar argument; that Mannerism represented simply a degeneration of High Renaissance art. As Posner points out, this view had remained largely unchanged since its original formulation in the seventeenth century by Gian Pietro Bellori (c.1615-96).<sup>21</sup> For Ginner, Mannerism bore all the hallmarks of decadence and artificiality which, according to the tenets of Neo-Realism, were the result of artists' rejection of study from nature. The qualities of *maniera* or stylishness, which appealed to Mannerist artists and their sixteenth-century patrons have been characterised as deportment, effortless accomplishment, sophistication and courtly grace.<sup>22</sup> Ginner evidently perceived only converse traits; self-consciousness, ostentation, unnaturalness and affectation and it was his prejudice that Mannerist art was based on intellectual preconceptions as opposed to direct visual perceptions. Mannerism, like the art of the High Renaissance, was indebted to the classical past, its exponents revelling in a display of learning characterised by frequent quotations from the Antique. Their knowledge of the classical language of art was revealed both in an adherence to and frequent, often bizarre, flouting of the classical rules, especially evident in Mannerist architecture.<sup>23</sup> The extreme artificiality which characterised much Mannerist art, the widespread application of *contrapposto*, compositional distortions, mannered gestures and a penchant for cold, acid colour schemes, while evidently a highly prized quality during the sixteenth century could not fail to repel Ginner who regarded such traits as evidence that Mannerist artists had ceased to look directly at nature having evolved a 'formula' instead.

While Ginner's recognition of the debt which Mannerist artists owed to High Renaissance art is shared by most art historians, the opinion that Mannerism represented merely the decadence of the Renaissance has largely been discredited. Ginner, on the other hand, was incapable of regarding the frequent quotations by Mannerist artists from the poses of figures in works by, for example, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) or Raphael as other than "the adoption by weak or commercial painters of the creative artist's personal methods of interpreting nature and the consequent creation of a formula".<sup>24</sup> Ginner's belief that "great art can only be created out of continued intercourse with

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<sup>19</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> D. Posner, *Introduction* in W. Friedlaender (1973), p.xii. (G. Bellori, *Le Vite dei pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*. Genoa, 1968. (first published 1672). Coincidentally, it was in 1914, as Posner points out, that such attitudes toward Mannerist art began to change, with an inaugural lecture by Professor Walter Friedlaender at the University of Freiburg which marked the beginning of a new phase in Mannerist scholarship. Posner suggests that the rediscovery of Mannerism in the second decade of this century and the apparently increased understanding of the intentions of its exponents was prompted by the development of abstract and expressionistic modes in modern art.

<sup>22</sup> J. Shearman (1981), p.18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.

<sup>24</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

nature" was incompatible with the artifice and the quotations from the work of other artists which characterised Mannerist art. As Ginner saw it, individuality and the possibility of making new discoveries or breaking new ground were sacrificed in the adoption of a 'formula', a standard view of the world in which figures adopted set poses and gestures and artists delighted in difficulties of execution which they overcame and disguised with a quality of apparently effortless ease, or *sprezzatura*. It was just such facility which Vasari, himself a Mannerist artist, evidently admired above all else in the work of Michelangelo especially in his decorations for the Sistine Chapel ceiling.<sup>25</sup> It is not immediately clear why Ginner specifically chose Giulio Romano to illustrate what he regarded as the defects of Mannerist art: perhaps it was owing to his very clear debt to Raphael to whom he acted as studio assistant from c.1515 and whose unfinished works he completed and shop and commissions he jointly inherited after Raphael's death in 1520. Certainly, in denigrating Giulio's work, Ginner was echoing a prevalent critical conviction, shared by Bernhard Berenson (1865-1959) who included Giulio in a list of Raphael's pupils and assistants of whom he wrote:

And in truth what is more unpalatable than their work? They have none of that feeling for space which pleases even the worst immediate followers of Perugino; none of that pleasant colour which attracts us to even the meanest Venetian. No wonder that we have given [them] and their ignoble fellows to oblivion. It is all they deserve.<sup>26</sup>

While Giulio achieved a place on Ginner's list of 'academic' artists by virtue of his role as a leading Mannerist with all which that epithet must have implied to a Neo-Realist, the inclusion of Annibale Carracci would have struck a familiar chord with Ginner's readers at a time when the term 'eclectic' was widely applied to the work of the Carracci.<sup>27</sup> Mahon has credited Winckelmann, in the eighteenth century, with its introduction into the terminology of art criticism and its application to the work of the Carracci in particular.<sup>28</sup> Readers of *The New Age* may have been familiar with the term in more recent usage. Mahon draws attention to a popular history of art, published in the late nineteenth century, which presented the Carracci as artists who did little more than look back to the achievements of the Renaissance, justifying their strategy with a theory of Eclecticism.<sup>29</sup> Berenson, in his influential survey of Italian Renaissance art, mentioned the Carracci in a chapter entitled *The Decline of Art*. Criticising the tendency of both Mannerists and 'Eclectics' to utilise Renaissance models in their work, Berenson asserted: "Vitality will reappear only when artists recognize that the types, shapes, attitudes, and arrangements produced in the course of evolution are no more to be used

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<sup>25</sup> G. Vasari (1977), p.360.

<sup>26</sup> B. Berenson (1902), p.129.

<sup>27</sup> It is not clear whether Ginner was referring in *Neo-Realism* to all three Carracci, Annibale, Lodovico (1555-1619) and Agostino (1557-1602) or simply to Annibale. The absence of a definite article would appear to indicate the latter and a letter to *The New Age* published four months later confirms that Ginner was in fact referring to Annibale Carracci. C. Ginner (1914b).

<sup>28</sup> D. Mahon (1971), pp.212-3. (J. Winckelmann, *Abhandlung von der Faehigkeit der Empfindung des Schoenen in der Kunst*. Dresden, 1763, p.26.)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.224. (Charles Blanc, *Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles. Ecole Bolonaise*. Paris, 1874).

again than spent cartridges."<sup>30</sup> In a subsequent letter to The New Age Ginner made clear that he based his criticisms of Annibale Carracci on the works available to him in the Louvre and in the National Gallery in London. He described Carracci as "one of the late Italians, ie. one of the "dregs of the Renaissance," which is nothing less than "art that is based on other art".<sup>31</sup> Certainly Ginner would have found sufficient evidence of Carracci's interest in the art of the past in both collections to support such a view.<sup>32</sup> He would have found evidence, too, of Carracci's interest in Raphael's work, specifically the tapestry cartoons executed during 1515-16 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum).<sup>33</sup>

It was without doubt Ginner's understanding that a system of Eclecticism was taught and promoted at the *Accademia degli Incamminati* founded by the Carracci in Bologna around 1582. While the Carracci apparently advocated study from the work of other artists, their own work was widely imitated not only by their pupils but by future generations of artists. Ginner was able to perceive a direct line of influence running from the artists of the Renaissance through the Carracci to Poussin and Charles Lebrun (1619-90).<sup>34</sup> The pivot upon which this perception focussed was the decoration of the Farnese Gallery in Rome carried out between 1595 and 1604 by Annibale with Agostino's assistance. In conception, layout and in the treatment of individual figures, the work owes much to the great decorative cycles in the Vatican *Farnesina* by Michelangelo and Raphael. In its turn the Farnese Gallery itself was to exert enormous influence throughout the seventeenth century. Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), Poussin and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) were among the many artists who studied, copied and adapted Annibale's designs.<sup>35</sup> Poussin, who spent most of his working life in Rome, praised the Farnese Gallery with reference to Annibale Carracci's debt to Raphael.<sup>36</sup> Martin has drawn attention to a number of works by Poussin which contain direct

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<sup>30</sup> B. Berenson (1902), pp.107-8.

<sup>31</sup> C. Ginner (1914b). It is not clear from what source Ginner was quoting here.

<sup>32</sup> The Infant Hercules Strangling Serpents, c.1599/1600 (Paris, Louvre) provided an instance of the former. The subject was a popular one in antique art and Carracci's design is close to a bronze previously in the Farnese Collection, now in the National Museum, Naples, while the body of the infant was based on the so-called Belvedere Torso (Rome, Vatican). (D. Posner (1971), vol.2, cat.121). In 1907 Tietze pointed out that the figure of Bacchus in Bacchus and Silenus, c.1599 (London, National Gallery) was derived from the ancient statue of Pan and Olympus (Naples, National Museum) while the figure of Silenus was drawn from two antique cameos in the same museum which Carracci would have known, along with Pan and Olympus, when they formed part of the Farnese Collection. (*Ibid.*, cat.116).

<sup>33</sup> Posner (1971), vol.1, pp.132, 174 and 131, points out that Carracci's Martyrdom of St. Stephen, c.1603-4 (Paris, Louvre) contains motifs borrowed from Raphael's tapestry design of the same subject, while the figures in his Domine Quo Vadis?, c.1602 (London, National Gallery) are based on the two main figures in Christ's Charge to St. Peter.

<sup>34</sup> Giulio Romano's name may also be inserted in the chain of influence for Bellori informs us that Annibale Carracci admired Giulio's Battle of Constantine, begun 1520 (Rome, Vatican). G. Bellori (1968), p.610.

<sup>35</sup> J. Martin (1965), pp.153-7.

<sup>36</sup> G. Bellori (1968), p.67. "Nicolas Poussin stated that Annibale, having surpassed all the painters of the past ... also surpassed himself; that painting had never before presented to the eyes an object more stupendous in its ornamentations; that the myths had the unique distinction of being the best compositions after Raphael."

quotations from Annibale Carracci's frescoes in the Farnese Gallery.<sup>37</sup> He points out that Poussin's designs for the *Grande Galerie* of the Louvre during 1640-2, unfinished and later destroyed, were inspired by the Farnese Gallery.<sup>38</sup> Around 1642, when Poussin returned to Rome, artists at the French Academy there increasingly turned their attention to the Farnese Gallery and the practice of making copies after the frescoes, which continued for over a century, was instigated.<sup>39</sup> Charles Errard (c.1606-89), as Director of the French Academy in Rome, sent four of his *pensionnaires* to copy the frescoes onto canvases which were subsequently taken to Paris and installed in the Tuileries Gardens where French students could copy them without the necessity of visiting Rome.<sup>40</sup>

In many ways Poussin represented, for Ginner, the pure type of the 'academic' artist, evincing a particular interest in antique art, a preoccupation which found ample scope in his adopted city of Rome. His friendship with the antiquarian Cassiano dal Pozzo gave him access to a large collection of coins as well as the *Museo Cartaceo*, or 'paper museum', a vast collection of drawings after antique works of art.<sup>41</sup> Apart from the random borrowing of individual figures, Poussin also adapted the structural principles inherent in ancient reliefs, their particular compositional and spatial organisation.<sup>42</sup> While Ginner would have found numerous references to Poussin's interest in antique art in the Poussin literature, it was on the works available to him, both in the Louvre and in the National Gallery in London that he based his perception of Poussin as a 'formula painter'.<sup>43</sup> Poussin concentrated on biblical themes, mythology and scenes from classical history and the stoical writers. His use of draped wax models was quite contrary to the Neo-Realist emphasis on drawing from life as were his apparently elaborately contrived landscapes based, as Blunt suggested, on landscapes by Annibale Carracci such as *The Flight into Egypt*, c.1604 (Rome, Galleria Doria-Pamphili).<sup>44</sup> In an example which would have been known to Ginner, Poussin's *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice*, c.1650 (Paris, Louvre) [17], all the elements of what Blunt described as "the stock in trade of the Mannerist landscape painters" are present.<sup>45</sup> *Repoussoir* trees lead the eye into a landscape which contains foreground figures, architectural detail in the middle distance and a distant view of hills. The tragic scene played out in the foreground, from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, when Eurydice, bitten by a snake, dies at her wedding to Orpheus, is typical of Poussin's subject matter. The castle in the middle distance, closely resembling the Castel Sant' Angelo in Rome, features in many of Poussin's landscapes.

In order to transpose the Castel Sant' Angelo to various locations and to repeat time and again what was in effect a formula, Poussin evidently took great liberties with the topography of his

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<sup>37</sup> J. Martin (1965), pp.153-7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.163.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.164, 166.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

<sup>41</sup> W. Friedlaender (1966), p.17; see also A. Mérot (1990), p.79.

<sup>42</sup> W. Friedlaender (1966), p.20

<sup>43</sup> C. Ginner (1914b).

<sup>44</sup> A. Blunt (1958), p.274.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.270.

landscapes. It was undoubtedly Ginner's perception that Poussin not only utilised elements taken from the work of other artists but that he created a landscape formula very far removed from the study of nature. Of course, Poussin did study from nature as a number of surviving drawings attest and, as Blunt has demonstrated, many of his landscapes do reproduce known locations with some accuracy.<sup>46</sup> One of Sickert's strongest objections to the text of Neo-Realism was Ginner's inclusion of Poussin in a list of "merely derivative painters". He recommended that Ginner go back to the Louvre and look at three passages in works by Poussin which, for him, indicated close study and an original view of nature.<sup>47</sup> In response, Ginner not only reiterated his view of Poussin as an artist in whose work he could see "nothing original, either in spirit, observation, or even technique", but also added the name of Titian (c.1487/90-1576) to the list of artists from whom his work derived:

If one will compare Poussin and Annibale Carracci, one will find such an extraordinary resemblance that I feel I can safely say that Poussin not only did not come out direct from Titian (whose greatness must be acknowledged, but the spirit of whose work, ie., the spirit of the Renaissance - Formula - could only be disastrous to followers), but derived from the decadent Carracci.<sup>48</sup>

Ginner's view of Poussin's work was at variance with advanced opinion which regarded the modern movement as influenced by his work through the medium of Cézanne. It may well have been a rejection of this proposed relationship which caused Ginner to derogate Poussin's work so relentlessly, both in the text of Neo-Realism and in the letter to The New Age which followed Sickert's published criticism. Cézanne had, after all, achieved a place on Ginner's list of 'Realists' while Poussin was relegated to the status of 'formula painter'. The origin of the perceived link between these two artists may be traced to Emile Bernard (1868-1941), writing in 1907, who reported a conversation in which Cézanne had speculated: "Imaginez Poussin refait entièrement sur nature, voilà le classique que j'entends".<sup>49</sup> While Reff finds no secure evidence that Cézanne ever made such a remark, it had certainly become current in the literature surrounding Cézanne since his death in 1906.<sup>50</sup> There are a number of indications that Cézanne admired Poussin's art. In 1864 he applied to copy Poussin's Et in Arcadia Ego, c. 1640 (Paris, Louvre).<sup>51</sup> A reproduction of this painting was still hanging in Cézanne's studio the year before he died.<sup>52</sup> Around 1887-90 Cézanne

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp.273, 283, 285.

<sup>47</sup> W. Sickert (1914c), p.820. "Look at the painting of the vermilion chariot of Flora. Look at the living baby turning to his dead mother's breast in the Plagues of Egypt, and look at the curve in the blade of a long sword the tip of which rests on some books in a kind of still life trophy under an apotheosis". The three paintings to which Sickert referred are The Triumph of Flora, c.1627, The Plague at Ashdod, 1630 and The Ecstasy of St. Paul, 1649-50 (Paris, Louvre).

<sup>48</sup> C. Ginner (1914b).

<sup>49</sup> E. Bernard, "Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites", Mercur de France, vol.LXIX (1 October 1907). Trans. T. Reff (1960), p.152.

<sup>50</sup> T. Reff (1960), p.161.

<sup>51</sup> T. Reff (1964), p.155. Although the copy he made is now lost, two drawings after single figures in the painting, executed c.1887-90, are now in the Kunstmuseum, Basel. (A. Chappius (1973), cat. nos.1011-12).

<sup>52</sup> R. Verdi (1990), p.57. (R. P. Rivière and J. F. Schnerb, "L'Atelier de Cézanne", Le Grande Revue, 1905).

also made a drawing of a portion of Poussin's Concert of Putti, 1627-9? (Paris, Louvre) which is now in the Kunstmuseum, Basel.<sup>53</sup> Cézanne's The Harvest, c.1875-7 (Japan, private collection), which was included in The Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1912, was indebted to Poussin's Summer, 1660-4 (Paris, Louvre).<sup>54</sup> Cézanne was said to have particularly admired this painting.<sup>55</sup>

Comparisons between Cézanne's work and that of Poussin were legion and Ginner, while not subscribing to this tendency, must have been well aware of its existence within the literature on Cézanne. The earliest mention of Poussin in connection with Cézanne seems to have been made in 1902 when François-Charles characterised Cézanne as "grave and classical, like Poussin, of whom, it is said, he thinks constantly."<sup>56</sup> In 1910 The Burlington Magazine published an article on Cézanne by Denis which had originally appeared in L'Occident in September 1907.<sup>57</sup> Denis described Cézanne as "the Poussin of Impressionism".<sup>58</sup> It was Denis's perception that Cézanne's art represented a species of classicism, a notion which was to be taken up and propounded by Fry.<sup>59</sup> In describing Cézanne's work as 'classical' Denis attempted to pin down the qualities of compositional unity and order which he discerned in his work.<sup>60</sup> Denis regarded Cézanne essentially as an artist in constant reaction against aspects of Impressionism, again a view which was to be appropriated by Fry.<sup>61</sup> Inevitably, the notion of Cézanne as a classic involved Denis in the assumption that he had studied the work of the Old Masters and he was able to credit Cézanne's supposed classicism within the context of Impressionism with reference to Cézanne's remark that he wished to make of Impressionism "something solid and durable, like the art of the museums".<sup>62</sup>

While Denis's critique of Cézanne's art was quite simply an attempt to elucidate certain aspects of the artist's work to a possibly sympathetic audience, in the hands of Fry the concept took on a distinctly defensive edge. Fry's words were addressed to a largely unsympathetic audience and must be considered within the context of the lively debate which surrounded Cézanne and the other artists whose work was included in the 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions held at the Grafton Galleries in 1910 and 1912. Denis's description of Cézanne as a classical artist was extended by Fry to include all the artists whose work was exhibited at the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, with special

<sup>53</sup> A. Chappius (1973), cat. no.1013.

<sup>54</sup> R. Verdi (1990), p.48; London, Grafton Galleries, Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, October 1912, cat. no.5.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. (Louis Vauxcelles, "La Mort de Paul Cézanne", Gil Blas (25 October 1906).)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.58. (François-Charles, "L'Exposition des artistes indépendants", L'Ermitage (13 May 1902), p.398.)

<sup>57</sup> M. Denis, "Cézanne", The Burlington Magazine, vol.16 (January 1910), pp.207-19 and (February 1910), pp.275-80.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.279.

<sup>59</sup> R. Fry (1912), p.16.

<sup>60</sup> M. Denis (1910), p.213.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. ("The Post-Impressionists", introduction to catalogue of Manet and the Post-Impressionists, Grafton Galleries, London, 1910. The catalogue introduction was unsigned but according to D. MacCarthy (1945), p.124, it was written by him from notes supplied by Fry.)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. ("J'ai voulu faire de l'impressionisme quelque chose de solide et de durable comme l'art des Musées".)

reference to André Derain (1880-1954) whom Fry related to Poussin.<sup>63</sup> It is difficult not to see Fry's decision to characterise the work of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists' as classical as an attempt to give credence to their work and to recruit their more reactionary critics to the ranks of their admirers.

Under the influence of Denis, Fry regarded the work of the 'Post-Impressionists' as classical in terms of their attitude toward their subject matter. While the majority of modern artists, according to Denis, were motivated by the subjects of their paintings - "illustrations to popular novels or historical events" - the 'Post-Impressionists' were inspired and sought to impress their audiences by qualities of colour, line and composition.<sup>64</sup> This distaste for art which set out to 'tell a story' was taken up and given priority by Fry who made it the linchpin of his own aesthetic theory. He espoused an art freed from illustration which would allow the functioning of a purely aesthetic response to line and colour.<sup>65</sup> Cézanne's work lent itself to such theorising by the predominance of still life and landscape subjects lacking overt literary or historical allusions, in which the artist was thought to have gone beyond surface description in order to engage the spectator with purely pictorial elements. In the hands of Clive Bell the theory became a dogma under the style of 'Significant Form' which, at its most extreme, invalidated all art of which Bell did not personally approve, particularly Victorian narrative painting, by the application of artistic prejudice masquerading as aesthetic hypothesis. William Frith's (1819-1909) The Railway Station, 1862 (Surrey, Royal Holloway College) [18] was thus removed from the canon of 'works of art' on the grounds that it was preoccupied with anecdotal, descriptive detail:

"Paddington Station" (sic) is not a work of art; it is an interesting and amusing document. In it line and colour are used to recount anecdotes, suggest ideas, and indicate the manners and customs of an age: they are not used to provoke aesthetic emotion. Forms and relations of forms were for Frith not objects of emotion, but means of suggesting emotion and conveying ideas.<sup>66</sup>

Fry was subscribing to the notion of a classical revival which had emerged as a well-defined tendency in French art. Bernard and Denis were both instrumental in the development and documentation of what came to be called the 'new classicism'; through their writings as much as their art. Their work increasingly revealed an interest in classical themes and forms, an interest which they felt to be incompatible with the aims of Impressionism which, by its very nature, implied sketchiness, a fundamental lack of structure and a dangerous attachment to the depiction of ephemeral effects of nature.<sup>67</sup> Cézanne emerged as a central figure in the evolution of the new movement which, by 1914, had spread from France to Italy and Spain.

It is hard to imagine Ginner, at this stage, approving the 'new classicism'. The name alone implied an element of reliance on past art with which he could have had little sympathy; while

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<sup>63</sup> R. Fry (1912), p.17. "... though no one could find direct reminiscences of a Nicholas (sic) Poussin here, his spirit seems to revive in the work of artists like Derain".

<sup>64</sup> M. Denis (1910), p.208.

<sup>65</sup> R. Fry (1912), p.16.

<sup>66</sup> C. Bell (1914), p.18. Bell derived this notion in part from an article by Fry published in 1911 in which he asserted that Frith's painting was not art but illustration. R. Fry (1911a).

<sup>67</sup> E. Cowling and J. Mundy (1990), pp.17-18.

Denis's chosen nomenclature, the 'neo-traditionalists', would have done little to alleviate the impression.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Denis made it clear that antique sculpture provided the chosen models of the 'new classicism', both directly and filtered through the art of the Renaissance:

The Doryphorus, the Diadumenes, Achilles, the Venus de Milo, the Samothrace, that is truly the redemption of the human form. Is it necessary for the saints of the Middle Ages to be mentioned? Must Michelangelo's prophets and the women of da Vinci be cited? <sup>69</sup>

The depiction of allegorical figures and scenes from Greek mythology, and a tendency to drape the human form in a kind of timeless, pseudo-classical garb, all reflected a growing preoccupation with antiquity. Sculpture lent itself more readily to the tendency being the medium in which most surviving works of antiquity were executed; and Ginner, then living in Paris, would have been familiar with the work of Aristide Maillol (1861-1944). When Maillol exhibited The Mediterranean, 1905 (Paris, Musée Maillol) [19] at the *Salon d'Automne* in 1905 he was hailed by Denis as "un Primitif classique" and likened to the Greek sculptors of the fifth century BC.<sup>70</sup> Maillol's interest in Greek art pervaded his work and in 1908 he travelled to Greece to study antique sculpture at first hand. In 1912 he worked on a series of woodcuts for an edition of Virgil's Eclogues which was followed by illustrations for editions of Ovid's Ars Amatoria and Virgil's Georgics.<sup>71</sup> Ginner saw further examples of Maillol's work in 1910 at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition which was preceded by an article on the artist by Fry for The Burlington Magazine. Fry again drew attention to the correspondence between Maillol's work and early Greek sculpture, a likeness which manifested itself, according to Fry, in simplicity of form and an air of serenity and repose.<sup>72</sup>

Fry's interest in the 'new classicism' was evident both in his choice of works for inclusion in the two 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions and in his growing interest in primitive art to which both he and Bell constantly likened the new art. During 1910 Fry published two articles on early non-Western art which demonstrate his growing preoccupation with the subject.<sup>73</sup> To the study of both primitive art and the 'new classicism' Fry brought his prejudice in favour of non-illustrative art. He contended that the 'Post-Impressionists' were in revolt against the "photographic vision of the nineteenth century", that they represented an "attempt to go behind the too elaborate pictorial apparatus which the Renaissance established in painting".<sup>74</sup> It was Fry's belief that representative skill had been gained at the expense of expression:

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<sup>68</sup> M. Denis, "Théories: 1890-1910", L'Occident (1912), pp.1-13. Trans. E. Holt (1966), pp.509-17.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.516.

<sup>70</sup> E. Cowling and J. Mundy (1990), p.150. (M. Denis, essay originally published in L'Occident, November 1905).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.148.

<sup>72</sup> R. Fry (1910b), p.331.

<sup>73</sup> R. Fry, "Bushmen Paintings", The Burlington Magazine, vol.16 (March 1910), pp.334-8; "The Munich Exhibition of Mohammedan Art", The Burlington Magazine, vol.17 (July 1910), pp.238-90 and (August 1910), pp.327-33.

<sup>74</sup> R. Fry (1910b), pp.331-2.

When you can draw like Tintoretto, you can no longer draw like Giotto, or even like Piero della Francesca. You have lost the power of expression which the bare recital of elementary facts of mass, gesture, and movement gave ...<sup>75</sup>

The theory arising from the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition placed Cézanne very much at the forefront of the 'new classicism', a role which had been assigned to him by Denis: "He is at once the climax of the classic tradition and the result of the great crisis of liberty and illumination which has rejuvenated modern art."<sup>76</sup> As the title of the first Grafton Galleries exhibition, Manet and the Post-Impressionists, suggests, Fry had in 1910 placed Manet at the head of the new movement. By 1912 a perceptible shift had taken place with Cézanne occupying the foreground.<sup>77</sup> In his introduction to the French section in the catalogue of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition Fry described the work of all the artists included as deriving "in some measure from the great originator of the whole idea, Cézanne".<sup>78</sup> Ginner was anxious to discredit the notion of Cézanne as a classical artist, not only in view of the reliance on past art which any such apprehension must have implied to him, but also on account of the company in which it placed Cézanne, ie. the Cubists.

While both Denis and Fry were careful to avoid any suggestion that the existence of a species of classical revival within 'Post-Impressionism' implied plagiarism or lack of originality on the part of the artists whose work they admired, Ginner would surely have held such a conclusion to be implicit within the theory itself; he was, after all, peculiarly sensitive to intimations of artistic recurrences or revivals. But what alarmed Ginner most was the tendency, especially on the part of Fry, to link Cézanne's art with that of the Cubists whose work Ginner deplored.<sup>79</sup> Ginner was highly critical of much of the art shown at the two 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions, believing that many of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists' simply imitated the work of Cézanne. Cubism he found to be particularly prone to this tendency and he accused its practitioners of adopting a formula based on Cézanne's method of "dividing the object into separate simplified planes of colour which strengthened the feeling of solidity and depth and gave in certain cases a cubistic appearance to the depicted objects".<sup>80</sup> Like Gore and Sickert, Ginner regarded the work of Cézanne as a continuation of the ideals which had guided the Impressionists rather than a reaction against them, and Ginner perceived that ideal as, inevitably, an attachment to direct study from nature.<sup>81</sup> In point of fact Ginner, at this stage, regarded 'Post-Impressionism' as a "new Academic movement", an assessment which will be explored in more detail in chapter four of this thesis.<sup>82</sup> Whether Cézanne, as Bernard in particular implied, intended any programmatic revival based on the work of Poussin is not really the issue here.<sup>83</sup> Certainly there are few secure links between the work of Cézanne and Poussin

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.332.

<sup>76</sup> M. Denis (1910), p.279.

<sup>77</sup> B. Nicolson (1951), pp.13-14.

<sup>78</sup> R. Fry (1912), p.16.

<sup>79</sup> C. Ginner (1911a).

<sup>80</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.272. (S. Gore (1910c), pp.19-20; W. Sickert (1911), p.86).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> T. Reff (1960), pp.151-3.

which would support the theory.<sup>84</sup> What is important is that Ginner would have encountered the notion and that, without doubt, he opposed it.

One result of the emergence of the 'new classicism' was an increasing interest in artists such as Poussin who was, during this period, the subject of a great deal of scholarly research. Between 1894 and 1904 no less than five monographs on Poussin appeared, including a translation into French of Bellori's early life of the artist.<sup>85</sup> During 1911 Poussin's letters were published and in 1914 no less than three major studies on the artist went to press.<sup>86</sup> It is interesting to note that among the artists whom Ginner commended as Realists were a number of admirers of the 'Academic' Poussin, one of Ginner's arch 'formula painters'. Verdi finds evidence that both Millet and Van Gogh admired Poussin's work.<sup>87</sup> The former, unlike Ginner, apparently discovered a commitment on the part of Poussin to study from nature.<sup>88</sup> Van Gogh characterised Poussin as both "a painter and a thinker" whose images, if this correctly interprets Van Gogh's words, were both naturalistic and symbolic.<sup>89</sup>

Ginner perceived the line of artistic influence continuing from the artists of the Renaissance through Carracci and Poussin and on to Lebrun who was in turn profoundly influenced by the work of Poussin. Their association dates from 1642 when Lebrun accompanied Poussin back to Rome from Paris where he remained for four years, partly under the instruction of Poussin.<sup>90</sup> Blunt has observed that, despite the dominance of the Baroque movement in Rome during Lebrun's period of study there, he was influenced largely by Poussin and by the models whom Poussin proposed: Antiquity, Raphael, the Carracci and Domenichino (1581-1641).<sup>91</sup> In two letters written from Rome in March and July 1643 to his protector Chancellor Séguier, Lebrun described a programme of study which included not only looking at antique works of art in "les principaux palais de Rome" but also copying the work of Raphael and Guido Reni (1575-1642).<sup>92</sup> The influences which worked upon Lebrun during his Roman years were to make themselves felt throughout the remainder of his career. Montagu points out that his models for the large decorative cycles which he carried out for his royal patron Louis XIV included the Carracci, Raphael, Reni and Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669).<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.173-4.

<sup>85</sup> R. Verdi (1990), p.59.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* (Ed., Charles Joanny, Correspondence de Nicolas Poussin. Paris, 1911; Otto Grautoff, Nicolas Poussin: Sein Werk und Sein Leben. Munich, 1914; Walter Friedlaender, Nicolas Poussin. Die Entwicklung seiner Kunst. Munich, 1914 and Emile Magne, Nicolas Poussin, premier peintre du roi 1594-1665. Brussels and Paris, 1914.)

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* (Alfred Sensier, Jean François Millet. Paris, 1881, p.220).

<sup>89</sup> V. Van Gogh (1959), vol. 2, p.416. "As to Poussin, he is a painter and a thinker who always gives inspiration, in whose pictures all reality is at the same time symbolic".

<sup>90</sup> A. Blunt (1944), p.169.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.169-70. Blunt cites, as an example of Lebrun's dependence on the art of Poussin, a painting he executed while in Rome, Horatius Cocles Defending Rome, 1642-6 (London, Dulwich Gallery), which Blunt describes as a pastiche of Poussin's work, actually quoting figures directly from his paintings. Blunt points to another early work, The Dead Christ, 1642-6 (Paris, Louvre) which recalls the work of both Annibale Carracci and Poussin.

<sup>92</sup> Letters published in H. Jouin (1889), pp.395-6.

<sup>93</sup> J. Montagu (1963).

This chapter has so far taken stock of Ginner's use of the term 'academic' to describe artists whose work he regarded as unoriginal, a result, in his opinion, of their attention to the achievements of other artists as opposed to looking directly at nature. According to Ginner, 'Academic painters':

... merely adopt the visions which the creative artist drew from the source of nature itself. They adopt these mannerisms, which is all they are capable of seeing in the work of the creative artist, and make formulas out of them.<sup>94</sup>

Taking issue with Ginner's denigration of Poussin, Sickert observed an apparent confusion in his application of the term 'academic' to describe both art which he believed to be unoriginal and that produced by members of the Royal Academy.<sup>95</sup> In other words Ginner appeared to be using the word both conceptually and literally with no attempt to distinguish between these alternative interpretations. In point of fact, Ginner and Sickert differed absolutely in their understanding and use of the term. Sickert declared: "The word "academic" has an honourable sense of permanent value, and belongs no more to the Royal Academy than do the words "New" or "English" or "Art", exclusively, to my friends and colleagues in Suffolk Street".<sup>96</sup> Ginner's response to Sickert's criticism was a piece of self-verifying dogma, disguised as logic, which neatly side-stepped the issue while apparently providing a circular conclusion encompassing his earlier remarks on Poussin: "... by the word "academic" I mean "art that is based on other art" and receiving no contact from nature. Example: Monsieur Nicolas Poussin".<sup>97</sup> In fact the text of Neo-Realism had implied by the term 'academic' much more than Ginner was now willing to admit, for it is a fact that criticism of the Royal Academy, both as an institution and as a group of individual artists, was implicit in Neo-Realism where Ginner wrote of the "débacle" of "the British Royal Academy, and of those of all the nations" and condemned the "old Academic movement which reigned at Burlington House and the Paris Salon".<sup>98</sup> In a review of the *Artistes Indépendants* exhibition in Paris in 1911 Ginner declared: "One cannot get even a laugh out of the Salons or the Academy, one can only get the hump."<sup>99</sup> There can be no doubt that Ginner equated 'academism' as he understood the term - "art that is based on other art" - with the work exhibited at the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy and at the *Paris Salon*.

Ginner's failure to elaborate on this theme suggests that he felt himself to be addressing a readership who took criticism of the Royal Academy for granted. Indeed, criticism of the Academy as an institution was hardly new. After all, it was largely in order to oppose the sway held by the Academy and provide a forum for those artists whom it excluded that the NEAC was founded in 1886. During that year dissatisfaction reached a climax with calls for reform coming from many quarters. A letter to The Times sparked off a virulent debate which was to continue throughout

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<sup>94</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>95</sup> W. Sickert (1914c), p.820.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> C. Ginner (1914b).

<sup>98</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>99</sup> C. Ginner (1911a).

August and September. It was signed by Clausen, an NEAC member who had exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy since 1876, Walter Crane (1845-1915) who had exhibited there only twice, in 1862 and 1872, and William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) who had failed in his attempts to secure election to the Academy although he exhibited there sixteen times between 1846 and 1874. They called for reform of the Academy to the extent that all works for the annual exhibition should be chosen by a jury "elected by and from all artists in the kingdom".<sup>100</sup> Later that month The Times published a leading article on the subject calling on the Academy, as a public institution, to give a full account of itself.<sup>101</sup> The Royal Academy's alleged maladministration of the Chantrey Bequest, which amounted to a public scandal, came to a head in 1903 when Fry, in his capacity as art critic of The Athenaeum, and D. S. MacColl (1859-1948) in the The Saturday Review launched a full-scale attack. It was pointed out that while Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841) had bequeathed funds for the express purpose of purchasing for the nation "the finest works of art, judged solely on their merits, which had been produced in Great Britain", the administrators bought almost exclusively from the annual exhibitions at the Royal Academy.<sup>102</sup> In Fry's view, the poor standard of the Chantrey Bequest collection was therefore indicative of a generally low standard evinced by the Academy's exhibitions.<sup>103</sup> Time and again in his role as art critic, not only on The Athenaeum, but for Pilot and The Nation, Fry attacked work shown at Academy exhibitions.<sup>104</sup>

Sickert's insistence on a semantic distinction between alternative uses of the term 'academic' implied that he regarded those artists who exhibited at the Royal Academy not as a homogenous, unified body but as a group of individuals who happened to exhibit at the same venue. Two years earlier he had pointed out that there were a number of artists, including Mark Fisher (1841-1923) and John Singer Sargent (1865-1925) who exhibited both at the Royal Academy and at the NEAC.<sup>105</sup> He claimed that much of the criticism surrounding the art exhibited at the Royal Academy merely expressed the adoption of avant-gardism as a dogma: "All the so-called progressive criticism in this country is tainted and compromised by an attitude of partisanship for the "outs" *quâ* "outs" against the "ins" *quâ* "ins"."<sup>106</sup> In this context Sickert praised the work of Edward Poynter (1836-1919), an Academician who was quite clearly regarded by a younger generation familiar with 'Post-Impressionist' art as one of the "outs".<sup>107</sup>

Ginner's use of the terms 'academic' and 'academy', on the other hand, implied the existence of a direct link between his interpretation of the word 'academic' and the practice of the members of the "British Royal Academy, and of those of all the nations".<sup>108</sup> Ginner understood the term 'academic'

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<sup>100</sup> G. Clausen, W. Crane and W. Hunt (1886).

<sup>101</sup> Anon., [Leading Article], The Times (19 August 1886), p.7.

<sup>102</sup> R. Fry (1903), pp.665-6.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p.666.

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, R. Fry (1902a), (1902b) and (1911a).

<sup>105</sup> W. Sickert (1912), p.487.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

to signify an over-reliance on the art of the past and it is certainly possible to identify a doctrinaire espousal of the study of the work of artists whose names had entered the canon of 'great' art, both in academic tradition and specifically with reference to the Royal Academy in London and to the French *Académie*.<sup>109</sup> Boime has identified a predisposition toward the study of the art of the past to be implicit during the nineteenth century in the teaching of the *Académie* which followed the familiar sequence of copying engravings, called *modèles de dessin* before graduating to the execution of laboriously detailed drawings from plaster casts of individual parts of the body.<sup>110</sup> Only then were students allowed to draw from the live model whose form they were encouraged to perceive in terms of a plaster cast, its proportions 'improved' upon in line with classical ideals, a view aided by the fact that the model invariably adopted poses after antique statuary.<sup>111</sup> While drawing was taught at the *Académie* students learned to paint in the studios of their masters. These private ateliers ran courses of instruction designed to prepare the student for entry to the coveted *Prix-de-Rome*. As with the teaching of drawing, students began by copying first heads after their teachers' work or that of the Old Masters. To this end they were encouraged to visit the Louvre and so the study of the art of the past continued to be reinforced throughout the students' training. The tendency was evident throughout the history of the *Académie* from its inception in the seventeenth century when Colbert instigated the practice of having students at the *Académie de France* in Rome copy works of antique art to send back to France.<sup>112</sup>

Students at the Royal Academy followed a similar course of instruction to that pursued at the *Académie* with the difference that they studied in the Royal Academy schools rather than in private studios. No one influenced teaching at the Royal Academy more than its first President Joshua Reynolds (1723-92) who delivered a series of 'Discourses' to students which stressed the premium placed by that institution from its inception on the study of the art of the past. In his first Discourse, delivered on the occasion of the opening of the Academy on 2 January 1769, Reynolds emphasised the importance of its role as a repository in which "great examples of the Art" would be available for study: "The student receives, at one glance, the principles which many Artists have spent their whole lives in ascertaining; and, satisfied with their effect, is spared the painful investigation by which they came to be known and fixed."<sup>113</sup> Reynolds spoke of the necessity of obedience on the part of students to the "Rules of Art", the established practice of the "great Masters" which, having

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<sup>109</sup> J. Hargrove (1990), p.12, has identified a problem of nomenclature in dealing with the French *Académie* which, unlike the British Royal Academy which has remained a single entity throughout its existence, underwent a series of alterations of title and administration under successive governments. At the symposium, The French Academy: Classicism and its Antagonists held in Maryland and Baltimore in 1984 and in the published essays, edited by Hargrove, which followed, the title 'French Academy' was adopted to cover all manifestations of the Academy in France, differentiation relying on context. This practice has been adhered to here, using the French translation of the word academy in order to avoid confusion with the British Royal Academy.

<sup>110</sup> A. Boime (1971), p.24.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>112</sup> N. Pevsner (1940), p.99.

<sup>113</sup> J. Reynolds (1904), p.7.

"passed through the approbation of ages, should be considered by them as perfect and infallible guides; as subjects for their imitation, not their criticism."<sup>114</sup> While Reynolds held that it was impossible to overdo the study of past achievements in art, he did offer some advice regarding the approved form which that study should take.<sup>115</sup> The value of copying he held to be inversely proportionate to the tedious labour involved; his watchword was imitation through selection.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, it was his conviction that an artist's inventiveness increased in direct proportion to the "number of ideas which have been carefully collected and thoroughly digested" from "an assemblage of all the treasures of ancient and modern art".<sup>117</sup>

While Ginner regarded Annibale Carracci as a 'formula painter', Reynolds included the Carracci in a list of artists who had "adopted a more liberal style of imitation, [extending] their views beyond the model that lay before them".<sup>118</sup> Reynolds also extolled the virtues of study from antique art; "venerable relics" which must be "sought after and carefully studied" as the "fountain-head" of art, prophesying that should the study of antiquity cease, the arts would "no longer flourish, and we shall again relapse into barbarism".<sup>119</sup> Reynolds professed a curiously litigious attitude to the question of plagiarism, holding the view that it was quite permissible for an artist to copy directly from antique sources, "a magazine of common property, always open to the public"; while the "works of the moderns are more the property of their authors".<sup>120</sup> He added that even this form of copying was acceptable provided artists, so to speak, covered their tracks, allowing "no seam or joining" to appear.<sup>121</sup>

Ginner would have been aware that similar ideals guided the teaching at the Royal Academy in his own day. In 1913 Clausen, one of the Naturalists whom Ginner vilified in Neo-Realism as "photographers of nature", published a collection of sixteen lectures which he had delivered to the students of the Academy schools.<sup>122</sup> Like Reynolds, of whose Discourses he wrote: "... there is no book that an artist can read that is so illuminating and so helpful", Clausen believed in the pre-eminence of Italian Renaissance art and the value of studying the Antique.<sup>123</sup> He regarded Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling as the greatest work of art ever produced and advised his students to study - not copy - antique art, with the proviso that such study would be more beneficial after the student had experienced life drawing.<sup>124</sup> While this view does depart from the strictly sequential academic tradition of a period of study in the antique room before a student was

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.24. (Second Discourse, 11 December 1769).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp.25-7.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.150. (Sixth Discourse, 10 December 1774).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pp.159-60.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.163.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.164.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp.164-5.

<sup>122</sup> G. Clausen (1913).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.117.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp.115, 145.

introduced to life drawing, Clausen evidently subscribed to the academic principle that study of antique and Renaissance models was important, indeed paramount, in a student's development.

In the context of Ginner's use of the term 'academic' in its most literal sense, it is worth noting that two of the artists on his list of 'formula painters', Poussin and Lebrun, played decisive roles in the history of the *Académie*. Lebrun was instrumental in its foundation and fulfilled the posts, successively, of Rector, Chancellor and Director until the death of his protector, Colbert, in 1683. Lebrun effectively controlled the arts during the reign of Louis XIV, combining his role in the *Académie* with the functions of *premier peintre du roi* from 1664, Director of the Gobelins factory from 1662 and even extending his activities to the directorship of the Academy of St. Luke in Rome during 1675-6. Poussin's work was to exercise a profound influence on the activities of the *Académie* through the agency of Lebrun whose teaching at the *Académie* revealed the direct influence of Poussin in his preoccupation with the creation of a standard method of expressing emotion in figure subjects. In a lecture delivered before the students of the *Académie* in 1667, Lebrun analysed Poussin's *Israelites Gathering the Manna*, 1638 (Paris, Louvre) with reference to its illustration of a variety of poses, expressions and gestures.<sup>125</sup> It was a method approved by Poussin who instructed Chantelou in a letter of 1639 to observe the movements of each figure in the painting thereby discovering the particular emotion which each was intended to convey.<sup>126</sup> Lebrun's own researches in this area leaned much more toward the delineation of facial expression and in 1698 his lecture on this subject to the students of the *Académie* was published in book form.<sup>127</sup>

A key element in the interpretation of academism is the notion of a reactionary resistance to artistic innovation. Certainly there was sufficient evidence of this tendency in the history of both the French *Académie* and the British Royal Academy. During the nineteenth century the exclusion of Realists such as Courbet and later the Impressionists from the *Salon* forced them to organise alternative exhibitions and fuelled perceptions of the 'official' art establishment as hidebound and reactionary. While recent attempts, notably by Boime and Hargrove, have been made to reduce the polarity perceived between 'advanced' and 'reactionary', 'avant-garde' and 'academic' in nineteenth-century French art, there can be little doubt that for Ginner, in keeping with many of his contemporaries, there was a clear distinction to be made.<sup>128</sup> Like many younger artists working in London during this period, Ginner's perception of the Royal Academy was coloured by the improbability of being elected to it.<sup>129</sup> For artists like Gilman and Ginner, the Royal Academy, viewed as a possible exhibiting forum, was quite simply an irrelevance. Their efforts were directed toward establishing alternative societies such as the AAA, described by Rutter as democratic in view of the fact that all artists were eligible to join and for the payment of an annual subscription could

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<sup>125</sup> W. Friedlaender (1966), p.146.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>127</sup> C. Lebrun (1698).

<sup>128</sup> A. Boime (1971) and J. Hargrove (1990).

<sup>129</sup> In 1942, at the age of sixty-four, Ginner's name was put forward for election as an Associate of the Royal Academy. He was duly elected but never became a full member.

have up to five works included in the Association's exhibitions.<sup>130</sup> The absence of a selecting jury ensured the acceptance of all work submitted.

Ginner himself received an academic training for a short time, spending a year during 1905-6 at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. The previous year and the two years following were spent at the *Académie Vitti* working for the first year under Paul-Jean Gervais (1859-1935) then with the Spanish artist Hermenegildo Anglada-Camarasa (1873-1959).<sup>131</sup> In Gilman's training at the Slade, emphasis was placed on drawing from the life model although Lewis observed that Gilman's efforts in this direction were not attended by "conspicuous success" and Gilman himself left no record of his views on the education he received there.<sup>132</sup>

It is likely that Ginner's perception of a pernicious element in the influence of antique and Italian Renaissance art on native art practice outside Italy was partly influenced by a book on Rembrandt published in 1911 by Holmes, then Director of the National Portrait Gallery.<sup>133</sup> Holmes presented Rembrandt as an artist working outside of academic tradition, as indeed barely affected by the work of any artist either past or present, a notion which was very much part of received opinion regarding Rembrandt's work during this period.<sup>134</sup> Holmes sought particularly to separate Rembrandt from any association with the art of the Italian Renaissance. He deplored the attachment to the study of Italian art which characterised "All the academies of the Fine Arts".<sup>135</sup> Rembrandt's appeal for Holmes lay in his 'humanising' of the Bible narratives, made possible by his independence from the classical sculpture which had influenced the ideal types of Italian Renaissance art.<sup>136</sup> The point had, of course, been made before, notably in Malcolm Bell's book on the artist published ten years earlier, but Holmes's specifically anti-Italian stance was his own.<sup>137</sup>

It was Holmes's contention that artists who had been inculcated in academies of art with the study of Italian painting, and been guided by this principle throughout their careers, were, by and large, completely forgotten.<sup>138</sup> While Ginner may have wished rather than believed this to be so, he fully endorsed the underlying prejudice. The list of artists whom he condemned as "Formula-machines" were exclusively members of art academies, several such as Poussin and Lebrun

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<sup>130</sup> F. Rutter (1927), p.185.

<sup>131</sup> J. Rothenstein (1957), p.189.

<sup>132</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.12.

<sup>133</sup> C. Holmes, *Notes on the Art of Rembrandt*, London, 1911. There can be no doubt that Gilman and Ginner knew Holmes who joined the NEAC during 1904, the year in which Gilman's work was first accepted by the Club's jury and where he had been exhibiting sporadically ever since. In 1912 both Ginner and Holmes were invited by Fry to send work to an exhibition which he organised in Paris. (*Galerie Barbazanges, Quelques Artistes Indépendants Anglais*, May, 1912).

<sup>134</sup> In 1905 Mortimer Menpes (1860-1938) published a book on Rembrandt in which he asserted: "The work of other painters affected [Rembrandt] not at all. We are without proof that he was even interested in the work of his contemporaries or predecessors ... The world about him, and his thoughts and reflections, were his only influences." M. Menpes (1905), pp.48-9.

<sup>135</sup> C. Holmes (1911), p.2.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>137</sup> M. Bell (1901), p.63.

<sup>138</sup> C. Holmes (1911), pp.2-3.

prominent shapers of academic practice.<sup>139</sup> Academic teaching had, in Holmes's view, produced generations of academic artists in an endless cycle of cause and effect:

Art academies sprang up equipped, so far as human effort could equip them, to carry their students through an impossible curriculum, and generation after generation of painters attempted to absorb the vast mass of learning for which the Grand Style of painting called ... Not one student in a thousand was made of strong enough stuff to endure so terrific an ordeal ... The rest lost all such talent as they originally possessed, and became dull eclectic pedants, driving the next unlucky generation into the same interminable educational morass in which their own originality had sunk.<sup>140</sup>

Holmes regarded Rembrandt as a self-taught artist, hardly an accurate appraisal but indicative of Holmes's deeply-held prejudice against the education provided in schools of art.<sup>141</sup> While Ginner shared Holmes's aversion to academies of art and his bias in favour of direct study from nature, he was not opposed to the notion of art education *per se* as Holmes evidently was when he declared: "Few seem to realise that what an artist must teach himself, from the study of nature and of his predecessors, is infinitely more important than all that he can learn from the best equipped art school".<sup>142</sup> Ginner, who was to open a teaching school with Gilman in 1916, would have retained the services of an art school in preference to the influence of a predecessor which, according to Neo-Realism, was liable to be pernicious.

The influence on Ginner's thought of Holmes's book is again indicated by his rejection of Italian Renaissance art which "going to Rome and not to nature" ended, in Ginner's view, in the "quagmire of Giulio Romano, Carracci, etc."<sup>143</sup> Ginner's list of 'Realists' included only two references to Italian art. The "early Italians" were, he conceded, Realists and he included Ghirlandaio's Portrait of an Old Man with a Young Boy in his list of key Realist works.<sup>144</sup> Holmes was of the opinion that the "great minds" of the Renaissance infused enough of their own "powerful personalities" into their emulation of ancient sculpture to create great art. It was the eclecticism of lesser talents to which he objected and the use to which Italian Renaissance art had been put in the art schools. In the hands of Ginner, a highly developed and complex argument was reduced to a dogmatic critique of Italian Renaissance art. Comparing Ginner's text with that of Holmes, one perceives a recurring tendency on the part of Ginner to pick up and overstate a number of Holmes's ideas. Holmes observed: "Greek art of the best period was gradually reduced to an average and standardised by the Romans, who achieved success only when, as in their portrait sculpture, they endowed it with fresh character".<sup>145</sup> Ginner's text reduced the subtleties of Holmes's argument to a crude statement involving the "downfall of Greece, and the bad art of Rome".<sup>146</sup> Holmes attempted

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<sup>139</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>140</sup> C. Holmes (1911), p.123.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.124. "... Rembrandt had to teach himself, as every great artist has done before or since."

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp.126-7.

<sup>143</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> C. Holmes (1911), p.xviii.

<sup>146</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

to alleviate the impression which he felt he may have given that all art academies "taught that the only road to salvation led through Greece and Italy":

That is strictly true only in isolated cases. For the most part, like the Royal Academy in England, they are mixed bodies, containing several prophets of classical rigour, possibly a few good artists, and a great many painters who honestly believe in some form of the popular ideal and honestly paint down to it.<sup>147</sup>

As a summary of the present academic system this was hardly high praise but it was an attempt at even-handedness, if not actually impartial. Ginner's condemnation of the academic system was, on the other hand, entirely without qualification. The British Royal Academy and those of all the nations had, he declared, ended in "débacle".<sup>148</sup> It is indicative of Neo-Realism as a whole for it is an extremely uncompromising document; Ginner's notion of the 'correct' approach to art implied absolutely no latitude. The tone throughout is relentlessly homiletic, the language somewhat religiose, initial capitals endowing words such as 'Art' and 'Nature' with a quasi-religious significance. Short paragraphs give a peremptory emphasis to the views expressed.

Ginner's stress on the value of artistic originality is repeatedly emphasised in Holmes's book. Holmes followed a well-trodden path in his portrayal of Rembrandt as the quintessential artistic genius equipped with an apparently totally original and personal approach. In a chapter entitled Rembrandt as Rebel he provided an outline of the ways in which Rembrandt's work departed from contemporary art practice in the Netherlands.<sup>149</sup> Holmes's reservations regarding the value of an art school training and his assessment of Rembrandt as a self-taught artist have been touched upon. His rejection of the training received in art schools was qualified with the proviso that "Academies and schools can teach the elements of drawing and painting" and that students *may* derive "some beneficial stimulus from the friendly rivalry and conversation of their fellows".<sup>150</sup> But here, according to Holmes, "the usefulness of schools and academies comes to an end."<sup>151</sup> In his view, any training over and above the basic elements of drawing was likely to consist of the cramming of the student with "the canons and ideals of his predecessors" which was, in Holmes's opinion, "really fatal".<sup>152</sup> Ginner's notion of 'formula painting' is very close to Holmes's warning on the dangers inherent in the practice of borrowing from the work of other artists. It was an acceptable practice, Holmes maintained, so long as an artist only emulated "some new principle which sensibly augments his powers of personal expression".<sup>153</sup> But when an artist copied specific traits, "some trick in handling, some preference in the choice of his subjects which seems to bring his work into closer accord with the contemporary work about him", then that artist became a mere copyist or

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<sup>147</sup> C. Holmes (1911), p.xix.

<sup>148</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>149</sup> C. Holmes (1911), pp.14-41.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.7.

"follower".<sup>154</sup> This was a general application of the same tenet which Ginner applied in a specific instance to the Cubists whom he believed to have adopted a superficial aspect of Cézanne's work, that is to say, his practice of "dividing the object into separate simplified planes of colour which strengthened the feeling of solidity and depth and gave in certain cases a cubistic appearance to the depicted objects".<sup>155</sup> The Cubists' adoption of Cézanne's "personal methods of interpreting nature" resulted, according to Ginner, in the creation of a 'formula'.<sup>156</sup>

It was, in Holmes's view, greatly to Rembrandt's credit that he survived a period of study in the studio of Pieter Lastman (1583-1633), whom Holmes described as a "member of the group of Italianising Dutchmen ... [and] a thorough eclectic", without coming under the influence of "the eclectic Italianising atmosphere" which characterised it.<sup>157</sup> The chief defect in the type of training provided by Lastman was, Holmes believed, "a sincerity to abstract rules and principles rather than to the artist's personal vision".<sup>158</sup> Holmes regarded Rembrandt's expression of character in portraying the human figure, in preference to ideal Italian types, as indicative of his fundamental independence from Lastman's training and from the Italian models which inspired him.<sup>159</sup> Rembrandt's decision not to visit Italy was, not surprisingly, seen by Holmes as being all of a piece with this attitude.<sup>160</sup>

Ginner's wholesale dismissal of broad categories of art which he signposted with reference to key figures such as Giulio and Poussin may be interpreted as simply Ginner's own artistic prejudices masquerading as aesthetic theory. Ginner's list of what we might term 'likes' and 'dislikes', was predicated on a prejudice in favour of genre painting and portraiture of all periods, a preference for Northern European art and a degree of hostility toward Italian Renaissance art. In this sense it was an audacious, even iconoclastic, document for none of those artists in the orthodox canon of those artists considered the greatest of the Old Masters, with the exception of Rembrandt, figure in Ginner's list of 'great painters'. Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, for example, are all absent. One can hardly imagine that Ginner was unwilling to assign Michelangelo's work to the canon of great art. Rather, he was making a point which was really an extension of his argument concerning what he termed 'academic' art: That artists should not look to the Italian Renaissance for inspiration which is precisely what the teaching of academies of art encouraged with their insistence that students draw not only from plaster casts of the antique statuary which had inspired Renaissance artists but also the works of Italian Renaissance artists themselves. Instead Ginner recommended a programme of study which involved looking directly at the subject, bypassing as far as possible the intermediate influence of other works of art. Holmes had praised Rembrandt in terms of his decision

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> C. Holmes (1911), p.26.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34-5.

not to visit Italy thus preserving his art from Italian influence. It is clear that Rembrandt achieved a place on Ginner's list of 'Realists' for precisely this reason, an aspect of Neo-Realism which may be viewed as a species of art historical nationalism.

There is indeed a strong vein of nationalism running through Neo-Realism; not a political nationalism but in the sense that Ginner believed a work of art ought to reflect the artist's own culture and environment. Viewed in this light it may be seen as another aspect of the Realist stress on the portrayal of contemporary life. It is something which can be seen in Ginner's and Holmes's derogation of artists who adopted elements of Italian Renaissance art instead of going directly to nature for inspiration. This notion occurs in French nineteenth-century Realist theory, in the writings of Thoré whose influence on Ginner's thought is indicated here. Jowell has detected an increasing hostility during the 1840s, on the part of Thoré, toward the influence of Italian art on the French school.<sup>161</sup> Thoré regarded this as an abdication of national identity by French artists in which he implicated David, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) and Poussin.<sup>162</sup> In 1848 Thoré even went so far as to call for the abolition of the French School in Rome which, he insisted, had exercised a detrimental influence on French artistic affairs.<sup>163</sup> He argued that the greatest artists in all countries had remained indigenous or 'national' by which he meant uninfluenced by Italian art.<sup>164</sup> While conceding the value of Italian Renaissance art, Thoré argued that France, Germany and the Low Countries had experienced their own Renaissance and that it was a positive advantage to be of one's own country:<sup>165</sup> "... il est bon d'être Français en France, Allemand en Allemagne, Espagnol en Espagne, Flamand en Flandre, tout comme il faut être Italien en Italie".<sup>166</sup>

Trawling through Thoré's published writings, one gains the distinct impression that many of the ideas contained in Neo-Realism were culled from this source. Much of Thoré's art criticism appeared in journals such as L'Artiste and the Gazette des Beaux-Arts while his Salons were available in a collected edition published in 1868.<sup>167</sup> Ginner was evidently primarily familiar with, or interested in, Thoré's writings of the 1840s which stressed a nationalistic aesthetic; demonstrated, for example, by his call for the hanging of the Louvre to be reorganised into national schools.<sup>168</sup> During the next decade Thoré restructured his theory to take account of a universal notion of art which he expounded in a series of articles for Révue universelle des arts, a new journal dedicated to the study of art in its universality rather than confined within national boundaries.<sup>169</sup> Thoré was, of course, a political figure, which Ginner was not, and Jowell regards his artistic nationalism as

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<sup>161</sup> F. Jowell (1977).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.129.

<sup>163</sup> T. Thoré, "De L'Ecole française à Rome", L'Artiste, vol. 11 (1848), pp.214-7. Trans. F. Jowell (1977), p.130.

<sup>164</sup> F. Jowell (1977), p.131.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> T. Thoré, op. cit.

<sup>167</sup> Salons de T. Thoré, 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1848. Avec une préface par W. Bürger. Paris, 1868.

<sup>168</sup> F. Jowell (1977), p.63. (T. Thoré, "A MM. Directeurs du Musée du Louvre", L'Artiste, vol. XI (1836), pp.281-3.)

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p.181.

symptomatic of a wider left-wing political nationalism.<sup>170</sup> No such claim can be substantiated on behalf of Ginner for nothing is known of the Neo-Realists' political leanings beyond Rutter's vague reference to Gilman's Socialism.<sup>171</sup> In fact, Ginner's art historical nationalism was thoroughly in keeping with his espousal of artistic originality and his mistrust of the academic system of art education with its bias in favour of the emulation of Italian art and it is worth pointing out in this context that there is no evidence that Gilman ever visited Italy while Ginner apparently went only once as a young man.<sup>172</sup> The artists whom Ginner named as Realists or criticised as 'formula painters' in Neo-Realism are substantially the same as those whom Thoré respectively praised as original artists with a strong national identity or condemned as being overly dependent on Italian models. Thus Thoré cited the Van Eycks, Bruegel and Rembrandt among those artists whom he considered the greatest of the Low Countries and independent of the Italian school.<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, he implicated Poussin and Lebrun in the decadence of French art, dependent on Italian models for their inspiration, while citing the Le Nains as examples of indigenous French artists who did not go to Italy.<sup>174</sup> As Ginner's 1924 article, The New Movements in Painting, demonstrates, this was a view which remained largely intact although the artist whom he now chose to exemplify the tendency was David:

Before the Impressionists sprang their ideals on to France that country was in the throes of a form of classicism which had been revived by the school of David ... and which had come down from the Italian Renaissance. This form of art had become decadent through its exponents having no personal aim or vision but contented themselves with aping more or less badly the ideas of their predecessors.<sup>175</sup>

Ginner's preoccupation with art as an activity which could be defined by nationality was expressed in an article he wrote in 1917 in which he called for a fusion of the best elements of contemporary English art in the creation of a "great national Art".<sup>176</sup> It was Ginner's contention that while many native artists had initially come under the influence of French art, they had gradually evolved an art which had taken a definite form of its own "under the workings of English emotions and minds".<sup>177</sup> He named the Vorticist movement as an example of English art, initially inspired by Cubism in France, which had taken on a character of its own, becoming "something quite apart".<sup>178</sup> In 1924 Ginner was even prepared to attribute the total assimilation of the influence of French art, which he perceived in the work of contemporary English artists, to the national character:

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p.140.

<sup>171</sup> F. Rutter (1931), p.207. "In politics [Gilman] became a Socialist with a profound dread and mistrust of Society".

<sup>172</sup> A sketchbook in the possession of Mrs Nancie Cappella, dated 1891, contains several sketches carried out in Italy of landscape and, occasionally, buildings. (Information from Mrs Cappella).

<sup>173</sup> T. Thoré, "De L'Ecole française à Rome", op. cit. Trans. F. Jowell (1977), pp.132-3.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>175</sup> C. Ginner (1924), p.6.

<sup>176</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.19.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

The English temperament more contemplative than the French, whose minds are quick and alert and act on impulse did not, except in a few instances, rush to extremes with the result that it has produced, by reacting in a calmer spirit to these new ideas, pictures which contained all the elements that are necessary to make up a perfect work of art.<sup>179</sup>

Ginner's inclusion of El Greco in his list of 'Realists' was symptomatic of his nationalistic conception of art. His is a name which does not appear to conform either to Thoré's nationalist model or to Ginner's Realist criteria. El Greco spent over ten years in Italy, most of them in Rome, and his elongated figures with distorted proportions and limbs and highly mannered poses are clearly indebted to Italian Mannerist art. On the face of it, one would have expected Ginner to condemn El Greco as an artist overly reliant on Mannerist art and thus to cast him as a 'formula painter'. In fact Ginner was evidently much more interested in the qualities of originality which he detected in El Greco's work. Shearman has described El Greco as "an artist who used strongly Mannerist conventions with an increasingly expressive purpose and urgency that is far from characteristic of Mannerism."<sup>180</sup> Brown notes that during the 1860s interest in El Greco was revived by artists and writers who sought to establish him as an artist who had worked outside the classical or academic tradition.<sup>181</sup> Prior to the mid-nineteenth century his work was dismissed as extravagant and bizarre. Nineteenth-century revisionists, however, regarded the unconventionality of his work as a positive trait.<sup>182</sup> Nineteenth-century French Realists were among his admirers; both Manet and Monet visited Spain to look at his work while Millet owned one of his paintings.<sup>183</sup> One might speculate that part of El Greco's attraction for Ginner lay in the story that he fled Rome after earning the fury of other painters by offering to repaint Michelangelo. According to Mancini, Pius V was offended by some of the nudes on the Sistine ceiling and ordered them to be painted over. El Greco offered to repaint the entire fresco with "honesty and decency" and equal mastery if Michelangelo's work was destroyed.<sup>184</sup> One suspects that the combination of iconoclasm and irreverence with regard to Italian Renaissance art embodied in this apocryphal tale would have held a strong appeal for Ginner.

El Greco is recorded in Toledo from 1577 until his death in 1614. Although Spain was not his native country he assimilated his surroundings to the extent that his work came to be regarded as an expression of the very spirit of Spain. In 1908 Manuel Cossio published a book on the artist in which he attributed the improvement which he perceived in the work which El Greco executed after his arrival in Spain to the influence of that country on his art.<sup>185</sup> Cossio was an original member and later Director of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* founded in 1880 and dedicated to the preservation of the Spanish national character in the assimilation of foreign ideas.<sup>186</sup> In the years

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<sup>179</sup> C. Ginner (1924), p.7.

<sup>180</sup> J. Shearman (1981), p.28.

<sup>181</sup> J. Brown (1982), p.20.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82. (G. Mancini, *Considerazioni Sulla Pittura*, 1614; Ed. A. Marucchi and L. Salerno, 2 vols. Rome, 1956.)

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22. (M. Cossio, *El Greco*. Madrid, 1908).

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

leading up to 1913 books and articles on El Greco's work proliferated. They included an appraisal by Julius Meier-Graefe who, having visited Spain on a pilgrimage in homage to Velazquez, found that his work paled beside that of El Greco.<sup>187</sup> It would be interesting to know what Gilman, who spent almost a year in Madrid studying and copying paintings by Velazquez, made of El Greco's work.<sup>188</sup> He must have seen, during his visit, the El Greco exhibition held at the Prado in 1902.<sup>189</sup> By 1913 both Neo-Realists had evidently been converted to Meier-Graefe's opinion for Velazquez's name does not appear in the list of 'Realists' as might have been expected; instead it is El Greco who figures as one of "the great painters of the world [who] have known that great art can only be created out of continued intercourse with nature".<sup>190</sup>

Part of the attraction of El Greco's work for Ginner may have lain in his perception of a link between his work and that of Cézanne. In 1912 Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and the other members of *der Blaue Reiter* in Germany published the Blaue Reiter Almanach which was translated into English in 1914 as The Art of Spiritual Harmony. Both Gilman and Ginner, as members of the Leeds Arts Club, would have been familiar with this publication through the agency of Michael Sadler, Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University, at whose home the club met once a month.<sup>191</sup> In his introduction to the Blaue Reiter Almanach, Franz Marc (1880-1916) posited an affinity between the work of El Greco and that of Cézanne, describing them as "spiritual brothers" and declaring that in their view of life both felt "the *mystical inner construction*, which is the great problem of our generation".<sup>192</sup> The notion of a link between the art of Cézanne and El Greco, whether real or perceived, seems to have influenced Ginner's interpretation of Cézanne's work. There is a passage in Cossio's book in which he analyses El Greco's work in terms of the spirit and nature of the Castilian landscape which surrounded him:

Castile, an austere and harsh place, was for [El Greco] benign because it made him free. Isolated in Castile, he forgets rules and abandons his teachers, he gathers his forces unto himself and becomes intimate with the spirit and nature of the region, he immerses himself deeply in them yet also allows them to penetrate his soul. Finally, he takes possession of the character of the land and of the Spanish soul; he borrows from them the elements that vibrate in harmony with his singular temperament - the violence, the dignity, the exaltation, the sorrow, the mysticism, the intimate reality, the ash-gray, reddish monotony [of the landscape] - and after a rapid,

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p.27. (J. Meier-Graefe, Spanische Reise. Berlin, 1910).

<sup>188</sup> H. Gilman (1910a).

<sup>189</sup> Exposición de las obras de Domenico Theotocópuli, llamado El Greco. Madrid, 1902. Catalogue by Salvador Viniegra.

<sup>190</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>191</sup> D. Thistlewood (1984), p.26. Sadler, whose pioneering art collection included several works by Kandinsky, visited the artist at his home near Munich in 1912. (M. Sadleir (1949), p.237). He continued to correspond with him until the 1930s and it was his son Michael Sadleir who produced the first English translation of the Blaue Reiter Almanach, having become interested in Kandinsky after buying several of his woodcuts from the AAA exhibition in 1911 (London, Royal Albert Hall, Allied Artists Association, July 1911, cat. no.1201). M. Sadleir (1949), pp.237-40.

<sup>192</sup> K. Lankheit, ed. (1974), p.59.

inevitable assimilation, he comes to form an original, eternal style, and finds a path he can call his own.<sup>193</sup>

In 1918 Ginner published an article in which he analysed Cézanne's work in precisely the same terms in which Cossio had discussed the work of El Greco, with reference, of course, to the landscape of Provence. Cézanne's work was, Ginner declared, "a direct interpretation of the character of Provence".<sup>194</sup> Cossio described Castile as "an austere and harsh place" and spoke of the "ash-gray, reddish monotony" of the landscape. The region of Provence was characterised, too, by a rugged terrain. Ginner wrote:

The country of Provence is bare and rocky, surface matter is almost absent, and we are brought to the rock, to the constructive foundation of the earth, to what might be termed its scaffolding. There is little of the fat soil that brings forth luxuriant vegetation: even the olive trees, pines and vineyards have a stunted, underfed appearance in harmony with the other characteristics of the land.<sup>195</sup>

Born and brought up in Cannes, Ginner was well-placed to assess Cézanne's interpretation of the Provençal countryside. According to Ginner, Cézanne had, by observing the character of the landscape around him, created a powerful and original art based on the qualities of construction and simplification which distinguished the landscape. Later, Cézanne was able to apply what he had learned from his study of landscape to the human figure and to still life.<sup>196</sup>

Cossio's interpretation of El Greco's art as the quintessential expression of the Spanish, specifically Castilian, spirit was a novel one when he presented it in 1908.<sup>197</sup> The period under discussion saw an intense upsurge of interest in El Greco. Having included El Greco's name in his list of 'Realists', Ginner proved himself to be part of this trend and as such he must have been aware of the interpretation of El Greco's work offered by Cossio. Although we have little information regarding Gilman's Spanish trip, it is possible that he was aware of, and may have discussed with Ginner, the ideas and aims of the 'Generation of 1898', a group of writers and philosophers indebted to the ideals of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* who were expressly committed to the notion of art as an indicator of national spirit and character, a commitment which was clearly indicated in Cossio's book on El Greco.<sup>198</sup> Part of this trend, although one of which Ginner was probably unaware, was the interest in the work of El Greco evinced by the young Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) who had copied heads by El Greco in the Prado as early as 1897.<sup>199</sup> There is considerable evidence that Picasso identified strongly with El Greco.<sup>200</sup> His work was influenced by him at a crucial stage in his development: Richardson has drawn a parallel between his *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907

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<sup>193</sup> M. Cossio, *op. cit.* Trans. J. Brown (1982), p.22.

<sup>194</sup> C. Ginner (1918), p.41.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>197</sup> J. Brown (1982), p.23.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> J. Richardson (1991), p.290.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

(New York, Museum of Modern Art) and El Greco's Apocalyptic Vision, 1608-14 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art) [20].<sup>201</sup>

The first two chapters of this thesis have been devoted largely to establishing a historical context for the theory of Neo-Realism and with interpreting Ginner's attitude toward the art of the past. Before examining the Neo-Realist view of contemporary art in chapter four, the following chapter will demonstrate that a commitment to Realism was implicit in the work produced by both Gilman and Ginner from an early date and will suggest that Gilman was heavily influenced in this respect by the work of Sickert.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p.430.

### CHAPTER THREE

"Intensely a realist, [Gilman] was ... influenced by Walter Sickert in his outlook and delighted in painting the poorer classes, the natives of Camden Town and their humble interiors. I associate, in my mind, Sickert and Gilman with Hogarth, Rowlandson and the great English tradition of realism."<sup>1</sup>

The above-quoted passage from the obituary which Ginner wrote following Gilman's death in 1919 indicates that Ginner not only regarded Gilman's Realism as being defined primarily by his choice of subject matter but that he perceived such themes to be inseparable from the context and influence of Sickert's art. The references to William Hogarth (1697-1764) and Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) represent an attempt to situate Gilman's work within an established English tradition rather than to imply the existence of any causal link. As Ginner made clear, Sickert's influence on Gilman's art was crucial, a circumstance in marked contrast to Ginner's own work which appears, on the face of it, to be almost entirely independent of Sickert's example unless we attribute to him some of the credit for Ginner's choice of London street scenes as subjects. Yet even here it appears that Ginner was not influenced directly by Sickert but by Whistler, the artist who, as Baron points out, had originally introduced Sickert to such themes.<sup>2</sup> Ginner's first essay in the genre was A Corner in Chelsea. Significantly, Chelsea, a study of the church of St. Luke which appears in the finished painting, was entered in Ginner's Notebooks as 'Whistler Chimneys', a clear indication that Ginner's choice of subject derived directly from the work of Whistler.<sup>3</sup> Sickert's influence on Ginner's work appears to have been confined to the practice of making on-the-spot drawings and colour notes to be worked up into a final drawing and squared for transfer to canvas in the studio. As suggested in chapter one, surviving photographs of the artist at work indicate that Ginner's practice when he first came to England was to make oil studies on canvas out of doors.

It was suggested in the introduction that Ginner's Scene at a Café Bar was influenced by Lautrec. While living in Paris he had some employment as a magazine illustrator.<sup>4</sup> Surviving examples of these, Les Suiveurs [21] and Du Tic Au Tac, 1907 (private collection) conform to a *fin de siècle* tradition of captioned caricatures suggestive of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) and Lautrec.<sup>5</sup> An early dated work by Ginner entitled At the Theatre, 1905 (London, Anthony D'Offay Gallery) [22] indicates an interest in the theatre scenes of Degas, taking a viewpoint from the gallery and including members of the audience silhouetted against the stage. Clearly, Ginner had developed independently on parallel lines to the work of Gore and Sickert. There can be little doubt that when he arrived in London and met his fellow AAA members, Ginner experienced not a revelation but a sense of community in shared artistic aims and interests which was undoubtedly a motivating factor

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1919a), p.130.

<sup>2</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.10.

<sup>3</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.xi.

<sup>4</sup> B. Sewell (1985), p.3.

<sup>5</sup> These are not cited in Ginner's Notebooks and it is not known which magazines he worked for.

in persuading him to remain. Rutter maintained that Ginner's style was fully formed before he met Sickert: "Nothing amuses me more than to read ... that Ginner is a 'pupil' of Walter Sickert. Pure nonsense. Ginner's own peculiar style was definitely formed before he came to London and got to know Sickert."<sup>6</sup> Certainly Ginner's preference for using very thick, undiluted paint is evident in the work he produced before he left Paris. An example is The Sunlit Wall, 1908 (private collection) [23], a French subject identified in Ginner's Notebooks as 'Paysage à Charenton'.<sup>7</sup> It was exhibited at the first Camden Town Group exhibition in June 1911 (39) where, along with Ginner's other contributions, including an unidentified Still Life (38), it attracted a good deal of critical attention which must have done much to consolidate Ginner's position within the Camden Town Group as an artist fresh from Paris, acquainted with the latest movements. One reviewer even drew a favourable comparison between Ginner's work and that of Cézanne which had been seen at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition at the Grafton Galleries during the previous autumn: "The most daring of the whole group is Mr. C. Ginner. His "Still Life" is painted with the passionate intensity of a Cézanne, but with a far better grip of form. "The Sunlit Wall" is a triumphant song of pure brilliant colour."<sup>8</sup>

Although not initially influenced by Sickert's working methods, contact with Sickert and other members of the Camden Town Group must surely have reinforced Ginner's commitment to Realism especially with regard to his choice of subject matter. It was an aspect of Sickert's art which was to exert a decisive and lasting influence on Gilman's work even after he had moved away from Sickert's use of colour and his particular handling which, in contrast to Ginner, were to be decisive factors in his early development. In order to measure the impact of Sickert's art on that of Gilman it is necessary to explore the weight of other early influences, the most significant of which was undoubtedly his attachment to the work of Velazquez.

In 1943 Cooper described Gilman's early study of Velazquez as an "unfashionable beginning".<sup>9</sup> In fact, as Rutter had suggested twelve years earlier, Gilman was joining in what was then the "fashionable worship of Velazquez".<sup>10</sup> Gilman's decision to travel to Madrid after leaving the Slade in 1901 was by no means an unusual one for a young artist to take; his Slade contemporaries Gore and Lewis went there in 1902.<sup>11</sup> Indeed it was by this time a well-trodden path, if not replacing at least to some extent rivalling Paris and Rome as a mecca for artists. When George Murray (1875-1933) won the Royal Academy's Gold Medal and Travelling Scholarship in 1901 he elected to go, not to Paris or Rome, but to Madrid to study and copy the work of Velazquez.<sup>12</sup> In the same year The Edinburgh Review published reviews of several books on Velazquez with the observation: "Velazquez is no longer merely an old master, he has become a living influence on

<sup>6</sup> F. Rutter (1927), p.190.

<sup>7</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.iii.

<sup>8</sup> Anon., "The Camden Town Group", The Observer (18 June 1911), p.7.

<sup>9</sup> D. Cooper (1943).

<sup>10</sup> F. Rutter (1931), p.207.

<sup>11</sup> There is no evidence that Gore and Lewis, who travelled to Spain together, met Gilman there.

<sup>12</sup> C. Hind (1906), p.25.

modern painting; it is as if he had recently opened a studio".<sup>13</sup> This was an interesting, indeed apposite comment for it precisely expresses the nature of the influence of Velazquez's work during this period which was primarily technical. By far the most influential book on the artist was R. A. M. Stevenson's (1847-1900) *Velazquez*, first published in 1895. Stevenson was concerned only marginally with biographical or historical approaches to Velazquez's work. His book was largely taken up with technical analyses and complete chapters were devoted to such subjects as 'The Dignity of Technique' and to composition, colour, modelling and brushwork.<sup>14</sup> Stevenson made it clear that he intended his book to serve as a guide for students visiting Madrid to study Velazquez's work at the Prado.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, early passages read very much like a guidebook with descriptions of the Spanish countryside and the rooms in the Prado, even touching on such practicalities as the reliability of the Spanish train service and the quality of the food and wine.<sup>16</sup> Rutter summed up the influence of Stevenson's book: "It is no exaggeration to say that for art-students in the later 'nineties Stevenson's book on *Velasquez*, and particularly his chapter on "Technique", became as much a Bible for the aspirant as Ruskin's writings had been for an earlier generation."<sup>17</sup> The reverence with which Stevenson's book was regarded, among both teachers and students, is indicated by the fact that it was frequently presented as a prize in the art schools.<sup>18</sup>

There can be no doubt that Gilman read Stevenson's book in the spirit in which it was intended. His trip to Madrid was nothing short of a pilgrimage and his time appears to have been entirely taken up with studying and copying Velazquez's paintings in the Prado. "I spent", he wrote, "more than a year almost constantly in the museum of the Prado".<sup>19</sup> He claimed during this time to have "learnt to know [Velazquez's] every attitude and characteristic so that I can recognize him at a distance with his back turned, or by the sound of his footsteps."<sup>20</sup> Gilman's period of study evidently made him something of an authority on Velazquez's work and when the authenticity of the so-called *Rokeby Venus*, c.1645-8 (London, National Gallery) was called into question in 1910 he argued convincingly, and with some asperity, in favour of Velazquez's authorship.<sup>21</sup> Briefly, the debate centred on the supposed discovery of a signature other than Velazquez's, a possible date and marks resembling a deliberate erasure.<sup>22</sup> Gilman, after comparing elements of the painting with other works by Velazquez, including the red curtain which he claimed to know "as well as I know my own overcoat", concluded that the painting was:

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<sup>13</sup> Anon., "Velazquez", *The Edinburgh Review*, vol.193 (January 1901), pp.132-57.

<sup>14</sup> R. Stevenson (1900), chapters IV-VII.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4, 22.

<sup>17</sup> F. Rutter (1933), pp.16-17.

<sup>18</sup> K. McConkey (1989), p.158.

<sup>19</sup> H. Gilman (1910a).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> F. Kenyon *et al.*, "The Rokeby "Venus". Report of the 'Morning Post' Committee", *The Art News*, vol. 1 (12 May 1910), p.218.

Spanish from corner to corner, and it is painted by Velazquez. It has been cleaned to its harm, and rubbed by the noses of "experts". I don't care what signature they find - Daniel Maclise and Jabez Balfour. I should think the cracks might do anything by now, and I've seen worse things on walls.<sup>23</sup>

What is interesting about Gilman's defence of Velazquez's authorship is the independence of his assessment. If he did go to Spain in 1901 with Stevenson's words, as it were, ringing in his ears, his own period of study evidently led to a revision of received opinion regarding Velazquez's painting technique. One of the objections to Velazquez's authorship of the Rokeby Venus was the fact that it was not apparently painted *au premier coup*. Stevenson had entered the Paris atelier of Emile-Auguste Carolus-Duran (1838-1917) during 1874, later recalling that he was taught there a method of direct painting largely derived from the work of Velazquez whom Stevenson described as Carolus-Duran's "only recognised master".<sup>24</sup> Gilman argued that Velazquez was a much more varied painter than the "pupils of Carolus-Duran" would allow and claimed that Velazquez would not stand still long enough to be compared with the "stuffed image" which always painted *au premier coup*.<sup>25</sup> He pointed to a long list of works by Velazquez in the collections of both the Prado and the National Gallery in London which did not conform to this method of working, concluding:

All are painted in varying thicknesses of paint, in varying degrees of liquidity of paint, in varying smoothness and roughness, in few or many sittings; in fact, in the varying technique which alone can correspond to the moods of so great a painter, and to the circumstances of each picture.<sup>26</sup>

Stevenson spent only a few days at the Prado, time which he himself considered insufficient, feeling as he did "a want of fuller knowledge and, above all, of the advantage of having made one or two copies".<sup>27</sup> Gilman's period of study, lasting over a year, was largely taken up with the execution of "several copies", which occasionally appear in his own paintings.<sup>28</sup> He evidently felt himself to be well equipped to give his opinion on questions of attribution and technique and it is clear that his period of study in Spain directly affected his own art.

During the period immediately following his return from Spain, Gilman favoured a manner of painting which, in its low, closely-graded tones and smooth surface, was apparently largely indebted to the work of Velazquez. There are few extant early works but it appears that all shared a similar facture. Fergusson met Gilman for the first time in December 1908 when Gore introduced them at a Fitzroy Street Saturday afternoon gathering.<sup>29</sup> He recalled that Gilman exhibited half a

<sup>23</sup> H. Gilman (1910a). Gilman was referring here to the initials JBDM supposedly discovered at the lower left corner of the canvas and thought to stand for Juan Bautista del Mazo (c.1612-67). See N. Maclaren (1970), p.125.

<sup>24</sup> R. Stevenson (1900), pp.107-9.

<sup>25</sup> H. Gilman (1910a).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> R. Stevenson (1900), p.95.

<sup>28</sup> H. Gilman (1910a). The Nursery, Snargate, c.1905-6 (London, Fox Fine Art) features a copy of Velazquez's La Infanta Doña Margarita de Austria, 1660 (Madrid, Prado) while Still Life, 1909-10 (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum) includes a sketch after a Velazquez 'Infanta'. (A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), pp.24, 35 and cat.15). The former, a vast canvas, is apparently painted to scale.

<sup>29</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.19.

dozen interiors on that occasion: "... women sewing - women taking tea - persons conversing in parlours."<sup>30</sup> What appears to have impressed Fergusson most in hindsight was the quality of the paint: "The pictures were very intimate - very smoothly painted - without impasto - without excrescences".<sup>31</sup> He described an early work entitled Lady at a Piano (date and present location unknown) as having an "enamel-like surface".<sup>32</sup> One can well imagine Fergusson comparing them in his mind with the extremely thick paint surfaces of much of Gilman's later work. At times Gilman exhibited a tendency to offset the usually sombre tones of his canvases with touches of bright colour.<sup>33</sup> In Portrait of Spencer Gore, 1906-7 (Leeds City Art Gallery) [24], for example, the overall brownish tonality is relieved by the sitter's bright green tie, a device which he used again in Portrait of a Lady, 1905 (Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums) [25] in which the black of the dress, flesh tones and the dull background are enlivened by the bright green and red of the chair. It was a technique which Gilman probably learned from Velazquez.<sup>34</sup> Among many examples known to Gilman was Velazquez's Philip IV in Armour, 1625-8 (Madrid, Prado) [26] in which the otherwise sombre tones of the canvas are relieved by a vivid crimson sash.

The influence of Velazquez's work is at its height in The Negro Gardener (London, Odin's Restaurant) [27] which is traditionally supposed to have been executed in 1905 on a trip to America which Gilman made with his first wife.<sup>35</sup> In this context Nicolson suggests the influence of the American painter Thomas Eakins (1844-1916).<sup>36</sup> Eakins spent six months in Spain during 1869-70, executing on his return to America a number of full length portraits of male sitters which indicate the influence of Velazquez.<sup>37</sup> Yet the influence of Eakins on Gilman's work seems superfluous in the context of Gilman's own first hand knowledge of Velazquez's portraits. There is no evidence that Gilman saw work by Eakins during his American trip but, assuming that he did, Eakins's most likely contribution to Gilman's portrait lies in the sympathetic treatment of a black sitter. Eakins and Winslow Homer (1836-1910) were the first American artists to break away from what Kaplan has described as the typical "minstrel-show conception" of blacks in American art, informing their portraits with a sense of the dignity and pride of their black sitters.<sup>38</sup> In pose, full length format and the closely graded tones, The Negro Gardener is very close to many of Velazquez's male portraits. Gore described the unusual little canvas Cave Dwellers, Dieppe, 1907 (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum)

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>33</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> The first published reference to the notion that the painting was executed in America occurred when it was included in an exhibition entitled Twentieth Century Art at Thomas Agnew and Sons, London in 1972, cat. no.2. The painting belonged to the artist's brother, Leofric, with whom the information may have originated.

<sup>36</sup> B. Nicolson (1972).

<sup>37</sup> L. Goodrich (1982), vol.1, p.59. Examples include John McClure Hamilton, 1895 (Hartford, Wadsworth Athenaeum) and The Dean's Roll Call, 1899 (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts).

<sup>38</sup> S. Kaplan (1966), p.106.

[28] as "a family quaintly aligned like peasants ... in a work by the Brothers Le Nain".<sup>39</sup> Yet it is difficult not to find, in the squat little figures gazing defiantly out at the spectator, an echo of Velazquez's portraits of the dwarfs at the court of Spain. Indeed, discreet references to Velazquez's work occur throughout this period of Gilman's art. The impression gained is that Gilman had so steeped himself in the art of Velazquez during his trip to Spain that, whether intentional or not, such references were inevitable.

While a commitment to the art of Velazquez was, as shown above, by no means unusual in a young artist during this period, it was part of a wider trend which showed itself in frequent quotations from the work of the Old Masters. The tendency was characteristic of a number of Gilman's fellow students at the Slade. Forge suggests that the work of Augustus John (1878-1961) and Orpen is particularly indicative of this propensity, pointing out that Orpen's The Mirror, 1900 (London, Tate Gallery) [29] makes open references to the work of both Van Eyck and Vermeer.<sup>40</sup> Taylor suggests that it relies for its handling and lighting on the work of Velazquez and points out that the inclusion of rows of cut-off picture frames and dado lines are devices lifted directly from Whistler.<sup>41</sup> The influence of Whistler's art on that of Orpen was very strong during this period. Orpen's Portrait of Herbert Everett, 1900 (London, National Maritime Museum) [30] is entirely indebted to Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black no.2: Thomas Carlyle, c.1873 (Glasgow Art Gallery) [31] while his Self Portrait, c.1901 (Glasgow Art Gallery) is clearly influenced by Whistler's full length portraits which derived in turn from the work of Velazquez.

From around 1905 Gilman's work too showed an increasing debt to that of Whistler. There is some evidence to suggest that his interest in Whistler was fostered by the example of Orpen's work. Orpen's The Mirror was shown both at the Royal Academy's summer exhibition and at the NEAC's winter exhibition in 1900.<sup>42</sup> When Gilman came to paint Edwardian Interior, c.1907 (London, Tate Gallery)[32] some echo of Orpen's work crept in. While the device of placing a seated figure in profile against a wall hung with pictures was a Whistlerian one, the somewhat illogical relationship between the figure and the contents of the room echoes Orpen. In both The Mirror and Edwardian Interior the figure occupies an inconsequential, even unnatural, position in relation to the furniture in the room. In Orpen's painting she is seated on a dining chair placed against a wall facing the side of a small chest of drawers, while Gilman's sitter faces into a corner before a small table or chest supporting a clutter of *bric-à-brac*. While Whistler pared his compositions down to a minimum, Gilman has incorporated a busyness of furnishings, pictures and

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<sup>39</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.20.

<sup>40</sup> A. Forge (1960b), p.25. The inclusion of a small convex mirror which reflects the artist's own image, clearly borrowed from Van Eyck's Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami, was a device which Orpen exploited again and again in, for example, The Swinton Family, 1901 (collection of Major General Sir John Swinton) and A Bloomsbury Family.

<sup>41</sup> H. Taylor (1986), p.241. Like Gilman, Orpen visited Spain, accompanying Hugh Lane to Madrid in 1904. He wrote to his wife: "I am learning so much from Velazquez and Goya that I am nearly off my head with excitement". (B. Arnold (1981), p.145.)

<sup>42</sup> Cat. nos. 270 and 50, respectively.

objects which recalls Orpen's more recent A Bloomsbury Family, 1907 (Edinburgh, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art) [33].

The air of tension created in Gilman's Edwardian Interior by the odd juxtaposition of the figure and the furnishings, which appear to dominate her, is symptomatic of a tendency in the work of a number of artists who were both Slade graduates and NEAC exhibitors. Among these Thomson notes an increasing interest, during the first decade of the century, in a certain type of interior scene with figures: "A number of these artists, including McEvoy and William Rothenstein, shared a concern for a certain kind of subtle narrative subject. Such scenes did not necessarily have an overt story, but a core of human interest which can be explained in terms of a likely, normal occurrence or emotion."<sup>43</sup> Thomson observes that this "addition of a quasi-literary element by allusion" was defined by a reviewer of the NEAC exhibition in June 1907 who wrote: "The best work is not understood at a glance; it is subtle and elusive, or whatever may be their equivalents in art circles ..."<sup>44</sup> Thomson suggests narrative intention in another early work by Gilman, Interior, c.1908 (collection of Lord and Lady Walston) [34].<sup>45</sup> This suggestion is endorsed here with the proviso that any such narrative is extremely oblique, possibly intended to be read in any one of a number of different ways, unlike the conventional narrative painting embodying a distinct meaning which can be read off using a network of shared references. A series of paintings which Orpen carried out around 1908 reveal a similar element of subtle narrative. They depict the artist's wife seated before a window in their house at Chelsea through which is visible the night sky.<sup>46</sup> One of these, Night, c.1908 (Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria) [35], depicts Grace Orpen with her head thrown back, one arm reaching around Orpen's neck as he leans over to embrace her from behind. Their hidden faces, the fact that the title does not allude overtly to the action taking place, the hint of strong underlying passion, all point to a concern with subtle emotional drama, provoking curiosity in the spectator as to the identity and circumstances of the figures. Another such painting is William Rothenstein's (1872-1945) The Doll's House, 1899 (London, Tate Gallery) [36], an interior with two figures modelled by Rothenstein's wife and John. Significantly, the painting was not intended to be an illustration of the play of the same title by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) as one might assume. Many years later Rothenstein wrote:

No. there [illegible] was, no intention to illustrate the play: it happened the room in wh. I painted John & my wife with its tiny staircase, was like a room in a doll's house; & the juxtaposition of a rather dramatic looking man, & a woman seated rather oddly, suggested something vaguely Ibsenish. That is all.<sup>47</sup>

Clearly, Rothenstein was chiefly concerned with creating an 'atmosphere', suggesting a depth of emotion which is, however, not overt but merely implied.

<sup>43</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.24.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* ('G.R.S.T.', "The New English Art Club", The New Age, vol.1 (6 June 1907), p.91).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>46</sup> B. Arnold (1981), p.214.

<sup>47</sup> Unpublished letter to J. B. Manson, dated 12 October 1929. (London, Tate Gallery Archive).

While it is clear that for many of Gilman's Slade contemporaries John fulfilled the role of exemplar, there can be no doubt that Orpen held more interest for Gilman. Both entered the Slade during 1897 but hardly on the same terms. Gilman had spent the previous year at the Hastings School of Art and, as noted in chapter two, Lewis recalled that at the Slade "he attempted to do the regulation charcoal drawing of the nude without conspicuous success."<sup>48</sup> Although two years younger than Gilman, Orpen arrived at the Slade having completed six years of study at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin, a career already studded with prizes and medals which culminated during his final year in the award of the Gold Medal for life drawing in the National Competition.<sup>49</sup> The result was a position of privilege and prestige at the Slade which allowed him to bypass study of the Antique altogether and go straight on to life drawing.<sup>50</sup> After the departure of John in 1898, Orpen appears to have gained a position of some authority over his fellow students who apparently submitted to his dictates regarding the posing of the model and the composition of their palettes.<sup>51</sup> Orpen left the Slade in 1899 but Gilman would have been able to follow the development of his art through exhibitions at the NEAC to which Orpen was elected in 1900.

One aspect of Slade artists' reference to the work of the Old Masters can be found in their use of mirror images and compositional constructions which allow the spectator to look from one room through to another. Orpen's frequent inclusion of a convex mirror has been alluded to and in his Portrait of Lewis Tomalin, 1909 (collection of Roger Tomalin) the tiled floor and the spatial construction of the room may be traced back to its ultimate source in the work of Dutch seventeenth-century artists such as Vermeer. Gilman used both devices: The Kitchen, c.1908 (Cardiff, National Museum of Wales) [37] and In Sickert's House, Neuville, 1907-8 (Leeds City Art Gallery) [38] are both constructed to show a view from one room into another. The former may well have been influenced by a painting of the same title by Duncan Grant (1885-1978) of 1902 (London, Tate Gallery) [39] although Grant's composition is constructed to include more of the foreground room and his figure is turned toward the spectator.<sup>52</sup> Gilman's use of mirror images can be seen in Interior. Such spatial constructions and the use of mirrors also featured in the work of both Velazquez and Whistler and would have been reinforced by Gilman's contact with Sickert and Gore who both utilised such devices in their own work.

While the influence of Whistler is implied by Gilman's interest in the work of Orpen, several early paintings by Gilman indicate a much more direct assimilation of this influence. This was in many ways a very logical development: Whistler's work was, after all, deeply indebted to that of Velazquez and must have represented for Gilman a solution to the problem of how to apply the spirit of Velazquez's work to a modern idiom. Gilman would have found a number of references

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<sup>48</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.12.

<sup>49</sup> B. Arnold (1981), p.32.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.49.

<sup>52</sup> Grant's painting was not publicly exhibited before 1952 and remained in the artist's possession until 1959 when it was purchased by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest for the Tate Gallery Collection. It may have been shown at Fitzroy Street where Gilman could have seen it.

to Whistler in the literature on Velazquez.<sup>53</sup> In addition Stevenson linked compositions by Whistler containing passages comparatively empty of incident to the compositional technique employed by Velazquez in Las Meninas, 1656 (Madrid, Prado) where the figures occupy only the lower half of the canvas.<sup>54</sup> It was C. Lewis Hind in his book Days with Velazquez, published in 1906, who drew the most decisive parallel between the work of Velazquez and that of Whistler. Hind maintained that the key to Velazquez's art was his understanding of the science of values which Hind defined as "the power of a painter to see his subject as a whole before his brush has touched the canvas, to appreciate instantly ... the reciprocal influence of the lights and darks of the tones under the conditions of distance and atmosphere".<sup>55</sup> While Hind preferred to regard Velazquez's exploitation of values as instinctive, "the scientific, analytical modern" took a more calculated approach.<sup>56</sup> Hind described Whistler's control of values "in one of his lovely Valparaiso pictures, where he just wafted upon the canvas a few pale sails against a sunset, and willed sea, sky and sails to fade away in perfect harmony."<sup>57</sup> Hind was very much adopting Whistler's own tone here and later on when he described Philip IV, King of Spain, 1644 (London, Dulwich Gallery), then attributed to Velazquez, he even went so far as to describe it as "a harmony in wild rose and pearl" in a precise imitation of Whistler's style of picture title.<sup>58</sup>

Both Hind and Stevenson made frequent allusions to Velazquez's 'impressionism'. Stevenson called him "the great Spanish impressionist" while Hind related his 'impressionism' to the study of values.<sup>59</sup> Both writers were using the term, not in a strictly technical sense, but in order to describe Velazquez's study of the effect of light on his subjects. Looking back on this period during the 1930s Rutter recalled how little the understanding of Impressionism in England had to do with developments in nineteenth-century French art:

We had not learned to distinguish between the "impressionism" of Whistler and Velasquez, which meant seeing a scene broadly as a whole and enveloping it in air and light; and the "impressionism" (or luminism) of Monet and Renoir which further meant analysing the colour in shadows and ruling out all neutral tints. In England, at all events, "impressionism" meant Whistler.<sup>60</sup>

Rutter maintained that the term 'Impressionist' "was bandied about and given to all kinds and conditions of painters to whom it did not apply in the least."<sup>61</sup> This in spite of the fact that since the first appearance of Impressionist paintings in England at the exhibition organised by Durand-Ruel in

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<sup>53</sup> R. Stevenson (1900), p.48.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>55</sup> C. Hind (1906), p.15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.96. In 1911 it was established that the painting is a copy of the original by Velazquez now in the Frick Collection, New York. (P. Murray (1980), p.131.)

<sup>59</sup> R. Stevenson (1900), p.125; C. Hind (1906), passim.

<sup>60</sup> F. Rutter (1933), p.57.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.58.

1870, their work had regularly appeared at exhibition in London.<sup>62</sup> It is generally supposed that the large exhibition of Impressionist works brought together at the Grafton Galleries by Durand-Ruel in 1905, attracting over eleven thousand visitors and spawning a vast quantity of critical comment, led to a greater understanding and a more precise use of the term.<sup>63</sup> Yet in 1908 we find Sickert still pleading for its more accurate application: "... I wish it could be agreed to use the name, solely and definitely, for the members of the original group who first accepted the description ..."<sup>64</sup>

Whistler died in 1903 and a memorial exhibition was held in London between 22 February and 15 April 1905.<sup>65</sup> Gilman was almost certainly in Chicago for the birth of his daughter, Hannah, on 4 February that year.<sup>66</sup> He must have returned to England, however, in time to see the Whistler exhibition.<sup>67</sup> Evidence for this assumption rests with Portrait of a Lady which reveals an overwhelming debt to Whistler's portrait of his mother, Arrangement in Grey and Black no.1: The Artist's Mother, 1871 (Paris, Louvre) [40] which was included in the 1905 exhibition.<sup>68</sup> The painting having entered the collection of the Louvre in 1891, Gilman would have had no opportunity of seeing it before the memorial exhibition other than in reproduction. Its impact on Gilman's portrait of his wife is unquestionable. Like Whistler's mother, Grace is painted full length, seated against a wall, in profile, facing left and wearing a black dress. Gilman's handling is liquid and tonal although the paint is not applied so thinly as in Whistler's portrait in which, according to Walter Greaves (1846-1930), "the dado ... shows through the black of the skirt."<sup>69</sup> As its title suggests, Whistler's portrait is strictly an 'arrangement in grey and black' with touches of white. Gilman, as observed earlier, brightened the otherwise dull tones on his canvas by painting the chair in which his wife is seated bright green and red. Whistler's sitter occupies an extremely narrow space which, in conjunction with the full profile, gives the canvas a shallow, frieze-like quality. Gilman, on the other hand, has introduced some movement into his composition by placing his sitter at an angle in a corner of the room. The vivid element of characterisation which is a feature of Whistler's portraits of both his mother and Thomas Carlyle, which was also included in the 1905 exhibition, was not lost on Gilman. Portrait of a Lady, with what Thomson has perceptively described as its "scrupulous record of nervous fingers and rather angry features that seem scarcely able to mask a bitter frame of mind", imparts the distinct impression that we are being 'let in on' a personality rather than simply given a

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<sup>62</sup> K. Flint (1984), pp.2ff.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>64</sup> W. Sickert (1908), p.1020. During 1889 Sickert had identified himself as a 'London Impressionist' when, with nine other members of the NEAC, he staged an exhibition under that title at the Goupil Gallery in December.

<sup>65</sup> London, New Gallery, Whistler Memorial Exhibition.

<sup>66</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.37.

<sup>67</sup> Causey and Thomson (*ibid.*) suggest that Gilman travelled to America in late 1904 or early 1905. Unless he and his wife travelled separately, 1904 seems more likely, allowing for the Atlantic crossing and the fact that Grace was heavily pregnant. Gilman exhibited at the NEAC's summer exhibition in 1904. His address was given in the catalogue as Pangbourne, Berkshire; we may thus place him in England at least until the summer.

<sup>68</sup> The similarity between these portraits was pointed out by A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.20.

<sup>69</sup> E. R. and J. Pennell (1908), p.168.

likeness.<sup>70</sup> During 1907 Sickert lent the Gilmans his house at Neuville near Dieppe.<sup>71</sup> Here Gilman painted In Sickert's House, Neuville which betrays a particularly Whistlerian handling and colour scheme.<sup>72</sup> The paint is fluid and thinly applied and the cool greenish tonality resembles Whistler's series of 'Nocturnes' such as Nocturne in Blue and Green: Chelsea, 1871 (London, Tate Gallery) [41] which was included in the 1905 memorial exhibition. The insubstantiality of some passages, especially the painting of the little girl's legs which dissolve into the terracotta tiles behind, are particularly indicative of Whistlerian influence, as, for instance, the semi-transparent figure standing at the river edge in the Tate Gallery painting.

This chapter has discussed the impact of several key influences on Gilman's early development; the work of Velazquez, Whistler and Orpen. What is arresting about this syllabus is not its variety but its apparent unity. After all, the work of Orpen was in turn heavily influenced by both Velazquez and Whistler and, of course, Whistler was himself profoundly affected by the work of Velazquez. Thus, although for the sake of clarity these influences have in the above account been treated sequentially, it is more accurate to regard each as dependent upon and, to a large extent, concurrent with the others. This may be illustrated with reference to a single painting, In Sickert's House, Neuville, which incorporates several of these elements, the spatial organisation reminiscent of Velazquez and Orpen and the colour scheme and handling which relate to Whistler. It is significant of the manner in which Gilman approached these influences that as late as 1912, when he painted The Café Royal (collection of Mr and Mrs Evelyn Joll), although Ginner had painted the subject during the previous year, Gilman's version was largely indebted to Orpen's The Café Royal, 1912 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay).<sup>73</sup>

In or around 1908 Gilman painted The Nurse (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) [42] which marks an important transition in his work.<sup>74</sup> The paint is thinly applied, the colour subdued:

<sup>70</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.20.

<sup>71</sup> In a letter to Nan Hudson (1869-1957) of c. May 1907, Sickert wrote: "The Gilmans write that they are happy & comfortable in my house in Dieppe". The letter can be dated by Sickert's reference to the NEAC exhibition which opened in May: "Then the New English Art Club is open, & to my amazement & joy my friend Hammersley bought my autoritratto at once." For confirmation that this referred to the painting which Sickert exhibited at the NEAC in Spring 1907 see W. Baron (1979), p.158. Another letter to Hudson, probably written in July or August 1907 because it referred to "my portrait with the casts in the last New English" [ie. the above-mentioned canvas], thus written after the exhibition had closed, and alludes to "London in the summer", contains another reference to Gilman: "The Gilmans have managed to quarrel with my bonne & have left my house". (I am grateful to Dr. Wendy Baron for sending me details of the first letter and a copy of the second.) Although the letters indicate that Gilman was at Neuville during the summer of 1907 they do not tell us whether he returned to England after leaving Sickert's house or whether he simply moved elsewhere. Gilman's daughter, Elizabeth Lautner, told John Woodeson that they lived in Dieppe for "the best part of a year", which suggests that they moved from Sickert's house to another address (J. Woodeson, Spencer F. Gore, unpublished MA Report, 1968. Courtauld Institute Library, p.18).

<sup>72</sup> A. Greutzner (Royal Academy of Arts, Post-Impressionism: Cross-Currents in European Painting, London, 1979, p.90) suggests that this was the Intérieur Vert exhibited at the Artistes Indépendants during the spring of 1908 (cat. no.2522).

<sup>73</sup> C. Ginner, The Café Royal, 1911 (London, Tate Gallery). For a comparative study of these three paintings see W. Baron (1979), p.286.

<sup>74</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.47.

Velazquez rather than Whistler appears to have been the motive force as regards colour, format and, to some extent, the mood of the painting. The sitter appears pensive, even sorrowful; in both mood and format, the portrait is reminiscent of Velazquez's half length portrait, Philip IV of Spain, c.1656 (London, National Gallery) which entered the collection in 1865. Yet, as Causey and Thomson suggest, the background wallpaper is rendered with a more broken touch and livelier colour than any of Gilman's previous work.<sup>75</sup> The Nurse may have been a response to Sickert's The New Home, 1908 (London, Fine Art Society) [43], also depicting a dark-clad woman seated before a background of fussy wallpaper, which was included in the NEAC's summer exhibition in 1908.<sup>76</sup> Gilman first met Sickert on 13 February 1907, a meeting which, as a letter from Gilman's wife to her mother in America makes clear, was the result of a chance encounter rather than an introduction by their mutual friend Gore as might have been expected:

Yesterday Harold was uptown in an art store. As he was going out a stranger who had also been in there ran after him and introduced himself as Walter Sickert ... he told Harold he had seen his pictures there and that they were very good indeed. He took him home with him.<sup>77</sup>

What is interesting about the contents of this letter, apart from providing a precise date for their meeting, is the fact that their friendship evidently proceeded directly from Sickert's appreciation of Gilman's work.

Probably Sickert's single most important contribution to Gilman's art was his rejection of the bulk of Whistler's art and teaching. Baron has observed that until 1885, "Sickert's subject-matter, the compositional arrangements of his pictures, and his handling were almost totally dependent upon Whistler's example."<sup>78</sup> Sickert's increasing reservations about the ultimate value of much of Whistler's work and, perhaps more importantly, of his working methods were prompted partly by his contact with Degas. It wasn't until 1908 that his disillusionment finally found voice in a series of articles in which he sought to publicly disengage himself from the teaching of his former master.<sup>79</sup> Sickert's chief objection to Whistler's work can be summed up in his description of Whistler as an "eternal sketcher".<sup>80</sup> Sickert defined the art of painting, *la bonne peinture*, as "the clean and frank juxtaposition of pastes (*pâtes*), considered as opaque rather than transparent, and related to each other in colour and values by the deliberate and conscious act of the painter."<sup>81</sup> "La peinture" was unglazed and "as fresh and clean in colour as a fresh herring."<sup>82</sup> It was Sickert's opinion that

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> London, Dering Yard, New English Art Club, summer 1908. Cat. no.59.

<sup>77</sup> J. Woodeson, op. cit., p.17. Unpublished letter, dated 14 February 1907, collection of Elizabeth Lautner.

<sup>78</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.11.

<sup>79</sup> This was, as Sickert himself pointed out, ironic in view of the fact that during the ten years between 1882 and 1892, he had published numerous articles in defence of Whistler's work in a variety of journals, including The Pall Mall Gazette, Whirlwind, The Speaker and The Saturday Review. (W. Sickert (1908), pp.1018-9).

<sup>80</sup> W. Sickert (1915), p.169.

<sup>81</sup> W. Sickert (1908), p.1024.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Whistler, having learned this manner of painting in Paris, had, amongst the "lilies and langours of the Chelsea amateurs", rejected 'la peinture' in favour of the "staining of a white canvas in the manner of a water-colour" and the "muffling-up of the painting in the indecision of a universal glaze."<sup>83</sup>

Sickert's precise prescription for the texture of oil paint led him to despise both heavy *impasto* and excessive thinning of the paint. He believed Whistler guilty of the latter: "He took the art of oil-painting of which he was just getting a real grasp, and thinned it into an imitation of the gouache delicacy proper to a Kakemono."<sup>84</sup> Whistler's method of applying many coats of paint, considerably thinned with oil and turpentine, covering the picture practically in one wet, while achieving what Sickert described as "the exquisite oneness that gives his work such a rare and beautiful distinction" had, according to Sickert, necessitated "excessive simplification" and resulted in "a fatal lowering of tone."<sup>85</sup>

It was Sickert's contention that Whistler was "hampered by an excessive dose of taste."<sup>86</sup> In his Ten O'Clock Lecture, Whistler had suggested that while nature contained the elements of all pictures "as the keyboard contains the notes of all music", it was the artist's job to "pick and choose, and group with science, these elements, that the result may be beautiful - as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords ..."<sup>87</sup> Sickert, on the other hand, believed that taste was the death of a painter: "He has all his work cut out for him observing and recording. His poetry is in the interpretation of ready-made life. He has no business to have time for preferences."<sup>88</sup> Sickert particularly objected to Whistler's habit of locating his sitters in nebulous, invented interiors, declaring that he had placed the sitter in Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Mrs Leyland, 1873 (New York, Frick Collection) "in a confused paradise of invented check-patterns, and apple blossoms, in a nowhere of his own ..."<sup>89</sup> Whistler's obsession with detail which led him at times even to design the dresses which his sitters wore, was one aspect of this element of 'tastefulness' as was the introduction of Japanese artifacts - fans, kimonos, dolls, porcelain - into his paintings, and it was evidently Sickert's opinion that these constituted not *japonisme* but *japonaiserie*, claiming that Whistler "did not digest what they had to teach".<sup>90</sup> Whistler's influence on a whole generation of artists was a position which Sickert coveted and by 1910 he felt able to declare his succession to the throne. He published a definitive rejection of Whistler's teaching which was, at the same time, a declaration of his own aspiration to lead:

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1025, 1024. 'Chelsea amateurs' referred to the Pre-Raphaelite D. G. Rossetti (1828-82) and his circle. Whistler settled in London in 1859 and in 1862 he met Rossetti and was quickly absorbed into the circle of artists and writers who surrounded him. Both Whistler and Rossetti lived in Chelsea.

<sup>84</sup> W. Sickert (1910h), p.205.

<sup>85</sup> W. Sickert (1910b).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> J. Whistler (1904), pp.142-3.

<sup>88</sup> W. Sickert (1908), p.1024.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1026.

<sup>90</sup> W. Sickert (1910h), p.204.

In order to clear the ground, it is necessary that I should, speaking for myself, and the very solid phalanx of young painters with whom I move, make the following explicit repudiation of Whistler and his teaching. It is for obvious reasons distasteful to me to have to do this. To shrink from doing it would be misleading to the students I aspire to lead, and would therefore limit my usefulness to the living. (...) I owe this explanation to those I may have contributed to mislead before I can expect a clear ground for my constructive teaching.<sup>91</sup>

The nature of Sickert's rejection of Whistler's art throws some light on what he understood by the term Realism. Largely influenced by Degas, Sickert's chosen subject matter around this time consisted of nudes in shabby rooms, sprawled or seated on iron bedsteads beneath which, more often than not, there lurks a chamber-pot.<sup>92</sup> His most notorious works in this genre were the 'Camden Town Murder' series as a result of which Frederick Brown (1851-1941), a founder member of the NEAC, was moved to withdraw his friendship in a letter which spoke of the "pornographic" nature of Sickert's work.<sup>93</sup> In 1917 Sickert recollected Degas's phrase: "Je veux ... regarder par le trou de la serrure", an expression which, according to Sickert, resulted in the "raised hands" of the "Puritans" in the English press who "could not conceive of anything being seen through a keyhole but indecencies", and thus classified Degas as a pornographer.<sup>94</sup> Sickert's unidealised representations of the female nude allied to his exclusive portrayal, in this context, of lower class models and surroundings, amounted to a very specific prescription for the subject matter of art. Sickert criticised those artists who executed paintings of dressed-up models in the manner of commissioned portraits, advising them instead to portray their - lower class - model in her everyday dress and habitat:

Let her leave the studio and climb the first dirty little staircase in the first shabby little house. Tilly Pullen becomes interesting at once. She is in surroundings that mean something. She becomes stuff for a picture. Follow her into the kitchen, or ... into her bedroom; and Tilly Pullen is become the stuff of which the Parthenon was made, or Durer, or any Rembrandt. She is become a Degas ...<sup>95</sup>

Sickert rejected much of the work exhibited at the NEAC on the grounds that there was an "over-insistence on two motifs. The one the august-site motif, and the other the smartened-up-young-person motif."<sup>96</sup> He claimed that such work did not give "the sensation of a page torn from the book of life."<sup>97</sup> It was his prejudice that lower class, 'below stairs' subjects, portrayed without sentimentality, held prior claims to consideration as "serious" art:

The more our art is serious, the more will it tend to avoid the drawing-room and stick to the kitchen. The plastic arts are gross arts, dealing joyously with gross material facts. They call, in their servants, for a robust stomach

<sup>91</sup> W. Sickert (1910a), p.105.

<sup>92</sup> Sickert began to draw nudes on metal bedsteads in Dieppe in 1902. In 1904 he also began to paint these subjects. (W. Baron (1979), p.146).

<sup>93</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.115. Sickert reported this incident in a letter to Ethel Sands (1873-1962) written during the First World War.

<sup>94</sup> W. Sickert (1917), p.185.

<sup>95</sup> W. Sickert (1910g), p.156.

<sup>96</sup> W. Sickert (1910e), p.109.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

and a great power of endurance, and while they will flourish in the scullery, or on the dunghill, they fade at a breath from the drawing-room.<sup>98</sup>

It was a theme to which he returned again and again. In criticising Whistler, Sickert declared that the artist has no time for preferences but must interpret "ready-made life". Yet if the subjects he portrayed were pages "torn from the book of life" it was certainly not the book of his own life or the social circles in which he habitually moved. It was necessary for him to seek out and to rent the grimy rooms in which he located his subjects, to engage as models the women whose naked bodies he posed in frequently undignified, invariably unflattering attitudes on carefully rumpled beds which, along with the chamber-pots and the washstands, assumed the role of props.

Sickert was not in the habit of calling himself a Realist. He disliked labels and it was one of his chief objections to Neo-Realism that Gilman and Ginner had elected to call themselves anything at all.<sup>99</sup> Yet his work may certainly be understood as Realist and many of his statements regarding choice and treatment of subject matter may be interpreted as defending a Realist position. It is significant that there was, as he himself admitted, very little of substance within the text of Neo-Realism with which he could disagree.<sup>100</sup> Sickert did refer to himself as a 'realist' during 1901, albeit with a small 'r', and it is clear from the context of the remark that he identified Realism with a preference for strictly *déclassé* subject matter and the rejection of idealism, particularly with regard to figure painting:

How bewildering your imaginative painter is to us poor realists. Mr. Ricketts's Cleopatra Lussuriosa fills me with wonder and respect. If we venture to exhibit a painting of a plump and wholesome woman in her bath say, or pulling on a stocking, we are told we are lewd fellows and no class ... But Cleopatra covers a multitude of sins. And in an age of African luxury Mr. Ricketts makes her luxurious on a box-ottoman without a back. A mere realist would have made Cleopatra a fine woman.<sup>101</sup>

If we are to identify Sickert, albeit cautiously, as a Realist and to characterise his particular understanding of Realism as a preference for 'below stairs' subjects treated without regard to propriety or 'taste', the extent of the gulf which had opened up between his work and that of Whistler becomes apparent. Ultimately he was to perceive Degas and Whistler as occupying opposite ends on a scale of what, for want of a better word, may be termed propriety. It was Sickert's firm belief, or prejudice, that had Whistler remained in Paris, a "wholesome fear of the tongue of Degas" would have prevented what he considered the worst excesses of tastefulness which contact with the "Chelsea aesthetes", ie. Rossetti and his circle, and what Sickert termed the "English thirst for sentimentality" had engendered.<sup>102</sup>

It is significant that, leaving figure subjects aside, those works of Whistler's which Sickert admired were the small panels depicting "his Nocturnes, his little streets, and seas, and shops" and

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<sup>98</sup> W. Sickert (1910c).

<sup>99</sup> W. Sickert (1914c), p.819.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> W. Sickert (1910f), pp.129-30.

<sup>102</sup> W. Sickert (1915), p.169 and (1908), p.1025.

his etchings of the Thames.<sup>103</sup> In other words, these were chiefly urban scenes, executed on a small scale; precisely the subjects which Sickert himself favoured. This was very much the staple fare offered for sale at the Saturday afternoon gatherings of the Fitzroy Street Group and later at Camden Town Group exhibitions; what Fergusson described as "little pictures for little patrons".<sup>104</sup> In addition, the iconography of the artists who became part of Sickert's circle included still life, landscape, nudes and portraits of friends. It is this range of subject matter which constitutes the measure of Gilman's lifelong debt to Sickert; while the influence of his technical procedures, his painterly practice, was more or less confined to the few years from 1908 onward. On his return from France, Gilman resumed his involvement with the Fitzroy Street Group. The Nurse is one of the earliest paintings in which the influence of Sickert is apparent. While Gilman's palette had always been sombre, the colour scheme of Meditation (Leicestershire Museums and Art Gallery) [44] is distinctly muddy, a development which, along with the application of paint in thicker dabs, would seem to owe more to the influence of Sickert. For this reason it is tempting to date Meditation to early 1910 rather than 1910-11 which is the date generally ascribed to it.<sup>105</sup>

Baron has linked this painting to Portrait of Madeline Knox, c.1910 (private collection) in the full length format and the downcast gaze of the figure who, she suggests, posed for both paintings.<sup>106</sup> The latter portrays the figure standing by a mantelpiece, a setting which Gilman repeated in, for example, Girl by a Mantelpiece, 1911-12 (Stoke-on-Trent, City Museum and Art Gallery) [45]. Gilman's earliest use of the format occurred in a painting of the same title of c.1907 (Christie's, 9 June 1978, lot 58a).<sup>107</sup> The source for this setting and compositional format lay in the work of Sickert who used it often, as in The New Home, which portrays a seated figure. In Chicken, c.1908 (private collection) Sickert, like Whistler, exploited the compositional possibilities afforded by the use of a mirror over the mantel. Gilman had himself used the device of a mirror over a fireplace in order to extend the pictorial potential of Interior. In the context of Sickert's initial impact on Gilman's art, it is worth noting that the timing of Gilman's interest in relating figures to the wider context of the room which they inhabit coincides with his meeting with Sickert. Although these works relate in treatment more to the work of Orpen, it may be that the initial stimulus lay in Sickert's work. From around 1903-4 when he painted La Carolina in an Interior (Paris, Bernheim-Jeune) and The Beribboned Washstand (private collection) in Venice, Sickert expressed an interest in

<sup>103</sup> W. Sickert (1908), p.1025 and (1910a).

<sup>104</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.19.

<sup>105</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.138; Causey and Thomson (1981), p.51. In the summer of 1910 Gilman exhibited The Blue Blouse: Portrait of Eleni Zompolides, 1910 (Leeds City Art Gallery) [46] at the NEAC (cat. no.257). This probably follows Meditation for it exhibits the love of bright colour and the earliest attempt at the divisionism which became features of Gilman's work during this period.

<sup>106</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.138.

<sup>107</sup> A painting entitled La Cheminée was exhibited at the *Artistes Indépendants* during March 1908 (cat. no.2525). That this was the version of Girl by a Mantelpiece sold at Christie's in 1978 is indicated by a label on the back, part of which reads: "no. 4 La Cheminée". Apart from the French title, it was number four in the sequence of Gilman's entries in the catalogue which began at no.2522. This may also have been the painting entitled The Mantelpiece shown at the AAA in July 1908 (cat. no.1384).

annexing his figure subjects to a recognisable background, placing them in the context of daily life. That it was the context of his own daily life rather than theirs is immaterial.<sup>108</sup>

The influence of Sickert is most apparent in a series of nudes which Gilman executed onwards of 1911, a subject which does not occur in his extant painted work before this date. His earliest known treatment of the subject is the small charcoal drawing of c.1908, Nude Girl on a Chair (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum). Gilman's series of nudes indicate that during this period he was moving in and out of a variety of techniques and approaches. They are extremely difficult to date and one is wary of attempting to do so, as others have, using contemporary reviewers' descriptions which might equally apply to more than one work or to works possibly unknown to us.<sup>109</sup> They are executed in a variety of techniques: Nude, c.1911 (New Haven, Yale Center for British Art) [47], for example, employs a divisionist handling using dots and dabs of pure colour. All share the predilection for bright colour which became a feature of Gilman's work during 1910 onwards, a preference which Gilman certainly did not owe to Sickert. Yet there is a level at which the entire series may be seen to reflect Sickert's treatment of the subject. The Model, Reclining Nude, 1911-12 (London, Arts Council of Great Britain) [48] is Sickertian as regards both theme and treatment. The portrayal of a naked woman sprawled among rumpled sheets on a metal bedstead was typical of Sickert's work as was the unidealised treatment of the figure with foreshortened legs and distended stomach. Compositionally, the painting shares Sickert's tendency to take a viewpoint at the foot of the bed and to pare the scene down to the essential elements of figure, bed and wall. Although the colour is vivid, the paint surface is rough and grainy, applied in broken strokes and slashes reminiscent of Sickert's handling in Le Lit de Cuivre, c.1906 (collection of Nigel Haigh) [49]. This work also shares Sickert's preference for viewing his subjects as it were unobserved or, as Degas had put it, 'through the keyhole'. Other nudes by Gilman, most notably Nude on a Bed, 1911-12 (York City Art Gallery) [50] were portrayed as being very much aware of the spectator. Again, while departing from Sickert's practice in the use of bright colour, Nude at a Window, ?1912 (private collection) [51] suggests Sickert's influence in the exploration of *contre-jour* lighting which is also a feature of Woman Combing Her Hair, ?1912 (Exeter, Royal Albert Memorial Museum); a clothed figure which, as Causey and Thomson point out, shares the same setting and may have been posed by the same model.<sup>110</sup> The direct influence of Degas, as opposed to its mediation through Sickert, would seem to be indicated here in the pose of the figure kneeling on a sofa with her back turned toward the viewer. It is reminiscent, for example, of Degas's Woman Drying Herself, c.1890-5 (Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland) although there is no evidence that Gilman could have seen this particular work.

The chief difference between Gilman's treatment of the nude and Sickert's lies in their implied attitudes toward their subjects. Gilman generally engages with his sitters, even the figure

<sup>108</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.74, relates that Sickert portrayed his Italian models in the surroundings of the rooms where he lived at 940, Calle dei Fratti.

<sup>109</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.227.

<sup>110</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.55.

with her back turned towards us in Nude Seated on A Bed, 1911-12 (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum) [52] implies, as Thomson suggests, some sort of response to the artist/spectator.<sup>111</sup> Sickert's nudes, on the other hand, are invariably portrayed voyeuristically as oblivious to the presence of a spectator. It is this engagement with his sitters, absent in Nude at A Window which may thus be seen as the 'odd one out' in this context, which constrained Gilman to portray them with a dignity which is frequently absent in Sickert's nude figures. One explanation for this difference in treatment may be that Gilman apparently used friends as models unlike Sickert who generally used paid models.<sup>112</sup> Causey and Thomson suggest that the same model posed for both Gilman's Fitzwilliam and Arts Council nudes as well as Nude Seated on A Bed, 1911-12 (University of Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery) and possibly the York picture.<sup>113</sup> They advance the possibility that she may have been the 'chère amie' of Gilman, possibly his mistress, whom Sands found modelling for Sickert in late 1912.<sup>114</sup> Spalding, basing her supposition on facial resemblance, suggests the model was Eleni Zompolides.<sup>115</sup> However, an alternative identity is suggested by another nude painting, clearly of the same model, bearing the title Clarissa, c.1911 (Brisbane, Queensland Museum).<sup>116</sup> Thomson proposes the theme of these paintings to be not simply the female nude, but female sexuality.<sup>117</sup> In any event, the impression gained is that, however one chooses to interpret the precise nature of Gilman's attitude toward his sitters, it is invariably a sympathetic and involved one.

Representations of naked women are frequently perceived as being the stock in trade of Camden Town Group members' work. Yet it is a fact that, of the artists whose work was shown at the three Camden Town Group exhibitions, only Gilman and Sickert contributed paintings of nude women and, in the case of Gilman, only to the second exhibition in December 1911.<sup>118</sup> Gore had abandoned it as a subject in his work by the time of the first exhibition in December 1911. His exploration of the theme does suggest the influence of Sickert up to a point. Yet, in spite of a contemporary review which spoke of Gore's "ugly distorted nudes sprawled on beds", his representations of the female nude tend on the whole to be much less squalid than those of Sickert.<sup>119</sup> Gore's Nude on a Bed, 1910 (Bristol City Art Gallery) [53] depicts the metal bedstead and full length reclining nude, the angle of vision and the pared down composition which were staple ingredients of Sickert's iconography at this time, but here the resemblance ends. The brighter colour,

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>112</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.182.

<sup>113</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.53. If we accept this premise then we must add Interior with Nude, c.1911 (Leeds City Art Gallery), clearly posed by the same model.

<sup>114</sup> W. Baron (1977), p.99.

<sup>115</sup> F. Spalding (1981). In a letter to the present writer, Eleni Zompolides's son, Ralph Townsend, was unable to confirm or discount this theory.

<sup>116</sup> A reproduction of this painting is in the collection of the Witt Library, Courtauld Institute, London.

<sup>117</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.29.

<sup>118</sup> London, Carfax Gallery, The Camden Town Group, December 1911. cat. no.20, Nude no.1 and 22, Nude.

<sup>119</sup> H. Carter (1911).

the more graceful treatment of the figure and the interest in the purely decorative possibilities of the brass bedstead mark a decisive departure. It is interesting to note that this painting, according to Gore's wife, hung in Gilman's studio at Maple Street.<sup>120</sup> It may well have directly influenced Gilman's own treatment of the nude. Baron points to the influence of Sickert on an early work by Grant, another Camden Town Group member, whose Girl in Bed, c.1908-9 (private collection) [54] depicts the ruffled bed and the ubiquitous chamber-pot.<sup>121</sup> Yet it is surely indicative of Grant's distaste for the Sickertian alternative that his figure is literally in bed, only her head and one shoulder visible above the sheets.

Alone of Camden Town Group members who tackled the subject, it was Sickert who portrayed the female nude as unlovely. Whether or not one chooses to interpret his attitude as one of perceiving beauty in scenes conventionally regarded as ugly or sordid, he himself could have had little doubt about the impact of his 'Camden Town Murder' series on their audience. Claude Phillips in The Daily Telegraph described Sickert's contributions to the third Camden Town Group exhibition which included Dawn, Camden Town, c.1909 (private collection) [55], a painting of a naked woman and a clothed man seated on a bed, as "musty, flabby realities - these ugly motives upon which he plays skilful but still ugly variations."<sup>122</sup> The nude by Gilman in the Arts Council collection, while by no means an idealised representation, retains a measure of dignity and grace which is invariably absent in Sickert's female nude subjects. Others, including the canvas in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, are again unidealised yet extremely charming without being in any sense saccharine. There was an element of shock value in Sickert's nudes of which he was well aware. The moral outrage expressed in Brown's letter to Sickert must surely have mirrored that felt by the average citizen walking into the Carfax Gallery from St. James's in 1911 or 1912. To a great extent Sickert courted public indignation by giving his paintings titles such as The Camden Town Murder, c.1908 (private collection) or L'Affaire de Camden Town, 1909 (collection of Fred Uhlman) which linked them in the public mind with the notorious murder of Emily Dimmock in September 1907 which the Press had christened the 'Camden Town Murder'.<sup>123</sup>

The difference between the Realism of Gilman's work and that of Sickert may be characterised not in terms of the subjects they chose which, with varying emphases, were substantially the same during this period, but in their intended effect. Sickert's subjects often generate an atmosphere of squalid, sordid debauchery, wretchedness, even violence and fear. The often violent, slashed handling which characterises much of Sickert's work must be seen as an intentional device designed to assist in the expression of the emotion which Sickert sought to portray. Seen in this light, Gilman's adoption of Sickert's handling in paintings such as the nude in the Arts Council collection may be regarded as being in some measure a superficial device divorced from the

<sup>120</sup> J. Woodeson (1970), cat.26.

<sup>121</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.204.

<sup>122</sup> C. Phillips (1912).

<sup>123</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.114. At the first Camden Town Group exhibition Sickert's contributions included two paintings entitled The Camden Town Murder Series, no.1 and The Camden Town Murder Series, no.2. (cat. nos.10 and 12).

element of expressionism which is characteristic of Sickert's work during this period. By contrast, Gilman's nude subjects often project an air of confidence, even fun, particularly evident in the York painting. There is an apparent contradiction here. While Sickert invariably observed his nude figure subjects, as it were, through the keyhole, he never resorted to the complete detachment which is so much a feature of the work of Degas whose scenes of women bathing are observed with an element of objectivity which informs the almost clinical treatment of the details of their toilet, their solitariness and their absorption in their own bodies. Coupled with this is a total absence of reference to past or future which is more readily associated with animal painting. Sickert indulged his penchant for human interest by the application of titles which heighten the sense of emotional drama or add an anecdotal dimension to a scene otherwise empty of narrative or in which narrative is not explicit. He gave Summer Afternoon, c.1909 (Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery) the alternative titles The Camden Town Murder and What Shall We Do for the Rent?.<sup>124</sup> Yet in 1912 Sickert was advising Hudson and Sands of the necessity of complete emotional detachment in their work, cautioning them to reject selves and *ménage* as subjects and hire paid models instead.<sup>125</sup> Again, the extremely expressive quality of his brushwork belies his apparent quest for objectivity. The level of detachment which Sickert advocated to Hudson and Sands was clearly not sought by Gilman. Whether for financial reasons or purely from preference, he continued to choose as models family and friends whom he invariably posed against the background of his own rooms at Maple Street after he moved there in 1914. Unlike Sickert, Gilman was interested in his subjects for their own sake and not as vehicles for telling a story. Whereas Sickert endowed his paintings with titles which point to an explicit narrative, Gilman very rarely gave his work allusive titles; most were exhibited simply as 'Portrait', 'Interior' or with such barely descriptive titles as Lady on A Sofa, c.1910 (London, Tate Gallery) [56]. One of the very rare examples of a specifically narrative title is My Lonely Bed (date and present location unknown), exhibited at the third London Group exhibition in November 1915.<sup>126</sup> The following year, possibly regretting this impulse, Gilman submitted three canvases to the AAA exhibition without any sort of title; all three appear in the catalogue as 'Painting'.<sup>127</sup>

Issues of surface handling apart it may be said that, while to a large extent adopting Sickertian subject matter, Gilman wished his work to retain an element of charm. A similar distinction may be drawn between the work of Sickert and Gore for it was part of Gore's skill, as Sickert among other critics recognised, to be able to create a lyrical painting from what was, to say the least, unlikely subject matter.<sup>128</sup> While it would be unfair to regard Gilman's conventionally

<sup>124</sup> W. Baron (1973), cat. 275.

<sup>125</sup> W. Baron (1977), pp.96-7.

<sup>126</sup> London, Goupil Gallery, London Group, November 1915, cat. no.62. This painting may have related to an undated pen drawing, now in the British Council Collection, entitled The Farmhouse Bedroom.

<sup>127</sup> London, Grafton Galleries, Allied Artists Association, March 1916, cat. nos.156, 157 and 158.

<sup>128</sup> W. Sickert (1914b). "A scene, the dreariness and hopelessness of which would strike terror into most of us, was to [Gore] matter for lyrical and exhilarated improvisation. I have a picture by him of a place that looks like hell, with a distant iron bridge in the middle distance, and a bad classic façade

more appealing treatment of his subjects as a cynical attempt to court the picture-buying public, it must be acknowledged that his exhibits at the NEAC's summer exhibition in 1910 point to a degree of deference to the apparent preferences of members of the club's jury. Gilman showed two unidentified portraits at the NEAC's winter exhibition in 1909, the first time his work had been accepted since 1904 when he exhibited a still life.<sup>129</sup> No doubt anxious to keep up his connection with the club he submitted two works to the next exhibition which very much suggest the typical NEAC exhibition picture. The presence on the jury of an ally in the shape of Gore, who had been elected a member of the club the previous year, would not alone have been sufficient to secure the selection of Gilman's entries, the portrait of Eleni Zompolides and Lady on A Sofa.<sup>130</sup> There are two paintings bearing this title, the one in the Tate Gallery and another sold at Christie's on 3 March 1978 (lot 181) [57]. They are similar although the latter is smaller and depicts the figure half length. It is not clear which was included in the NEAC exhibition. They represent a frankly pretty evocation of a charming subject which, as Baron has observed, carries an Edwardian flavour more reminiscent of Steer than of Fitzroy Street.<sup>131</sup> Compositionally the version sold at Christie's is extremely close to Steer's Girl on A Sofa, 1891 (private collection) [58]. This painting had not been exhibited but Gilman may have had access to it through his connection with Steer who was one of his teachers at the Slade. In the context of these works it is perhaps easier to understand why The Breakfast Table (Southampton Art Gallery), another pretty interior in a similar vein, was for so long accepted as a work by Gilman.<sup>132</sup> As far as the portrait which Gilman exhibited is concerned, the half length portrait of a woman or girl in frontal pose was a common format at NEAC exhibitions.<sup>133</sup>

Having drawn this distinction between the work of Sickert and Gilman, it is necessary to dismiss any notion that Gilman's place on an imaginary scale of propriety was therefore nearer, in Sickert's view, to Whistler's end than to his own. It is impossible to imagine Sickert criticising Gilman's work, as he had Whistler's, on the grounds of excessive tastefulness. While Gilman's introduction to the range of subject matter preferred by Sickert was obviously an important factor in the development of his art, it did not imply any radical revision of either his previous subject matter or his attitude towards it. This is illustrated by Gilman's treatment of what was a thoroughly

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like the façade of a kinema, and two new municipal trees like brooms, and the stiff curve of a new pavement in front, on which stalks and looms a lout in a lounge suit. The artist is he who can take a piece of flint and wring out of it drops of attar of roses."

<sup>129</sup> London, Royal Society of British Artists, New English Art Club, winter 1909, cat. nos.39 and 106.

<sup>130</sup> London, Royal Society of British Artists, New English Art Club, summer 1910, cat. nos. 256 and 257.

<sup>131</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.226.

<sup>132</sup> F. Spalding (1981) suggests that The Breakfast Table was the work of William Ratcliffe (1870-1955) while W. Baron (1982), p.182, rather more plausibly, advances the possibility that Walter Russell (1867-1949), Steer's colleague at the Slade, was the artist.

<sup>133</sup> An example of this type of portrait is Steer's The Schoolgirl, 1906 (Cardiff, National Museum of Wales), exhibited at the NEAC's winter exhibition in 1906 (cat. no.123).

Whistlerian motif, The Thames at Battersea, 1907-8 (Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery) [59].<sup>134</sup>

The river, especially the areas around Battersea and Chelsea, was a theme to which Whistler returned again and again but while the subject is Whistlerian, Gilman's treatment of it, as Spalding suggests, serves to illustrate, as much as anything, the difference between the two artists.<sup>135</sup> Although in his etchings of the Thames and in paintings such as Battersea Reach, c.1863 (Washington, Corcoran Gallery) Whistler portrayed the Thames in a more workaday light, he generally chose, as in Nocturne in Blue and Green: Chelsea, to depict the river at evening when twilight cast an atmospheric veil over factory buildings and lights shimmered and twinkled on the water.<sup>136</sup> Gilman, on the other hand, has depicted the daytime bustle of activity as people enjoy their leisure on the river. A yacht, a rowing team and a paddle steamer occupy this stretch, the latter churning up a wake of muddy brown water while plumes of smoke belch from the tall black chimneys above a huddle of factory buildings on the far bank. In spite of the fact that Gilman has depicted pleasure craft while Whistler invariably portrayed the lighters which were the river's industrial cargo transport, it is Gilman who has provided a portrait of the Thames as a working river. In this sense his painting has more in common with the work of Whistler's followers such as Paul Maitland (1869-1909) whose Sun Pier, Chatham, c.1897 (London, Tate Gallery) portrayed the river in a rather more prosaic light than that generally conceived by Whistler.

Two years after Sickert initiated what was, in retrospect, a carefully planned and well orchestrated campaign to discredit and distance himself from Whistler's art, Gilman advertised his own position by publicly placing himself with that "solid phalanx of young painters" of whom Sickert had claimed leadership. In an article on composition, Gilman reaffirmed Sickert's denial in principle of one of the chief tenets of Whistler's Ten O'Clock Lecture, ie. "That nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted."<sup>137</sup> Gilman surely had Whistler in mind when he imagined the artist apostrophising nature: "Uncultivated peasant that you are, your very brightness worries me! The colour of your garments is too crude. Your lines don't harmonize. You have no grace. I am ashamed to speak of what I see."<sup>138</sup> He placed himself firmly in Sickert's camp in his expression of the view that:

No flower is better placed than where it grows, or in a vase by one not thinking of expression. The teacup filled shows best the thought that filled it; when it is emptied another pattern on the table will be formed. Life dictates the shapes. The artist only holds them. If forms don't please, look for another motive. Nothing but life can imitate the real.<sup>139</sup>

During the summer of 1910, Sickert contributed a veritable barrage of articles to The Art News and The New Age largely concerned with issues relating to the treatment of the human form in art,

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<sup>134</sup> Another painting of this theme by Gilman is The Thames at Chelsea, previously with the Fine Art Society and now in a private collection.

<sup>135</sup> F. Spalding (1981).

<sup>136</sup> This was included in the 1904 Whistler Memorial Exhibition.

<sup>137</sup> J. Whistler (1904), p.143.

<sup>138</sup> H. Gilman (1910b).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

whether in portraiture or the study of the nude. A close reading of Gilman's article reveals that it was primarily the human figure with which he too was concerned and that he was influenced to a large extent by Sickert's opinions on the subject, gleaned no doubt through conversations at Fitzroy Street as much as from Sickert's published writings. On the same day that Gilman's article appeared in The Art News, the journal also published a piece by Sickert entitled Idealism which insisted, as Gilman did, that artists should not interfere with nature to the extent of imagining parts of their compositions.<sup>140</sup> Significantly, by 1911 Gilman was being described as a pupil of Sickert.<sup>141</sup> Although he was already adopting a brighter palette and an interest in divisionism, his composition, to some extent his handling and, bearing in mind the reservations set out above, his subject matter were largely dependent on Sickert's example.

The publication of Neo-Realism seven years after Gilman and Sickert first met was to cause a serious breach between the two artists. Yet it is significant that Sickert's criticism of the treatise and of the work of the Neo-Realists devolved largely on the issue of their use of, as he saw it, excessively thick paint. Sickert made it clear that he regarded this as an unfortunate penchant on the part of two artists whose work he otherwise admired.<sup>142</sup> In fact, as will be suggested in chapter six, the quarrel between Sickert and the Neo-Realists had much more to do with differences of opinion regarding the merits of other artists' work, in the sense that Sickert felt Gilman was peopling the London Group with 'undesirables', than with any intrinsic artistic divergence between these two artists. Onwards of 1914, Gilman's work underwent significant modification in order to incorporate a more formalist approach, yet his chosen subject matter remained substantially the same and, in spite of his use of thicker paint, Sickert's fundamental appreciation of his work remained intact.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> W. Sickert (1910c).

<sup>141</sup> Anon., "The Camden Town Group", The Observer (18 June 1911), p.7.

<sup>142</sup> W. Sickert (1914c) and (1914g).

<sup>143</sup> Sickert praised Gilman's work in a review of the London Group exhibition during 1916. (W. Sickert (1916).)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### "Post-Impressionism - Voila l'ennemi!"<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to The New Age Ginner described Neo-Realism as "my manifesto".<sup>2</sup> The implication of a public declaration of intent is borne out by the text, which evolves from historical survey to an assessment of specific areas of contemporary art practice and a prescription for the future development of British art. "In this article", Ginner declared, "I wish to deal with our own times, with the Art of today."<sup>3</sup> While Sickert quibbled over Ginner's attitude toward the work of Poussin and over his use of the term 'academic', it was the role of Neo-Realism as a critique of so-called 'Post-Impressionist' art with which other commentators, including Hulme, were primarily concerned. This chapter will examine Ginner's attitude toward so-called 'Post-Impressionist' art, attempting to show that his hostile opinion was largely formed as the result of an identification of 'Post-Impressionism' with the theories of Bell and Fry and dissatisfaction with the direction in which these theories were leading contemporary British art. It will be seen that Neo-Realism represented an attempt to erase the distinction between representation and decoration which was central to the writings of both Bell and Fry.

Ginner's criticisms of 'Post-Impressionism' were constructed on a similar basis to his analysis of the work of the Carracci, Poussin and the other artists whom he had condemned in the early part of Neo-Realism, ie. that their work was 'academic':

There is a new Academic movement full of dangers. Full of dangers because it is disguised under a false cloak. It cries that it is going to save Art, while in reality it will destroy it. What in England is known as Post-Impressionism - Voila l'ennemi!<sup>4</sup>

The investigation of Ginner's use of the term 'academism' conducted in chapter two of this thesis established his intention to convey his own uneasiness with what he considered an over-reliance on the art of the past. While Ginner's disapproval of the work of say Giulio Romano may be attributed to Giulio's overt attachment to the manner of Raphael, his condemnation of 'Post-Impressionists' stemmed from what he considered an all too apparent attachment on their part to the work of Cézanne. Ginner had, of course, included Cézanne in his list of 'Realists' and he was careful when reintroducing his name to refer to him again as "Cézanne the Realist" in order to distinguish him from the 'Post-Impressionists' who were clearly not Realists according to Ginner's understanding of the term.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>2</sup> C. Ginner (1914b).

<sup>3</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

In characterising 'Post-Impressionism' Ginner referred to it as a "journalistic term".<sup>6</sup> This was clearly a reference to Fry's coining of the label as the title of the exhibition Manet and the Post-Impressionists which he organised at the Grafton Galleries in the autumn of 1910. In describing the title as 'journalistic' Ginner was taking his cue from Sickert who observed in his review of the exhibition that the choice of title was "a detail of advertisement. Only those who have never had to decide on what I may call poster-editing will quarrel very seriously with him on this score."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the term evolved from the combined requirements of brevity and publicity. It is a perception endorsed by Desmond MacCarthy's (1877-1952) account of Fry's choice of title at a meeting with a journalist who was to help with publicity:

Roger first suggested various terms like 'expressionism', which aimed at distinguishing these artists from the impressionists; but the journalist wouldn't have that or any other of his alternatives. At last Roger, losing patience, said: 'Oh, let's just call them post-impressionists; at any rate they came after the impressionists'.<sup>8</sup>

In 1920 Fry claimed that he had chosen the name 'Post-Impressionist' "as being the vaguest and most non-committal ... This merely stated their position in time relatively to the Impressionist movement."<sup>9</sup> Yet the very act of exhibiting the work of twenty-six largely French artists under one roof and endowing them with a title, shared by them and apparently exclusive to them, was calculated to ensure the perception of a unifying credo in the minds of those who visited the exhibition. Indeed, the attempt to bend their art to a shared aesthetic aim was accomplished within the narrow limits of the theorising which comprised the catalogue introduction.

Significantly, Fry was anxious to establish 'Post-Impressionism' as a movement in revolt against Impressionism. MacCarthy testified to this in his account of how Fry came to coin the term and Fry himself was later to regret this polarity: "In conformity with my own previous prejudices against Impressionism, I think I underlined too much their divorce from the parent stock. I see now more clearly their affiliation with it ..."<sup>10</sup> Ginner by no means accepted the break between Cézanne and the Impressionists implied by Fry. As far as Ginner was concerned, Cézanne was an Impressionist, a view shared by both Gore and Sickert. Reviewing the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition for The Art News, Gore wrote:

A future generation, forgetting their quarrels, forgetting the names they gave themselves, will certainly find them much more closely linked together than we are able to. It is possible to imagine them seated at a round table. Gauguin between Degas and Pissarro, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Seurat, Signac, Moret [Monet], and so on round to Manet, Renoir, and Degas again.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.79.

<sup>8</sup> D. MacCarthy (1945), p.124.

<sup>9</sup> R. Fry (1920), p.290.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> S. Gore (1910c), pp.19-20.

Perceiving their differences as technical rather than fundamental or intrinsic, Gore refused to recognise any central discontinuity in the work of Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists and 'Post-Impressionists'. His attitude was echoed by Sickert who claimed that it was absurd to call Cézanne a 'Post-Impressionist' since his art was embedded in the Impressionist movement, and suggested that Gauguin's art derived from the same source.<sup>12</sup> This perception was clearly shared by Ginner and its defence involved him in direct criticism of Fry's theories. Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh were, Ginner asserted, "children of Impressionism" who "brought out of Impressionism a new development by creating a personal Art and self-expression."<sup>13</sup> He believed that far from reacting against Impressionism they were, on the contrary, "the very outcome, ... the very development of it."<sup>14</sup> Ginner observed that "learned but short-sighted, men in France, Germany, and England" had attempted to demonstrate "amidst much noise, that these three painters were a reaction against impressionistic realism."<sup>15</sup> This is clearly a reference to Fry as is the allusion to 'Post-Impressionism' as an 'academic' movement "as preached in England."<sup>16</sup> We may also surmise that Ginner's allusion to the "smaller Matisse fry" was a pun on Fry's name. This occurred in the context of the "followers" of Matisse:

Matisse hunts up formulas in Egypt, in Africa, in the South Seas, like a dog hunting out truffles. The formula once found ready made, the work is easy. The smaller Matisse fry find it even easier, as they have not the trouble of hunting.<sup>17</sup>

Fry evidently felt himself to be under attack for although he did not take part in the ensuing debate, conducted through letters and articles published in The New Age, Watney suggests that Fry's introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Whitechapel Gallery during 1914, entitled Twentieth Century Art. A Review of Modern Movements, constituted a response to Neo-Realism.<sup>18</sup> The preface was unsigned but Watney suggests, if not actually written by Fry, that, like the introduction to the catalogue of Manet and the Post-Impressionists, it was composed from notes supplied by him.<sup>19</sup> Certainly his influence is indicated in the denigration of nineteenth-century narrative painting implied by the suggestion that artists have "moved away from an academic treatment of history, anecdote, and sentimentality" and that the work included in the exhibition "avoids the heavy metallic crudity of the colour schemes of the mid-Victorian period and the sophisticated timidity of the art shades that followed in the eighteen-eighties and 'nineties".<sup>20</sup> Comprising 494 catalogue entries, the exhibition represented an overview of the various tendencies

<sup>12</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.86.

<sup>13</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> S. Watney (1980), p.148. The preface was apparently an extended version of the text of a publicity pamphlet issued by the Omega Workshops (J. Collins (1984), p.90).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Anon. [Roger Fry?], Introduction to catalogue of Twentieth Century Art. A Review of Modern Movements. Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1914, p.3.

present in contemporary British art. Although a large proportion of exhibits were products of the Omega Workshops, there was also a representative selection of work by other groups including the majority of the London Group's membership. The group of ex-Camden Town Group members, which included Gilman and Ginner, were dismissed with the words: "The first group has been influenced by Mr. Walter Sickert and Mr. Lucien Pissarro. It treats common or sordid scenes in a sprightly manner and excels in a luminous treatment of landscape."<sup>21</sup> It was an over-simplified, not to say patronising, view which signalled Fry's distaste for art which in his opinion evinced an over-reliance on subject matter and its associations. Several of the statements contained in the preface would, as Watney suggests, seem to constitute a direct response to Neo-Realism: "Modern art, contrary to a common misapprehension of its meaning, does not alienate itself from life, but seeks a closer connection with life than did the art that preceded it."<sup>22</sup> This reads very much like a reply to Ginner's contention that 'Post-Impressionism', the "new Academism", constituted a break with nature as opposed to the "continued renewal with Life, i.e., collaboration of the Artist and Nature" advocated in Neo-Realism.<sup>23</sup>

The first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition presented Manet very much as the originator of the 'movement', a fact indicated by his prominence in the exhibition title and the inclusion of only eight works, all placed in the first section of the catalogue. The concept of showing a restricted number of key works, prominently placed, accorded Manet the role of father figure. But already the preface to the catalogue indicated the status which was to be granted to Cézanne in Fry's narrative of the development of modern French art. According to Fry, Manet had effectively rejected chiaroscuro in favour of representing objects with light falling full upon them; an innovation which "led to a very great change in the method of modelling, and to a simplification of planes in his pictures which resulted in something closely akin to simple linear designs."<sup>24</sup> It was Fry's contention that contact with the Impressionists led Manet to abandon this technique in favour of one in which "the shifting, elusive aspects of nature were accentuated."<sup>25</sup> It was then taken up by Cézanne who "showed how it was possible to pass from the complexity of the appearance of things to the geometrical simplicity which design demands ..."<sup>26</sup> Thus it was that in the account outlined by Fry, Cézanne took up his position as a "guide" whose "art has appealed enormously to later designers."<sup>27</sup> Among these 'later designers' were, according to Fry, artists such as Van Gogh, Gauguin and Matisse, indeed all the artists whose work was included in the exhibition.<sup>28</sup> By the time the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition opened two years later, in October 1912, the emphasis had shifted. Now the idea was to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>23</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>24</sup> London, Grafton Galleries, Manet and the Post-Impressionists, catalogue by R. Fry and D. MacCarthy. The catalogue preface was unsigned but, according to D. MacCarthy (1945), p.124, it was written by him from notes supplied by Fry.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp.10-11.

show the work of the artists of the "new movement", ie. 'Post-Impressionism', in its "contemporary development not only in France, its native place, but in England where it is of very recent growth ..."<sup>29</sup> It was this which stuck in Ginner's craw, fundamentally opposed as he was to the notion of any artist adopting the personal working methods of another.

While evidently disagreeing to a large extent with Fry's theory of 'Post-Impressionism', there is no doubt that Ginner had appropriated its basic premise; that the works collected together in the second 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition constituted a school of painting whose exponents "all alike derive in some measure from the great originator of the whole idea, Cézanne."<sup>30</sup> Ginner separated the artists whose work was shown at the exhibition into three distinct categories and in this sense he again appears to have been taking his cue from Fry's introduction to the French group in the exhibition catalogue. Ginner identified a group of artists who had adopted a formula based on Cézanne's geometrical simplification of the forms of nature:

He felt nature simply and interpreted it accordingly by dividing the object into separate simplified planes of colour which strengthened the feeling of solidity and depth and gave in certain cases a cubistic appearance to the depicted objects ... The Post-Cézanne's adopted this superficial aspect of his work without searching into the depth of his emotions and his mind, and created a formula.<sup>31</sup>

A second group were the Cubists whom he described as "a development of Post-Cézannism."<sup>32</sup> Ginner had probably read the treatise on Cubism by the Cubist painters Albert Gleizes (1881-1953) and Jean Metzinger (1883-1956) which appeared in an English translation during 1913.<sup>33</sup> While he would have been unimpressed by their criticism of Courbet as "the slave of the worst visual conventions" or their dismissal of Impressionism as "an absurdity", it was probably from this source that he derived his analysis of Cubism in terms of its ultimate derivation from the work of Cézanne.<sup>34</sup> Gleizes and Metzinger stressed the Cubist debt to Cézanne: "To understand Cézanne is to foresee Cubism."<sup>35</sup> Ginner was clearly familiar with the contents of Cézanne's letter to Bernard of 15 April 1904 from which he quoted a passage relevant to the "Post-Cézannes'" interest in his work: "His words that the forms of nature "peuvent se ramener au cône, au cylindre et à la sphère" was simply his mode of expressing his feelings of simplified nature."<sup>36</sup>

The third group comprised the work of "Matisse and his followers" who based their art on that of Gauguin:

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<sup>29</sup> R. Fry (1912), p.7. A Russian section was also included.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>31</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> A. Gleizes and J. Metzinger, *Cubism*. London, 1913. In a letter to Bernard, dated 15 April 1904, Cézanne stated that the artist should: "... traitez la nature par le cylindre, la sphère, le cône ..." (J. Rewald, ed. (1978), p.300).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.11, 13.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>36</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

Gauguin ... went to the South Seas and painted the South Sea islanders. Out of this a Post-Gauguin school arose, of which Matisse would seem to be the most important development. Out of Gauguin's Romantic Realism and his personal interpretation Matisse and Co. created a formula to be worked quietly at home in some snug Paris studio, as far away as possible from the South Seas or any other exotic country.<sup>37</sup>

Again there is the stress on Gauguin as a Realist and the implication that artists such as Matisse were lifting elements of Gauguin's art out of context. The stipulation, formulated by Realists in the nineteenth century, that artists should confine themselves to the depiction of their own surroundings is very strong here: Ginner clearly condemned Matisse as a French artist working in a Paris studio under what Ginner regarded as the second-hand influence of the colour and light of the South Pacific. In isolating these categories Ginner followed Fry's lead, although Fry chose to regard Cézanne as the head of the whole movement rather than a branch of it, while Picasso and Matisse represented two extremes of artists' responses to the work of Cézanne. And of course the conclusions they drew from their contemplation of these categories were quite different in terms of critical response.

The first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition created something of a furore in the Press, largely owing to the fact that many commentators regarded a proportion of the artists whose work was included as incompetent charlatans. It was the premise upon which the majority of newspaper reviews were based and a significant proportion of letters on the subject published in the art press.<sup>38</sup> Fry's conscious attempt to link 'Post-Impressionism' with primitive art in the minds of this audience and his contention that this was an art in which "skill was completely subordinated to the direct expression of feeling" failed to combat the impression received by many visitors to both exhibitions that a significant proportion of these artists could neither draw nor paint. It was certainly Sickert's attitude toward the work of, among others, Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso. Reviewing the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition he accused Matisse of "wilful deformation" while dismissing Picasso with faint praise as "a quite accomplished sort of minor international painter."<sup>39</sup> He regarded Cézanne as "immensely overrated" while at the same time admiring much of his work.<sup>40</sup> Gore's attitude toward Cézanne was similar, appreciating his work while observing that in attaining an exact harmony of colour "he often lost the drawing, which he would then recover with a line. Hence incompleteness."<sup>41</sup>

Ginner accorded Cézanne a much more secure position as "Cézanne the Realist" but it is clear that he was by no means comfortable with the art of either Picasso or Matisse.<sup>42</sup> He had expressed his doubts about the work of both these artists in a review of the *Artistes Indépendants* in

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Examples of the former include R. Ross, "The Post-Impressionists at the Grafton. The Twilight of the Idols", *The Morning Post* (7 November 1910), p.3 and C. Phillips, "Grafton Galleries. The 'Post-Impressionists'", *The Daily Telegraph* (11 November 1910), p.5; of the latter, E. Wake Cook, "Post-Impressionism", *Pall Mall Gazette* (10 November 1910), p.7 and H. Holiday, "Post-Impressionism", *The Nation*, vol.8 (24 December 1910), p.539.

<sup>39</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.82.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>41</sup> S. Gore (1910c), p.19.

<sup>42</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

Paris during 1911. Although work by Picasso was shown at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, these had included only two oils, the remaining seven works being drawings. One of the paintings was very early, Nude Girl with Basket of Flowers, 1905 (private collection) while the other, the early Cubist Portrait of Clovis Sagot, 1909 (Hamburg, Kunsthalle) [60], seen in isolation, must have conveyed little more to Ginner other than that Picasso was a follower of Cézanne. Ginner's ignorance of the existence of the movement which, following the 1911 *Artistes Indépendants*, was christened 'Cubism', is indicated by a reference in his review of the exhibition. Noting that his last visit to Paris had taken place three years previously, he observed:

I did not notice any real new movement except one, which I shall call the Picasso movement, and which more than three years ago must have been non-existent, or only in embryo. The Picasso school is the "cubistes" school, who only see in nature volumes which they express by juxtaposition of geometrical forms.<sup>43</sup>

Although neither Georges Braque (1882-1963) nor Picasso exhibited at the *Artistes Indépendants* in the spring of 1911, Ginner observed that there was "a whole room of these paintings." He was clearly referring to *salle* 41 which became known as the 'Cubist Room', where the work of six adherents of Cubism was shown together.<sup>44</sup> Having effectively seized control of the Hanging Committee, this group not only ensured themselves a separate exhibiting space but also assigned *salle* 43 to a group of artists working in a related idiom.<sup>45</sup> Ginner compared these works to the effects of an earthquake he had experienced as a child in the South of France, "these geometrical volumes ... crumbling down one on top of the other in the most alarming way."<sup>46</sup> These artists were all, to some extent, experimenting with the geometrical treatment of form and the breaking up of the image into planes and facets which also characterised the work of Braque and Picasso. The exhibitors in *salle* 41 by no means represented a homogenous group, however, and Spate has attempted to show that Léger's major contribution, Nus dans un paysage, 1909-11 (Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller), a complex painting incorporating a rigid geometry with an emphasis on cylindrical forms, differed significantly from the work of Braque and Picasso in its use of curved planes.<sup>47</sup> Delaunay exhibited a series of views of Paris, including La Tour Eiffel, 1910-11 (destroyed) which, as Golding suggests, were preoccupied less with volumes than with an optical synthesis incorporating a multiple perspective.<sup>48</sup> Ginner was not concerned however with fine

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<sup>43</sup> C. Ginner (1911a). The review is signed 'Matière' but Ginner's Notebooks, vol.1, p.cxxxiv, establish his authorship.

<sup>44</sup> C. Green (1976), p.6. They were Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), Henri le Fauconnier (1881-1946), Gleizes, Marie Laurencin (1885-1956), Ferdinand Léger (1881-1955) and Metzinger.

<sup>45</sup> P. Daix (1982), p.75. These included Roger de la Fresnaye (1885-1925), André Lhote (1885-1962), Luc-Albert Moreau (1882-1948) and André Dunoyer de Segonzac (1884-1974).

<sup>46</sup> C. Ginner (1911a). Interestingly enough, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), in a review of the *Artistes Indépendants* of the previous year, had also likened the Cubist work of Delaunay to the effects of an earthquake: "... the influence of a Friesz of a few years ago has made him paint some solid canvases that unfortunately look as if they were commemorating an earthquake." ("Le Salon des Indépendants", L'Intransigeant (18 March 1910). Trans. L. Breunig (1972), p.67).

<sup>47</sup> V. Spate (1979), pp.233ff.

<sup>48</sup> J. Golding (1971), p.149.

distinctions but lumped together all those preoccupied with "juxtaposition (sic) surfaces expressed by geometrical volumes" as "the Picasso movement."<sup>49</sup> Perceiving Cubism as a movement, Ginner was now able to place in its context Picasso's Portrait of Clovis Sagot which he had seen at the Grafton Galleries. He must surely have had this painting in mind when he recalled "seeing a really interesting geometrical portrait by Picasso." He concluded however that, although "a wonderfully clever conjurer's trick", he "failed to see in it "painting" or "art"."<sup>50</sup>

Ginner was evidently more familiar with the work of Matisse and it is clear that his interpretation of this artist's work was gleaned from the introduction to the catalogue of the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition: "Matisse and Co. wish to show us, I believe, solely the essence of nature, that being according to them the most decorative way of expressing it."<sup>51</sup> This clearly owes a great deal to Fry's assertion that 'Post-Impressionists', determined to express the "emotional significance which lies in things", rejected truth to nature as the criterion in judging a work of art.<sup>52</sup> The 'Post-Impressionist' "aims at *synthesis* in design; that is to say, he is prepared to subordinate consciously his power of representing the parts of his picture as plausibly as possible, to the expressiveness of his whole design."<sup>53</sup> The emphasis on the decorative aspect of the work of "Matisse and Co" - again, the perception of a school of painting derived from Fry's writings - suggests that Ginner had read Fry's reply to the critics of Manet and the Post-Impressionists which was published in The Nation in November 1910. Here Fry drew attention to the "purely decorative quality" of the works on show.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to his perception of the work of Picasso, Ginner's attitude toward Matisse was ambivalent. He admired Matisse's still lifes and, while reserving the opinion that the movement represented by Matisse had as yet produced nothing "sérieux", he admitted that it had great possibilities.<sup>55</sup>

The visit to Paris during which Ginner reviewed the *Artistes Indépendants* was made in the company of Gilman and Rutter and was clearly intended as an opportunity to acquaint themselves further with the work of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists'.<sup>56</sup> Ginner recalled that they visited: "... such collections as Bernheim's, who possessed a room entirely decorated with the works of Van Gogh, ... Durand Ruel's collection of French Impressionists; Pellerin's Cézannes; also the Vollard and Sagot Galleries with their Rousseaus, Picassos, Vuillards, & c."<sup>57</sup> There is a lack of discrimination here which indicates very clearly the confusion which Fry's exhibition had engendered. No attempt is made to distinguish between the several movements which comprised Fry's blanket term 'Post-Impressionism' nor to differentiate between that which was 'modern' and what was actually

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<sup>49</sup> C. Ginner (1911a).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> R. Fry and D. MacCarthy (1910), p.9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>54</sup> R. Fry (1910d), p.332.

<sup>55</sup> C. Ginner (1911a).

<sup>56</sup> F. Rutter (1922), p.134.

<sup>57</sup> C. Ginner (1919a), p.130.

contemporary. After all, much of the work included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition in 1910 had been executed during the 1880s, more than twenty years earlier. By 1910 Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh were already dead. The somewhat helter-skelter review of modern art conducted in Paris by Gilman, Ginner and Rutter is reminiscent of MacCarthy's account of the tour of commercial art galleries made by himself and Fry in order to choose works for their exhibition. The bulk of the exhibits were obtained from the galleries of Bernheim Jeune, Druet and Vollard; apparently little or no work was bought direct from the artists concerned. Sickert highlighted the part played by the Parisian dealers in the selection of exhibits when he observed: "We must always remember that, if the innocent and none too discriminating enthusiasm of an English committee proposes exhibitions of this kind, it is the French dealer and the state of his stock which disposes."<sup>58</sup>

While Ginner's brief for *The Art News* review was evidently to provide a survey of the latest developments in art as shown at the *Artistes Indépendants*, the remainder of the trip was clearly spent in studying comparatively less challenging art. This is indicated by the difficulty which Gilman experienced in deciding which artist's work appealed to him most among the bewildering kaleidoscope of new art to which he had been subjected. According to Ginner, the choice lay between Gauguin and Van Gogh and Gilman ultimately settled for the latter. That he was little acquainted with the work of these artists is indicated by Ginner's remark that Gilman "did not immediately accept Van Gogh and I can remember a long argument we had on the merits of this master."<sup>59</sup> Significantly, the choice was not between, say, Matisse and Picasso but between two artists, both deceased, with whose work Sickert, for example, who had lived in France and who made frequent visits to Paris, had been familiar for some time.<sup>60</sup> Fry's second 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition was characterised by the same lack of sensitivity to individuality which had been apparent in 1910. The hanging of the exhibition again failed to take into account the sheer diversity of the artists whom he identified as 'Post-Impressionists'. Highly critical of the show's organisation, Rutter observed:

The utter confusion which at present exists owing to the coining of the word 'post-impressionist' ... might be partially cleared up if the public could be brought to realise that the term as used in England covers some half-a-dozen distinct and separate art movements which in France are given separate names.<sup>61</sup>

Rutter then went on to suggest an alternative, loosely chronological hanging which would separate the artists into their constituent groups of Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists, Fauves, Cubists and so on.

Having established a direct causal link between Impressionism and the work of Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh and having advanced the notion that the majority of the artists identified as

<sup>58</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.89. Fry was himself disposed to agree with critics of his choice of exhibits, admitting that there were too many Gauguins and that Matisse was inadequately represented, while Picasso "should have been seen in bigger and more ambitious works." (R. Fry (1910e), p.402).

<sup>59</sup> C. Ginner (1919a), p.130.

<sup>60</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.80.

<sup>61</sup> F. Rutter (1912b).

'Post-Impressionists' had adopted 'formulae' from the work of these artists and were thus to be classified as 'academics', Ginner turned in his treatise to the function of art as decoration. In the introduction to the catalogue of the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, attention was drawn to the decorative aspect of Gauguin's art, and a direct parallel made in this context with primitive art in the sense that such art was seen to reject overtly representative concerns in favour of realising "the power which abstract form and colour can exercise over the imagination of the spectator."<sup>62</sup> Again, in the article in The Nation previously referred to, Fry persuasively drew attention to the decorative effect which the paintings created on the walls of the Grafton Galleries: " ... these pictures, like the works of the early primitives, and like the masterpieces of Oriental art, do not make holes in the wall, through which another vision is made evident. They form a part of the surface which they decorate ..."<sup>63</sup> In the catalogue of the second exhibition it was the work of Matisse which Fry singled out, while imputing this quality to the work of all the artists shown: "His work has to an extraordinary degree that decorative unity of design which distinguishes all the artists of this school."<sup>64</sup> Ginner may have had this in mind when he criticised a "common opinion of the day ... that Decoration is the unique aim of Art", although it should be pointed out that a preoccupation with decorative effects was evident in the work of a large number of French artists from Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98) through Gauguin to Matisse.<sup>65</sup>

Both Fry and Bell perceived a fundamental dichotomy and incompatibility between the aims of illustration and design. In selecting a group of British artists for inclusion in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, Bell was, as he put it, concerned to "discover in the work of these English painters some vestige of those qualities that distinguish Post-Impressionists from the mass ..."<sup>66</sup> Bell defined these qualities as "simplification" and "plastic design".<sup>67</sup> By 'simplification' he meant the omission of external detail in favour of concentrating on the essential form of objects and by 'plastic design' he intended to convey an emphasis on form rather than description.<sup>68</sup> It was a reaffirmation of the priority of form over content which both Bell and Fry understood to be the measure of what they called 'Post-Impressionism'. In his preface to the English section in the exhibition catalogue Bell introduced for the first time the concept of 'Significant Form'. Evidently derived from an article published by Fry in 1909 entitled An Essay in Aesthetics, the burden of Bell's thesis was the notion that certain forms and combinations of line and colour could, in themselves, both express and evoke emotion.<sup>69</sup> 'Significant Form' implied by such means the expression of emotion as an end in itself rather than the depiction of descriptive detail designed to evoke the facts

<sup>62</sup> R. Fry and D. MacCarthy (1910), p.11.

<sup>63</sup> R. Fry (1910d), p.332.

<sup>64</sup> R. Fry (1912), p.15.

<sup>65</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>66</sup> C. Bell (1912), p.10.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp.10-11.

<sup>69</sup> R. Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics", The New Quarterly (April 1909), pp.173-90. In this essay Fry explored what he called the 'emotional elements of design', arguing that emotion could be conveyed through line, colour, light and shade and so on, quite apart from representative considerations.

and concomitant emotions of life, ie. narrative. It was a thesis which Bell was to elaborate two years later in his book, Art:

... lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.<sup>70</sup>

As suggested in chapter two of this thesis, Bell denied to works which in his opinion relied for their effect on descriptive detail or narrative the status of art, 'proving' his theory by applying it to Frith's The Railway Station; a test which, predictably, it failed. Of course, the logical extreme of such a theory was the promotion of a totally abstract art. In his introduction to the French section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, Fry rather hesitatingly suggested that a consistent development of Picasso's art would "undoubtedly be the attempt to give up all resemblance to natural form, and to create a purely abstract language of form ..."<sup>71</sup> Fry was, however, clearly unhappy with such an extreme and in the event it was left to Bell to explore the possibilities of such an art.<sup>72</sup>

While the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition spawned the notion that likeness to nature was an irrelevant consideration in assessing a work of art, the theory arising from the second implied that it could be positively harmful.<sup>73</sup> Fry had used his belief in the irrelevance of representation as a means of defence; Bell now adopted it as a line of attack: "The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions."<sup>74</sup> It goes without saying that a theory of art based on impalpable, not to say obscure, value judgements must be purely subjective and it is worth pointing out that Fry's attempt to define 'Significant Form' failed when, as he confessed, it landed him in "the depths of mysticism".<sup>75</sup> It is clear that if taste was to be the arbiter, a very strong case must be made out for the discernment of both Bell and Fry. Consequently we find that the writings of both men are littered with references to their own sensibility and its proportionate absence in their detractors.<sup>76</sup>

With reference to the theories laid down by Bell and Fry, Ginner evidently understood 'Post-Impressionism' to imply an antagonism between the concepts of decoration and what he termed the "plastic interpretation of Life", which we may take to mean detail and description or, in opposition to

<sup>70</sup> C. Bell (1914), p.8. Although Bell's book was published after Neo-Realism, Ginner would have been familiar with the section on 'Significant Form' which had appeared in the form of an article a year earlier: C. Bell, "Post-Impressionism and Aesthetics", The Burlington Magazine, vol.22 (January 1913), pp.226-30.

<sup>71</sup> R. Fry (1912), pp.14-15.

<sup>72</sup> S. Tillyard (1988), pp.177-80, discusses Fry's unease with the work of the Cubists. Fry himself, (1920), p.295, later criticised Bell's notion that "representation of nature was entirely irrelevant ... and that a picture might be completely non-representative."

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.187.

<sup>74</sup> C. Bell (1914), p.25.

<sup>75</sup> R. Fry (1920), p.302.

<sup>76</sup> S. Watney (1983) explores this aspect of their theoretical writings.

Bell, the fundamental *relevance* of subject matter.<sup>77</sup> Ginner had himself clearly perceived an opposition between the aims of decoration and Realism when in 1911 he drew a distinction between the work of Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists, observing that the "neo-impressionist's, as distinct from the impressionist school which aimed at realism, is decorative."<sup>78</sup> At this stage Ginner evidently regarded the systematic application of the 'dot' and the scientific control of colour implied by Neo-Impressionism as fundamentally opposed to a Realist conception of art. In Neo-Realism, however, he attempted to erase this distinction between Realism and decoration and it is this which reveals the extent of Ginner's ambition in formulating the theory and which ultimately constitutes the measure of his influence on the future development of British art. The watchwords of Neo-Realism were "intimate research into Nature", "deliberate objective transposition" and "good craftsmanship", a formula which Ginner repeated no less than three times in the text of Neo-Realism.<sup>79</sup> It was his belief, however, that these conditions did not necessarily imply the exclusion of decorative possibilities, citing Van Gogh as a "modern Realist" whose work was at the same time highly decorative: "A room at Bernheim's private house in Paris hung only by works of this great realist (who confessed to Gauguin that he could not work from imagination) makes one of the finest decorative wall-spaces I have ever seen."<sup>80</sup> Ginner held that realistic and decorative priorities could, and did, exist in a single work of art, one occurring as a direct result of the other:

When this method of intimate research has been followed we find that the infinite variety of colour, pattern and line which is to be found in Nature and the arrangements evinced by them under the artist's personality "create a whole which is a decorative composition". This resulting decorative composition is an unconscious creation produced by the collaboration of Nature and the Artist Mind.<sup>81</sup>

At this stage Ginner regarded the decorative element in a Realist work as involuntary or subconscious, a kind of byproduct naturally occurring in the best art. It was a short step from this to a realisation that, while retaining an essentially Realist outlook, a work of art could be manipulated in order to emphasise its decorative aspect. It was a step which Ginner was willing to take and one which was to ensure the evolution of Neo-Realism from the fundamentally insular document of 1914 to the progressive prescription for the future development of British art contained in Modern Painting and Teaching.<sup>82</sup>

The primary aim of Neo-Realism was to prevent what Ginner regarded as the subversion of contemporary British art to a narrow dependence on the working methods and the analysis of nature found in the work of Cézanne and Van Gogh: "Let those who are making a formula out of Cézanne or Van Gogh get entangled in the formulas and fall, only he who takes from Cézanne or Van Gogh that which he finds in them relating to Nature and not that which is merely personal to themselves

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<sup>77</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>78</sup> C. Ginner (1911).

<sup>79</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. (It is not clear from what source Ginner was quoting here).

<sup>82</sup> C. Ginner (1917).

will ever produce an original and great work of Art."<sup>83</sup> Clearly Ginner was uncomfortable with British responses to the work exhibited at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition although, with some tact, he failed to identify by name any of the British artists to whom he applied the epithet 'formula painter'. The work of thirteen British artists was included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition and, significantly, neither Gilman nor Ginner were among them. Equally significant is the fact that it was Clive Bell who chose the exhibits and who wrote the catalogue preface. At this stage Bell would have found little in the work of either Gilman or Ginner to which he could relate his notions of 'simplification' and 'plastic design'. It is worth observing that Ginner's understanding of the aims of those British artists included in the exhibition may have derived as much from Bell's declaration that each of the British 'Post-Impressionists' "owes something, directly or indirectly, to Cézanne" as it did from a study of the actual works available.<sup>84</sup>

Textual references in Neo-Realism are at times curiously elusive and Ginner's meaning and the identities of the artists to whom he indirectly referred are difficult to pin down with any degree of certainty. To whom, for instance, was he referring when he spoke of the "rose-pink halo of interest" which, he claimed, characterised 'Post-Impressionist' art?<sup>85</sup> Watney suggests Vanessa Bell (1879-1961) and Gore who both made extensive use of pink in their paintings between 1912 and 1914.<sup>86</sup> Yet one can hardly imagine Ginner criticising in print the work of Gore, a close friend and colleague to whom the theory of Neo-Realism owed so much. It is by no means certain that Ginner was in fact referring to English 'Post-Impressionists' as Watney assumes and, shifting the site of Ginner's criticism to the French section of the exhibition, we can infer that he was alluding to Matisse whose Young Sailor II, 1906-7 (Mexico City, collection of Mr and Mrs Jacques Gelman) [61], which was included in the exhibition, was characterised by a background of pale pink.<sup>87</sup> The critical ambiguity and uncertainty which inhabits this passage echoes Ginner's ambivalence toward Matisse's work in his review of the *Artistes Indépendants* exhibition in the spring of 1911. Part of the problem lies in the fact that the terminology employed by Ginner, indeed his entire frame of reference, was at this point in time by no means a stable or universal currency. Certainly, a large proportion of the 48 works included in the British section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition owed something to recent developments across the Channel; after all this was, according to Bell's catalogue preface, the whole point of the exercise. There was no question of chauvanism or fears of a national identity crisis here: "Their debt to the French", declared Bell, "is enormous".<sup>88</sup> Again, "No one of understanding, I suppose, will deny the superiority of the Frenchmen."<sup>89</sup> Francophiles to the core, neither Bell nor Fry were concerned with the issues of national identity which so clearly exercised

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<sup>83</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>84</sup> C. Bell (1912), p.9.

<sup>85</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>86</sup> S. Watney (1980), p.119.

<sup>87</sup> London, Grafton Galleries, Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, October 1912, cat. no.36.

<sup>88</sup> C. Bell (1912), p.9.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.11.

Ginner. In his catalogue introduction, Bell described English art of the previous two centuries as "the laughing-stock of Europe."<sup>90</sup>

In computing the 'debt to the French' of these British 'Post-Impressionists', Bell was clearly unwilling to be specific: "detective-work of this sort", he maintained, "would be profitless here as elsewhere."<sup>91</sup> However, in the interests of ascertaining precisely whom Ginner intended to criticise, a little 'detective-work' may, in this context, be rather profitable than otherwise. The British artists included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition were Bernard Adeney (1878-1966), Vanessa Bell, Frederick Etchells (1886-1973), Jessie Etchells (1892-1933), Eric Gill (1882-1940), Gore, Grant, Henry Lamb (1883-1960), Lewis and Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). In January 1913 works by Cuthbert Hamilton (1884-1959) and Wadsworth were added to the exhibition.<sup>92</sup> The number of works assigned to each artist varied, with Lewis contributing ten, albeit mostly drawings, Fry five and Lamb only two. The proportion of works which are both extant and identifiable as having been included in the exhibition does allow us to gauge the influence on these artists of so-called 'Post-Impressionist' art. As described above, and bearing in mind the fact that he regarded Cézanne as belonging to the Impressionist movement and therefore not a 'Post-Impressionist', Ginner identified three major categories in 'Post-Impressionist' art: "Cézannism", "Cubism" and the "Matisse movement" based on the work of Gauguin. He was able to find representatives of all three groupings in the British section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. It is a matter for some regret that Ginner failed to review the exhibition, providing us with a record of his objections to the British work included and his reasons for such. In the absence of such a record the identity of those artists of whose work he disapproved must remain a matter for conjecture. What we can do is consider the ways in which these artists were indebted to French sources which may give some indication of Ginner's meaning. The first category was 'Cézannism' and a number of the works shown certainly do indicate the influence of Cézanne. Fry's The Terrace, 1912 (collection of Mr and Mrs R. King) [62], for example, displays a tendency to divide forms into facets and to apply a geometrical discipline to the forms of nature.<sup>93</sup> This painting is very close to the canvases which Gore executed at Letchworth during the summer of 1912, two of which were included in the exhibition. One of Gore's exhibits, The Tree, has not been identified but the remaining two were Letchworth Station, 1912 (York, National Railway Museum) [63] and The Cinder Path of 1912.<sup>94</sup> The disposition of the landscape and geometrical treatment of the clouds in Fry's painting is particularly close to that found in The Cinder Path. The Letchworth series represented a synthesis of the lessons which Gore had learned from his study of the work of both Cézanne and Gauguin and remains among his best work. Spencer's John Donne Arriving in Heaven, 1911 (private collection) may also be regarded as

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>92</sup> J. Collins (1984), p.27.

<sup>93</sup> Cat. no.122.

<sup>94</sup> Cat. nos.131, 133 and 116, respectively. There are two paintings entitled The Cinder Path; one in the Tate Gallery, London [64] and a smaller version in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, both painted in 1912. It is not clear which was shown at this exhibition.

displaying the influence of Cézanne taken a step further.<sup>95</sup> The small figures are extremely stylised, reduced to flat planes and facets as is, to some extent, the landscape. Bell's Nosegay, 1912 (present location unknown) which was illustrated in the catalogue, again suggests the influence of Cézanne in the application of the paint in broad, flat strokes and the conversion of natural forms to rigid geometrical shapes and straight lines.<sup>96</sup>

The influence of Matisse may be detected in the work of Frederick Etchells and Grant. The work of both these artists was extremely decorative and during this period they were working closely together, having collaborated on a commission to design and execute a series of murals for the dining room of the Borough Polytechnic during 1911.<sup>97</sup> Adeney and Fry were also involved in the project. Grant's contributions included The Queen of Sheba, 1912 (London, Tate Gallery) [65], The Dancers, 1911-12 (present location unknown), The Countess, 1912 (private collection) [66] and Pamela, 1911 (private collection) [67].<sup>98</sup> All are carried out with great emphasis on pattern-making, The Queen of Sheba, in particular, with its gracefully curving lines and the application of paint in separate 'dots' which marks Grant's interest in surface as much as form. Watney suggests that this loosely pointillist technique relates closely to the work of Denis and to the early work of Matisse.<sup>99</sup> The Countess suggests the influence of Matisse in the frontal pose and the simplification of facial features resulting in the articulation of eyes and nose by the device of a simple dark contour. One thinks particularly of such portraits by Matisse as The Girl With Green Eyes, 1909 (San Francisco, Museum of Art) which Grant had seen at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition.<sup>100</sup> Pamela is extremely close to Frederick Etchells's Two Women Sitting on the Grass, c.1911 (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) which was also included in the exhibition.<sup>101</sup> Both portray female figures seated out of doors and both place great emphasis on pattern-making with a vocabulary of short strokes and dabs in spite of which busyness the figures retain a sharp angularity. This interest in pattern-making within a representational framework is reminiscent of the work of Matisse. The only other work by Etchells which can be positively identified is The Dead Mole, c.1912 (collection of Lady Keynes) which displays a similar handling.<sup>102</sup> It is an unusual work, extremely stylised, even whimsical. As Cork suggests, it is Mannerist in conception yet in colour and form it owes allegiance to the work of Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse.<sup>103</sup> Grant's The Dancers clearly relates to Matisse's The Dance, 1909 (New York, Museum of Modern Art) which Grant had seen when he visited

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<sup>95</sup> Cat. no.149.

<sup>96</sup> Cat. no.78.

<sup>97</sup> In an interview with Richard Cork (1976, vol.1, p.50) during August 1971, Grant recalled: "Etchells and I both liked to experiment at that stage, and were very much in sympathy with each other."

<sup>98</sup> Cat. nos.74, 81, 101 and 102, respectively. Another version of The Dancers is in the collection of the Tate Gallery, London.

<sup>99</sup> S. Watney (1980), p.87.

<sup>100</sup> Cat. no.111.

<sup>101</sup> Cat. no.124.

<sup>102</sup> Cat. no.103.

<sup>103</sup> R. Cork (1976), vol.1, p.51.

Matisse's studio at Issy-les-Moulineux in 1909.<sup>104</sup> Although the concept of portraying five women holding hands and dancing in a circle relates to Matisse's painting, Grant's treatment of the theme is quite different, monumentality replacing movement. Nevertheless, the presence of Matisse's painting at the exhibition gave critics the opportunity to compare Grant unfavourably with the French artist. P. G. Konody noted the comparison, claiming that Grant failed to approach Matisse's "superb rhythm of movement" and that his dancers were too "posed and stiff". He concluded that this was the result of Grant's failure to choose between the decorative convention of flat patterning and "three-dimensional realism".<sup>105</sup>

As far as Ginner's third category, 'Cubism', is concerned the only artist who could be associated with the movement was Lewis who contributed the most radical works in the British section of the exhibition. Six of the ten pieces which he sent in were illustrations to Shakespeare's Timon of Athens, a series comprising some of Lewis's most sternly Vorticist conceptions, at times heading off into total abstraction.<sup>106</sup> Lewis's Vorticist work combined allegiances to both Cubism and Futurism, a startlingly dynamic fusion which, as Cork suggests, was remarkably appropriate to a portrayal of the anger, violence and chaos implicit in Shakespeare's narrative.<sup>107</sup> Another of Lewis's exhibits, Creation, 1912 (present location unknown) [68] was constructed along similar lines with the emphasis placed more on the Futurist conception of figures in motion; a departure no doubt inspired by what Lewis had seen at the Futurist exhibition held in London in March 1912.<sup>108</sup> Predictably, Lewis's exhibits drew some of the sharpest criticism. Konody wrote of "the hopelessly mechanical aspect of his sternal spheres and geometrical diagrams - Picasso's cubism simplified and 'standardised'".<sup>109</sup>

Much of the criticism dealing with the British section of the exhibition dwelt on their supposed debt to the French. Konody took this view while maintaining that the British achievement was inferior:

Every word of their artistic language is traceable to some French root. There is no eccentricity, no affectation, no mannerism in French that does not find a ready echo in English Post-Impressionist art. And let it be said at once, like every echo, it is feebler than the original sound. The aims are identical, but the achievement is very often more timid ... less plastic in design, less emphatic and less exciting.<sup>110</sup>

Looking back on this period during the 1930s, Vanessa Bell observed that many British painters on seeing the work exhibited at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition "threw their petticoats ... over the

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<sup>104</sup> S. Watney (1980), pp.86-7.

<sup>105</sup> P. Konody (1912). It is interesting to note that in 1917 Grant painted Dancers - Homage to Matisse (private collection) which, as its title suggests, is entirely indebted to Matisse's painting.

<sup>106</sup> Cat. nos.194-198, 201. R. Cork (1976), vol.1, p.43 points out that they are impossible to identify since Lewis produced a portfolio of twenty watercolours and drawings for this project, none of which bears a title.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>108</sup> London, Sackville Gallery, Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters, March 1912.

<sup>109</sup> P. Konody (1912).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

windmill thinking that you could paint like Gauguin or Van Gogh by the simple process of putting a black line round everything, or like Cézanne by putting a blue one."<sup>111</sup> Yet a proportion of the work included in the British section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition represented mature, considered responses to cross-Channel influences. Lewis had developed, in Vorticism, a highly original art in spite of a clear debt to Cubist and Futurist innovations, while most critics were agreed that Grant's Queen of Sheba represented the continuation of an English tradition of illustration which could be traced back through Beardsley. Dismissing Grant's handling and use of colour, those elements of his work which defined his allegiance to Matisse, Robert Ross declared that his Queen of Sheba, "a very amusing illustration", would have "told better in black and white".<sup>112</sup> Clearly, Ross was thinking of Beardsley's drawings and indeed an early pen drawing by Grant entitled Tea, 1899 (private collection) is extremely close to the work of Beardsley. Significantly, it was The Countess which raised the most ire in discussions of Grant's work, for it was the painting which most clearly emulated the phase of Matisse's development which had been roundly condemned by critics following the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition. Konody described Grant's painting as "Matisse at his silliest. This is nursery art without the child's ingenious sincerity."<sup>113</sup> It was the familiar cant of insincerity combined with incompetence which characterised a large section of critical response to both 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions.

Ginner's failure to name names stems from two circumstances. The artists whose work was included in the British section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition were difficult to criticise individually in the terms which Ginner laid down. Accusations of 'formula painting' in the case of any of the thirteen artists included did not readily hold water. In addition, several were friends of Ginner, including Gore, Lewis and Frederick Etchells who recalled that Ginner "was a great chum and probably introduced me to Lewis."<sup>114</sup> It is unlikely that he would want to implicate them by name in a published document and it is perhaps significant that Ginner confined his criticisms to a review of developments in French art, for any reference to Italian Futurism would have identified Lewis as a 'formula painter' within the discourse of Neo-Realism.

In view of Ginner's remarks regarding decorative painting, it may well have been the work of Frederick Etchells and Grant to which he chiefly objected. As previously suggested, their contributions very much expressed their current preoccupations; in particular, large-scale decorative mural work of the type carried out for the Borough Polytechnic commission. Both were, at this stage, clearly concerned chiefly with surface pattern, arguably at the expense of underlying form and structure. In Pamela, for example, Grant was forced to cut through the busy pattern of grass and lily-pond using a sharp black contour in order to re-establish the form of the sitter's legs. Robert Ross had sounded a warning note in 1912 when he suggested that the British section was inferior to the French "in their rendering of mass and form", and advised that a tendency to sacrifice mass to colour

<sup>111</sup> V. Bell, MS. Memories of Roger Fry, October 1934. Extract reprinted in S. Watney (1980), p.49.

<sup>112</sup> R. Ross (1912).

<sup>113</sup> P. Konody (1912).

<sup>114</sup> R. Cork (1976), vol.1, p.50. (F. Etchells, interview with Cork, 2 June 1970).

must be checked if the movement was not to end "as so many movements have ended in England, in an empty decorative convention."<sup>115</sup> The evolution of the theory of Neo-Realism was largely predicated upon a prejudice in favour of the priority of structure and composition; what might be termed the scaffolding of a painting. When Gore caused the ballustrade in Gauguins and Connoisseurs at the Stafford Gallery, 1911 (private collection) [69] to curve in a great sweep across the top of the canvas, he was not so much toying with the surface of the painting as tackling the concept of decoration at the level of the very structure of his composition. It was this concern with fundamental compositional design which Neo-Realism was ultimately to address and in condemning the notion that decoration was, as he put it, the "unique aim of art", Ginner was already hinting at the direction which Neo-Realism would take. He clearly drew a distinction between the concept of decoration as surface pattern and the kind of decorative design which Gore was exploring as an integral component in the structure of his composition.

This chapter has attempted to show that Ginner's attitude toward 'Post-Impressionist' art was very much conditioned by the theories of Bell and Fry. Clearly a shift had taken place in Ginner's perception of 'Post-Impressionism' between the first exhibition in 1910 and the second exhibition held two years later. Following the first exhibition, Ginner had accompanied Gilman and Rutter to Paris, eager to see more, and in a letter to Pissarro dated 2 January 1911, he clearly identified himself and his fellow Fitzroy Street Group members as 'Post-Impressionists': "Let us hope also that 1911 will bring good luck to Fitzroy Street in particular & all "post impressionists" in general."<sup>116</sup> By 1914, however, 'Post-Impressionism' had become the 'enemy', "a new Academic movement full of dangers" which threatened to "destroy" art.<sup>117</sup> The catalogue which accompanied the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition and Bell's 1913 article introduced the doctrine of 'Significant Form' which reduced the role of subject matter and description in art to the level of illustration, drawing a line between the concepts of form and content where Ginner clearly felt that no line should exist. Neo-Realism promoted the notion that issues of subject matter and design, what Ginner termed 'Realism' and 'decoration', were not necessarily antagonistic or competing elements, either within the consciousness of the artist or of the critic, but inalienable priorities, achievable within a single work of art and Ginner pointed to the work of Van Gogh as an example of such an art. Ginner's hostility toward 'Post-Impressionism' was compounded by the works which comprised the British section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition which he regarded as being overly reliant on the work of, in particular, Cézanne and Gauguin. Concern for the preservation of a national artistic identity and rejection of what Ginner termed 'formula painting', or the adoption of the style of another artist, caused Ginner to deplore the influence of 'Post-Impressionism' on contemporary British art. Hostility toward Bell and Fry was clearly implied in the text of Neo-Realism, a hostility evidently reciprocated in the catalogue of the Twentieth Century Art exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery

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<sup>115</sup> R. Ross (1912).

<sup>116</sup> Unpublished letter from Ginner to L. Pissarro. Collection of Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>117</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

during 1914, following the publication of Neo-Realism. Paradoxically, Ginner's hostility toward the Fry camp may well have been conditioned partly by pique at his own exclusion from the list of British artists who participated in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, a notion which will be discussed in chapter six of this thesis. Chapter five will explore in more detail the Neo-Realists' growing commitment to a dialectical approach to art in which decorative and Realist principles were seen to hold equal importance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### "Decorative Realistic Painting."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Ginner's later insistence that it was the work of Van Gogh which impressed Gilman most during their trip to Paris with Rutter, it was an interest in Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist art which informed the work produced by both Ginner and Gilman throughout 1911. It was during 1912 that both artists, influenced by Gore, perceived that the strong decorative element in the work of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists', evident in their use of bright colour and bold, simplified form, was not incompatible with a commitment to Realism. It was this realisation which informed the ambivalence of Ginner's attitude toward what, in Neo-Realism, he referred to as the "decorative Ideal."<sup>2</sup> Having observed that a room filled with works by Van Gogh which they had seen at the dealer, Bernheim's, private house in Paris made "one of the finest decorative wall-spaces I have ever seen", Ginner went on to say:

It is a common opinion of the day, especially in Paris (even Paris can make mistakes at times), that Decoration is the unique aim of Art. Neo-Realism, based on its tradition of Realism, has another aim of equal importance, a message deeper than the simple decorative Ideal, and on which it relies for its greatest strength.<sup>3</sup>

There followed the passage on art's function to record and interpret its epoch which was discussed in chapter one of this thesis. On the one hand Ginner referred rather dismissively, even satirically, to the decorative function of art, yet the insertion of the words "of equal importance" suggests that he apprehended, while not quite realising the implications of that fact, that the aims of Realism and decoration could be balanced within a single work of art. This chapter will explore the stages which led, and the elements which contributed to, this perception.

During July 1912 Gilman exhibited a portrait of his mother at the AAA which carried the standard-bearing title Thou Shalt Not Put a Blue Line Round Thy Mother.<sup>4</sup> It was a defiant, if humorous, counterblast to the adoption by British artists of the tendency to outline forms in blue or black which was a feature of the work of, to take only three examples, Cézanne, Gauguin and Matisse; what Sickert, referring to Cézanne, called "the blue authenticating contour."<sup>5</sup> Indeed the title may well have been intended as a corrective to Ginner whose Victoria Embankment Gardens, 1912 (London, Tate Gallery) [70] at the same exhibition was conspicuous for its use of heavy outlines.<sup>6</sup> Although contemporary reviews provide no clues to its identity, the portrait in question

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<sup>1</sup> Titles of two paintings which Gilman exhibited at the AAA during 1912. (London, Royal Albert Hall, Allied Artists' Association, July 1912, cat. nos. 231, 232).

<sup>2</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Cat. no.230.

<sup>5</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.84.

<sup>6</sup> Cat. no.75.

was probably The Artist's Mother at Lecon Hall, c.1911 (Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums) [71]. A small panel measuring only 24.7 x 34.8 centimetres, its identity is indicated by the comparatively low catalogue price of £15. The identification of the painting as the Aberdeen portrait is supported by its treatment. There is certainly no evidence of 'Post-Impressionist' influence here for the handling is, if anything, Impressionist. Sunlight enters the room from a window at the right, illuminating the figure of Gilman's mother seated at a window sewing. The paint is applied in small dabs and touches, the face rendered in myriad shades of reflected light while white is used to illuminate the side of the figure nearest to the source of light.

In spite of Ginner's recollection that Gilman was impressed by the work of Van Gogh at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, it was clearly to Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist sources that he looked for technical guidance during this period. The tendency manifested itself during the first half of 1910 with The Blue Blouse: Portrait of Eleni Zompolides.<sup>7</sup> This is very much a transitional work in which Gilman's interest in divisionism and brighter colour modifies his earlier manner. Although the blue blouse which gives the painting its title is rendered in folds of vivid turquoise and azure, the sitter's coat and skirt are a sombre brown which, in later portraits, Gilman was tempted to convert to rich plum or aubergine. Again, the sitter's face is described in conventional skin tones while the treatment of her folded hands displays Gilman's growing interest in the skin's tendency to reflect surrounding colour. The multi-tinted paint is laid on in small, close touches and the rather dead handling of the left arm betrays the fact that Gilman's achievement in this technique was still at an experimental stage. The brighter colours which Gilman began to employ around this time suggest a rejection of Sickert's rather muddy palette and preference for browns and ochres. Lewis's much-quoted remark in this context was simply his characteristically picturesque way of describing Gilman's move away from the Sickertian palette:

He would look over in the direction of Sickert's studio, and a slight shudder would convulse him as he thought of the little brown worm of paint that was possibly, even at that moment, wriggling out onto the palette that held no golden chromes, emerald greens, vermilions, *only*, as it, of course, should do.<sup>8</sup>

Lewis described Gilman's growing interest in brighter colour as a "plunge into the Signac palette."<sup>9</sup> Certainly the work which he executed around this time does suggest some familiarity with the theory and practice of Neo-Impressionism.

Gilman's decision to adopt a brighter palette has often been attributed to his experience of the work included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition.<sup>10</sup> What is not generally acknowledged is the fact that he had already begun the process of recasting his art during the first half of 1910 with the portrait of Eleni Zompolides. Gilman, in common with several other artists of his circle, was

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<sup>7</sup> As pointed out in chapter three, this portrait was exhibited at the NEAC's summer exhibition in 1910 (cat. no.257).

<sup>8</sup> W Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Q. Bell (1967), p.94.

gradually becoming aware of the achievements in France of such artists as Georges Seurat (1859-91), Paul Signac (1863-1935) and Camille Pissarro (1831-1903), chiefly through the efforts of the latter's son, Lucien, who had settled in England in 1890 and was a member of both the Fitzroy Street and Camden Town Groups. Pissarro evidently regarded himself in some sense as his father's ambassador in England, devoting a great deal of time and energy to the task of selling Camille's work in London and making known his artistic theories.<sup>11</sup> His influence on the artists of the Fitzroy Street Group was acknowledged by Sickert:

Mr. Pissarro, holding the exceptional position at once of an original talent, and of the pupil of his father, the authoritative depository of a mass of inherited knowledge and experience, has certainly served us as a guide, or, let us say, a dictionary of theory and practice on the road we have elected to travel.<sup>12</sup>

Sickert conceded that his own attempts to recast his art and to observe colour in the shadows had been "aided" by Pissarro.<sup>13</sup> Pissarro's authority and prestige were undoubtedly enhanced in the eyes of his British colleagues by his acquaintance with such French artists as Gauguin, Manet, Monet and Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and as one of the friends to whom Madame Seurat had sent one of her son's pictures after his death in 1891.<sup>14</sup> During 1886 Pissarro met Van Gogh who gave him a still life of apples inscribed "à l'ami Lucien Pissarro."<sup>15</sup> During the summer of that year, Pissarro worked at Le Petit Andelys on the Seine with Signac who visited him in London in April 1898 with the Belgian artist Théo van Rysselberghe (1862-1926).<sup>16</sup> In 1927 Rutter acknowledged the position of authority which Pissarro held within the Camden Town Group: "The thing which impressed me was the immense respect with which John and Sickert, as well as the rest, always listened to anything Lucien Pissarro had to say about painting: I felt, and I believe they felt, that he was the master of us all, the man from whom we could all of us learn."<sup>17</sup>

The greatest influence on Pissarro was his father who had adopted a pointillist technique in 1885 after meeting Signac and Seurat, who was at that time working on the huge canvas Un Dimanche d'été à l'Île de la Grande Jatte, 1884-5 (Chicago, Art Institute).<sup>18</sup> By 1895, however, Pissarro père had abandoned the 'dot' which he found too time consuming and artistically limiting. In a letter to Lucien, written on 9 January 1895, he expressed the view that Van Rysselberghe's portraits were: "... spoiled by the pernicious practice of systematic employment of the dot ... I am afraid he will persist for some time yet in this terrible and cold manner of execution, which has value only if one looks at works exclusively from the point of view of conscientiousness and stubborn

<sup>11</sup> J. Rewald (1980), pp.190-1.

<sup>12</sup> W. Sickert (1914e), p.83.

<sup>13</sup> W. Sickert (1910d), p.84.

<sup>14</sup> W. Meadmore (1962), p.62.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.41. Vincent van Gogh, Still Life with a Basket of Apples and Two Pumpkins, 1885 (Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller Müller).

<sup>16</sup> A. Thorold (1983), p.10.

<sup>17</sup> F. Rutter (1927), p.192.

<sup>18</sup> J. Rewald (1980), p.63.

toil."<sup>19</sup> Camille Pissarro repainted or destroyed most of the canvases he had executed during his 'dot' period.<sup>20</sup> On 8 April 1895 he wrote to Lucien: "I am so sick of this sort of thing that all my pictures done in my period of systematic divisionism, and even those I painted while making every effort to free myself from the method, disgust me."<sup>21</sup> Although he had abandoned the precision of the 'dot', Camille Pissarro still clung to the principles of colour division although his colours were now placed on the canvas with a much looser touch than previously. It was a manner of painting which was to influence Lucien in such works as Well Farm Bridge, Acton, 1907 (Leeds City Art Gallery) which, while owing its subject matter to Camille Pissarro's Lordship Lane Station, Upper Norwood, 1871 (London, Courtauld Institute), is more dependent for its handling on Pissarro père's much later divisionist manner.<sup>22</sup>

Lucien Pissarro's divisionist handling, allied to his use of bright colour and the observation of colour in the shadows, a legacy of his contact with the French Impressionist painters, was to exert a strong influence on the artists of the Fitzroy Street Group.<sup>23</sup> Although the principles of colour division didn't affect Gilman's work until 1910, they were present in Gore's work as early as 1907. Baron has observed that the landscapes which he painted in Yorkshire during the summer of that year were influenced by Pissarro's methods.<sup>24</sup> They were built up in small, separate touches of often very brilliant colour. Similarly, Woman in A Flowered Hat, 1907 (Plymouth, City Museum and Art Gallery) [72] is composed of small, broken touches and exhibits an interest in the purely decorative qualities of paint. It is certain that, for a time at least, Gore regarded himself as a Neo-Impressionist. Rutter recalled that he was in the habit of describing himself as such and his column in The Art News was signed 'a Neo-Impressionist'.<sup>25</sup> That his efforts in this direction were recognised by European Neo-Impressionists is confirmed by contributions to a fund set up after his death in 1914 to raise money for a memorial exhibition. Maximilien Luce (1858-1941), Van Rysselberghe and Signac all sent pictures to be auctioned.<sup>26</sup> Although he was strongly influenced by pointillist handling, Gore was never lured into emulation of the strictly scientific control of colour and brushwork which informed the work of both Seurat and Signac. Having flirted briefly with a tighter handling in Woman in A Flowered Hat, he soon moved on to a looser, more personal touch. By 1910 he was able to declare, as Camille Pissarro had done, that the reduction of the system of divided colour to a science "was not a great success because it made a painting very mechanical."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.255.

<sup>20</sup> W. Meadmore (1962), p.46.

<sup>21</sup> J. Rewald (1980), p.266.

<sup>22</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.18.

<sup>23</sup> Lucien Pissarro exhibited at the eighth and final Impressionist exhibition held above the Restaurant Doré in the Rue Lafitte, Paris, 15 May - 15 June 1886. (J. Rewald (1980), p.64).

<sup>24</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.19.

<sup>25</sup> F. Gore and R. Shone (1983), cat. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Unpublished letter from S. Gore to Doman Turner, dated 11 June 1910. Typescript copy in the possession of Frederick Gore.

During 1910 Gilman came increasingly under the influence of Lucien Pissarro's working methods and Walter Bayes (1869-1956) recalled the extent to which both Gilman and Gore regarded Pissarro as "the depository of theoretic wisdom."<sup>28</sup> Ginner's recollections of Gilman's work during this period are dominated by a perception of his commitment to an Impressionist handling: "... through his interest in Lucien Pissarro's works and the impressionist movement generally, he was slowly realising colour values (...) In his first use of the purer impressionist palette, Gilman worked at the juxtaposition of separate tones in the manner of the French Impressionists."<sup>29</sup> Writing in 1945 he recalled that Gilman "held firmly to the juxtaposition of colours in firm small touches but had nevertheless the appearance of "pointillism" which marked the work of Spencer Gore."<sup>30</sup> Ginner also recalled that around this time Gilman painted direct from nature in emulation of the Impressionists, a method which, as we have seen, was to be replaced by the preparation of careful preliminary drawings.<sup>31</sup> The use of dabs of pure white to indicate the fall of sunlight places Nude with The Artist's Mother at Lecon Hall but the much cleaner, purer palette would tend to suggest that it post-dated the Aberdeen portrait in which the dazzling highlights and pure colour of the foreground have not been carried into the background. Nude is a charming canvas, scintillating with light and colour, yet there are areas in which Gilman's achievement in this new technique falls short. The poor modelling of the arms, for example, and the unsuccessful translation of the metal bedstead and the fold of the sheet to the left of the figure in a single row of dabs of paint which indicate form but fail to describe it.

The use of drier paint and a much cruder facture in these works replaces the fluid handling of Gilman's earlier Velazquez-inspired works, yet Gilman himself perceived no apparent break in his own artistic development. This must be due in part to the notion of Velazquez as the first Impressionist painter which had been popularised by Stevenson. In April 1910 Gilman published a technical analysis of the link between Velazquez's working method and that of the Impressionists. He described the Impressionist technique, pointing out its advantages for the artist in a way which suggests that he was himself experimenting with the method, perhaps having already painted the portrait of Eleni Zompolidis:

... the juxtaposition of small pieces of paint of the moderns ... is a new technique. In this way one can work from light to dark (setting the light as high as its colour will allow), or from dark to light, all over a painting at one go or labouring at part only of the canvas. One can work upon dry paint without oiling out, correct without niggling, labour without pain.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> W. Bayes (1930), p.100. "Pissarro even more than Sickert, was regarded as the fountain of true principle. Pissarro, Gilman would say with pursed-up lips, Pissarro was profound ... Gore and Gilman, for all their admiration of Sickert as an artist, seemed to consider Pissarro as the depository of theoretic wisdom ..."

<sup>29</sup> C. Ginner (1919a), p.130.

<sup>30</sup> C. Ginner (1945), p.134.

<sup>31</sup> C. Ginner (1919a), p.134.

<sup>32</sup> H. Gilman (1910a).

Gilman maintained that there were areas in the work of Velazquez where a similar method had been adopted, suggesting that Velazquez "would have smiled very kindly at this new thing which is making men of less supple mind so angry now."<sup>33</sup> In a memorable and graphic phrase, Gilman summarised his attitude toward the paint surface: "Edges of paint do not matter, for the painting is all edges as a tree is made of leaves."<sup>34</sup> Thus he was able to make the transition from the fluid tonal manner of his early work to the divisionism of the period 1910-12 without sacrificing his attachment to Velazquez whose work continued to serve as an inspiration and even, to some extent, as a technical guide. It is important to realise that Gilman's adoption of divisionist method implied no fundamental break with what was an intrinsically Realist aesthetic. His artistic development was an extraordinarily consistent one which admitted the possibility of technical innovation while his commitment to Realism remained undiminished.

During 1911 Gilman and Ginner enjoyed a painting holiday at Dieppe where Gilman painted Le Pont Tournant (The Swing Bridge) Dieppe, 1911 (private collection) [73], a veritable *tour de force* in his new manner. The subject of the bridge represented, in some respects, a perfect vehicle for the display of divisionist technique and it was a sufficiently outlandish piece of engineering to strike not only a foreign but particularly a modern note.<sup>35</sup> The bridge provided a strong compositional motif and the intricate pattern of the iron girders created points and shafts of light which Gilman was able to translate into dabs of colour. Its allegiance to Neo-Impressionism was noticed by one reviewer who described Gilman as "a neo-impressionist with a personal accent of his own."<sup>36</sup> The allusion to the originality of the handling may have been made in respect of the fact that the principles of divisionism were not carried to every area of the canvas and Gilman's method lacked the element of scientific control which characterised the work of the Neo-Impressionists. It may well be that Gilman was influenced by the work which he had recently seen in Paris. Unfortunately the precise date of the trip is not known but they may have seen a large exhibition of the work of Signac which was held at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery from 23 January to 1 February 1911. Ginner recalled that they saw Durand-Ruel's collection of French Impressionist works.<sup>37</sup>

The work which Ginner carried out at Dieppe displays a much tighter handling than that evinced by Gilman. He painted a number of major canvases which are among his finest works. The second Camden Town Group exhibition included three Dieppe subjects by Ginner: The Sunlit Quay,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> When the painting was shown at the second Camden Town Group exhibition in December 1911, Claude Phillips drew attention to the "curious type of modern bridge". (C. Phillips, "The Camden Town Group", The Daily Telegraph (14 December 1911), p.16). F. Farmer (1987), cat.92, suggests that Gilman may have been influenced in his choice of subject by paintings of bridges by Van Gogh seen in Paris. It must be pointed out, however, that Gilman's composition is quite different to those of Van Gogh, choosing in this painting and in The Canal Bridge, Flekkefjord, 1913 (London, Tate Gallery) [74] to view the bridge from the road rather than from the waterside as Van Gogh did in paintings such as The Bridge at Langlois, 1888 (Otterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller Müller).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> C. Ginner (1919a), p.130.

Dieppe (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) [75], The Wet Street, Dieppe (Sotheby's, 15 May 1985, lot 90) [76] and Evening, Dieppe (private collection) [77].<sup>38</sup> The reviewer who applied the epithet 'Neo-Impressionist' to Gilman's work at the same exhibition also described Ginner as a "neo-impressionist, with a touch of the personal in his work."<sup>39</sup> Like Gilman's work of the period, Ginner's canvases combined the divisionism of the older Impressionists with a restricted pointillism which he confined to certain areas of the canvas. In both The Sunlit Quay, Dieppe and Evening, Dieppe the application of the paint in spots and dabs is confined to the sky. The rest of the canvas is rendered in small dabs of pigment which in Evening, Dieppe are applied in distinct bands or layers which are differentiated either by variations in density or by the alternate use of horizontal or vertical strokes. In this sense the canvas takes on a distinctly decorative quality, the accumulation of myriad touches to some extent assuming a life of their own apart from the forms they describe. Yet it is significant that Ginner did not regard the decorative placing of marks as an end in itself, for his preferred technique was one which accurately achieved the particular quality of shimmering light on water and the subtly graded tones of a blue twilight.

The chief difference between the work of Ginner and Gilman during this period lies in the handling which is much more strictly controlled in Ginner's work. Gilman's touch is more random and scattered with bright splashes of colour disposed at key points throughout the canvas. Ginner brings his tones quite high in some areas, particularly the touches of red where the sunlight catches the ridges of the foreground roofs in The Sunlit Quay, Dieppe. These are, however, introduced gradually, the surrounding tones preparing us for the highest ones, whereas in Le Pont Tourmant (The Swing Bridge) Dieppe Gilman quite suddenly produces here and there a splash of red to liven up the composition and offset the darker or milder tones. Ginner's technique is one which he used to similar effect in the large canvas A Corner in Chelsea which also depicts a view over red tiled roofs and chimneys, divisionism in this case being confined to the sky. Although clearly influenced by divisionist technique and the Neo-Impressionist use of small dabs of colour to indicate form and the fall of light, neither Gilman nor Ginner emulated the strictly scientific control of colour, the investigation and application of which informed the work of the Neo-Impressionists in France. It may have been in order to distance themselves from this tendency - after all, the Daily Telegraph's review of the second Camden Town Group exhibition had referred to both as 'Neo-Impressionists' - that the Neo-Realists denigrated Neo-Impressionism in their manifesto: "... the Neo-Impressionists ... succeeded in relating Impressionist painting to Science. But with their eyes entirely fixed on this scientific study of colour and neglecting to keep themselves in relationship with Nature they began gradually to sink into the Formula Pit."<sup>40</sup> The influence of Lucien Pissarro is evident here for the Neo-Realists would have been well aware that both he and Pissarro père regarded the scientific

<sup>38</sup> London, Carfax Gallery, Camden Town Group, December 1911, cat. nos.27, 28 and 30. W. Baron (1979), p.233, points out that The Sunlit Quay, Dieppe and Evening, Dieppe were conceived as a complementary pair, providing a complete panorama of Dieppe seen across the harbour. The dimensions of the canvases are almost identical.

<sup>39</sup> C. Phillips, "The Camden Town Group", The Daily Telegraph (14 December 1911), p.16.

<sup>40</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

control of form and colour as an artistic dead end as, ultimately, did Gore who observed that the Neo-Impressionists' attempt to "reduce the system of divided colour to a science ... was not a great success because it made a painting very mechanical ..."<sup>41</sup>

Significantly, Evening, Dieppe suggests the influence of Van Gogh in the use of touches of thicker paint, in the predominance of blue and yellow and the choice of a night scene which was an unusual theme for Ginner. The painting is particularly close to Van Gogh's The Starry Night, 1888 (private collection) [78] which uses precisely the same technique to indicate the shimmer of light on water.<sup>42</sup> Van Gogh's stars have a lamp-like brilliance which Ginner would have been loath to reproduce for fear of an overstatement which would amount to adopting the 'formula' of another artist. Instead he has adapted them to represent the lights of the town. During the previous year Ginner painted Sheaves of Corn, 1910 (collection of Mr and Mrs Alexander Irvine) [79] which apparently owes something to the influence of Van Gogh in both subject matter and treatment. The paint is applied in small, thick touches of vivid colour and while the treatment of sea, sky and grass is more purely Impressionist, the handling of the sheaves themselves is analogous to Van Gogh's work at Arles during 1888, characterised by short, directional strokes, varied to describe different types of vegetation. Like Van Gogh, Ginner has attempted, although less successfully, to render aerial perspective by blurring the strokes in order to flatten form as it recedes into the distance. In the foreground and in the nearest sheaf, every blade, leaf and straw is delineated, a technique which Van Gogh frequently used in his later work.

It wasn't until the summer of 1912 that the interest in Van Gogh, evinced by Gilman during his trip to Paris with Ginner in 1911, found expression on canvas. On a trip to Sweden, Gilman painted The Reapers, Sweden, 1912 (Johannesburg Art Gallery) [80].<sup>43</sup> This type of subject,

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<sup>41</sup> Letter from S. Gore to Doman Turner, dated 11 June 1910. Typescript copy in the possession of Frederick Gore.

<sup>42</sup> This painting was included in Vincent Van Gogh, Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, 15 - 31 March 1901 (cat. no. 65).

<sup>43</sup> It is not clear precisely when the trip to Sweden took place but Gilman was still in England on 6 July when he accompanied Gore and others on a trip to Hendon and was taken up in an aeroplane. (F. Gore and R. Shone (1983), cat.21). The subject of reapers indicates that Gilman was in Sweden during late summer or early autumn. Woodeson records that Gilman let his house at Letchworth to Gore in August which suggests that he left for Sweden that month or at the end of July. (Spencer F. Gore, unpublished M.A. Report, 1968, p.75, Courtauld Institute Library) He visited Norway the following year. Gilman moved to Letchworth in 1908 and became a near neighbour of Stanley Parker, brother of the Letchworth architect Barry Parker. Stanley's wife, Sigie, was Swedish and may well have introduced Gilman to contacts in Sweden. (I am grateful to Ralph Townsend, Eleni Zompolides's son, for the above information relating to Sigie Parker.) Another connection with Scandinavia was the Norwegian artist Harald Sund (exh. 1910-14) who became a fellow member of the London Group and who, it has been suggested, may have accompanied Gilman on a trip to Norway during 1913 and posed for the nude figure in the foreground of Norwegian Waterfall, 1913 (Perth, Western Australian Art Gallery). (W. Baron (1979), p.33). There is a tradition that Gilman visited Sweden with Ratcliffe. There is no evidence, however, that Ratcliffe visited Scandinavia in 1912 although he was certainly in Sweden during 1913. W. Baron (1979), p.288, discusses the possibility that Gilman and Ratcliffe travelled to Scandinavia together in 1913 and that they then parted, Gilman going to Norway and Ratcliffe to Sweden. This seems unlikely for, as John Marjoram (1982), pp.7, 12, points out, Ratcliffe was accompanied to Sweden by Stanley and Sigie Parker and

common in Van Gogh's work, is unique in Gilman's *oeuvre*. The painting represents Gilman's first sustained response to 'Post-Impressionism' and to the work of Van Gogh in particular. His growing interest in the use of pure colour was at last given free rein and the painting vibrates with light and colour. Dark shadows are banished completely and instead Gilman has stated the violet and green tints which inhabit the areas of shadow. Contradicting the advice implied in the title of the portrait of his mother at the AAA exhibition, Gilman surrounded both figures with a distinct blue contour. His earlier divisionist handling is gone, to be replaced by slashing, almost violent, brushstrokes highly reminiscent of Van Gogh's work. Although The Reapers, Sweden constitutes a more successful response to the influence of Van Gogh than Ginner's Victoria Embankment Gardens, they are analogous in the sense that they represent an extreme departure in the context of the previous work of both artists. This was noticed by a critic in The Times who observed that Gilman's painting, in common with that of certain other members of the Camden Town Group, "seems too bright for the mood otherwise expressed ..." <sup>44</sup> This critic included Ginner's Piccadilly Circus in a list of paintings in which "colour is incongruous and imposed upon the picture for its decorative effect." <sup>45</sup> Like Gore at Letchworth, Gilman required the impetus of fresh surroundings in order to recast his art. The trip to Sweden during which Gore rented his house at Letchworth, resulted in the suppression of Gilman's earlier divisionist manner to be replaced by a much looser handling. In A Swedish Village, 1912 (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada) [81] forms have been flattened out and paint applied in significantly broader strokes of the brush. The repercussions of this loosening out of Gilman's technique are to be found in Portrait of Sylvia Gosse, c.1912-13 (Southampton City Art Gallery) [82] in which the technique of indicating the fall of light on the figure by white highlights is retained but combined with a rapid, slashing paint application and a significantly brighter colour scheme.

Throughout 1912 and 1913 Gilman was working through a variety of painting techniques, exploring the influences to which the 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions at the Grafton Galleries and his trip to Paris had exposed him. The purpose of all this activity was no doubt to establish his identity in the form of a personal working method. It was a problem faced by most young artists working in Britain during this period who evinced an interest in comparatively recent developments in European art. The notion of 'formula painting' outlined in Neo-Realism was clearly the result of a very real fear of falling into the trap of simply imitating the work of one or more of the modern masters. The ironic title of Gilman's portrait of his mother at the AAA exhibition in 1912 suggests that he was already well aware of the pitfalls. The titles of the two other paintings which he contributed to this exhibition are also indicative of his concern with the direction in which contemporary British art was moving. They were both entitled Decorative Realistic Painting and although they can no longer be identified, Rutter's review of the exhibition described number 231 as a "low-toned but extraordinarily

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J. W. Beresford, a trip which presumably took place in early spring as the work which he carried out there has a snow or spring theme. Gilman's scenes of Norway were clearly painted in summer.

<sup>44</sup> Anon., "The Camden Town Group", The Times (19 December 1912), p.9.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

substantial nude."<sup>46</sup> The notion of a 'decorative realistic painting' suggests that in these works Gilman attempted to combine these principles and thus to erase the distinction between decorative and realistic art, a conceptual leap which Gore had in practice already achieved in paintings such as Gauguins and Connoisseurs at the Stafford Gallery and in the work which he executed at Letchworth during 1912. Gilman no doubt profited in this respect from the influence of Gore to whom he was evidently very close during this period. In January 1913 they held a large joint exhibition at the Carfax Gallery in order to demonstrate not only the development of their work to date, but to exhibit their recent achievements at Letchworth and in Sweden.<sup>47</sup>

Side-stepping much of the theory contained in the catalogue introduction, Gore had understood the unity of decorative and realistic concerns to be the essential principle underlying much of the work included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition. In his review of the show he attacked the doctrine expressed in the essay which prefaced the catalogue, stressing instead the importance of subject matter in the works shown:

It is equally untrue to say of Pissarro, Sisly (sic), Signac, or Seurat that they cared for nothing except the momentary effects of light on objects as it is to say of Cézanne or Gauguin that they simplified objects to express the emotional significance which lies in things. All of them were equally interested in the character of the thing painted, and if the emotional significance which lies in things can be expressed in painting the way to it must lie through the outward character of the object painted.<sup>48</sup>

It was through the work of Gauguin, arguably the artist who interested and influenced him most among the so-called 'Post-Impressionists', that Gore apprehended the essential unity of what he termed the 'decorative' and 'naturalistic' aspects of art, pointing out that it was impossible to place Gauguin's work in either category since it gave evidence of both. Gore concluded:

The attempt to separate the decorative side of painting from the naturalistic seems to me to be a mistake. Durer is supposed to have said just before he died, that he had begun to see how simple nature was. Simplification of nature necessitates an exact knowledge of the complications of the forms simplified. This may be done to produce a greater truth to nature as well as for decorative effect.<sup>49</sup>

Gore was somewhat advanced in terms of his knowledge and understanding of the work shown at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition. He had seen the huge Gauguin retrospective held at the *Salon d'Automne* in 1906.<sup>50</sup> Comprising 227 works, the exhibition included The Yellow Christ, 1889 (Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery) and The Vision After the Sermon, 1888 (Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland) [83]. In addition to Gauguin, Gore would have seen the work of a number of

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<sup>46</sup> F. Rutter (1912a).

<sup>47</sup> London, Carfax Gallery, Harold Gilman and Spencer Gore, January 1913 (50 catalogue numbers).

<sup>48</sup> S. Gore (1910c), p.19.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> H. Wellington (1954), p.1110. "Gauguin had died in 1903 and we knew there was to be a big retrospective exhibition of his paintings in Paris at the coming Salon d'Automne. Gore intended to see this before returning to England (he did, and was greatly impressed)."

other artists included in Fry's exhibition who were represented at the 1906 *Salon d'Automne*.<sup>51</sup> Far from finding Manet and the Post-Impressionists disconcertingly advanced, Gore complained that it was not modern enough: "Let us hope next time for an entirely modern and representative exhibition of French painting."<sup>52</sup>

Gore's apprehension of the dualism of decorative and representational concerns in the work shown at the Grafton Galleries in 1910 found expression in his own work as he began to emphasise decorative elements in his compositions. In The Nursery Window, Rowlandson House, 1911 (private collection) [84] he used the bars on the window to unify his composition, lending interest to what might otherwise be considered a somewhat uninspired view of Euston Station.<sup>53</sup> Gore had used this device before, notably in View From A Window, c.1908-9 (London, Anthony d'Offay Gallery) in which, as Baron suggests, he made use of the window frame in order to articulate his composition.<sup>54</sup> It was a tendency which became more pronounced in his work during 1911. In North London Girl, c.1911 (London, Tate Gallery) [85] the striped curtain behind the figure takes on the role of the bars on the nursery window, treated purely as an area of colour and pattern and given equal emphasis with the figure itself.<sup>55</sup> In November 1911, the Stafford Gallery held an exhibition of works by Cézanne and Gauguin. Gore now responded much more directly to the influence of Gauguin who was represented by fourteen works, including The Vision After the Sermon which he had already seen.<sup>56</sup> Gore's response to the exhibition was Gauguins and Connoisseurs at the Stafford Gallery which represents, in every sense, a gesture of homage to Gauguin. The 'connoisseurs', who include John and Sickert, stand directly in front of a wall on which hang three works by Gauguin. They include The Vision After the Sermon and it is to this painting that Gore's work owes its composition, high viewpoint and rich colour scheme. The translation of the balustrade into a purely decorative feature echoes the flat patterning of the tree trunk curving through Gauguin's composition. There is even an echo of the edges of the Breton women's headdresses in the legs and tail of the fox fur worn by the seated woman and the turn of Christ's head in the central painting, Christ in the Garden of Olives, 1889 (Florida, Norton Art Gallery), is repeated in the small figure of the gallery's owner, John Neville. Indeed the painting is littered with such references which, as its title might suggest, were delivered in a spirit of ironic wit as much as homage. In The Balcony at the Alhambra, c.1911-12 (York City Art Gallery) [86], The Vision After the Sermon again provided the starting point for Gore's composition with its high viewpoint looking down on the heads of the figures. The red

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<sup>51</sup> They included Cézanne, Derain, Othon Friesz (1879-1949), Pierre Girieud (1875-1940), Pierre Laprade (1875-1932), Henri Manguin (1874-1949), Albert Marquet (1875-1947), Matisse, Jean Puy (1876-1960), Odilon Redon (1840-1916), Georges Rouault (1871-1958), Felix Vallotton (1865-1925), Louis Valtat (1869-1952) and Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958).

<sup>52</sup> S. Gore (1910c), p.20.

<sup>53</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.314.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142. Baron suggests that the initial inspiration for these lay in the work of Sickert.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

<sup>56</sup> London, Stafford Gallery, Gauguin and Cézanne, November 1911, cat no.16.

carpeted aisle, from which all trace of steps has been omitted, recalls the reductive tree trunk which dominates Gauguin's composition.

It was during the summer of 1912, when he stayed in Gilman's house at Letchworth to paint while Gilman visited Sweden, that Gore's vision crystallised in the production of an astonishing series of paintings. Built in 1903 following Ebenezer Howard's (1850-1928) Garden City concept, Letchworth provided Gore with an ideal environment in which to pursue his artistic vision. Its very newness combined with the scope it provided for exploring a combination of landscape and townscape meant that he could exploit his favourite themes in completely fresh and unfamiliar surroundings. Gilman commissioned a house at 100 Wilbury Road but, as it turned out, he hardly lived there and appears not to have painted its environs at all. It was left to Gore to exploit the themes provided by Letchworth's apparently unlikely suburbs and the surrounding landscape. The paintings which Gore executed at Letchworth have two things in common apart from their adventurous use of colour and the subordination of form to an overall decorative scheme; they are mostly panoramic landscapes with a high viewpoint and the dominant compositional feature is usually a road or pathway.<sup>57</sup> It is the use of these common devices which gives the whole series the appearance of a controlled experiment in which Gore, using a limited range of subjects and compositional formats, worked through various stages of decorative pattern-making. In this device of the pathway we can trace Gore's experiments in Letchworth back to their beginnings in London in the two canvases discussed above, The Balcony at the Alhambra and Gauguins and Connoisseurs at the Stafford Gallery. In the former, Gore reduced the red carpeted stairway to a flat pathway, transforming it into a striking and purely decorative feature. In the painting of the interior of the Stafford Gallery, Gore again took a part of the fabric of the building, in this case a ballustrade, and subjected it to a stylised treatment. Elements of both these canvases - the high viewpoint, the emphasis on flat pattern-making and the somewhat whimsical distortions - can be traced to the work of Gauguin. In Letchworth, however, Gore was working through these influences to a much more personal manner.

The most radically experimental of the Letchworth series is undoubtedly The Beanfield, 1912 (London, Tate Gallery) [87] in which Gore went much further in the direction of abstraction. The forms of the landscape have been reduced to their basic outlines, particularly in the foreground where the rows of beans are conceived as a series of zig-zag lines. An interesting analysis of Gore's intention is given on the Gilman label on the back of the picture which states: "The colour found in natural objects (in the field of beans for instance in the foreground), is collected into patterns. This was his own explanation."<sup>58</sup> An early indication of Gore's apprehension of the possibilities of a decorative approach to landscape painting occurred in his review of an exhibition of sketches from

<sup>57</sup> This is evident in Letchworth Station where the railway track fulfils this function, in The Cinder Path, The Icknield Way (Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales) [88], Letchworth. The Road (Letchworth Museum and Art Gallery), Sunset. Letchworth. with Man and a Dog (private collection) and Croft's Lane, Letchworth (private collection), all painted in 1912.

<sup>58</sup> When Gore died, Gilman labelled all the pictures remaining in his studio with title, date and, in some cases, an explanatory note regarding subject or technique.

nature by members of the Design Club in which he observed: "The designer should have the advantage, when in front of nature, of being able to seize and emphasise the decorative character of the scene before him."<sup>59</sup> It was this stricture which Gore applied in paintings such as Letchworth Station in which his earlier Impressionist touch of small commas, dabs and dots, has been replaced by broad, flat planes of colour, straight lines, angles. Detail is pared down to an absolute minimum of basic shapes and faceless figures. Apart from the articulation of the grassy bank in the foreground, there is almost no attempt to describe surface texture. The shiny new station at Letchworth lent itself to such treatment as almost no other subject could. The sparkling Toytown colours of the buildings with their bright red roofs occupy a landscape which has been modified to accommodate them; trees, hedges, fields, even cloud formations are all subjected to geometrical pattern-making.

An apprehension of the unity of representational and decorative concerns was one aspect of Gore's influence on Neo-Realism but, as suggested in the introduction, the theory may be seen to owe a great deal to Gore in more general terms. His ideas on art have come down to us chiefly through the medium of a series of letters which he wrote to his Camden Town Group colleague, the deaf artist Doman Turner (c.1873-1938). These represented a teaching commitment on Gore's part, the details of which were set out in a preliminary letter in which Gore undertook to criticise, at five shillings a time, any drawings which Turner cared to send.<sup>60</sup> Both technically and theoretically, the areas of greatest emphasis in Gore's letters are similar to those found in Neo-Realism. Gore placed great stress on the necessity for artists to go directly to nature for their inspiration rather than relying on the work of other artists:

Copying the old masters will teach you to understand what drawing means. But don't when you are drawing an ear think of how Menzel drew an ear or anybody else. The only advantage you have at the present moment over Menzel is that you have an entirely different idea of an ear.<sup>61</sup>

Gore was also opposed to drawing from memory, advocating instead, as the Neo-Realists did, the use of careful preparatory studies made in front of the subject. He also implied disapproval of the practice of 'borrowing' elements from the work of another artist:

Drawing from memory nearly always leads to some kind of mannerism ... it is interesting to notice in Millet and in Daumier and others who did not always get their facts first hand, that such things as the folds of a coat are never very interesting however magnificent the whole figure may be.<sup>62</sup>

Drawing from imagination was also prohibited: "... personally I always find things more interesting as they are, or if you like, interesting because they are so. I am perfectly incapable of inventing the shape of a stone or how it lies on the top of another or how it would be related to everything else."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> S. Gore (1910a).

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Gore to Turner, dated 8 June 1908. Typescript copy in the possession of Frederick Gore.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., dated 21 August 1908.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., dated 8 September 1908.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., dated 23 June 1909.

Clearly there is a close relationship between Gore's theories on art and those laid down in Neo-Realism, largely predicated on the notion of a close relationship between the artist and nature. Significantly, Gore and the Neo-Realists were, in a number of areas, influenced by the same sources. As Gore himself wrote: "Nearly everything I have told you comes through Walter Sickert from Degas."<sup>64</sup>

The catalyst for the extraordinary departures of the work which Gore carried out at Letchworth was undoubtedly the commission to decorate the interior of the Cabaret Theatre Club for Frida Strindberg in the spring of 1912. The designs which Gore produced display a freedom of colour and form, dictated largely by the nature of the commission, which he exploited in his subsequent work at Letchworth. The artists with whom Gore was associated in the commission were Epstein, Gill, Lewis and Ginner. During 1912 Ginner struggled to come to terms with a whole range of influences to which Fry's first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition and his trip to Paris with Gilman and Rutter had subjected him. In this context the commission to decorate the interior of the Cabaret Theatre Club may be viewed in terms of a kind of safety valve which allowed Ginner to explore alternative approaches to technique, colour, subject matter and so forth. Yet while the impact of these designs on his subsequent work is less immediately obvious than Gore's conversion at Letchworth, it was no less decisive. Ginner's Notebooks record that he carried out three large paintings for the Cabaret Theatre Club commission: Chasing Monkeys, Birds and Indians and Tiger Hunting.<sup>65</sup> He also executed two posters in distemper entitled Piccadilly Circus and Le Chasonnier dans la Forêt Vierge. These were very large, measuring seven by four feet six inches, and five by four feet, respectively. Ginner's Notebooks further record that he was paid only two pounds and ten shillings for each of them.<sup>66</sup> These, along with the paintings, are now lost as are all the wall decorations and sculpture executed for the Cabaret Theatre Club. Ginner's Notebooks record that Chasing Monkeys measured eight by six feet while Birds and Indians, as indicated by a small diagram, was made to fit an irregular space, six feet high and overall twelve feet, four inches wide with a gap of six feet, four inches cut out nearer to the right.<sup>67</sup> Cork suggests that it may have been designed to fit round a door and points out that it corresponds to a space outlined in one of Gore's sketchbooks.<sup>68</sup> Tiger Hunting was a triptych, the central panel measuring six feet, eight inches by six feet while the two narrow side panels measured six feet by one foot, six inches. In terms of the sheer area to be covered with paint, Ginner's contribution represents an immense amount of work. According to his Notebooks, Ginner made designs for all three wall decorations which were reduced

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., dated 8 September 1908.

<sup>65</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, pp.liv-lvi.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp.xlix, l.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.lv.

<sup>68</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.74. On p.303, note 76, Cork states that the dimensions given in Ginner's Notebooks do not tally with those on a diagram in a letter from Ginner to Gore, dated 9 May 1912. In fact, the diagrams and measurements are identical. As he states in note 75 on p.303, Cork derived his dimensions of 9 x 6 feet from W. Baron (1979), p.43. In fact, the figures in this source are incorrect and should read 12 feet 4 inches by 6 feet. I am grateful to Frederick Gore for letting me have a copy of the letter from Ginner to Gore.

two inches to the foot.<sup>69</sup> The present locations of these are not known, indeed the only surviving piece of work relating to Ginner's contribution to the Cabaret Theatre Club commission is the preparatory oil and pencil Study for Tiger Hunting, 1912 (New Haven, Yale Center for British Art) [89]. It is squared and numbered, suggesting that, in terms of drawing at least, the finished mural was a more or less faithful copy and a surviving monochrome photograph of the central panel confirms this [90].<sup>70</sup>

What the study does indicate is the fact that, in terms of Ginner's choice of both colour and subject, his work for the Cabaret Theatre Club was closely linked to that of Gore. While Gill concentrated on the biblical imagery associated with the club's alternative name, the 'Cave of the Golden Calf', and Lewis chose scenes of revelry, Ginner and Gore both depicted hunting scenes. As Cork points out, the imagery embodied in the decorations carried out by all the artists involved in the Cabaret Theatre Club commission was characterised primarily by an interest in primitivism.<sup>71</sup> In the murals by both Ginner and Gore, the naked huntsmen shoot with bow and arrow and although no trace of the vividly painted plaster pillars which Epstein executed for the commission have survived, contemporary descriptions alluding to an amalgam of human and animal forms, suggest an affinity with primitive totems.<sup>72</sup> An interest in primitive art was characteristic of the period. Like Derain, Matisse and Picasso, Epstein collected non-Western art, the forms of which influenced his own work. The work of a large proportion of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists' was indebted to primitive art and, as pointed out in chapter two, Bell and Fry defended the new art in terms of its likeness to primitive art. Looking back on this period in 1920, Fry claimed that his appreciation of Cézanne's work was conditioned by his love of early Italian art.<sup>73</sup> Hulme, making a similar claim, declared that his apprehension of an emerging geometrical tendency in modern art coincided with his first experience of Byzantine mosaics.<sup>74</sup> It will be pointed out in the following chapter that the work which Fry and Grant carried out for various decorative commissions throughout this period was influenced by their interest in the Byzantine mosaics which they saw on visits to Turkey in 1910 and 1911.

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<sup>69</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol. 1, p.lvi. Chasing Monkeys was sold to Ginner's mother, Mrs Arthur E. Best, Birds and Indians to Mrs Victor Sly and Tiger Hunting to the artist Stanislaw de Karlowska (1876-1952).

<sup>70</sup> Collection of F. Gore. The small changes which Ginner made in the finished mural were all in favour of a more simplified design. He pared away some of the detail in the foliage, especially above the tiger's back, and excluded the tiger's white fangs, simplifying and stylising the drawing of the eyes of both tiger and elephant, a modification which he probably carried through to the eyes of the monkeys in the side panels which are not shown in the photograph. One alteration in colour which can be discerned from the monochrome photograph is in the cacti. In the squared design the leaves are painted half brown, half green but the absence of contrast in the photograph indicates that this was altered in the final design.

<sup>71</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.68.

<sup>72</sup> R. Cork (*ibid.*) draws attention to Violet Hunt's (d.1942) recollection that the pillars "all had scarlet details, the heads of hawks, cats and camels", while Lewis (1950), p.125, described the "figures appearing to hold up the threateningly low ceiling".

<sup>73</sup> R. Fry (1920), pp.288-9.

<sup>74</sup> T. Hulme (1914b), p.467.

Cork has suggested that the choice of a primitive theme for the Cabaret Theatre Club decorations was conditioned primarily by the name which Strindberg chose for the main arena, the 'Cave of the Golden Calf'; both in terms of the prehistoric associations of the word 'cave' and the allusion to the episode from the Book of Exodus in which the Israelites made and worshipped a golden calf.<sup>75</sup> A strong contributing factor, however, must surely have been the recent performances of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* which made their London debut in the summer of 1911, appearing again during November. The combination of Fokine's daring and innovative choreography and the stunning set designs and costumes by Leon Bakst (1866-1924) and Nicolas Roerich (1874-1947) created a dazzling spectacle which certainly had a profound effect on Gore. Rutter recalled accompanying him to a performance at Covent Garden: "At the fall of the curtain he turned to me, his eyes shining with moisture and whispered: "I've often dreamt of such things - but I never thought I should see them!"<sup>76</sup> By this date, Gore had moved away from the depiction of music hall and ballet scenes which had earlier preoccupied him but one can hardly doubt that the spectacular *mise-en-scène* of the *Ballets Russes* influenced his designs for the Cabaret Theatre Club. Ginner, in turn, had close links with the world of dance through his sister, Ruby, who was to publish two influential books on the subject.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, dance was to be a regular feature of the programme of entertainments at the Cabaret Theatre Club and it is worth noting that the music and ballet critic, Edwin Evans, was a regular visitor to Hulme's Frith Street Salon which was also attended by Ginner and Gore. Although no surviving designs for the Cabaret Theatre Club by either Ginner or Gore depict dancers, they were preoccupied with primitive themes of naked huntsmen with bows and arrows and certainly an interest in primitivism, evident in works such as *The Rite of Spring*, was an important factor in the choreography of the *Ballets Russes*. Several of Lewis's designs for the cabaret included dancing figures which was to become a popular theme in the work of a number of artists during this period, including David Bomberg (1890-1957), Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915) and William Roberts (1895-1980).

Gore's contributions to the Cabaret Theatre Club decorations included a mural depicting a deer-hunt which, as an existing study indicates (London, collection of F. Gore and E. Cowie), was close to Ginner's conception for the *Tiger Hunting* mural. In both cases, the colour scheme is extremely hot, dominated by a combination of warm reds and yellows with rich greens and blues. In addition, all the elements in the composition have been simplified into geometrical shapes, although this is considerably more pronounced in Ginner's work. There is a tendency in both cases to heavily outline forms, again more apparent in Ginner's work. Ginner's design is highly successful, unified by the blue contours which surround each form and the scarlet bands curving through the composition, drawing together the panels of the triptych. The entire composition of Ginner's mural has been reduced to the basic elements of ovals, crescents, circles and triangles, particularly the head of the elephant which is simply an amalgam of these shapes. Their debt to Le Douanier Rousseau (1844-

<sup>75</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.68.

<sup>76</sup> F. Rutter (1922), p.127.

<sup>77</sup> Ruby Ginner, *The Revived Greek Dance*. London, 1933 and *Gateway to the Dance*. London, 1960.

1910) is, as Cork suggests, quite considerable; in the captivating monkeys which inhabit the side panels, in the jungle theme and the close-up view of vegetation which fills the entire composition with flat patterns through which the globes of orange and yellow fruits glow like lanterns.<sup>78</sup> Ginner may well have been inspired by Rousseau's Tropiques, les Singes dans la Forêt des Orangers, 1907 (New York, collection of Adelaide Milton de Groot) [91] which he would have seen at the 1907 Salon d'Automne when he was living in Paris.<sup>79</sup>

Ginner's conception is thoroughly exotic and the addition of several cacti, although untypical jungle vegetation, were evidently intended to provide an outlandish, foreign touch. The conception of the tiger owes something to the three tigers which inhabit a preliminary oil sketch for Gore's deer-hunting mural (London, Tate Gallery). These are conceived essentially as playful creatures, an impression which Ginner has attempted to alleviate somewhat by the addition of red jaws and two prominent white fangs.<sup>80</sup> The hieratic figures, composed of triangles and crescents, apparently owe something to the figures in Lewis's contributions to the decorative scheme. Their geometrical formulation is allied to the figures in Kermesse, 1912 (Montreal, Phillips Family Collection) [92], an ink and wash drawing for the lost painting which Lewis executed for the stairway leading down to the club. There is, in the naked skin, massive shoulders and jet black hair, a hint of the figures in Lewis's Design for a Drop Curtain, 1912 (London, collection of F. Gore and E. Cowie) [93]. The ultimate source, however, for the figures was probably Design for the Preliminary Prospectus, 1912 (London, collection of F. Gore and E. Cowie) [94] which Cork suggests may have been a collaborative effort by Gore and Lewis.<sup>81</sup> The dancing figures on the right, which Cork ascribes to Lewis, are constructed from triangular shapes in a manner very similar to those by Ginner.

The entire formal conception of Ginner's design may be regarded as his response to Cubism in terms of the reduction of form to a series of geometrical components which, as his review of the *Artistes Indépendants* suggested, was what he understood Cubism to mean and clearly all that he understood by it. One should perhaps say 'Cubo-Futurism' since Ginner was probably working on the murals when the first exhibition of Futurist art held in England opened at the Sackville Gallery in March 1912. Many of the exhibits were clearly indebted to Cubism and Lewis, who influenced Ginner's designs most in terms of drawing, was certainly heavily indebted to Futurist art. The earlier parts of Ginner's Notebooks were written up retrospectively and more or less chronologically but it is both interesting and significant that the record of two drawings, described as "cubist designs", are inserted among the Cabaret Theatre Club decorations. The dates are recorded as 1914 and 1916 so that they belong more properly to later pages of the Notebooks. The titles are given as The Circus and The Merry-Go-Round but Ginner gives no indication of their having been exhibited and beyond

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<sup>78</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.78.

<sup>79</sup> Paris, Grand Palais, Salon d'Automne, October 1907, cat. no.1493 or 1494.

<sup>80</sup> Although these fangs were excluded from the final design, the stylisation of the eyes served instead to give the creature a more dangerous appearance.

<sup>81</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.69.

these tantalising references nothing is known of them.<sup>82</sup> The Circus follows in sequence the poster entitled Piccadilly Circus which Ginner executed for the Cabaret Theatre Club, suggesting that it may have related to it, although a more likely candidate is the 1913 painting of the same title in the collection of Leeds City Art Gallery [95]. The Merry-Go-Round follows the record of the second poster although a comparison of titles suggests a connection is unlikely. One is left to speculate a possible affinity with The Merry-Go-Round, (London, Tate Gallery) [96] by Mark Gertler (1891-1939), also executed in 1916, a painting which, combining as it does a commitment to the figurative with a strong sense of pictorial design, may be regarded as a quintessentially Neo-Realist canvas in terms of the development of the theory post-1914. Lack of knowledge concerning the technique and composition of these designs apart, what does clearly emerge is the fact that Ginner regarded them as being connected with his work for the Cabaret Theatre Club and that he applied to them the interesting epithet 'cubist'. Their place in the chronology of his work is significant in terms of the evolution of Neo-Realism to take account of the strong design element of much contemporary art, a development which will be discussed in chapters seven and eight.

Commentators have speculated that the lost poster entitled Piccadilly Circus which Ginner contributed to the decorative scheme of the Cabaret Theatre Club was related to his oil painting of the same title.<sup>83</sup> In fact, as a hitherto unknown reproduction of the poster indicates, the two works were conceived quite differently.<sup>84</sup> In the poster, the statue of Eros by Alfred Gilbert (1854-1934) which was omitted from the oil painting, its base and the steps leading up to it, all highly stylised, are given a prominent position in the centre of the composition and, whereas in the oil painting only motorised traffic was included, only one omnibus appears in the poster, the remaining vehicles being horse-drawn. The surviving illustration is monochrome but it is clear that, like the tiger-hunting mural, the composition is composed of large, flat areas of colour surrounded by distinct dark contours. The influence of Lewis is very apparent in the central figure with top hat and walking stick which, in the turn of the head and the large gloved hands, is reminiscent of the figures in Lewis's Design for a Programme Cover, 1912 (private collection) [97]. The figure as a whole is also close to Lewis's Smiling Woman Ascending A Stair, 1911-12 (Bradford, Vint Trust) [98], a study for the lost painting The Laughing Woman. It is clear from both the poster and the tiger-hunting mural that, in exploring what was for him a radical departure, Ginner relied very much on the example of Lewis's art. Although certain details of the poster, such as the faces of the foreground figures are rather ill-conceived, the composition as a whole is highly successful, expressing the same sense of fun which inhabits the tiger-hunting mural. Ginner clearly had a gift for discerning and conveying the comic potential of animals, in this case the cab horses. In the tiger-hunting mural the elephant, the tiger and the brown monkeys were successfully caricatured. Indeed, the poster design would have worked well as a children's book illustration. There is some evidence that Ginner attempted to extend this

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<sup>82</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, pp.xlix and l. The former belonged to Mrs Victor Sly, the latter to Miss Bernadette Murphy.

<sup>83</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.311; R. Cork (1985), p.303, n.80.

<sup>84</sup> The poster was reproduced in Anon., "Theatre Cabaret", The Lady's Realm (April 1912), p.602.

venture into poster design. His niece recalls Ginner telling her that he designed some posters but that they were not a success because he used too many colours for the reproduction process.<sup>85</sup>

Ginner's tiger-hunting mural and his poster depicting Piccadilly Circus are whimsical, not to say bizarre, in the context of his previous work. The whole notion of hedonism, gaiety and extravagance which one associates with the Cabaret Theatre Club clearly freed in him a vein of wit and humour, a delightful sense of fun and whimsy in consideration of which the fact that no trace remains of his other designs for the club can only be regarded as a grave loss. The experience of the Cabaret Theatre Club commission was to have a distinct and powerful influence on Ginner's future development. It is necessary to disagree with Baron's assessment that "Ginner's experience with these night-club decorations seems to have had little effect on his future work."<sup>86</sup> On the contrary, just as Gore learned to exploit in his later work, particularly at Letchworth, the radical simplification of form which was the legacy of his contribution to the 'Cave of the Golden Calf', so Ginner's work, though less dramatically, was nevertheless affected. In spite of the fact that Ginner's Notebooks do not always list his work in precise chronological order, it is interesting to note that the work cited immediately after the Cabaret Theatre Club decorations was Victoria Embankment Gardens which, on stylistic grounds, may very well have followed on from the Cabaret commission.<sup>87</sup> In many respects this painting represents the antithesis of the theories which Ginner was later to expound in Neo-Realism. It is heavily indebted to the work of Van Gogh, practically amounting to a pastiche. The forms of trees and clouds are highly stylised and Ginner utilised the type of expressive brushwork which is so much a feature of Van Gogh's work, even contriving to make the tall tree in the foreground resemble a cypress, evoking a scene in Arles rather than a London park.<sup>88</sup> Ginner evidently recognised an element of insincerity - what he was later to refer to as 'formula' or 'academic' painting - for he did not repeat the experiment. Nevertheless, the heavy outlining of forms within the painting, linking it to his work for the Cabaret Theatre Club, was to become a feature of Ginner's art and it is this, combined with a much more rigid, formalised compositional structure, which were to assert themselves in Ginner's work from 1912 onwards. In this context the three small copies of each of the Cabaret Theatre Club mural subjects, which involved working on a smaller scale, may well have encouraged and aided Ginner in transferring the principles embodied in the Cabaret Theatre Club decorations to his easel paintings. Following directly on from Victoria Embankment Gardens in Ginner's Notebooks is Piccadilly Circus, which was one of Ginner's contributions to the Camden Town Group exhibition in December 1912.<sup>89</sup> It belongs, in colour and technique, to a group of paintings representing London which include The Sunlit Square, Victoria

<sup>85</sup> Letter from Nancie Cappella to the present writer, dated 27 August 1992.

<sup>86</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.44.

<sup>87</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.lviii. A date of May - June has been suggested for the painting. It was not included in Fry's Paris show, suggesting that when he collected exhibits in April it had not yet been painted. The AAA exhibition opened in July and this painting was included. The lush foliage of the trees and plants would indicate that it was painted in May or June. (Tate Gallery Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1982-4. London, 1986, p.188).

<sup>88</sup> A. Robertson (1977), p.10.

<sup>89</sup> London, Carfax Gallery, Camden Town Group, December 1912, cat. no.24.

Station, 1913 (Southport, Atkinson Art Gallery) [99] and The Fruit Stall 1914 (Christie's, 17 November, 1978, lot 24) [100]. They are united by close attention to detail, thick *impasto* and, what would appear to be the legacy of Ginner's work for Strindberg, bright colour and a rigid compositional structure, emphasised by strong outlines. Another very thickly painted work, The Circus, also has affinities with this series and with Ginner's work for the Cabaret Theatre Club. The colour is very bright and again forms are strongly outlined.

In a brilliant analysis Cork has drawn attention to the links between Piccadilly Circus and Futurism.<sup>90</sup> It is a parallel which resides not in treatment but in choice of subject for, as Cork points out, Ginner has rejected Futurist notions of simultaneity, multiple motion and 'lines of force', all of which would shortly be exploited by England's Futurist disciple Christopher Nevinson (1889-1946), in favour of stressing the solidity of the objects in view.<sup>91</sup> "Everything is painted with a dogged firmness which precludes the sensation of speed altogether."<sup>92</sup> Yet the emphasis is placed firmly on modernity in terms of the rapid incursion of motorised vehicles on the streets of London.<sup>93</sup> Indeed Ginner could hardly have chosen a location more illustrative of the trend, for Piccadilly Circus in the heart of the city, marking the convergence of London's busiest thoroughfares, was and remains, synonymous with urban bustle, speed and noise. It has been suggested that the inclusion of the flower-seller, isolated in the centre of the traffic, was intended as a relic or reminder of a passing age.<sup>94</sup> It is much more likely that the decision to include the flower-seller was based on pictorial requirements for she provides a necessary focus of rest, a still centre in the midst of Ginner's circular and tumultuous composition, a circumstance aided by her seated position in contrast to the movement around her. In addition, this was no doubt her 'pitch' which she occupied daily.<sup>95</sup> As a familiar figure to passers-by she, as much as the red omnibuses bearing their destinations in large black and red letters, played a part in conveying the particular character of the location which is clearly what Ginner hoped to achieve. There is no reason to suppose that Ginner would have regarded the activities of the flower-seller and the omnibus passengers as mutually exclusive, as both Baron and Cork appear to suggest.<sup>96</sup> Private motorised transport was still comparatively rare and while many people used public transport to take them into the city centre, their shopping was then conducted on foot. In a contemporary photograph of the location the pavements are crowded with pedestrians: seen in this light, the increased deployment of motorised vehicles was likely to afford

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<sup>90</sup> R. Cork, "Machine Age, Apocalypse and Pastoral". Essay included in British Art in the 20th Century, Royal Academy, London, 1987, p.66.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> By 1912 the proportion of motorised to horse-drawn vehicles was almost 3-1, a reversal of the situation which had obtained as recently as 1909 (Tate Gallery Catalogue of Acquisitions 1980-82. London, 1984, p.100).

<sup>94</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.311.

<sup>95</sup> A photograph of Piccadilly Circus taken during the summer of 1912 [101] shows a flower-seller seated on the steps of Eros with a wicker basket and a bucket exactly like those shown in Ginner's painting. (Tate Gallery Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1980-82. London, 1984, p.100.)

<sup>96</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.311; R. Cork, Machine Age, Apocalypse and Pastoral, op. cit., p.66.

the flower-seller more custom rather than less.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, even today, when the streets of the metropolis are thronged with traffic to an extent not yet dreamt of in 1912, the flower-seller with a pavement stall or barrow is a common enough sight.

The timing of Ginner's painting was crucial in terms of the influence of Futurism. The exhibition of Futurist art at the Sackville Gallery during March 1912 included work by Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), Carlo Carrà (1881-1966), Luigi Russolo (1885-1947) and Gino Severini (1883-1966), all signatories of the the Manifesto of the Futurist Painters issued during 1910. The exhibition moved to London from Paris, part of a major publicity drive organised to spread Futurist art and ideology throughout Europe and into Britain and Russia. Although Piccadilly Circus is clearly indebted to the Futurist preoccupation with modernity, machinery and noise, it was not painted until late 1912 and did not therefore constitute an immediate response to the Futurist exhibition.<sup>98</sup> This is partly explained by Ginner's preoccupation successively with the Cabaret Theatre Club commission, with the work of Van Gogh as indicated by Victoria Embankment Gardens and by his absence from London at Applehayes on a painting holiday during the summer.<sup>99</sup> Ginner may well have been inspired by the work which Gore brought back from Letchworth. The clean-cut villas, wide, straight roads and surrounding fields of Howard's suburban Utopia were far enough removed in spirit from the noise, crowds and pollution of Piccadilly Circus but the parallel lies in the modernity, the sense of up-to-the-minute contemporaneity. Gore's Letchworth Station is surrounded by empty fields which stretch to the far horizon but it is a scene which speaks above all of a fascination with the themes of contemporary life. It was in this sense that Konody entirely missed the point when, in a review of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, he described Letchworth Station as "the silent protest of a lover of the green countryside against the intrusion of unbending iron and black smoke."<sup>100</sup> On the contrary, it was precisely the modern character of the location which appealed to Gore. No doubt a similar motive inspired Gore's Flying at Hendon, 1912 (private collection), another ultramodern subject. Cork points out that in Piccadilly Circus Ginner: "As if to hammer home the rapidly changing identity of metropolitan life ... allows the word 'NEW'

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<sup>97</sup> A photograph of the location taken in the early 1920s [102] shows not one but several flower-sellers plying their trade on the steps of Eros and, incidentally, the Criterion Theatre at the right which can be glimpsed beyond the traffic in Ginner's painting.

<sup>98</sup> A fascinating clue to the date of Piccadilly Circus is the presence on the canopy of the nearest omnibus, above the driver, of a box bearing the route number which could be illuminated at night. It was a new feature on this type of omnibus, introduced during the summer of 1912. This, along with the fact that the figures are dressed in winter clothing and the painting was exhibited at the third Camden Town Group exhibition in December 1912 (24), indicates that it was painted in late 1912. (Tate Gallery Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1980-82, op. cit., p.100). Ginner's preoccupation with contemporaneity is indicated by his decision to portray the newest type of omnibus.

<sup>99</sup> Applehayes on the Devon/Somerset border belonged to the artist H. B. Harrison (1855-1924). Robert Bevan (1865-1925), Ginner and Gore all painted there, each making several visits. Ginner's exhibits at the Camden Town Group exhibition in December 1912 included two Applehayes subjects (22, 23).

<sup>100</sup> P. Konody (1912).

to stand out among the clamorous music-hall advertisements on the side of the Clapham-bound bus."<sup>101</sup>

The decision to concentrate on the mechanised din of the inner city may well have been inspired, as Cork suggests, by Filippo Marinetti's (1876-1944) comments on a visit to London during the Futurist exhibition.<sup>102</sup> In an interview with the The Evening News Marinetti, anxious to recruit English disciples to the movement, declared: "Why, London itself is a Futurist City!" and spoke of the "brilliant-hued motor-buses" and "enormous, glaring posters".<sup>103</sup> It could almost be a description of Piccadilly Circus and it is impossible to imagine that the painting was not inspired to some extent by Marinetti's call for English artists to exploit the themes offered by the modern city. The Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery included a number of street scenes by Boccioni, Carrà and Severini; the city was, after all, a central theme in Futurist art, an essentially urban aesthetic centred on the teeming cities of Italy's industrial north. The first Futurist Manifesto, published in 1909, celebrated the life of the city in the 'modern capitals'; the crowds, railway stations, factories and locomotives.<sup>104</sup> The past was resolutely dispatched and the museums and libraries dedicated to its preservation recommended for burning or flooding. The poster, Piccadilly Circus, which Ginner designed for the Cabaret Theatre Club apparently owes something to the Futurists' technical methods, in particular their incorporation of a multiple viewpoint whereby the composition of a painting was not confined to what the artists could see looking in one direction from a given point. Taking a high viewpoint, Ginner has tilted and distorted the buildings, incorporating a wider perspective and taking liberties with their locations and architectural details. It is not clear exactly when Ginner executed the poster although it was ready for publication in the April number of The Lady's Realm. It is possible that he may have been influenced by Boccioni's The Street Enters the House, 1911 (Hanover, Niedersächsische Landesgalerie) [103] which was included in the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery during March 1912.<sup>105</sup> The exhibition catalogue contained an essay entitled The Exhibitors to the Public which was largely concerned with defining the technical means by which the paintings were achieved and in elucidating key areas of Futurist art practice. The complex compositional structure of Boccioni's painting was explained in terms of the notion of simultaneity whereby the spectator is presented with a composite view of everything the woman can see from her balcony rather than simply the view from one angle:

The simultaneousness of states of mind in the work of art: that is the intoxicating aim of our art ... In painting a person on a balcony, seen from inside the room, we do not limit the scene to what the square frame of the window renders visible; but we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced ... You must render the invisible which stirs and lives beyond intervening obstacles,

<sup>101</sup> R. Cork, Machine Age, Apocalypse and Pastoral, *op. cit.*, p.66.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Anon., "Futurist London. Leader of New Art School on Our Neglect of Reality", The Evening News (4 March 1912), p.3.

<sup>104</sup> F. Marinetti, The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism. Trans. U. Apollonio (1973), p.22.

<sup>105</sup> Cat. no. 6.

what we have on the right, on the left, and behind us, and not merely the small square of life artificially compressed, as it were, by the wings of a stage.<sup>106</sup>

Although prepared to make some concessions to Futurist technique in his design for a poster for the Cabaret Theatre Club, Ginner was unwilling to carry these means through to his easel painting of the same subject. Rejecting overtly Futurist methods designed to portray speed, movement and emotion, Ginner's personal response to the incursion of the machine age is a peculiarly familiar one to late twentieth-century viewers in the sense that his traffic is so snarled-up as to preclude any possibility of speed. As Cork has observed: "*Piccadilly Circus* appears to be clogged with traffic rather than vibrating with Marinettian horsepower ..."<sup>107</sup> A number of factors contribute to this impression. The road is so densely packed with traffic that it is difficult to ascertain where one vehicle ends and another begins. There is very little aerial perspective and small details contribute to an element of spatial ambiguity; the wicker basket of flowers, for example, the rim and contents of which appear to be on the same plane as the front mudguard of the nearest omnibus, or the two heads in profile directly above whose place within the composition in terms of the vehicles to which they belong is difficult to decipher. The spatial confusion was clearly intended to emphasise a sense of the perpetual throng, the sheer bustle of the location. This was picked up on by one critic who, when the painting was shown at the third Camden Town Group exhibition in December 1912, observed: "*Piccadilly Circus*", both in its crude tones and jumbled composition, happily suggests the noise and confusion of that busy thoroughfare."<sup>108</sup> Contributing most to the sense of a busy location is the fact that the spectator has the sensation not of looking on at the scene but of actually participating in it. This is achieved largely by the position of the taxi which approaches the spectator almost head-on, by the proximity of the foreground figure and by the, as it were, claustrophobic composition, crammed with detail, hemmed in by buildings and traffic and excluding the sky altogether. This raises the question of the space which the artist occupies. Clearly he cannot be in the middle of the road which is where the composition logically places him. Two possibilities remain: either Ginner is standing on the opposite pavement and has pared down what would have been a much wider view, perhaps using a homemade viewfinder such as the one he is known to have owned.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, bearing in mind Easton's assertion that Ginner never

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<sup>106</sup> U. Boccioni et al, "The Exhibitors to the Public". Essay included in catalogue of Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters, Sackville Gallery, London, 1912, pp.11-12.

<sup>107</sup> R. Cork, Machine Age. Apocalypse and Pastoral, op. cit., p.66.

<sup>108</sup> 'G. R. H.', "The Camden Town Group" Pall Mall Gazette (12 December 1912), p.7.

<sup>109</sup> M. Easton (1970), p.204. Measuring 11 x 9 cm the viewfinder is subdivided with black and white cotton and inscribed '24 - 20' and '27 - 20' which, as Easton points out, were the canvas dimensions, in inches, favoured by Ginner. The fact that Piccadilly Circus was a much larger canvas does not preclude the possibility that Ginner used a viewfinder. It is possible that Ginner's interest in the work of Van Gogh may have encouraged him to use such a device. Van Gogh's published letters contain a reference to just such a viewfinder: "I painted my last three studies with the help of a viewfinder divided into squares, which, as you know, I often use. I attach some importance to it, because I do not think it unlikely that, sooner or later, more artists will make use of it, just as the old German, Italian, and, I believe, the Flemish painters did." (Letter from V. Van Gogh to Theo, n.d. V. Van Gogh (1912), p.122.)

used a camera, he may have taken the composition from an existing photograph.<sup>110</sup> The latter is the most likely possibility since the road was really too wide for Ginner to observe so much detail from the opposite pavement, a view which would in any case be severely impeded by the constant stream of traffic.<sup>111</sup> The wealth of minute and, as we have seen, accurate detail conveyed in Piccadilly Circus would, if recorded on the spot, have necessitated numerous drawings, especially as the subjects were in constant motion. The only surviving drawing is the squared and numbered one now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum; no other studies are recorded in Ginner's Notebooks.<sup>112</sup> The possibility that Ginner used a photograph is supported by the fact that the composition, rather unusually for Ginner, is cropped at both sides so that forms are abruptly severed in the manner of a snapshot image. Although both compositionally and in terms of content, the poster Piccadilly Circus and the oil painting of the same title are conceived very differently, they do have one significant detail in common. The figure of the seated flower seller in hat and shawl with her wicker basket of flowers appears in both works, although she is reversed in the oil painting. Given that the painting followed the poster, it is evident that these details derived from the same drawing or photograph for the highly stylised figure in the poster is clearly related to the figure in the painting. The same is true of the figure of a woman in a large hat at the left of the poster which is repeated in the woman gazing from an omnibus window at the right of the oil painting.

In his oil painting of Piccadilly Circus we see Ginner preoccupied with a desire to achieve the particular character of the location. The scene is manifestly set in London but to remove any possible doubt, prominence is given to the clearly legible destinations painted on the side of the nearest omnibus: 'Battersea', 'Bloomsbury', 'Clapham', 'Hyde Park'. While the choice of theme may be seen as a response to Marinetti's advice to English artists to exploit the themes offered by the city of London, the rejection of Futurist technique conforms in practice to the principles which would inform Neo-Realism. The adoption of the methods used by the Futurists would, in Neo-Realist terms, have implied the use of 'formulae'. While the conscious machine age modernity of Piccadilly Circus was new in his art, the depiction of London street scenes was already a staple in the repertoire of subjects favoured by Ginner and a core of his fellow Camden Town Group members. Bevan, Malcolm Drummond (1880-1945), Gilman, Gore and Ratcliffe all painted the streets, gardens, squares and public buildings of inner London, but in a spirit entirely different to that evinced in Piccadilly Circus. They invariably chose the quieter streets and secluded gardens rather off the beaten track, often in Bloomsbury or Camden Town and frequently viewed from a first floor window. Typical of Gore's London scenes are two Camden Town subjects; Mornington Crescent, c.1911 (London, British Council) and Spring in North London, 2 Houghton Place, 1912 (University of Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery), both viewed from an upper window, both typically depicting the least obvious, least public angle; the back of the underground station and a view over a back

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<sup>110</sup> M. Easton (1970), p.204.

<sup>111</sup> The sheer pressure of traffic is indicated by the contemporary photograph of Piccadilly Circus previously referred to.

<sup>112</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.lxi.

garden. Bevan's street scenes around this time were simply a backdrop to his many paintings of horses in cab-yards and so on. Indeed, it is ironic to note that one of his contributions to the third Camden Town Group exhibition, along with Ginner's Piccadilly Circus, was 'Quiet With all Road Nuisances', c.1912 (private collection) a scene at a horse sale at Aldridge's in Upper St. Martin's Lane.<sup>113</sup> The auctioneer's recommendation of the animal to which the title refers aptly reinforced the 'road nuisances' depicted in Ginner's painting. Both Gilman and Ratcliffe depicted comparatively few London scenes and always favouring quiet locations. In 1912 both painted remarkably similar views of Clarence Gardens [104/105], a peaceful London square, and it is notable that Gilman, in particular, concentrated on the large tree which dominates his composition almost to the exclusion of the buildings behind.<sup>114</sup> The obvious source for these lies in the work of Sickert although by this date he had largely abandoned the subject of London streets, occasionally painting townscapes and street scenes in Dieppe. His interest in depicting shop fronts and street corners may be traced to the influence of Whistler although the ultimate source for such subjects lay in the work of the French Impressionists to where the common Camden Town Group device of observing the view from an upper window may also be traced.

Ginner's decision to depict the most tellingly contemporary elements of his subject in Piccadilly Circus must have found favour with Lewis who included an iconoclastic tirade on the subject of this location in the first edition of the Vorticist publication Blast:

DAMN all those to-day who have taken on that Rotten Menagerie, and still crack their whips and tumble in Piccadilly Circus, as though London were a provincial town. WE WHISPER IN YOUR EAR A GREAT SECRET. LONDON IS NOT A PROVINCIAL TOWN. We will allow Wonder Zoos. But we do not want the GLOOMY VICTORIAN CIRCUS in Piccadilly Circus. IT IS PICCADILLY'S CIRCUS!<sup>115</sup>

Ginner's composition, excluding, as Cork has pointed out, the last vestiges of horse-drawn transport as well as the statue of Eros which provided nineteenth-century Victorian associations, was as resolutely modern as Lewis could have wished.<sup>116</sup> The ranting, declamatory style of Blast owed much to the manifestos issued by the Futurists who retained an immense aptitude for self-publicity. Ginner was no doubt aware of their activities from an early date. During 1909 Le Figaro devoted a front page to the publication of the first Futurist manifesto.<sup>117</sup> Ginner's review of the NEAC exhibition in December 1911 alluded to Marinetti's dismissal of the nude as a subject in art which had appeared in Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto 1910 published as a leaflet by the journal

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<sup>113</sup> Cat. no.39.

<sup>114</sup> Each painted two versions of the subject. Those by Gilman, in Odin's Restaurant, London and the Ferens Art Gallery, Kingston upon Hull, are very similar and close to the larger of Ratcliffe's versions (private collection).

<sup>115</sup> W. Lewis, "Great Preliminary Vortex. Manifesto I", Blast, no.1 (20 June 1914), p.19.

<sup>116</sup> R. Cork, Machine Age. Apocalypse and Pastoral, *op. cit.*, p.66.

<sup>117</sup> "Manifesto of Futurism", Le Figaro (20 February 1909), p.1.

Poesia on 11 April 1910.<sup>118</sup> Ginner may well have been in the audience when Marinetti delivered a lecture in French at the Lyceum Club for Women in April 1910. On 19 March 1912 he lectured again at Bechstein Hall to promote the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery.<sup>119</sup> In 1930 Bayes recalled that on this visit Marinetti attended a gathering of the Fitzroy Street Group, impressing the assembly by his extravagance in keeping a taxi waiting at the door while he talked upstairs.<sup>120</sup> Bayes particularly recalled introducing Gilman to Marinetti on this occasion and rescued a telling phrase from a newspaper paragraph alluding to "the Baldheaded Futurist Gilman."<sup>121</sup> It is interesting to note that the Preliminary Prospectus for the Cabaret Theatre Club, dated 12 April 1912, stated that the venue intended to offer "free development to the youngest and best of our contemporaries and - "Futurists".<sup>122</sup> While disdaining to harangue their audience in the Futurist manner so manifestly approved by Lewis, there is nevertheless more than a hint of the Futurist appetite for publicity and didacticism in the activities of the Neo-Realists. The publication of a manifesto was, in itself, a step very much in keeping with Futurist procedure and while it is a characteristically restrained document, the use of initial capitals and its extremely dogmatic, uncompromising tone does link it to the Futurist tendency. One might also regard two lectures which Ginner delivered to the Leeds Arts Club as analogous with the Futurists' penchant for public appearances designed to promote their ideas.<sup>123</sup>

Ginner would have found himself in agreement with much of the theory expressed in the essays published in the catalogue of the Futurist exhibition at the Sackville Gallery.<sup>124</sup> Foremost among these was the rejection of 'academism' which was to become the linchpin of Neo-Realism. This was expressed by the Futurists' rejection of the nude as a subject, in the proposed destruction of the museums and by their obvious pleasure in pure colour as opposed to "the bituminous tints by which it is attempted to obtain the patina of time upon modern pictures."<sup>125</sup> The Futurists declared that "all forms of imitation must be despised, all forms of originality glorified."<sup>126</sup> Again, this found an echo in Ginner's disparagement of what he termed 'formula painting'. Ginner's characterisation of

<sup>118</sup> Trans. U. Apollonio (1973), pp.27-31. This was reprinted as one of two prefatory essays in the catalogue of the Sackville Gallery exhibition but Ginner's review, published several months before the exhibition opened, suggests that he was already familiar with it.

<sup>119</sup> R. Cork (1976), vol.1, p.28.

<sup>120</sup> W. Bayes (1930), pp.100-1. Lewis and Nevinson, who organised a dinner in honour of Marinetti (C. Nevinson (1937), p.57), may have been responsible for arranging this visit.

<sup>121</sup> The source for this quotation has not been identified but it may be "A Man about Town's Causerie" in the Sunday Evening Telegram which Fergusson quoted as alluding to Gilman's "bald head and regal mouth." (W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.22, no date supplied).

<sup>122</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.63.

<sup>123</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.cxxxii, record that they were entitled Modern Art and the Future and The Recent Movements in Modern Painting, delivered on 5 October 1914 and 27 September 1915, respectively. Despite extensive research on my behalf in the Leeds Arts Club archive by staff at the Reference Library in Leeds, no transcripts or reviews of these lectures have been found.

<sup>124</sup> Three essays were included in the catalogue: Initial Manifesto of Futurism, The Exhibitors to the Public and Manifesto of the Futurist Painters.

<sup>125</sup> "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters". Essay included in the catalogue of Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters, London, 1912, p.34.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p.33.

'Post-Impressionism' as a "new Academic movement" may have derived directly from a passage in The Exhibitors to the Public in which it was stated: "It is indisputable that several of the aesthetic declarations of our French comrades display a sort of masked academism."<sup>127</sup> The commitment to the portrayal of contemporary life espoused by the Futurists was to become a central tenet of Neo-Realist theory. The nineteenth-century French Realist call for contemporaneous subject matter was formulated in considerably more moderate terms than that of the Italian Futurists who wished to destroy the past altogether. Clearly Ginner was more comfortable with the former, yet the timing of the poster and the oil painting of Piccadilly Circus and of Neo-Realism would seem to suggest that it was to the Futurists that he owed his preoccupation with the notion of portraying modern life and the need to spell out what, as his previous work shows, had always been, for him, an article of faith. It was a subject to which he would return in 1918 when he urged his fellow artists to seek out subjects in their "own sphere", portraying the landscape which surrounded them rather than reproducing a *faux* Provence based on the landscapes of Cézanne.<sup>128</sup> The Futurists declared that "there can be no modern painting without the starting point of an absolutely modern sensation ..."<sup>129</sup> Interestingly enough, while Ginner's criticism of the new 'academism', ie. 'Post-Impressionism', was based on his belief that it was imitative, the Futurists rejected it on the grounds that its exponents apparently denied the significance of subject matter: "Is it not, indeed, a return to the Academy to declare that the subject, in painting, is of perfectly insignificant value?"<sup>130</sup> This was a complete reversal of the claim made by Bell and Fry that academic art was unworthy of the epithet 'art' in that it was overly dependent on subject matter and, indeed, narrative.

It was suggested in the previous chapter that Ginner was highly critical of the 'Post-Impressionist' theories of Bell and Fry in Neo-Realism. Yet during 1912 he became remarkably close to Fry. The following chapter will explore this phase of Ginner's career and, more importantly, will trace the stages in the Neo-Realists' growing alienation from Sickert against the background of his published criticisms of Neo-Realism.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>128</sup> C. Ginner (1918),

<sup>129</sup> The Exhibitors to the Public, *op. cit.*, p.10.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER SIX

"... I shall paint as thick as I damn well please."<sup>1</sup>

It was suggested in chapter four that Ginner's outspoken condemnation of 'Post-Impressionism' in the text of Neo-Realism may have been occasioned partly by pique at not having been invited to take part in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. In fact, during the spring and early summer of 1912, Ginner appears to have hovered on the edge of assimilation to Fry's coterie of artists, a merger which did not ultimately take place. This chapter will explore this interesting and hitherto overlooked juncture in Ginner's career before going on to discuss, in detail, Sickert's response to Neo-Realism in the context of the debate which publication of the treatise occasioned in the pages of The New Age.

During May 1912, an exhibition entitled Quelques Artistes Indépendants Anglais was held at the Galerie Barbazanges in Paris. It was organised by Fry and among the ten artists whom he selected to exhibit was Ginner.<sup>2</sup> A number of factors may have contributed to Fry's decision to include Ginner in the exhibition. Three paintings by him were shown at the first exhibition of the Contemporary Art Society, with which Fry was closely involved, at Manchester City Art Gallery during December 1911. In his catalogue introduction, Fry referred to Sickert as an artist who preferred to concentrate on the 'pictorial' rather than the 'emotional' elements of his subject; yet he singled out among his 'followers' Ginner and Gore whose work, in his opinion, demonstrated the degree to which "personal attitude finds expression even when art is approached in this objective spirit."<sup>3</sup> Clearly Fry regarded the work of Ginner and Gore as the acceptable face of the Camden Town Group: the fact that he discussed Grant separately suggests that he regarded his membership of the group as purely an expedient and therefore irrelevant to discussions of his work. As a close friend of Ginner, Gore may have been influential in promoting his work. Gore's role in the Paris exhibition was clearly an important one, for he was responsible for organising a second exhibition at Cardiff during July 1912 to which some or all of the exhibits from the Paris show were transferred.<sup>4</sup> Another

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1914c).

<sup>2</sup> The other nine were Bell, Frederick Etchells, Jessie Etchells, Fry, Gore, Grant, Holmes, Lewis and Helen Saunders (1885-1963). None of the three paintings which Ginner sent to the exhibition can be identified. Their titles in the catalogue were: (1) Les Affiches, Londres, (2) Nature Morte and (3) Les Vases. They are recorded in Ginner's Notebooks as The London Posters, 1912, The Normandy Still Life, 1911 and The Pots and the Carpet, 1912.

<sup>3</sup> R. Fry, "Prefatory Note, with reference to the work of the Younger Artists", Catalogue of Exhibition by the Contemporary Art Society. Manchester City Art Gallery, winter 1911, p.xxi. Ginner exhibited (5) Flowers, Fruit and Vases, 1911, (28) Still Life, Fruit and Teapot, 1910 and (224) Sussex Downs, 1910 (present locations unknown). The exhibition toured Leeds, Bradford and Aberdeen during 1912. Two works by Gilman were included, (19) an unidentified portrait and (24) Washing In the Snow, c.1909-10 (private collection).

<sup>4</sup> J. Collins (1984), p.26. Ginner's Notebooks, vol.1, pp.xlvi, xlviiii, li, reveal that all the paintings which he exhibited in Paris were transferred to the Cardiff show.

factor in Ginner's favour was his involvement in the Cabaret Theatre Club commission. Again, Gore may have been influential in securing Ginner a share in the project since Strindberg had put him in charge of organising the overall decorative scheme as well as the contributions of individual artists.<sup>5</sup> It is not clear whether Ginner had already been asked to participate in this project when Fry invited him to contribute to the Paris exhibition, but there can be no doubt that his involvement with the commission would have impressed Fry who was at this time very much in favour of such schemes.

The whole notion of co-operative group endeavour in the context of decorative cycles was very much 'in the air' during this period. The Borough Polytechnic murals were the catalyst for a whole series of such commissions and many more projected schemes which never came to fruition.<sup>6</sup> Those which did come off included wall paintings in Maynard Keynes's rooms in King's College, Cambridge, carried out by Grant during the winter of 1910-11. During the same period, Frederick Etchells and Grant were involved in decorating one of the rooms Grant shared with Keynes at Brunswick Square. The involvement of both Etchells and Grant in all these schemes was paramount and, as previously suggested, paralleled the development of their easel paintings which were, during this period, extremely decorative. It is significant that when he wrote to Charles Vildrac on the subject of the Paris exhibition, Fry singled out the work of Etchells and Grant while denigrating the work of the remaining exhibitors, including his own: "Duncan Grant will exhibit and certainly he has genius, perhaps Etchells also; the others like myself have but a little talent and at least goodwill."<sup>7</sup> A number of their exhibits were to appear again at the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition later that year, including Etchells' The Dead Mole and Grant's The Dancers and The Queen of Sheba. These gave evidence of their preoccupation with decorative effects and Fry's comment may be taken as clear evidence of the direction in which his sympathies lay. In the introduction to the catalogue of the Contemporary Art Society's exhibition at Manchester, Fry had already singled out Etchells and Grant for praise in terms which indicate that he regarded them as the two artists working in England who had most successfully taken on the mantle of 'Post-Impressionism':

In both one sees evidence of a profound study of primitive art and the application of its principles in an entirely modern and original manner. Both realise more clearly than any other modern English artists the value of the bare statement of structural planes and lines of movements and the importance of scale and interval in design.<sup>8</sup>

The extent to which artists and the public were preoccupied by the concept of applying contemporary art practice to Byzantine or *quattrocento* traditions of decorative cycles in mosaic or tempera is indicated in a letter Fry wrote to his mother during November 1911. He referred to a "great debate", which he had been asked to open, on the subject of the recently executed Borough Polytechnic

<sup>5</sup> R. Cork (1985), p.70.

<sup>6</sup> In an undated letter [September 1911] to Grant, Fry referred to possible commissions from Lady Cunard and Lord Curzon (J. Collins (1984), p.16). In a letter to Vanessa Bell dated 12 October, 1911 Fry mentioned a project for a London Hospital (D. Sutton (1972), vol.1, p.352.)

<sup>7</sup> R. Fry to Charles Vildrac, dated 1 April 1912. (D. Sutton (1972), vol.1, p.356).

<sup>8</sup> R. Fry, Prefatory Note, with reference to the work of the Younger Artists, op. cit., p.xxi.

murals. It was evidently a lively occasion with "much freedom of speech".<sup>9</sup> While Byzantine and *quattrocento* sources provided the inspiration for projects carried out by Fry, Grant and others, they were motivated chiefly by lack of money and the urgent need for commissions.<sup>10</sup> It was ultimately the penury experienced by Grant and other young artists which persuaded Fry to establish the Omega Workshops in late 1912 as a means for them to earn money. Gore was given work at the Omega along with other obvious candidates such as Bell, Frederick Etchells, Grant and Lewis. Ginner never worked at the Omega nor was he invited to exhibit at the first exhibition of Fry's Grafton Group during March 1913 although he was apparently an early member of the group.<sup>11</sup> It was formed during February 1912 when Fry wrote to Lewis on the 21st asking him to attend the first meeting on the 27th.<sup>12</sup> In a letter informing Charles Vildrac of the imminent Paris exhibition, Fry wrote that it would consist of "pictures by my little group of English artists."<sup>13</sup> This would seem to identify Ginner as a member of the group.

One other factor which may have influenced Fry's decision to invite Ginner to participate in his Paris show was a review of the NEAC's winter exhibition which Ginner contributed to The Art News in December 1911.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to his June review with its cautious acceptance of Matisse and its rejection of Picasso and the other Cubists, this ostensibly put Ginner at the forefront of the avant-garde. Written in French, which must have appealed to the francophile Fry and lent the allusions to modern French art an air of authority, it comprised a total condemnation of a large proportion of exhibits at the NEAC, comparing them unfavourably with a number of the younger artists whose work was included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition. Ginner even brought in the Futurists with a reference to Marinetti.<sup>15</sup> Picking up on a key element of criticism surrounding the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, Ginner declared:

... ce n'est ni Gauguin ni Van Gogh, ni même Monsieur Picasso qui soient des dégénérés de l'Art, mais bien les Carolus Duran et les Alma Tadema dont ni les yeux ternes ni les âmes veules ne voient ni ne sentent plus rien.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Letter from R. Fry to Lady Fry, dated 9 November 1911 (D. Sutton (1972), vol.1, p.353).

<sup>10</sup> During 1910 and 1911 Vanessa Bell, Fry and Grant all visited Turkey and were impressed by the mosaics which they saw there. (J. Collins (1984), p.10). Grant was inspired too by the work of the early Italians especially Piero della Francesca (1410/20-92) whose work he copied and whom he cited many years later as one of the major influences on his art (S. Watney (1990), p.83). Fry suggested that the work of the 'Post-Impressionists' marked "the beginning of the return to Byzantine and Early Christian art ..." (Letter from R. Fry to Sir Edward Fry, 24 November 1910, D. Sutton (1972), vol.1, p.338.)

<sup>11</sup> London, Alpine Club Gallery, Grafton Group, 15-31 March 1913.

<sup>12</sup> D. Sutton (1972), vol.1, p.355.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from R. Fry to C. Vildrac, dated 1 April 1912 (Ibid., p.356.)

<sup>14</sup> C. Ginner (1911b). Like his earlier review it was signed by a pen name, this time 'Le Grincheux', but Ginner's Notebooks, vol.1, p.cxxxiv, indicate that he was the author.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.20. Ginner allowed that there were two or three artists in the exhibition whose work he could praise were he not "trop agacé et de mauvaise humeur" after seeing the other "insultes à l'Art". (Ibid.) He was referring, no doubt, to Bevan, Gore and Sickert who all had work accepted by the jury.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.19.

It was not a particularly challenging review in terms of the artists whom Ginner singled out for criticism; largely members of the old guard, from Lawrence Alma Tadema (1836-1912) and William Shackleton (1872-1933) to Sargent. Yet one can well imagine that Fry would have sympathised with Ginner as, figuratively speaking, he rushed from the galleries at Suffolk Street, gasping for air, "sortons, sortons vite! Respirons l'air!", exclaiming: "A moi Derain; à moi Vlaminck; à moi Othon Friez! (sic) A moi les vrais jeunes! Au secours! Au secours!"<sup>17</sup>

In spite of all this, when the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition opened in October, Ginner was not among the seven artists whom Fry had selected for the Paris exhibition in May who were represented there. The three excluded were Ginner, Holmes and Saunders. It seems safe to assume that Ginner was not invited to take part since Rutter and Sickert rather indignantly protested on his behalf at what they clearly regarded as both a slight and an inconsistency. Sickert observed in a letter to Hudson: "Fry-Bell, in their critical capacity, have tried to edit film, pick and choose pictures (a disintegrating and impossible attitude), have created Ginner Post-Imp in Paris but not in London ..." <sup>18</sup> In his review of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition Rutter wrote:

If, as the title suggests, all the exhibitors are post-impressionist painters, then I ask myself how it is that Lamb and Spencer Gore are post-impressionists when John, Sickert and Ginner apparently are not. Under the classification adopted by the organisers of the Grafton Galleries exhibition the Camden Town Group is rent asunder, and nobody but Mr. Roger Fry and Mr. Clive Bell can tell who is a post-impressionist and who not.<sup>19</sup>

Significantly, neither Rutter nor Sickert regarded Bell and Fry as acting independently although Fry organised the Paris show while Bell was responsible for selecting the artists who were included in the British section of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Sickert even amalgamated their names as though to emphasise a degree of collusion and mutual dependence.<sup>20</sup> At one point the possibility was mooted of transferring the third Camden Town Group exhibition, at the end of its run in

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20. Fry himself criticised Alma Tadema in an article published a year later. (R. Fry, "The Case of the Late Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema, O. M.", The Nation (18 January 1913), pp.666-7).

<sup>18</sup> Letter from W. Sickert to N. Hudson, n.d., extract quoted in W. Baron (1979), p.53.

<sup>19</sup> F. Rutter (1912b). Another artist whom Bell and Fry overlooked was Pissarro. In an unpublished letter dated 16 December 1912, Gore informed Pissarro that Fry wished to include three paintings by him in the extended run of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition during January 1913 to replace works which had to be returned to Paris. (Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). Pissarro replied on 18 December: "I am very sorry to appear disagreeable (sic), but I don't think I want to send to the Grafton. You see when Van Gogh, Seurat, Signac etc were represented at the 1st exhibition I fancied having worked with them for so long I ought to have been there ..." (Letter from Pissarro to Gore, Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum.) No doubt Pissarro also objected to being asked to exhibit as an afterthought to replace works being returned to their owners, as well as to the fact that, as Gore's letter makes clear, Fry insisted on himself choosing the works which Pissarro was to exhibit.

<sup>20</sup> In fact Fry wrote to Bell during the summer of 1912 informing him that he would accompany him when he visited artists to choose works for the exhibition, and recommending work by himself, Etchells and Gill. (D. Sutton (1972), vol.1, p.357).

December 1912, to the extended 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition in January 1913.<sup>21</sup> This would have meant that Ginner, who showed four works at the Camden Town Group exhibition, would have been included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition after all. In the event the projected transfer did not take place.

Although the legacy of his work at the Cabaret Theatre Club is clearly visible in Ginner's subsequent art production, in the marked outlining of forms and in the use of brighter colour and bold compositional design, the year 1913 saw a return to first principles. Ginner was never to repeat the experiment of Victoria Embankment Gardens nor did he again attempt anything like the conscious machine age modernity of his oil painting, Piccadilly Circus, although it should be pointed out that despite the fact that Piccadilly Circus represented the translation of elements from the tiger-hunting mural to his easel painting and in spite of its clear debt to Futurism in terms of subject matter, there is nothing within the canvas which could be seen to depart from the tenets of Neo-Realism which, although formulated in the following year, can already be seen to be governing Ginner's work during 1912. Without doubt the still-lives, landscapes and London street scenes which predominated in Ginner's work throughout 1912 conformed, in Fry's estimation, to the superficial definition of Camden Town Group painting outlined in the introduction to the catalogue of the Twentieth Century Art exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery during 1914. It will be recalled that this section of exhibitors was described, possibly by Fry, as treating "common or sordid scenes in a sprightly manner." On that occasion Ginner exhibited two landscapes and a still life.<sup>22</sup> At the AAA exhibition in July 1912 Ginner exhibited, alongside Victoria Embankment Gardens and the unidentified London Posters, a third London street scene entitled Leicester Square, 1912 (Brighton, Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums) [106]. The bare trees indicate that it was painted very early in 1912, before Ginner began work on the Cabaret Theatre Club decorations. It is therefore an indication of the point at which his work had arrived when he undertook the Strindberg commission. As an accurate topographical view of central London rendered in small touches of thick paint, it is very typical of the direction in which Ginner's work was to develop and as such it serves to illustrate why Ginner was by no means a likely candidate for accommodation in Fry's circle of artists. While the method of building up the painting with small individual touches of paint may be said to correspond with the technique used by Etchells and Grant in their work during this period, at no point do these relinquish their purely formal function to do duty as decorative surface in the manner of, say, The Queen of Sheba. In addition, Ginner was not interested in working from imagination as Etchells, Grant and Lewis all did; a fact clearly indicated by a proportion of their contributions to both the Paris show and the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. Nor does his work correspond in any very obvious way to that of any of the artists included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition.

<sup>21</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.50, quotes an extract from a letter from Pissarro to Manson, dated 19 December 1912: "I don't feel it would be an advantage to be among the 'Posts', but if the C. T. were to exhibit at the Grafton en bloc, I should of course be glad to join as one of them ..."

<sup>22</sup> Cat. nos.339. North Devon, 1912 (private collection), 372. The Sunlit Wall and 376. The Wild Ducks, 1912 (private collection). The latter belonged to Gilman and features in two of his paintings: Girl with A Teacup and Interior, c.1915 (private collection). C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.xlvii.

The emphasis in Leicester Square was placed on topography and it displays none of that whimsical, almost fey spirit which inhabits Etchells's The Dead Mole and which so clearly appealed to Fry. Ginner himself evidently came to regard Leicester Square in terms of a kind of manifesto. Significantly, he gave a preliminary drawing and an oil sketch of the subject to his fellow Neo-Realist, Gilman, and in January 1914, shortly after the publication of Neo-Realism, the drawing was reproduced in The New Age.<sup>23</sup> Having outlined the theory, the drawing was clearly intended to serve as an example of Neo-Realism in practice.

The fact that Ginner's brief flirtation with Fry's circle during 1912 did not ultimately result in a permanent relationship signifies the extent to which he found himself fundamentally opposed to the theories which informed the writings of both Bell and Fry, specifically with regard to the work included in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition. At the close of the first exhibition in 1910, Ginner, excited by what he had seen and eager to see more, had toured the galleries of Paris with Gilman and Rutter, debating the relative merits of artists such as Gauguin and Van Gogh.<sup>24</sup> The exhibition hardly provided a challenge to Ginner's critical faculties, familiar as he was with the work of many of the artists included and able to appreciate the work of Kees Van Dongen (1877-1968) and, to a lesser extent, of Matisse. No work by Van Dongen was included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition but, reviewing the *Artistes Indépendants* during his trip to Paris, Ginner wrote: "Matisse and Co. wish to show us, I believe, solely the essence of nature, that being according to them the most decorative way of expressing it. There is truth in the idea, and Van Dongen is the only one who in any way succeeds."<sup>25</sup> Cautious approval of Matisse was implied in a back-handed compliment: "Matisse ... exhibits an interior, which was perhaps the most pleasing thing I've seen of his in his decorative treatment of figures. I forgive him many things because of his beautiful "still lifes"."<sup>26</sup> Ginner's negative response to Cubism in the same review was discussed in chapter four and, although he had used a vaguely Cubist idiom in his designs for the Cabaret Theatre Club, this, beyond a certain degree of formal simplification, was not directly translated to his easel painting. When the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition opened in the autumn of 1912 Ginner was no doubt dismayed at the extent to which the work of the Cubist faction predominated.<sup>27</sup> Neo-Realism constituted, in part, a review of the exhibition and Ginner's division of 'Post-Impressionists' into originators and imitators, or 'formula painters', signifies the extent to which he disapproved of the Cubist element. Further, Neo-Realism may be seen to constitute a response to the theory presented with the art exhibited, particularly with regard to the vexed question of the role of subject matter; for the theories of Bell and Fry underwent a sea-change to accommodate the type of art included in the second exhibition.

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<sup>23</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.liii; The New Age, vol.14 (22 January 1914), p.369.

<sup>24</sup> C. Ginner (1919b), p.130.

<sup>25</sup> C. Ginner (1911a).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Among the Cubist group were Braque, Derain, L'Hote, Jean Marchand (1883-1940), Picasso and Vlaminck.

While Fry singled out Ginner's work at the Contemporary Art Society's exhibition during 1911, the terms in which he addressed it were ambivalent to say the least. He bracketed Ginner with Gore and led up to both by way of M. G. Lightfoot (1886-1911) and Sickert. Attributing to Lightfoot what he termed "a certain relentless acceptance of fact", Fry, bearing in mind Lightfoot's membership of the Camden Town Group, posited this as his connection with the "group of younger men who gathered round Walter Sickert."<sup>28</sup> Sickert, in turn, was characterised as: "... a somewhat solitary figure. Alone of English artists, he has steadily refused to acknowledge the effect upon the mind of the associated ideas of objects; has considered solely their pictorial value as opposed to their ordinary emotional qualities."<sup>29</sup> The work of the other members of the Camden Town Group - it is safe to assume that Fry did not include Grant whose work he discussed separately - was "characterised by their concentration on this purely pictorial and non-romantic attitude."<sup>30</sup> Fry's ambivalence occurs in the following passage:

Whether the idea as held by them is the most fruitful possible may be doubted, but it supplies the healthiest possible training and corrects a national tendency to slip into romantic exaggeration and over emphasis. The works of Spencer Gore and Ginner show too, how much the personal attitude finds expression even when art is approached in this objective spirit.<sup>31</sup>

The work shown at the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition had spawned the notion that verisimilitude or 'likeness to nature' was an irrelevant consideration in assessing a work of art. The essays contained in the catalogue of the second exhibition took this one step further by interrogating the relevance of representation itself. Fry's introduction to the catalogue of the Contemporary Art Society's exhibition suggests that in applying this standard to contemporary British art, the attention to subject matter found in the work of such core members of the Camden Town Group as Ginner, Gore and Sickert led him to question the value of their work and to accord it a lower status than that of Frederick Etchells or Grant. The study of taste is, to say the least, an imprecise science and since so many of the aesthetic theories of Bell and Fry were conditioned by personal artistic preference it is difficult to define precisely why the work of one artist conformed to their standard more or less than that of another. Certainly both objected to narrative painting; yet while the conjunction of image and title in a number of works by Sickert may be understood as constituting narrative at some level, the work of Ginner hardly conformed to any such interpretation. Fry's unease no doubt stemmed in part from Ginner's attention to the portrayal of specific locations, a preference which, as we have seen, he shared with other members of the Camden Town Group. It was suggested in the introduction to the catalogue of the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition that the artists included rejected conventional representational concerns in favour of "expressing the emotional significance

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<sup>28</sup> R. Fry, Prefatory Note, with reference to the work of the Younger Artists, *op. cit.*, p.xx.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp.xx-xxi.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.xxi.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

which lies in things, and is the most important subject matter of art."<sup>32</sup> Gore, in his review of the exhibition, objected to this view, arguing that "if the emotional significance which lies in things can be expressed in painting the way to it must lie through the outward character of the object painted."<sup>33</sup> It was a belief endorsed by Ginner who advocated "deliberate and objective transposition of the object (man, woman, tree, apple, light, shade, movement, etc.) under observation ..."<sup>34</sup> By the time the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition opened, Bell had taken the theory a step further with the doctrine of 'Significant Form'. In his catalogue introduction he confidently declared: "We have ceased to ask, "what does a picture represent?" and ask instead, "what does it make us feel?"<sup>35</sup> A circumstance which had arisen, according to Bell, from these artists' concentration on "the significance of form".<sup>36</sup>

Neo-Realism constituted a response to the theory surrounding the notion of 'Significant Form' for although Bell's book, Art, was published after Neo-Realism, the theory was outlined in an article by Bell which appeared in The Burlington Magazine a year earlier.<sup>37</sup> The doctrine of 'Significant Form' devalued the role of subject matter and thus ultimately implied denigration of the type of art produced by Gilman and Ginner for it abstracted from the appreciation of art, the role and relevance of contemporaneity which was so important to them. Indeed, it was the *raison d'être* of a work like Piccadilly Circus. Bell's search for a common denominator in all art which appealed to him, from a Persian bowl to a painting by Cézanne, was legitimate in the sense that, from the point of view of appreciation, art is ageless.<sup>38</sup> But the search for 'Significant Form' was based only on works of art which appealed to Bell's personal taste and since he rejected narrative painting and what he considered excessive attention to subject, the quest centred on issues of colour and form; so-called 'illustrative' painting was denied the status of art altogether. Bell rejected any allusion to the material present and the ordinary aspects of contemporary life, or at least held such allusions to be irrelevant, and was thus in clear opposition to Neo-Realism which advocated the role of art as socio-historical document. Rejecting the overtly political concerns which predominate in a section of nineteenth-century French Realist art, several members of the Camden Town Group, including Gilman and Ginner, concentrated on the portrayal of everyday life, everyday people and everyday objects. It was this element of the particular with its scrupulous record of contemporary culture in dress, furnishings and so forth, which offended against the sensibilities of Bell and Fry and why they clearly preferred the work of Grant which, to the uninitiated, seldom betrays a specific location and which carries a quality of timelessness. Grant's The Dancers, 1912 (London, Tate Gallery), for example, in refusing to conform to contemporary standards of feminine beauty or costume and

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<sup>32</sup> R. Fry and D. MacCarthy (1910), p.9.

<sup>33</sup> S. Gore (1910c), p.19.

<sup>34</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>35</sup> C. Bell (1912), p.9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>37</sup> C. Bell, "Post-Impressionism and Aesthetics", The Burlington Magazine, vol.22 (January 1913), pp.226-30.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.227.

lacking the particularity of portraiture, achieves an image which is ahistorical in contrast to Ginner's oil painting of Piccadilly Circus which gives us a precise record of the livery and gadgetry of the London General Omnibus Company's latest omnibus design in the year of grace, 1912. While we may infer from Rutter's and Sickert's indignant protests on Ginner's behalf that he would have accepted an invitation to exhibit at the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition had it been offered, it is clear that by this date Bell and Fry had consigned his work to the dustbin of illustration, description and documentation.

Clearly, a closer relationship with Fry's circle was no longer an option and during 1914 Gilman and Ginner found themselves increasingly alienated from Sickert who not only criticised but effectively ridiculed the doctrine of Neo-Realism in several published articles throughout the spring and early summer of 1914. In point of fact Gilman burned his boats with both Fry and Sickert shortly after the publication of Neo-Realism. In a letter to The New Age, Sickert had defended Fry's art against the criticism of Hulme, declaring that Fry was "a highly gifted and progressing painter."<sup>39</sup> In a letter published in the following issue of the journal, Gilman observed:

Mr. Walter Sickert and Mr. Roger Fry, by their mutual admiration of each other's painting, prove themselves the former a bad, the latter a good, critic. It is a beautiful sight, when there is so much discord among us, to see the lion and the lamb lying down together. Mr. Sickert is unfortunate in helping Mr. Fry to destroy the only deserved reputation he (Mr. Fry) ever possessed.<sup>40</sup>

Gilman and Ginner evidently sought to establish their independence from both Fry and Sickert and the method they chose was through the quality and depth of their paint surface. Both artists employed a very heavily loaded brush resulting in an unusually substantial application of pigment. A preference for thick paint was evident in Ginner's work from an early date. As pointed out in the introduction, Rutter recalled that the works he sent over to the first AAA exhibition from Paris in 1908 were "a nuisance to handle because the paint stood out in lumps and was still wet!"<sup>41</sup> These can no longer be identified but several other early works demonstrate a similar tendency. In 1909 Ginner visited South America where he painted Girl at An Easel, 1909 (private collection) [107].<sup>42</sup> Although this is a very small work, the paint is applied extremely thickly with a great deal of movement in the brushwork. Instead of indicating form by the use of line, Ginner has quite literally 'sculpted' form by laying down a thick application of pigment then drawing his brush through it to indicate the fall of light on the hair and to describe the planes of the face and the folds of the dress. A similar technique characterises another early work, Tâche Décorative - Tulipes, 1908 (collection of Mr and Mrs Peyton Skipwith) [108]. The two works may have been intended as a pair; the dimensions are almost identical and the handling equally unrestrained in both cases.<sup>43</sup> It is not a

<sup>39</sup> W. Sickert (1914a).

<sup>40</sup> H. Gilman (1914a).

<sup>41</sup> F. Rutter (1927), p.190.

<sup>42</sup> The painting is inscribed on the reverse: "Painted in S. America. To me from C. Ginner, Anton Lock." (F. Farmar (1987), cat.46.)

<sup>43</sup> Tâche Décorative - Tulipes measures 22 x 14 centimetres, Girl at an Easel 22.8 x 15.2 centimetres.

successful technique for the brushwork lacks a necessary element of control, suggesting that the extremely precise technique of Ginner's later work evolved in response to a realisation that his talents were ill-suited to an expressive idiom and best served by adherence to a much more exact, less random manner in which each brushstroke held a preordained position within a carefully planned structure. In this sense, A Corner in Chelsea may be seen as a transitional work in which flatter areas of paint are combined with a detailed rendering of brickwork and roof tiles. One of Ginner's exhibits at the first Camden Town Group exhibition was The Sunlit Wall. In keeping with Ginner's other works of this period it carries an extremely thick paint surface and one critic compared it in this respect to the work of Adolphe Monticelli (1824-96).<sup>44</sup>

The next few years saw a toning down, on Ginner's part, of the violent handling of these early works. Paint was applied less thickly and the technique he favoured in works such as Evening, Dieppe was one in which pigment was laid down in small, close, carefully considered touches. During 1913, however, Ginner's technique began to change again. In paintings such as Piccadilly Circus a thicker paint surface began to re-emerge but it was not until he painted The Circus that Ginner resumed the extremely *impastose* surface of his early work. The difference between The Circus and paintings such as Girl at an Easel lies in the handling, for although Ginner can again be seen to be sculpting in pigment, as shown for example in the petals of the yellow sunflowers on the clown's costume in The Circus, each touch is small and precise and he has employed distinct contours in order to describe form. Colour is extremely vivid and, in so far as Ginner's intention was to create an art independent of the "personal methods of interpreting nature" of any other individual, it was successful.<sup>45</sup> Attention to the actual substance of paint had always been a priority in Gilman's work, a fact acknowledged by Rutter as early as 1910 when he observed that it was "... enriched by a fuller blooded lust for the creaminess of pigment. Indeed, to appreciate the delicacy of Mr. Gilman's art, one must possess a little love of paint for its own sake ..."<sup>46</sup> Gilman's interest in the use of a considerably thicker paint surface developed rather more abruptly than Ginner's and was clearly the result of the latter's influence. In its extreme form it was more or less confined to a series of portraits which Gilman executed in or around 1914 which included Portrait in Profile: Mary L, 1914 (private collection) [109], The Coral Necklace, 1914 (Brighton, Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums) [110] and Portrait of Mrs Victor Sly, 1914-15 (Wakefield Art Gallery and Museums) [111]. All three share the same setting of pink diamond-and-rose patterned wallpaper and the latter two an almost identical pose; half length, seated facing right and occupying a chair placed against a door. The thick paint is laid on in dry smears and ridges, the technique differing from Ginner's in that no attempt is made to model form from pigment. Girl With A Teacup displays a similar paint surface. A preference for using very thick paint was implied in Neo-Realism when it was stated:

The good craftsman loves the medium and the tools he uses. The real painter loves his paint as the sculptor his marble, for it is through these

<sup>44</sup> 'M. S.' [Michael Sadler], "The Camden Town Group", The Art News, vol.2 (15 July 1911), p.78.

<sup>45</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>46</sup> F. Rutter, "Round the Galleries", The Sunday Times (17 July 1910), p.4.

mediums that he finds himself, is himself, and finds all his joy. In the great artist one must feel revealed, his love and passion for the medium ... Furthermore ... it is only out of a sound and solid pigment that good surface and variety can be got, and durability in the ages to come.<sup>47</sup>

It was a curious combination of a purely sensuous delight in paint for its own sake and a technical concern for the stability and permanence of the work of art which the amalgamation of pigments comprised.

This apparently innocuous penchant for *impasto*, not apparently a contentious issue, was shortly to arouse heated debate within the pages of The New Age, the journal which originally gave space to the Neo-Realists' manifesto. The instigator was Sickert in whom Neo-Realism had initially provoked a mild and essentially favourable reaction. His response to the document did not follow immediately on its publication in January 1914. It was only when it appeared as the preface to the catalogue of the joint exhibition which Gilman and Ginner held at the Goupil Gallery during April and May 1914 that Sickert published a review of its contents.<sup>48</sup> The delay in Sickert's reaction may be explained partly by the fact that the letters pages of The New Age were, during late 1913 and early 1914, largely taken up with a heated dispute between the journal's regular art correspondent, Anthony Ludovici, and the supporters of Epstein whose work Ludovici had criticised in a review of Epstein's one-man exhibition at the Twenty-One Gallery during December 1913.<sup>49</sup> Hulme replied in defence of Epstein in the following issue and Lewis entered the debate on the same side. Sickert then weighed in with an attack on the Vorticists in an article entitled On Swiftness to which Lewis replied in the next issue.<sup>50</sup> It wasn't until this particularly virulent argument had subsided that Sickert addressed Neo-Realism.<sup>51</sup> There was little within the treatise with which he did not find himself in complete agreement and he summarised Ginner's main argument in one sentence: "Art that is based on other art tends to become atrophied, while art that springs from direct contact of the artist with nature at least tends to be alive."<sup>52</sup> Two of Sickert's criticisms of the text of Neo-Realism were discussed in chapter two of this thesis: Ginner's derogation of Poussin's art and his interpretation of the word 'academic'. Sickert's remaining objection was based on his dislike of labels in view of which he advised Gilman and Ginner to drop the title 'Neo-Realist':

Let us leave the labels to those who have little else wherewith to cover their nakedness. Charles Ginner is a very good name, and has gathered already around it associations of achievement and respect. "Harold Gilman" calls up to the mind a definite tendency in painting, and both names are only

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<sup>47</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>48</sup> London, Goupil Gallery, Harold Gilman, Charles Ginner (Neo-Realism), 18 April - 9 May 1914.

<sup>49</sup> A. Ludovici, "Art: The Carfax, the Suffolk Street and the Twenty-One Galleries", The New Age, vol. 14 (18 December 1913), pp.213-4.

<sup>50</sup> W. Sickert, "On Swiftness", The New Age, vol. 14 (26 March 1914); W. Lewis, "Modern Art", The New Age, vol. 14 (2 April 1914).

<sup>51</sup> Lewis's letters to The New Age on the subject are reprinted in W. Rose (1967), pp.54-9 while the debate as a whole is covered in S. Tillyard (1988), pp.222ff.

<sup>52</sup> W. Sickert (1914b), p.819.

obscured when they are covered by a uniform domino which would tend to merge their identities.<sup>53</sup>

In a short letter Ginner replied to Sickert's criticisms of his use of the word 'academic' and there the matter appeared to have ended.<sup>54</sup> But two months later Sickert published a veiled attack on the Neo-Realists when he reviewed the NEAC exhibition at which both artists showed work. Gilman exhibited The Coral Necklace while Ginner showed Clayhidon, 1913 (Exeter, Royal Albert Memorial Museum) [112].<sup>55</sup> Both displayed an extremely thick paint surface and although Sickert did not criticise them directly it is clear from the terms in which he praised the work of Lamb that an attack on the Neo-Realists was implied:

Mr. Lamb is not only a great talent, but a great talent under the guidance of a clear and educated brain. He has never been, for a moment, the dupe of technical pedantries ... He knows that there is a strict limit to the advantages of impasto. He knows that, firstly, excessive impasto is not in itself a sign of virility. He knows even that it is, when practised as an aim in itself, only another subterfuge. Intentional and rugged impasto, from the fact that each touch receives a light and throws a shadow, so far from producing brilliancy, covers a picture with a grey reticulation and so throws dust in the eyes of the spectator, and serves, to some extent, to veil exaggerations of colour and coarseness of drawing. It is a manner of shouting and gesticulating and does not make for expressiveness or lucidity.<sup>56</sup>

Gilman and Ginner recognised themselves and, understandably furious, both replied in the next issue of The New Age. Despite being entitled The Worst Critic in London, Gilman's response was a temperate one and, after observing that Sickert had been known to prefer thick paint in the past and might do so again in the future, offered a rather vague defence on technical grounds: "It is, in any case, a technical detail, and depends on the questions of brilliance, permanence, covering power, deliberateness of workmanship, etc., impossible to discuss here."<sup>57</sup> Dispensing with explanation or defence, Ginner's response was short and aggressively non-conformist: "Paint is thicker than turpentine. In answer to Mr. Sickert I have but one statement to make: I shall paint as thick as I damn well please."<sup>58</sup>

Their responses were conditioned by the tone of Sickert's review and his implication that the Neo-Realists were using *impasto* to disguise shortcomings in both colour and drawing. It must have been extremely galling to have an artist of Sickert's reputation, to whom Gilman in particular had been very close, publicly criticising their work in so insinuating a manner. Yet Sickert was not prepared to let matters rest and, as a riposte to Gilman's The Worst Critic in London, replied in the following issue of The New Age with an article wickedly entitled The Thickest Painters in London. It was a typically Sickertian piece, the main point led up to by a series of anecdotes occupying the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> C. Ginner (1914b).

<sup>55</sup> London, Royal Society of British Artists, New English Art Club, June - July 1914, cat. nos.269, 186.

<sup>56</sup> W. Sickert (1914f), p.115.

<sup>57</sup> H. Gilman (1914b).

<sup>58</sup> C. Ginner (1914c).

bulk of the text and interspersed with couplets from music hall songs. He denied that his praise of Lamb had merely been a subterfuge designed to launch an attack on the Neo-Realists and, what must have been particularly vexing for Gilman and Ginner, ended with an unfavourable comparison between their handling and that of Gore who had died less than three months earlier: "Will they look at the Gores in the New English Art Club, and say whether that skilful, delicate, draughtsmanlike, reticent use of thick paint, that eloquent variety of touch, is not an ideal technique?"<sup>59</sup> Apart from Sickert's tactlessness in alluding to their lost friend and respected colleague in this context, the mention of Gore raises another issue. Watney suggests that Gilman and Ginner were "self-consciously bidding for the leadership of Sickert's circle, which had fallen vacant with Gore's untimely death."<sup>60</sup> Certainly Gilman and Ginner had become major players in the group politics which animated the London art world during this period; but it is important to realise that Neo-Realism, while deviating from Sickert's views only on the issue of *impasto*, was intended as a break with Sickert in political terms. While Gilman and Ginner were certainly both irritated and disconcerted to find themselves publicly rebuked by Sickert, they neither sought, desired nor expected his unqualified approval. Although Gilman claimed that Sickert had been known to use thick paint in the past, he was sufficiently acquainted with Sickert's views on the subject to know that he would not approve of *impasto* on the scale employed by the Neo-Realists.

Gilman and Ginner were clearly indebted to Van Gogh in their preference for a thick paint surface, a predilection which was endorsed in his published letters.<sup>61</sup> Van Gogh was, in turn, influenced by Monticelli whose work he greatly admired.<sup>62</sup> As pointed out earlier, when Ginner exhibited The Sunlit Wall at the first Camden Town Group exhibition, its thick paint surface attracted comparisons with the work of Monticelli rather than Van Gogh.<sup>63</sup> In a recently published volume of Van Gogh's letters, Gilman and Ginner would have found a passage in a letter to his brother which amply endorsed their love of thick paint:

It is not the extravagant use of paint that makes the painter. But, in order to lend vigour to a piece of ground and to make the air clear, one should not be particular about a tube or two. Often the very spirit of the thing one is

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<sup>59</sup> W. Sickert (1914g).

<sup>60</sup> S. Watney (1980), p.120.

<sup>61</sup> Gilman owned a copy of The Letters of A Post-Impressionist Being the Familiar Correspondence of Vincent Van Gogh, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici. London, 1912. (Information from the artist's niece, Mrs Barbara Duce). Ginner was photographed at the age of 66 reading a copy of Lettres du Vincent Van Gogh, ed. E. Bernard. Paris, 1911 (M. Easton (1970), fig.5).

<sup>62</sup> Van Gogh's published letters are littered with references to Monticelli and the high regard which he held for him. In a letter to his brother, Theo, written during 1888, Van Gogh wrote that he couldn't help "laying it on thick in Monticelli's manner. Sometimes I really think I am continuing that man's work ..." (V. Van Gogh (1959), vol.3, p.49). The following year he wrote again to Theo: "I have a canvas of cypresses with some ears of wheat, some poppies, a blue sky like a piece of Scotch plaid; the former painted with a thick *impasto* like the Monticellis, and the wheatfield in the sun, which represents the extreme heat, very thick too ..." (V. Van Gogh (1959), vol.3, p.188, n.d.)

<sup>63</sup> 'M. S.' [Michael Sadler], *op. cit.*

painting leads one to paint thinly; at other times the subject, the very nature of the things themselves, compels one to lay the colour on thickly.<sup>64</sup>

The Neo-Realists would have been well aware of Sickert's derogation of Van Gogh's use of thick paint for it had been his chief criticism of the work by Van Gogh included in the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition: "I have always disliked Van Gogh's execution most cordially ... I execrate his treatment of the instrument I love, these strips of metallic paint that catch the light like so many dyed straws; and when those strips make convolutions that follow the form of ploughed furrows in a field, my teeth are set on edge."<sup>65</sup> For his own part, Sickert held that the ideal paint surface should resemble "the side of a matchbox". Lilly, who for a time shared a studio with Sickert, gives an interesting first-hand account of his painting technique:

The underpainting once dry, the local colours were then applied, 'butter into granite'. He literally attacked the canvas at this stage, scrubbing on the paint fiercely, using a rotary motion as if he were washing the floor, wearing his brushes down to the ferule and sometimes, in his excitement, scratching away with the tin ... he declared that the ideal texture of paint resembled 'the side of a matchbox', rich, brittle, scintillating.<sup>66</sup>

This furious attack was the opposite of the careful approach developed by Gilman and Ginner. They laid their colours on side by side with considered strokes of the brush, building up a thick layer of brilliant colour as though each brushstroke represented the placing of a piece of glass in a mosaic or a single stitch in tapestry; using no medium in order to preserve the integrity of tint and texture. Fergusson reinforced the image of Gilman as a careful painter when he recalled that he "... made a great point of not worrying his paintings; he kept each stroke separate; he painted always as directly as possible."<sup>67</sup> In a letter to the then Curator of Manchester City Art Gallery in 1925, Ginner wrote: "I use my paint as it comes out of the tube without using any mediums & painting fairly thickly as I do, occasionally, I find I get a richer quality & also derive pleasure from the actual manipulation of the material."<sup>68</sup> Lilly recalled Sickert grumbling at Gilman: "I can't think how you can work over all that rough stuff, Harold. Must be like trying to walk across a ploughed field in pumps!"<sup>69</sup>

It is clear that the Neo-Realists' preference for thick paint was not regarded by them as merely a matter of personal choice but in some degree as an article of faith. During 1916 they opened a teaching establishment at 16 Little Pulteney Street in Soho. Lilly attended and recalled that the use of thick paint and very bright colour were encouraged:

As for spreading the thick paint, of the consistency of clay, on the canvas, I soon decided that Sickert was right; it *was* like walking across a ploughed field in pumps. Although we were not encouraged to use any medium I

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<sup>64</sup> V. Van Gogh (1912), p.16.

<sup>65</sup> W. Sickert (1911), p.89.

<sup>66</sup> M. Lilly (1971), p.52.

<sup>67</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.26.

<sup>68</sup> The letter is undated but endorsed with a note stating that it was received on 7 March 1925. I am grateful to Manchester City Art Gallery for sending me a copy of the original letter.

<sup>69</sup> M. Lilly (1971), p.129.

longed to smuggle in a little turpentine when no one was looking to thin this stiff mixture.<sup>70</sup>

Possibly the fact, obvious enough in 1914, that Gilman and Ginner attached "a somewhat doctrinaire importance to the virtue of impasto in itself" was what worried Sickert, regarding it as a regrettable fault in two artists whose work he otherwise admired.<sup>71</sup> But it is clear that what annoyed Gilman and Ginner most was the fact that Sickert had criticised them publicly in terms which made clear he knew the extent of his own influence. And when the Neo-Realists responded to his review of the NEAC exhibition, his reply implied that he knew they were piqued, not by the fact of being criticised, but chiefly by whom. Yet the whole point of publishing a manifesto and calling themselves Neo-Realists was in order to establish a separate identity. When Sickert hinted that labels caused "copy to foam up under the pen like paper roses in a conjurer's hat", he probably hit the nail on the head.<sup>72</sup> Gilman and Ginner seized every opportunity to exhibit and both belonged to several artists' societies but, like many other struggling young artists, they sold very little work and when exhibitions were reviewed their work was often either included in a list of 'other exhibitors' or else not noticed at all. They needed publicity and they needed to establish a distinct and recognisable identity. It was pointed out in the introduction that the first occasion on which Gilman and Ginner publicly showed their work under the appellation 'Neo-Realist' was at the AAA exhibition in July 1913. This strategy achieved its intended effect in terms of attracting the notice of the critics; no mean feat in an exhibition containing nearly thirteen hundred exhibits. Their astuteness in having 'Neo-Realist' printed after their names in the exhibition catalogue was rewarded by no less than fourteen lines of precious column inches in The Standard's short review of the exhibition:

If there be a general tendency to be observed in the serious work of our younger painters it is aptly summed up by the title claimed by two of them: "Neo-Realist". The subjects are taken from near at hand, often from London, and the powers of the artist are concentrated on seeing the subject not so much in a new or specifically "artistic" way as with an open mind for character, and on putting it upon the canvas with a very scrupulous regard for the intrinsic qualities of paint. The convention adopted may vary, but the general aim is towards a more vivid reality, not of illusion but of human perception.<sup>73</sup>

It is interesting to note that although Gilman's unidentified Painting (192) and Ginner's The Angel, Islington, 1914 (private collection) (545) were included in a list of "the more remarkable works" in the exhibition, the reviewer did not name the two Neo-Realists, using the title in order to define instead the work of the group of 'Camden Town' painters which included Gilman and Ginner. Although Sickert did not exhibit at the AAA that year, his criticisms of Neo-Realism may have stemmed in part from a suspicion that his own work was likely to be subsumed to the category which the critic for The Standard chose to regard as being defined by the term Neo-Realist. In other words, that the Neo-Realists were likely to be regarded as speaking not only for themselves but also for

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>71</sup> W. Sickert (1914g)

<sup>72</sup> W. Sickert (1914c), p.820.

<sup>73</sup> Anon., "Salon of Allied Artists' Association", The Standard (7 July 1913), p.5.

those artists, including Sickert, who were members of the Camden Town Group and whose preferred subject matter was drawn from the daily life of London or their own domestic surroundings.

Sickert's strategy of patronising Gilman and Ginner with faint praise and schoolmasterish reprimands, interspersed with humorous allusions designed to make them appear either foolish or grotesquely obsessed or both, tended to cast them in the role of two rather insubordinate members of Sickert's circle. By persistently writing in a tone which implied that what he thought actually mattered to them, Sickert was deliberately denying the Neo-Realists the independence which they sought. Even the format of the debate placed them at a disadvantage. Sickert was a regular contributor of both articles and drawings to The New Age and his side of the debate was conducted within a framework which acknowledged his status as an established and respected critic. Although Neo-Realism was published in the form of an article, both Gilman and Ginner were then forced to conduct their defence in the letters pages of the journal. Consequently, their side of the debate carried considerably less weight.

In terms of achieving their objective of advertising themselves, the Neo-Realists caused a minor rumpus within the pages of The New Age. The exchange of letters and lampoons on the subject has not previously been chronicled.<sup>74</sup> Several allusions to the subject may be construed in Sickert's published writings before the appearance of the review of the NEAC exhibition to which Gilman and Ginner responded. No doubt they were aware of these earlier hints, probably choosing to ignore them as being sufficiently indirect. In an article entitled Transvaluations which comprised a criticism of contemporary British art in terms of both drawing and technique, Sickert alluded to "the more neo-blind of my young friends", clearly a reference to the Neo-Realists.<sup>75</sup> The following week saw the publication of Modern French Classics, an article which produced a definition of the term 'academic' somewhat at variance with Ginner's. Sickert perceived 'academic' in opposition to 'direct' painting on a scale which admitted the presence of both extremes in the work of a single artist; in other words, he used the word 'academic' in its "true and nobler sense" to mean virtuosity in

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<sup>74</sup> The debate had a lighter side in the form of two lampoons, one in verse, the other in prose, by 'Arifiglio'. The former appeared on 18 June 1914 (p.162). Entitled Artistic Amenities it contained the immortal lines: "Says Ginner, "Yes I will paint thick,/ Although it makes old Sickert sick"." The following week, 25 June, p.191, saw the publication of Laying it on Thick, a clever spoof of Sickert's article The Thickest Painters in London, complete with rambling anecdotes, snatches of music hall songs and phrases in French and Italian. An allusion was made to the recent closure of the Cabaret Theatre Club: "The Cabaret is shut down upon *par ordre du Roi*, and Ginner's elephant has packed up its trunk, and gone off to fresh fields and new *impastos*." The humour of the piece turned upon the misuse of phrases in French, a subject which Sickert had introduced in exposing the technical and grammatical gaffes committed by George Moore (1852-1933). (W. Sickert, The Thickest Painters in London, *op. cit.*) Ginner was evidently able to appreciate the humorous side of the debate despite the vehemence of his only other written response to Sickert's attacks. He replied to Sickert's anecdote concerning Moore's supposed misuse of the phrases 'l'addition' and 'la note' with an authoritative account of their usage which suggested that both Sickert and Moore were wrong, ending with the observation: "I consider the above question far more important than *impasto*". (C. Ginner, "Mr. Sickert versus "The Thickest Painters"", The New Age, vol.15 (9 July 1914), p.239). This attempt to defuse the row was successful and Ginner's letter marked the conclusion of the debate as far as the letters page of The New Age was concerned.

<sup>75</sup> W. Sickert (1914d), p.35.

its least pejorative sense.<sup>76</sup> Sickert introduced a complimentary reference to Gilman which may have been intended as a corrective to the more glaring displays of *impasto* in his work as a whole. Referring to Gilman's Norwegian Waterfall he contrasted its surface with the results which he deplored in Courbet's use of the palette knife: "Mr. Gilman's painting ... has ... the brilliancy of the Courbet *impasto*, plus the cumulative drawing and the tender variety of touch that the brush alone, the painter's true instrument, can give."<sup>77</sup> The vehemence of what Gilman described as Sickert's "violent paragraph" on the issue of thick paint - he was referring to the paragraph in Sickert's article The New English Art Club quoted earlier in this chapter - may well have been occasioned by frustration at the failure of either Gilman or Ginner to benefit from his earlier hints.<sup>78</sup> Sickert now seized every available opportunity to castigate the Neo-Realists. In an article on the AAA exhibition in the issue of The New Age following publication of The Thickest Painters in London he reverted again to the subject. This time he used the work of Alfred Wolmark (1877-1961) as a stick with which to beat the Neo-Realists:

Mr. Wollmark (sic) presents a curious problem. Beginning with quite reasonable pictures he has of late years put on a turgid and bombastic method of *impasto* which entirely defeats the painter's intention. Thick oil-paint is the most undecorative matter in the world ... You cannot see Mr. Wollmark's (sic) pictures for the paint. Economy of means, if Mr. Gilman and Mr. Ginner will allow me to say so, is one of the capital virtues in art.<sup>79</sup>

Sickert again implied that the Neo-Realists' preference for thick paint was an advertising ploy when, after drawing attention to an interior by an unidentified artist named J. D. M'Intyre which demonstrated "the fine and normal use of oil-paint", he alluded to "young men ... yelling and gesticulating to attract attention."<sup>80</sup> Significantly, although Gilman and Ginner each contributed three paintings to the exhibition, Sickert failed to comment on any of them. Gilman responded to The Thickest Painters in London with a short letter which demonstrated the extent of the gulf which had opened up between himself and his former mentor. He claimed that he had been deliberately misrepresented by Sickert and that, as a critic, Sickert entirely lacked a sense of responsibility.<sup>81</sup> In the following issue both Harrison and Douglas Fox Pitt (1864-1922) entered the debate, both weighing in on the side of the Neo-Realists. Harrison implied the existence of an ulterior motive on Sickert's part, suggesting that his persistent adherence to the view that Gilman and Ginner advocated the use of *impasto* for its own sake, in spite of their written denials, was "exercised at the expense of truth and justice ... worthy only of a politician - not a painter."<sup>82</sup>

Without doubt, Sickert's decision to bring the whole debate into the public arena was, as Harrison implied, politically motivated. It is clear from several references within the letters and

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> H. Gilman (1914c).

<sup>79</sup> W. Sickert (1914h), p.178.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> H. Gilman (1914c).

<sup>82</sup> H. Harrison (1914).

articles published in The New Age that the event which precipitated the conflict was Sickert's resignation from the London Group. As far as The New Age is concerned, the whole debate may be traced back to Gilman's letter published in the journal at the end of January in which he disparaged both Fry and Sickert.<sup>83</sup> The ethos behind the formation of the Camden Town Group had been exclusivity, a fact evidenced by the group's comparative smallness and an outright ban on women members. The London Group held quite different aims and, as a prime mover in its formation, these were largely dictated by Gilman. His intention, clearly stated, was to bring together the active, vital elements of contemporary British art, both figurative and abstract - what he termed 'realists' and 'formulists' - in order that they might learn from each other and combine to form a vigorous opposition to more academic tendencies.<sup>84</sup> The new group, formed in the autumn of 1913, represented an expansion of the Fitzroy Street Group which had a much more diverse membership than the Camden Town Group. However, unwillingness on the part of several members to embrace Gilman's policy of collectivism meant a number of resignations, among them Pissarro and Sickert. The latter objected chiefly to the inclusion of the Vorticist element and in February 1914 he wrote to Hudson:

I have resigned both Fitzroy Street and the London Group ... I now see the stages which led to this. First Gilman forced Epstein on me, as you know against my will. But I was in a minority. At Brighton the Epstein-Lewis-Etchells room made me sick and I publicly disengaged my responsibility. On Saturday Epstein's so-called drawings were put up on easels and Lewis's big Brighton picture. The Epstein's are pure pornography - of the most joyless kind soit-dit and the Lewis is pure impudence ...<sup>85</sup>

It is clear that Sickert laid the blame squarely with the policy of inclusion pursued by both Gilman and Gore, who was then President of the London Group: "I hope you don't think my conduct, to Gore and Gilman chiefly, cowardly or treacherous. You know that they have dragged me step by step in a direction I don't like, and it was only a question of the exact date of my revolt."<sup>86</sup>

The first public intimation of dissent came when Sickert delivered a speech at the opening of an exhibition organised to mark the birth of the London Group. Entitled Exhibition by the Camden Town Group and Others, it brought together talents as diverse as Manson and Lewis.<sup>87</sup> Underlying animosities were indicated, however, by the fact that two catalogue introductions were required to cover the diversity of exhibitors and by Lewis's insistence that he and his group of like-minded friends be allowed to exhibit in a separate room, Gallery III, which became known as the 'Cubist Room'. Sickert's opening address, while paying lip service to the notion of "free speech" in artistic matters, nevertheless carefully dissociated him from "the extremist views of post-

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<sup>83</sup> H. Gilman (1914a).

<sup>84</sup> H. Gilman (1914b).

<sup>85</sup> W. Sickert to N. Hudson, n.d. Extract quoted in W. Baron (1979), p.67.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Brighton Public Art Galleries, Camden Town Group and Others, 16 December 1913 - 14 January 1914.

Impressionism."<sup>88</sup> Sickert referred, of course, to the contents of the 'Cubist Room'. The terms in which Sickert dismissed Epstein's art must have been perplexing to Gilman. After all, Brown withdrew his friendship from Sickert in response to the 'pornographic' nature of the nudes which had exerted so profound an influence on Gilman's work. As Manson put it in a letter to Pissarro: "You will have heard that Sickert has resigned from the LG & from Fitzroy St. He cannot stand W. Lewis & J. Epstein & the cubists & pornographic paintings! Sickert as a censor of public morals is a pleasing spectacle."<sup>89</sup> Recognising the degree of personal animosity which informed Sickert's reaction to his work, Gilman suggested that his review of the NEAC exhibition represented "inevitable cockshies" at a "society from which [Sickert] has retired."<sup>90</sup> Fox Pitt was a member of the London Group and his letter to The New Age was clearly an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters. After observing that posterity would know Sickert as a great painter rather than an art critic, he attempted to appease him with a reference to his major role in the formation of the Camden Town Group.<sup>91</sup> As an effort at conciliation it was not successful and Sickert remained stubbornly antagonistic towards the London Group and to Gilman in particular. Indeed his friendship with Gilman received its *coup de grâce* during the autumn of 1915 when Sickert engineered Gilman's dismissal from his teaching post at the Westminster Technical Institute. Sickert began teaching there in 1908 but gave up his post in the autumn of 1912 to Gore.<sup>92</sup> When Gore died Gilman took over the post. During 1915 Sickert was asked to take over the school of painting. In a letter to Sands which Baron dates to around August, he wrote: "I am to have a free hand and direct the art school entirely."<sup>93</sup> According to Lilly, Gilman and Sickert clashed on the issue of colour. Gilman had apparently encourage his students to use very bright colour while Sickert preferred to confine them to a much more restricted palette:

No wonder that their pupils were disturbed. Gilman had been tempting them with every bright colour under the sun; Sickert held that they should master a few colours before they indulged in orgies of crimson and emerald green. Now they found themselves put right back to the beginning, reduced to a palette so restricted that it was almost monochrome. All over lighting, too, was suppressed.<sup>94</sup>

Sickert evidently regarded their differences as insurmountable for he was clearly directly responsible for Gilman's dismissal. In an unpublished letter to Rutter, Lewis, while unable to resist finding a humorous side to the situation - "I think Sickert is a romantic Germanic soul who delights to see

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<sup>88</sup> R. Emmons (1941), p.147.

<sup>89</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro, dated 31 January 1914. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>90</sup> H. Gilman (1914b).

<sup>91</sup> D. Fox Pitt (1914). Fox Pitt's attempt at conciliation must be seen in light of the fact that he was a friend of Sickert ( W. Baron (1979), p.61, describes him as a 'disciple') and that he admired Ginner's work. He and his wife bought The Wet Street, Dieppe and Evening, Dieppe in 1911 and The Café Royal in 1914.

<sup>92</sup> W. Baron (1977), p.98.

<sup>93</sup> W. Baron (1973), pp.150-1.

<sup>94</sup> M. Lilly (1971), p.131.

himself in a Machiavellian sensational rôle" - was nevertheless indignant on Gilman's behalf: "But I think it is very hard luck on our Neo-Realist friend: for without that money he may have difficulties in these times. And Sickert had not even the excuse of presuming that he could go to the Wars since he is physically debarred from that."<sup>95</sup> Lewis was referring here to the fact that, as a result of a childhood accident which left him with a deformed hip and a permanent limp, Gilman was exempt from war service.<sup>96</sup> Lewis ended with the observation: "There is probably some spite as well as romance in W. S.'s proceeding, however." Lewis clearly felt that Sickert's actions were motivated by animosity towards Gilman, possibly arising from the circumstances which caused Sickert to resign from the London Group. Lewis was by no means alone in taking Gilman's part in the affair. Manson referred to the incident in three unpublished letters to Pissarro.<sup>97</sup> In the third, dated 15 October 1915 he wrote:

I expect to see Gilman to-night when I shall hear about his affair ... I wrote to Sickert to say what I thought of him. He wrote to say he was sorry to hear of my unfavourable opinion. I was his valued friend & colleague! He writes later trying to twist the blame on to Gilman. He is now my "sincerely attached" WS! His mind seems to be truly Prussian. His methods, behaviour & everything else are on those lines."<sup>98</sup>

Manson also informed Pissarro that Gilman intended to sue his employers, the London County Council (LCC), for the loss of his job. In the first letter, dated 30 September, he wrote: "Sickert has engineered Gilman out of his job at Westminster to take it himself! Gilman is bringing an action. The lawyers say he has a beautiful case. So, exit Sickert."<sup>99</sup> In the second letter, dated 4 October, he remarked: "Sickert is a cad! The writs have been issued & I suppose the LCC will have to compensate Gilman & sack ... Sickert!"<sup>100</sup> There is no evidence that the case ever came to court. Gilman did not work at the Westminster School again and in his letter to Pissarro of 4 October Manson states that Gilman had expressed a desire to open a school with Pissarro and Ginner saying that his Westminster pupils had "promised to come to him anywhere."<sup>101</sup> In the event this did not materialise and the following year Gilman and Ginner opened their school at Little Pulteney Street.

During 1916 Sickert rejoined the London Group, remarking rather cynically in a letter to Hudson: "I daresay it was a mistake to refrain from exhibiting because dear Epstein's drawings made me sick. One is only responsible for what is in one's own frames."<sup>102</sup> In order to pave the way for re-entry to the group, Sickert reviewed the third London Group exhibition, singling out for praise the

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<sup>95</sup> Unpublished letter from Lewis to Rutter, n.d. [September/October 1915]. Collection of Tate Gallery Archive, London.

<sup>96</sup> B. Hall (1965), p.15.

<sup>97</sup> W. Baron (1973), p.188, notes that in several letters to Sickert, Brown also sided with Gilman in the affair.

<sup>98</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. (No letters from Sickert referring to the incident are extant among the Manson papers held by the Tate Gallery Archive.)

<sup>99</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>100</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.71., n.d.

work of the group's President, Gilman, commenting on his Leeds Market, 1915 (London, Tate Gallery) [113]: "Mr. Gilman touches a high level in his *Leeds Market*. The intricate drawing of the roof in tones of artichoke green and artichoke violet is an expression of something only found by a born painter intensely interested in his subject."<sup>103</sup> Sickert even spared praise for Ginner, although it was less open-handed: "Mr. Ginner's *Timber-yard* shows the same omnivorous interest and burning patience, but his touch is less instinctive and less varied."<sup>104</sup> Gilman was clearly not mollified for their friendship was apparently not renewed.<sup>105</sup> In fact, Manson suggested that Gilman was afraid that Sickert was about to launch a takeover bid for the Presidency of the London Group, observing in a letter to Pissarro: "It was Walter Taylor who invited Sickert to the London Group. Gilman is quaking. He imagines that Sickert aims at being President! Oh! the little gods of modern art! They are droll."<sup>106</sup> As the tone of this letter suggests, Manson's former regard for Gilman, expressed in his defence of Gilman in the Westminster row, had diminished by 1916. There is no evidence that this was due to a specific incident. Although he had resigned from the London Group during 1914 as a result of the inclusion of the Vorticists with whose work he was not in sympathy, Manson, unlike Sickert, evidently did not hold this against Gilman as his support over the Westminster episode the following year makes clear. It may well have been distaste for the influence of the Vorticist element on Gilman's own work, very apparent around 1916, which occasioned Manson's rancour. In a letter to Pissarro, dated 9 October 1916, he wrote:

Gilman asked if he might send his new pictures here to me [Manson was then Keeper of the Tate Gallery]. I declined the honour without thanks. The man is a self-satisfied pig; & because I sold two pictures for him in an emergency he seems to think I have got to keep him! I don't love him or his work so I certainly shan't trouble more about him.<sup>107</sup>

In an undated letter to Pissarro, Manson disparaged the work of the members of the Grey Room Group who included Gilman, Ginner and Bevan:

The grey (room) people still go on steadily but their work seems very remote from art and they no longer have the excuse of being young: they have walked gaily on the quicksands of eccentricity & now they are sinking in them. They have wandered off the path & the further they go the more hopelessly remote from art they get. It's rather sad. Particularly in the case of Bevan (I always think) who had a pleasant talent which he deliberately exchanged for a dull mechanical process which he supposes to be modern & original.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> W. Sickert (1916). Leeds Market was no. 61 in the exhibition catalogue.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* Sickert referred to Timber Yard, Leeds, 1915 (private collection) [114] which was no.68 in the exhibition.

<sup>105</sup> M. Lilly (1971), p.131. "Coolness with the Sickerts continued. Gilman had the habit of taking his friends to the Sickert's house in Camden Road on Sunday evenings and leaving them there, like parcels, to be called for later while he went on elsewhere."

<sup>106</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro, dated 15 June 1916. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>107</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>108</sup> Unpublished letter from Manson to Pissarro. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Manson was clearly opposed to the rigorously formalised manner, incorporating brighter colour and bold contours, which asserted itself in the work of Bevan, Gilman and Ginner under the influence of Hulme's theories and the work of artists such as Lewis, a development which will be discussed in the following chapter.

While it was the row between Sickert and the Neo-Realists which claimed the attention of readers of The New Age and which elicited the responses in the letters pages discussed above, this petty and somewhat diffuse debate regarding the relative merits of more or less *impasto* merely served to distract attention from the real issues involved. Although there was clearly a very real sense in which the material quality of paint had in itself become a deeply contentious issue, the fact remains that while Sickert, as regular art correspondent for The New Age since 1910, had been censuring Cubists, Futurists, Vorticists, any artists, in fact, who employed abstract or semi-abstract forms, Ginner, in Neo-Realism, had, as Thistlewood suggests, presented the most cogent, the real antithesis to the argument for abstract art.<sup>109</sup> In particular, Neo-Realism must be considered in the context of the theories of Hulme which appeared in a regular column in The New Age and with reference to Hulme's response to the manifesto which was to exert a distinct influence on the future development of Neo-Realist theory.

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<sup>109</sup> D. Thistlewood (1984), p.27.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

"A regeneration of Art through design."<sup>1</sup>

As previously stated, Hulme was a regular contributor to The New Age, largely on the subject of the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859-1941) which influenced his own aesthetic theories. One of the most consistent features of The New Age was its attachment to the views expressed in the philosophies of both Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). The journal's editor A. R. Orage (1873-1934) was responsible for two books on Nietzsche while most of the translators of the first English edition of his works were contributors.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, The New Age exerted a decisive influence on artistic affairs in England during the period under discussion, not least through its connection with the Leeds Arts Club which Orage helped to found and which followed a policy of discussing and debating the articles and arguments presented by the journal.

The New Age. A Democratic Review of Religion, Politics and Literature, to give its full title, was a defunct periodical when Orage and Holbrook Jackson (1874-1948) bought it in 1907 and began editing it as a weekly. 'Religion' was promptly replaced in the title by 'Art' and the words 'Independent Socialist' substituted for 'Democratic'. When Orage became sole editor in January 1908, the subtitle was again altered to become simply A Weekly Review of Politics, Literature and Art. Editorially, the journal favoured a socialist approach while avoiding adherence to any particular political party. It is generally referred to as a Fabian tract which is true only up to a point. Orage and Jackson were both Fabians, as were many of the journal's contributors, and funds for its purchase had been donated by a leading Fabian, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950).<sup>3</sup> But Orage was, in many respects, opposed to the old-guard Fabians and what he regarded as their obsession with statistical data.<sup>4</sup> It was in order to combat this attitude that Orage and Jackson founded the Fabian Arts Group in 1907 "with the object of interpreting the relationship of art and philosophy to Socialism."<sup>5</sup> Remaining under the umbrella of the Fabian Society, the new group allowed its members to explore and discuss issues which they felt to be important, while avoiding conflict with the parent body. The New Age was more truly the organ of this group than of the society as a whole. The Fabian Arts Group was run along similar lines to the Leeds Arts Club which had been founded in 1903 by Orage and Jackson. It is here that we find Gilman and Ginner visiting Rutter who had joined the club after

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.20.

<sup>2</sup> W. Martin (1967), p.5.

<sup>3</sup> W. Martin (1974), p.7.

<sup>4</sup> Reviewing a Fabian pamphlet, Orage observed that they had: "... a positive genius for the commonplace ... I am convinced that when the rest of the world shall have taken Mark Twain's advice, and 'shuffled off this mortal coil', there will still be the Fabian Society to prepare neat and accurate tables of averages and percentages for the judgement day." (A. Orage (1896).)

<sup>5</sup> W. Martin (1967), p.21. (Holbrook Jackson, quoted in Fabian News, vol.17 (January 1907), p.20.)

being appointed Curator of Leeds City Art Gallery in May 1912.<sup>6</sup> The club's policy of redebating the material contained in The New Age brought them into contact with the theories of Bergson as interpreted by Hulme who was particularly interested in Bergson's theory of 'Creative Evolution' whereby an analogy was drawn between universal creation and mental creativity.<sup>7</sup> Both were said to spring from a similar impulse, an impulse not of construction but of dissociation; in the one case of matter, in the other of ideas, from the flux of raw material.<sup>8</sup> Bergson's view of evolution was opposed to both the 'mechanistic' and 'finalist' conceptions which, in the former, saw evolution as the result of forces exerted upon atoms, and in the latter as the fulfilling of a prearranged plan with man as the ultimate goal. Bergson felt that these views ignored the fact that evolution was a continuous process; regarding it instead as ultimately predictable by an infinite intelligence. Bergson's theory took account of the evolutionary process as a continuous one, explicable only through the belief that it resulted from the dissociation of matter from raw material rather than its gradual construction; separation as opposed to fabrication.

Hulme was able to apply this view of creation and of creativity to modern, particularly contemporary, art by regarding each artistic innovation as the detachment of new methods of expression from the 'inner flux': "... the big artist, the creative artist, the innovator, leaves the level where things are crystallized out into definite shapes, and, diving down into the inner flux, comes back with a new shape which he endeavours to fix."<sup>9</sup> In this sense artistic creativity was, for Hulme, a process of discovery and disentanglement. Once uncovered, new ways of seeing nature were made accessible to other artists through the resulting work of art: "Once the painter has seen it, it becomes easy for all of us to see it. A mould has been made. But the creative activity came in the effort which was necessary to disentangle this particular type of vision from the general haze - the effort, that is, which is necessary to break moulds and make new ones."<sup>10</sup> In this sense Hulme likened artistic creativity to poetic metaphor. The good poet does not utilise dead metaphor but attempts to invent an original symbol to illustrate his own experience.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, artists must discover their own language of line and colour to express their individual experience of life. This was, of course, exactly what was being worked out in the work of such semi-abstract artists of Hulme's circle as Epstein and Lewis who were currently developing their own, highly original language of expression.

Hulme's notion that abstract art held prior claims to greatness as the product of original thought leads us to consider his debt to Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1961). This lay specifically in his belief that the work of the 'abstractionists' marked the end of the Renaissance humanist thinking which had prevailed for the previous four hundred years, and the beginning of an entirely new attitude toward the visible universe. Taking his cue from Worringer, Hulme identified two distinct

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<sup>6</sup> R. Jackson (1975), p.68.

<sup>7</sup> D. Thistlewood (1984), p.28.

<sup>8</sup> T. Hulme (1958), pp.149-50. The following interpretation of Bergson's theories has been made on the basis of material drawn from this source, pp.143-69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.150.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151.

types of art; 'soft' or 'vital', exemplified by Greek and post-Renaissance art and 'angular' or 'geometrical' which he believed was typical of Indian, Egyptian and Byzantine art.<sup>12</sup> They were, Hulme argued, created to satisfy entirely different mental needs and the re-emergence of the latter signified the emergence of a corresponding attitude to the world. Whereas 'vital' art resulted from actual or desired empathy with nature, 'geometrical' art was, according to Hulme, the result of "a feeling of separation in the face of outside nature."<sup>13</sup> Geometric forms, being durable and permanent, represented a refuge from the unpredictability of a volatile world in a state of constant flux. According to Hulme, their use in primitive art resulted from a certain shying away from the arbitrariness and confusion of existence; while in modern art they were directly related to a preoccupation with machinery which expressed itself in both animate and inanimate forms. In the new art the human body was exposed to this geometrical treatment to the same degree as, for example, a building.

Neo-Realism had been formulated within the context of The New Age, and it was between its pages that the debate concerning its implications for modern art was conducted; largely, as we have seen, by Sickert. But before Sickert entered the controversy, Hulme refuted the theory in an article which appeared in The New Age during February 1914.<sup>14</sup> He began by reiterating his belief that 'geometrical' and 'vital' art represented two distinct artistic types and that the re-emergence of the former signified the emergence of a corresponding attitude to the world. Hulme claimed to have arrived at this conclusion after studying Byzantine mosaics: "I was ... impressed by these mosaics, not as something exotic or "charming", but as expressing quite directly an attitude which I to a certain extent agreed with."<sup>15</sup> Through this experience Hulme perceived that the 'geometrical' character inherent in such art was:

... essential to the expression of the intensity they are aiming at. It seemed clear that they differed absolutely from the vital arts because they were pursuing a different intention, and that what we, expecting other qualities from art, look on as dead and lifeless, were the necessary means of expression for this other intention.<sup>16</sup>

Having discovered an empathy with the abstract forms of Byzantine mosaics, Hulme then became aware of the existence of a similar tendency in contemporary art. His position was curiously close to the one in which Fry found himself in 1906 when, having admired the 'constructive design' of the early Italians, he perceived the existence of a similar tendency in the work of Cézanne.<sup>17</sup> Hulme and Fry had even set out with the same premise, namely that the pursuit of beauty was an irrelevant

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<sup>12</sup> Hulme identified these two types of art in a paper entitled Modern Art which he described as "practically an abstract of Worringer's views." (*Ibid.*, p.82.) Hulme heard Worringer lecture during 1913 and had the opportunity to converse with him at the Berlin Aesthetic Congress. (T. Hulme (1914b), p.467).

<sup>13</sup> T. Hulme (1958), p.85.

<sup>14</sup> T. Hulme (1914b).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.467.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> R. Fry (1920), pp.288-9.

consideration in art; a notion which Fry had derived from Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).<sup>18</sup> Hulme was indebted to Worringer who, in 1908 had stated in his seminal work, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*: "... the work of art, as an autonomous organism, stands beside nature on equal terms and, in its deepest and innermost essence, devoid of any connection with it, in so far as by nature is understood the visible surface of things. Natural beauty is on no account to be regarded as a condition of the work of art ..." <sup>19</sup> Fry continued to discuss art in terms which tended to imply that beauty was still the criterion by which to judge a work of art. For Hulme, on the other hand, art was:

... aiming at the satisfaction of a different mental need altogether. When Mr. Roger Fry, therefore, talks as he did lately, of "machinery being as beautiful as a rose" he demonstrates what is already obvious from his work, that he has no conception whatever of this new art, and is in fact a mere verbose sentimentalist.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Hulme, Fry had clearly abandoned the premise that conventional notions of beauty were irrelevant to the appreciation of modern art.

In refuting *Neo-Realism*, Hulme's first quarrel with Ginner was in his condemnation of the new movement as academic being based on a formula ultimately derived from a misconception of the work of Cézanne. Hulme argued that the new art did not use 'formulae' but rather 'abstractions' which differed from the former in being unlike nature through deliberate intent rather than as a result of lack of vitality: "Mr. Ginner's misconception of the whole movement is due to his failure to make this distinction, a failure ultimately arising from the assumption that art must be realistic."<sup>21</sup> Hulme illustrated his own theory concerning the relationship between representation and abstraction by means of a diagram:

R ..... p (r) ..... a (r) ..... A

His explanation of the diagram is worth quoting in full:

I take (R) to represent reality. As one goes from left to right one gets further and further from reality. The first step away being p (r), that is the artist's interpretation of nature. The next step a (r) being an art using abstractions (a), with a certain representative element (r). The element (a) owes its significance to, and is dependent upon the other end (A) of this kind of spectrum - a certain 'tendency to abstraction'. I assert that there are two arts, the one focussed round (R), which is moved by a delight in natural forms, and the other springing from the other end, making use of abstractions as a method of expression.<sup>22</sup>

The fallacy in Ginner's argument was, in Hulme's view, that he would not admit the validity of (A) or even a (r) in their relation to the rest of the diagram. When Ginner said art he meant figurative art, and when confronted with abstract forms he regarded them as the "... decay of mannerism in formulae which comes about when the artist has lost contact with nature, and there is no personal

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.293.

<sup>19</sup> W. Worringer (1953), p.3.

<sup>20</sup> T. Hulme (1958), pp.104-5.

<sup>21</sup> T. Hulme (1914b), p.467.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

first-hand observation."<sup>23</sup> Ginner failed to make the distinction between representative and abstract art which was central to Hulme's theory. Whereas Hulme perceived (R) and (A) as being two entirely distinct types of art out to satisfy quite different mental needs, Ginner saw (A) as being only a corruption of (R): according to Hulme, the fundamental misconception inherent in Ginner's argument. Hulme was equally dismissive of Ginner's allusion to a "decorative formula" which he claimed was again the result of Ginner's refusal to accept the existence of an art based on the creative use of abstract forms: "As long as that is denied, then abstractions must inevitably be either conventionalised mannerisms or decorative. They are neither."<sup>24</sup>

Hulme then went on to devote some considerable space to his thesis that the work of Cézanne revealed a conscious working towards abstraction. Ginner claimed that the Cubists had adopted Cézanne's method of dividing the object into separate simplified planes of colour and turned it into a formula. According to Ginner, Cézanne's statement that "the forms of nature "peuvent se ramener au cône, au cylindre et à la sphère", was simply his mode of expressing his feelings of simplified nature."<sup>25</sup> Hulme believed, on the other hand, that Cézanne's words showed the working of a creative invention which had to some extent turned away from realism and evidenced a tendency towards abstraction:

Though the simplification of planes may appear passive and prosaic, entirely dictated by a desire to reproduce a certain solidity, and from one point of view almost fumbling, yet at the same time one may say that in this treatment of detail, there is an energy at work which, though perhaps unconscious, is none the less an energy which is working towards abstraction and towards a feeling for structure. If one thinks of the details, rather than of the picture as a whole, one need not even say this energy is unconscious.<sup>26</sup>

The notion that Cézanne was consciously working toward the utilisation of completely abstract forms was a radical one which illustrates the gulf which separated the respective theories of Ginner and Hulme at this point.

At the beginning of 1914, Ginner and Hulme apparently differed beyond any possibility of reconciliation; two years were to elapse before Ginner came round to an acceptance of Hulme's view that the use of abstract forms in art was a valid means of expression. Hulme clearly saw it as his mission to convert Gilman and Ginner to his own way of thinking. Reviewing the first London Group exhibition in March 1914, Hulme concentrated on what he termed the "Cubist section", by which he meant the contributions of the group centred around Lewis and the Rebel Art Centre. He did, however, make a passing reference to what he referred to as "the more realist section of the society", singling out in particular paintings by Gilman, Ginner and Gore. He described Ginner's La Vieille Balayeuse, Dieppe, 1913 (collection of Natalie Bevan) [115] as "the best picture of his that I have seen as yet. His peculiar method is here extraordinarily successful in conveying the sordid

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.468.

<sup>25</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.271.

<sup>26</sup> T. Hulme (1914b), p.468.

feeling of the subject."<sup>27</sup> Hulme nevertheless expressed serious reservations about the ultimate value of the work of Gilman and Ginner:

These pictures are filled with contours which ... one can only describe as meaningless. They are full of detail which is entirely accidental in character, and only justified by the fact that these accidents did actually occur in the particular piece of nature which was being painted. One feels a repugnance to such accidents - and desires painting where nothing is accidental, where all the contours are closely knit together into definite structural shapes.<sup>28</sup>

By on the one hand praising, in principle, the work of the Neo-Realists, and on the other offering constructive criticism of it, Hulme clearly hoped to influence the future direction of their work and encourage them to adopt a view very much closer to his own. He evidently perceived the possibility of regeneration in the work of both artists, a perception which may well have been confirmed by discussions with the Neo-Realists at Frith Street and elsewhere. Hulme's denigration of art which in his opinion merely recorded the "accidents" of nature formed the burden of his criticisms of Neo-Realism published in The New Age during the previous month. Focussing on Ginner's frequent reiteration of his belief that an "intimate relation" between the artist and nature was essential to the production of 'great' art and that without this precondition art would descend into 'formula', Hulme put forward an opposite point of view. He argued that it was not the artist's only business to reproduce and interpret nature, "source of all good" (he is satirically quoting Ginner here); instead artists may create their own visual language. In presenting his argument Hulme parodied the "highly coloured and almost ethical" language in which Ginner put his case: "Get further and further away from dear old Mother Nature and see what happens to you: you fall into dead formulae."<sup>29</sup> An important qualification in Hulme's argument, and one which may have surprised Ginner, was his assertion that abstract art relied on continual research into nature just as much as figurative art: "There must be just as much contact with nature in an abstract art as in a realistic one; without that stimulus the artist could produce nothing."<sup>30</sup> This said, however, the artist was then free to select and distort in the interests of expression the random elements found in nature. Hulme caustically observed: "Both realism and abstraction, then, can only be engendered out of nature, but while the first's only idea of living seems to be that of hanging on to its progenitor, the second cuts its umbilical cord."<sup>31</sup>

Hulme's decision to single out for praise at the London Group exhibition Ginner's La Vieille Balayeuse. Dieppe is extremely interesting for it is a canvas which expresses precisely the direction in which the work of both Gilman and Ginner was gradually moving, a tendency which Hulme was anxious to encourage. The legacy of Ginner's work for the Cabaret Theatre Club commission is apparent in the bold colour and the marked outlining of forms. The painting is very close to Ginner's

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<sup>27</sup> T. Hulme (1914c), p.661

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> T. Hulme (1914b), p.469.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

The Sunlit Square, Victoria Station, executed in the same year. Using a moderate application of thick paint, Ginner favoured in both works a colour scheme comprising shades of blue and violet, highlighted with touches of red, yellow and green. Each area of colour is composed of a number of tints applied in small touches which resolve at a distance. Compositionally, the two works are similar, although The Sunlit Square, Victoria Station contains rather more incident. Ginner was clearly influenced by the work of Bevan for in both colour and handling these paintings are indebted to such works as The Cab Yard at Night, 1910 (Brighton, Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums) [116] which was exhibited at the second Camden Town Group exhibition in December 1911 (31) and at Bevan's one-man exhibition at the Carfax Gallery during April 1913.<sup>32</sup> As a friend of Bevan, Ginner was, in any case, no doubt familiar with these works. La Vieille Balayeuse, Dieppe is related, compositionally, to another painting by Bevan entitled A Horse Sale at the Barbican, c.1912-13 (London, Tate Gallery) [117].<sup>33</sup> Both works contain a crowd of figures and demonstrate a marked simplification of forms enclosed in bold outlines. In the context of the clear correspondence between the work of Ginner and Bevan it is interesting to note that Bevan owned La Vieille Balayeuse, Dieppe having acquired it from Ginner in exchange for a painting of his own.<sup>34</sup> Bevan's work was to develop over the next few years into an even more rigorously simplified manner which was to have clear implications for the development of the work of both Ginner and Gilman. Over the next two years, Ginner's work became increasingly formalised as he organised his paintings into areas of bright colour bounded by distinct contours resembling *cloisonisme*. One feels that, in works such as Boscastle Harbour, 1915 (Christie's, 12 June 1987, lot 260) [118], this was not always a successful technique. In this painting Ginner has concentrated on organising details such as the bricks of the harbour wall and the rocky surface of the coastline into dense areas of pattern which are rather forced in terms of their ability to function as both pattern and naturalistic landscape.

The essays by Hulme discussed above formed the second and third of a series of three articles under the heading Modern Art published in The New Age. The first article was a review of the Grafton Group exhibition at the Alpine Club Gallery in which Hulme attempted to "define the characteristics of a new constructive geometric art" which he saw currently emerging.<sup>35</sup> Hulme recognised another strand at work in avant-garde elements of contemporary British art. One faction, forming the bulk of exhibits at the Grafton Group exhibition, he defined as centred around Fry, constituting what he described as "a kind of backwater":

It consists almost uniformly of pallid and chalky blues, yellows and strawberry colours, with a strong family resemblance between all the pictures; in every case a kind of anaemic effect showing no personal or constructive use of colour. The subjects also are significant. One may

<sup>32</sup> London, Carfax Gallery, Robert Bevan, April 1913, cat. no. 12.

<sup>33</sup> The compilers of the Tate Gallery catalogue suggest that this was The Horse Mart which was no. 48 at Bevan's Carfax Gallery exhibition. (M. Chamot, D. Farr and M. Butlin (1964), p.55.)

<sup>34</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol. 1, p.lxx, records that he exchanged La Vieille Balayeuse, Dieppe for an unidentified painting by Bevan entitled Sussex Landscape.

<sup>35</sup> T. Hulme (1914a), p.341.

recognise the whole familiar bag of tricks - the usual Cezanne landscapes, the still lifes, the Eves in their gardens, and the botched Byzantine.<sup>36</sup>

Hulme dismissed Fry's landscapes as having accomplished "the extraordinary feat of adapting the austere Cezanne into something quite fitted for chocolate boxes."<sup>37</sup> Hulme maintained that while a certain degree of archaism was a natural stage in the evolution of a new method of expression, the persistence of a "feeble imitation of archaism" - what he earlier referred to as "botched Byzantine" - was an unnecessary survival once the short term preoccupation with archaic art had fulfilled the function of liberating artists from the constraints of contemporary conventional modes of seeing.<sup>38</sup> Hulme thus condemned Fry's circle for clinging onto and adulterating the art of the past, in particular the Byzantine mosaics which had played so important a role in the evolution of Hulme's own aesthetic theories.<sup>39</sup> What Hulme required and what he, to a certain extent, discovered in the work of artists such as Epstein, Lewis, Nevinson and Wadsworth, was a much more rigorous, more austere art than that of Fry and his circle which he regarded as projecting "a typically Cambridge sort of atmosphere."<sup>40</sup> He described the "character of the dilettante appreciation" of the "kind of dons" whom he imagined bought these pictures: "It is so interesting and clever of the artist to use the archaic in this paradoxical way, so amusing to make Adam stand on his head, and the donkey's ear continue into the hills - gentle little Cambridge jokes."<sup>41</sup>

In supporting the work of the Vorticists and those artists allied to them, Hulme voiced his allegiance to an art which derived its inspiration, its forms and its iconography from geometry and the mechanical imagery of the Machine Age. It was a departure which, for Hulme, signalled the end of a mode of seeing which had prevailed since the Renaissance and the beginning of an entirely new way of looking at the world. Hulme responded to the inherent austerity of these forms, finding in them a rigour which one might regard as the visual equivalent of the belligerent, iconoclastic tone of Blast and of the Futurist Manifestos. It is clear that Hulme discovered and responded to a degree of pungency and vigour in the work of Gilman and Ginner which he found lacking in that of Fry, Grant and others of their circle. His positive response to the Neo-Realists' choice of subject matter is expressed in the terms in which he praised La Vieille Balayeuse, Dieppe for its success in "conveying the sordid feeling of the subject."<sup>42</sup> Hulme's outright condemnation of the work of Fry and his group of like-minded artists does not by any means imply the kind of constructive criticism which he applied to the work of Gilman and Ginner which he evidently hoped ultimately to influence in favour of a more formalist approach. It is unfortunate that Hulme never wrote a projected article

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Hulme (ibid., p.342) described Grant's Adam and Eve, 1913 (destroyed) as containing "elements taken out of the extremely intense and serious Byzantine art [and] used in an entirely meaningless and pointless way."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. This comment is clarified by the fact that Hulme was sent down from Cambridge during his second year for knocking down a policeman. (S. Hynes, Introduction, included in T. Hulme (1955), p.x.)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> T. Hulme (1914c), p.661.

on "the more realist section" of the London Group which would, no doubt, have helped to clarify his attitude toward the work of Gilman and Ginner in particular.<sup>43</sup> Of the two Neo-Realists it is ultimately Gilman who can be seen to have benefitted most, in practice, from Hulme's criticism and the dialogue which took place within the framework of the London Group and the Frith Street *salon* for during 1913, in works such as La Vieille Balayeuse, Dieppe, Ginner had already begun to incorporate the bold, simplified form and the paring away of incidental detail which later became features of Gilman's work.

Gilman's policy with regard to the formation of the London Group during the autumn of 1913 indicates that, although it was not yet evident in his work, he had already begun to envisage an art which would combine the positive elements of both abstract and figurative traditions. In an interview with The Standard which took place shortly after the publication of Neo-Realism he set out the principle underlying the London Group's formation:

There are at present two well-defined sections in English art ... which are known as realists and formulists. They both rise from the revolt against naturalism, and they support one another in the sense that one can learn from the other. These sections are combining in 'The London Group'.<sup>44</sup>

According to the interviewer, Gilman then went on to demonstrate, using a "small tongue-shaped cactus growing in a little red pot on the table", the difference between the two factions which comprised the group:

If I am a formulist - for instance, a cubist (who is only an artist who uses Picasso's formula of simplification) - I shall simply paint a very obviously tongue-shaped object with a sort of elliptic circle underneath it to represent the top of the pot, and quite possibly I shall make the cactus bright red. That is to say, I am rendering so much of it as consists of planes and curves that are really there in it but it does not matter to me whether I paint it green and vegetable-like at all. On the other hand, if I am a realist I want the object to remain a cactus after I have painted it.<sup>45</sup>

The implied comment that a cactus painted by a 'formulist' would not only no longer outwardly resemble a cactus but would ultimately, unlike its equivalent 'realist' conception, no longer be a cactus, indicates a misapprehension on the part of Gilman of the aims of the painters under discussion. While his support of the inclusion of so-called 'formulists' in the London Group arose not merely from an impulse toward democracy but from a positive appreciation of their work, it is clear that Gilman's understanding of the aims of these artists was at this stage, to say the least, imperfect. Nevertheless, he was willing to find out more, stressing that the inclusion of both factions in the London Group provided an opportunity for each to learn from the other. For his part Hulme, as champion of what might loosely be termed the Lewis-Epstein faction, was more than willing to play his part in this learning process. Indeed, he performed a key role in drawing together those artists who comprised the London Group's membership, for it was from Hulme's Frith Street *salon* that

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Anon., "Artists in Revolt. Formation of "The London Group"", The Standard (3 February 1914), p.10.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Gilman apparently recruited members who did not already belong to the Fitzroy Street and Camden Town Groups. While discussions as to the formation of the group and the actual decision-making process centred around Fitzroy Street, it was from Hulme's circle that Gilman apparently recruited outside members. On Tuesday evenings Hulme presided over the large collection of literary, artistic and political figures who frequented Mrs Ethel Kibblewhite's *salon* at 67 Frith Street, Soho Square. Nevinson, who was to become Secretary of the London Group after Manson's resignation, recalled the diverse band who attended:

There were journalists, writers, poets, painters, politicians of all sorts, from Conservatives to New Age Socialists, Fabians, Irish yaps, American bums, and labour Leaders such as Cook and Larkin. From this atmosphere originated the London Group. Gilman was the motive force. Slowly but surely with the help of Hulme he gathered all the warring elements of Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, Neo-Primitives, Vorticists, Cubists, and Futurists.<sup>46</sup>

Further exchange of views no doubt took place at Fitzroy Street where Hulme attended 'at homes'.<sup>47</sup> In addition, John recalled that Gilman and Gore were frequent visitors to the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel, a favourite haunt of Lewis's circle.<sup>48</sup>

The year 1915 saw a decisive change in Gilman's painting technique which may be described as taking on a much broader, flatter quality. To a large extent, his characteristic vocabulary of small dabs and touches was replaced by a more expansive handling and a tendency towards heavy outlining of forms. This is nowhere more apparent than in a small oil painting entitled The Lane, 1915 (Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery) [119], executed while staying with Hubert Wellington (1879-1967) at Walton-on-the-Hill near Stafford.<sup>49</sup> The flatly defined structure of the building and the block-like treatment of tree foliage and grass represent a new departure in Gilman's work and one which was to persist, albeit in a somewhat modified form, throughout 1915 and 1916. Leeds Market, 1915 (London, Tate Gallery) has been likened to Ginner's work, largely, as Rutter observed, for the complexity of forms it contains: "The subject, in which the great glass roof of the market is a prominent feature, is in the nature of a Ginner subject, and his influence peeps out rather in the delicate network of the design than in the exquisite shimmering colour which is sheer Gilman, and Gilman at his highest."<sup>50</sup> Rutter may have been thinking of Ginner's Looms, 1915 (present location unknown) [120], executed on the same trip to Leeds with Gilman, an extremely complex drawing depicting a great quantity of machinery rendered in minute detail.<sup>51</sup>

Although the piled-up fruit and intricate roof structure of Leeds Market did not lend themselves to the broad simplification of form evident in The Lane, Gilman adhered to the use of

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<sup>46</sup> C. Nevinson (1937), p.63.

<sup>47</sup> A. Jones (1960), p.98.

<sup>48</sup> A. John (1952), p.136.

<sup>49</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.72.

<sup>50</sup> F. Rutter (1922), p.134.

<sup>51</sup> Looms was reproduced in Art and Letters, vol.1 (July 1917), p.11.

heavy contours reminiscent of the work of Bevan and Ginner. The Lane is very close to many of Bevan's landscapes and street scenes of this period such as Dunn's Cottage, 1915 (Leeds City Art Gallery) [121] or the extremely stylised The Beech Tree, 1915 (Christie's, 6 March 1987, lot 157) [122] in which the leaves of the trees are reduced to block-like geometrical structures. The geometrical stylisation of landscape features such as trees and hedges evident in The Lane and The Beech Tree can be traced back to Gore's series of Letchworth landscapes in which even the insubstantial forms of clouds were subjected to this rigid treatment. Bennington has drawn a parallel between Bevan's Dunn's Cottage and Gore's Croft's Lane, Letchworth, pointing out that Bevan actually owned this painting.<sup>52</sup> The total integration of buildings and landscape which resulted from a tendency to apply straight lines to natural forms is also a feature of The Lane.

The stylistic departures which Gilman explored in his work at Leeds and Staffordshire during 1915 are reminiscent of the revolution in Gore's painting method effected at Letchworth three years earlier. For this reason it is tempting to date The Orchard (Hull University Art Collection) [123] to 1915 instead of 1916 which is the date usually ascribed to it.<sup>53</sup> It is generally thought to be one of the series of paintings of trees which Gilman executed while staying with Wellington at an inn called The Bell, at Sapperton in Gloucestershire during the summer of 1916.<sup>54</sup> But neither in composition, colour or technique does The Orchard relate to this series. Generally known as the 'Beechwood' paintings, the woodland scenes which Gilman painted in Gloucestershire are very close to the paintings of trees in Richmond Park which Gore executed shortly before his death in March 1914. In Gilman's Beechwood, Gloucestershire, 1916 (York City Art Gallery) [124] colour is muted, greens and browns with touches of ochre and blue. Apart from the use of thicker paint, the handling is similar to Gore's Richmond Park, March, 1914 (London, Anthony d'Offay Gallery) [125]. Two paintings in this series, both entitled Beech Wood (Sotheby's, 23 May 1984, lot 91 [126] and 22 July 1987, lot 148, respectively), are executed using much brighter colour but their extremely thick paint surface sets them apart from The Orchard which, although executed in vivid shades of blue, green and pink, is much more thinly painted. The tree which dominates the composition has been reduced to a series of large areas of flat colour with almost no attempt at modelling. All the forms are heavily outlined, the tree trunks rendered in blue and bright pink. The extremely experimental, semi-abstract nature of this canvas would seem to place it with The Lane in 1915. The comparison with Gore is irresistible: like Gore at Letchworth in 1912, Gilman appears to have gone through an intensely experimental phase which he later modified. The earliest evidence of the interest in paring away incidental detail which characterises Gilman's work from 1915 onwards, occurs in The Eating House, c.1913-14 (Sheffield City Art Gallery) [127].<sup>55</sup> Here Gilman has combined brilliant colour with a bold simplification of both form and composition which is evident if one compares this work

<sup>52</sup> J. Bennington (1984), p.18.

<sup>53</sup> M. Easton (1967), p.14, suggests a date of 1916 for this painting.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> A slightly smaller version of this painting is in the collection of Richard Burrows. Both were shown at the exhibition of work by Gilman and Ginner at the Goupil Gallery during April and May 1914 (cat. nos. 5 and 37).

to another unfinished version of the subject, An Eating House, c.1913-14, in the collection of the artist's family [128], a much busier composition with a wider viewpoint. In the Sheffield painting, Gilman has resisted the temptation to include tabletop clutter, even faces. Instead he has focussed on the booths at the back of the room, only the crowns of the diners' cloth caps, bent over the tables, visible above the high backs. The composition is relentlessly formalised into a series of strong horizontals and verticals. The vivid scarlet and orange back of the nearest booth forms a daringly simplified area which is reminiscent of the carpeted aisle in Gore's Balcony at the Alhambra or the curving ballustrade in Gauguin's and Connoisseurs at the Stafford Gallery. In all these works, architectural features or fittings have been transformed into areas of flat pattern and colour.

Gilman's move towards an increasingly formalised image is evident in a series of portraits executed during 1915 and 1916. Like the 1914 portraits, the sitters are almost exclusively female and are unified by Gilman's tendency to place them in similar poses within a limited range of interiors. Unlike the 1914 portraits, however, these later works reveal a much more hard-edged technique and a tendency toward slightly thinner, flatter areas of paint. In this context it is useful to compare two undated portraits, both entitled Ruth Doggett, one in a private collection [129], the other in the collection of the artist's family [130].<sup>56</sup> Stylistic evidence would suggest that the former was painted first, probably during 1914, for it is close in style to the group of portraits which includes The Coral Necklace.<sup>57</sup> The portrait in the collection of the artist's family is quite different. Probably painted during 1915, the figure is depicted in a more informal pose, standing with her elbow leaning on the back of a chair. The application of the paint is much thinner without the excessive 'ridging' of the earlier portraits. The sitter's figure is firmly outlined, the straight lines of her fashionably bobbed hair contributing to the much more formal design of the picture. The fussy touch of the earlier portraits is gone, to be replaced by a much broader handling and a close attention to the structure of forms within the picture rather than surface texture.

Close in technique is Portrait of A Lady, 1915-16 (Manchester City Art Gallery) [131].<sup>58</sup> The seated figure is placed against the same background of turquoise and rose-pink wallpaper which frames Miss Doggett, apparently occupying an area at the opposite end of the sideboard against which she is placed. Gilman again employed the device of outlining the figure and the treatment of

<sup>56</sup> Ruth Doggett (exh.1915-38), a student of Gilman at the Westminster Technical Institute, exhibited at the AAA and in 1920 became a member of the London Group.

<sup>57</sup> The portrait in a private collection has many affinities with Mrs Victor Sly, of 1914. The wallpaper is the same in both paintings, indicating that both sitters are placed in the same room, seated before the same door. Both are very thickly painted, the pigment rising up in ridges which catch the light, creating the scintillating effect which was a feature of Gilman's portraits during this period. Although the portrait format is different - Ruth Doggett is shown full length while the portrait of Mrs Sly is half length - their pose is almost identical. Both are seated facing to their left with hands folded in their laps, left hand over right hand, elbows resting on the arms of the chair.

<sup>58</sup> This portrait exists in another, very similar version, Portrait of Miss Fletcher, 1916 (private collection). According to John Nash (1893-1977), a Miss Fletcher attended the 'at homes' of the Cuberland Market Group: "I heard from a girl called Fletcher, who comes sometimes to Cumbers and w. whome (sic) in company w. Meyer, Gilman and others I was having tea last Sunday." (Undated, unpublished letter from J. Nash to Dora Carrington (1893-1932). Collection of Tate Gallery Archive).

the paint surface is similar but there are important features which would support a date later than the portrait of Ruth Doggett. While the figure of Ruth Doggett was set against a large area of wallpaper, in Portrait of A Lady Gilman has reduced the wallpaper to a small section to the right of the sitter's head. The rest of the background is composed of part of a door, the edge of a sideboard on which sits a pile of books, and a small section of dado. The resulting composition is extremely successful, creating a much more ordered, more formal effect. There is nothing haphazard or accidental in the design of the picture, each object contributing to the unity of the composition.

The culmination of the portraits of this period, and indeed of Gilman's mature painting style, is the portrait of his Maple Street landlady, Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table.<sup>59</sup> It is Gilman's seminal work, at once the most articulate of his many portraits and the culmination of his attempts throughout 1915 and 1916 to refine his painting method. In a sense, Portrait of A Lady can be seen as a rehearsal for this painting. Gilman adhered to his manner of outlining forms; the cups and saucers on the table and the figure of Mrs Mounter herself are all enclosed by a heavy, dark contour. The lavish *impasto* is matched by the dazzling colour, from the vivid turquoise of the wallpaper glimpsed between the partly open double doors, with their glowing orange panels outlined in lavender, to the gleaming teapot and lustre jug in the foreground. The figure of Mrs Mounter herself is no exception, the rich plummy tones of her dress setting off the brilliant hues of her face, framed by a bright orange headscarf. It may have been Ginner, as well as Sickert, who encouraged Gilman to experiment with the placing of his sitters against backgrounds of garish wallpapers. As early as 1913, Ginner painted Annabel and My Wallpaper in which, as the title suggests, Ginner's wallpaper played a dominant role. It was not until 1916, with Portrait of A Lady, that Gilman began to exploit this motif as a purely decorative device. One is forcibly reminded of the close attention to design and pattern-making which became so much a feature of Gore's work. There is also something of the confrontational style of much of Van Gogh's portraiture, especially those of the Arles period.<sup>60</sup> A more obviously direct source for the portrait, as Causey and Thomson point out, is Cézanne's Femme à la Cafetière, c. 1890-4 (Paris, Louvre) [132] which Gilman would have seen in the Pellerin

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<sup>59</sup> There is another version of this portrait in the collection of the Tate Gallery, London. Somewhat smaller than the Liverpool picture, it lacks the chair placed to the right of the figure. The artist's widow told the compilers of the Tate Gallery catalogue that the Tate painting and a drawing in the collection of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, which relates to it, were executed first. (M. Chamot, D. Farr and M. Butlin (1964), vol.1, p.236). A squared drawing, including the chair, in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford corresponds closely to the Liverpool painting. Gilman exhibited two works, both entitled Mrs Mounter, at the London Group exhibition in November 1916. Number 54 was priced at £5 while number 109 was £35. It is clear, therefore, that number 54 was a drawing and R. A. Bevan believed it to be the Ashmolean drawing. (R. Bevan (1946), p.50). If this and the evidence of Mrs Gilman that the Tate portrait was done first are correct, we may assume that the Tate portrait was number 109 at the London Group exhibition in November 1916, and therefore painted in 1916. Allowing that Gilman would not have exhibited a squared drawing, we may take it that the Oxford drawing was squared either late in 1916 or early 1917 and transferred to canvas in time to be shown at the London Group exhibition in April 1917 (cat. no.41). This is based on the premise that Gilman would not have shown the same portrait at consecutive London Group exhibitions.

<sup>60</sup> A. Causey and R. Thomson (1981), p.17.

Collection when he visited Paris in 1910/11.<sup>61</sup> Like Mrs Mounter, she is seated before double doors, there is even a strip of floral wallpaper to the left of the figure. Instead of the decidedly French *cafetière*, Mrs Mounter presides over a very large, very English teapot.

In 1917 Ginner voiced his opinion that the strong sense of design evident in the work of British artists influenced by Cubism might be allied to a 'realist' outlook "to produce eventually some great National Art."<sup>62</sup> While Ginner apprehended this possibility theoretically, Gilman had already realised such a moment, practically, in his own art. In this sense he was following the example of Gore whom Ginner described as " ... a fine example of a broadminded artist who was ready to learn whatever he could from the various modern schools."<sup>63</sup> In a painting such as Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table, Gilman combined a strong sense of design, evident in composition, colour and form, with an insistent attachment to Realism, indicated by the obvious attempt to describe a personality and the emphasis on the details of the sitter's surroundings. It is a painting which stands to Gilman's career much as Gore's Letchworth landscapes stand to his. In both cases, deeply held convictions concerning art's function to express life in realistic terms were readdressed and reinforced through a realisation of the importance of a coherent compositional framework and the admissibility of a certain degree of formal simplification, even distortion. This tendency is also evident in both artists' attitudes to colour. The blazing red fields and geometrical simplification of form evident in Gore's The Icknield Way find their equivalent in the vivid hues of Mrs Mounter's face and the severe contours of her figure.

The changes evident in Gilman's art from 1915 onwards must have been prompted in part by his association with some of the more radical elements in the London Group. Having perceived the possibility of a regeneration of British art through co-operative group endeavour, Gilman began to reap the benefits in his own art. Through his attendance at Hulme's Frith Street *salon* and his Presidency of the London Group, Gilman came to associate more and more with the artists who were to have a decisive effect on his work. Adeney, Bomberg, Hamilton, Lewis and Wadsworth were all working in a rigid, geometrical manner which can be traced back to Cubist innovations in Paris and ultimately to the work of Cézanne. Gilman's interest in, and admiration for, this type of art was expressed in his determination to admit its exponents to the London Group in the face of Sickert's opposition.

While Sickert's criticisms had the effect of driving Gilman further in the opposite direction, Hulme apparently exerted a much more positive influence. Gilman's increasing preference for art which expressed a certain tendency toward abstract or geometrical forms was indicated not only by his encouragement of artists such as Epstein and Lewis in the London Group, but also in his decision to invite Edward McKnight Kauffer (1891-1954) and Nevinson to join the Cumberland Market Group which he formed with Ginner and Bevan during 1914. As we have seen, Gilman's own art was moving in a similar direction in paintings such as Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table. Hulme's

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>62</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.19.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.20.

arguments in favour of abstract art were persuasive and one can well imagine the debate continuing from the pages of The New Age to Mrs Kibblewhite's house in Frith Street. Without departing from his standards of Realism, Gilman began to perceive the possibilities for a much more formal, more structured art inherent in natural forms. Gilman's contribution to the AAA exhibition in 1912, Thou Shalt Not Put A Blue Line Round Thy Mother, had signified a half-humorous rejection of the particular idiosyncrasy of Cézanne by which his emulators chose to signify their allegiance and which also applied to the followers of Gauguin and Matisse. By 1915, however, Gilman had begun to apply contour to his own figures as a means of adding a degree of solidity and integrating them with his increasingly formalised interior settings, as in the portrait of Miss Doggett in the collection of the artist's family. It is possible to trace, in the progress of Gilman's work during this period, his self-conscious exploration and ultimate acceptance of Hulme's views. His habit of making two versions of the same subject is instructive in this context as in Mrs Mounter at the Breakfast Table, the two versions of which are identical apart from their size and the presence of a ladder-back chair placed to the right of the figure in the Liverpool painting. Gilman's preoccupation with the role of the chair, part of its back visible only, is entirely consistent with the attention to minute compositional detail which increasingly characterised his work. The presence or absence of the chair was in this case sufficient to alter Gilman's perception of the delicate balance of the composition. Interior, 1917-18 (London, British Council) [133] reveals a similarly taut composition, dominated by the large canopied bed on which Gilman's wife is seated. Detail is confined to the bottom right corner, yet the resulting composition is unified and extremely successful. The *repoussoir* curve of the bed fulfils an essentially decorative role, again reminiscent of Gore's exploitation of such features as the balustrade in Gauguins and Connoisseurs at the Stafford Gallery. Similar preoccupations may be traced in the development from image to canvas of Mother and Child, 1918 (Auckland City Art Gallery) [134]. A squared drawing in the same collection indicates that Gilman had originally planned to include an area of floral wallpaper behind the sitter. His decision to omit this detail in the final composition and the reduction of the sitter's striped skirt to an area of flat pattern are consistent with his progress toward a tighter, more controlled image. It also suggests that he had embraced Hulme's criticism of a tendency to include elements within a particular scene simply because they were there. By editing his subjects, selecting certain elements and suppressing others, Gilman was exercising a much larger degree of control over his own compositions.

The return to landscape represented by Halifax Harbour at Sunset, 1918 (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada) [135] and the restraints imposed by the Canadian War Memorials committee which commissioned it, disrupted the even progression towards a more formal handling which had been asserting itself in Gilman's work since 1914. In this context, a small watercolour, Mrs Mounter (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) [136], dated 1 December 1918, may be seen as a return to the concerns which had preoccupied him prior to the Canadian commission. Watercolour was an unusual medium for Gilman and one in which he explored a very personal handling. The paint is applied in spots or dabs rather than in the more conventional watercolour technique of thin colour

washes. It was a method which related to his earlier use of oil paint and Gilman may have been attempting through the medium of watercolour to arrive at some kind of synthesis between the thick *impasto* of his earlier work and the much flatter quality of the paint in Interior. Quite apart from technical considerations is the extraordinary quality of the image. Mrs Mounter has been transformed from the homely body of the earlier portraits to a brooding, slightly sinister figure. Clad in a severe overall and lit from above by a shaft of light from a high window or skylight, she stands four-square amid the studio clutter of furniture, frames and brushes. The pyramidal contours of her figure are indicated by broad, slashing strokes of black ink. One hand is clenched against her cheek, the other, barely modelled, rests like a flipper against her body. The uncompromising geometry of the picture has led Watney to speculate that Gilman may have been developing "a kind of post-Cubist decorative Expressionism along the lines of Kirchner."<sup>64</sup> It is a fascinating but ultimately academic line of enquiry for Mrs Mounter was to be one of Gilman's last works; he died just over two months later. Hall related the circumstances of Gilman's death:

A virulent epidemic of influenza, which eventually killed more people than had perished in the Great War, was spreading through Europe. Ginner caught it, and Gilman returning to Maple Street to nurse him, caught it too. They both developed pneumonia of which Gilman died on February the 12th, the day after his forty-third birthday.<sup>65</sup>

Both professionally and personally, it was a severe blow for Ginner whose mother died the following day.<sup>66</sup> Artistic isolation might have followed had Ginner not developed closer ties with Wadsworth with whom he contemplated opening a school during 1920. The correspondence between the work of Ginner and Wadsworth, which was to prove significant for both, will be discussed in the following chapter.

The influence of Lewis on the work of the Neo-Realists during this period must not be underestimated for, while admiring their work, he sought to interest the Neo-Realists in a rather different interpretation of the term 'realism' as applied to art. Reviewing the London Group exhibition of March 1915, Lewis wrote:

Among the Camden Town Group, I admire many qualities in Mr. Gilman's and Mr. Ginner's paintings. I still hope to find myself on common ground with these two painters one of these days. Given the limitations of their system of work, as I consider it, they yet stand out so notably among their co-sectionists, that I am optimistic as to this virtue soon changing their kind too.<sup>67</sup>

Whereas Ginner had been at pains to distinguish Neo-Realism from 'naturalism', Lewis persisted in finding that the two were synonymous and that neither had anything to do with Realism as he understood the term. His premise is worth quoting in full:

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<sup>64</sup> S. Watney (1980), p.131.

<sup>65</sup> F. Hall (1965), pp.19-20. After his second marriage in 1917, Gilman lived in Chelsea briefly before moving to Hampstead. Ginner took over his rooms at Maple Street.

<sup>66</sup> Records at Somerset House show that Lydia Adeliné Best died on 13 February 1919.

<sup>67</sup> W. Lewis (1915), p.78.

There seems to be a certain confusion in the minds of some of my friends on the Camden side of London as to the meaning of REALIST. They seem to read into REALIST the attributes of the word NATURALIST: for on various occasions they have called themselves NEO-REALISTS. By REALIST they evidently mean a man who scientifically registers the objects met in everyday life. But NATURALIST is the word for this particular gentleman. Reality is not the result of scientific registration, but rather NATURE. Mr. Wadsworth, in his painting of BLACKPOOL is purely "realistic". That is the REALITY, the essential truth, of a noisy, garish sea-side. A painting of Blackpool by a Camden Town Artist would be a corner of the beach much as seen by the Camera. This would only be a symbol or trophy of the scene with the crudity of Time added to the spatial poorness of the Camera.<sup>68</sup>

For Lewis, Realism was not achieved by a more or less literal record of the accidental relations of objects found in nature or in life. Instead, he advocated a greater degree of intervention on the part of the artist in order to create a more convincing reality. In fact he was making precisely the point that Hulme had made when he criticised the work of Gilman and Ginner at the London Group exhibition during the previous year. Although the painting which Lewis singled out for praise, Wadsworth's Blackpool, c.1915 [137], is now lost, a contemporary photograph shows an austere, highly schematised composition built up entirely of straight lines, totally abstract in appearance if not in conception. It is interesting that despite the uncompromising geometry of its forms, Lewis insisted on treating the painting as though it were an instantly recognisable scene in a seaside town. In fact, to the casual observer without the aid of a title, its subject is quite inscrutable: "Its theme is that of five variegated cliffs. The striped awnings of Cafés and shops, the stripes of bathing tents, the stripes of bathing machines, of toy trumpets, of dresses, are marshalled into a dense essence of the scene."<sup>69</sup> Not for Lewis the austerity of Bell's and Fry's dicta on 'pure' art and 'Significant Form'. Like Gilman and Ginner, Lewis stood by the primary role of subject matter in a work of art. As Gilman's work progressed throughout 1915 and 1916 toward simplified form and a more rigid compositional structure, the difference between his art and that of Lewis became one of degree rather than of substance. Gilman never attempted the rigid geometry which was Wadsworth's favoured means of expression during this period and Lewis recognised the failure of his hopes for the eventual direction of Gilman's art when he wrote after Gilman's death: "My own interests in painting lie in different channels to those navigated by Gilman."<sup>70</sup> Yet his decision to single out for praise the portraits of Mrs Mounter and the drawings associated with them, indicates a recognition that Gilman had gone some way in the direction which Lewis had mapped out for him.<sup>71</sup>

This chapter has traced the Neo-Realists' progression towards the production of much more formalised, more controlled images. This is evident in their attention to individual forms within each picture as well as to the structure of the composition as a whole as they adopted a much more interventionist approach to the process of picture-making. Hulme's criticism of their work as

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>70</sup> W. Lewis and L. Fergusson (1919), p.15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

reproducing the 'accidental' arrangements found in nature can be seen to have found its mark. His spirited defence of the use of abstract forms in art combined with the Neo-Realists' discussion and experience of such work through contacts in the London Group, exercised a salutary influence on their work. It is a shift which is evident in the reformulation of the theory of Neo-Realism itself which, as described in Ginner's 1917 article, Modern Painting and Teaching, underwent significant modification in order to incorporate the notion that abstract and figurative tendencies in modern British art could react positively on each other. Having explored the impact of the strong design elements of abstract and semi-abstract art on the individual artistic consciousness of both Gilman and Ginner, the following chapter will discuss the ways in which the Neo-Realists sought to impose this perception on the work of their fellow artists in an effort to influence the future development of the national school.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

"In this process of Art finding itself there are many movements which appear opposed to one another and yet might be co-ordinated to produce eventually some great national Art."<sup>1</sup>

As President of the London Group and one of the principal agents in its formation, Gilman had, to some extent at least, achieved his stated intention of drawing together what he - and we with hindsight - regarded as some of the most vital and significant artists then working in England. True, by the end of 1914 there were still important absentees, a fact due partly to the group's rigorous election procedure and partly to the deep schisms, mostly of a personal rather than artistic nature, which continued to disunite various factions. Neither Bell, Gertler or Grant were members of the London Group and, of course, neither was Sickert.<sup>2</sup> Yet the group's very existence betokened a signal achievement for while it occupied a wider perspective than the old Camden Town Group or the existing Grafton Group, it was, unlike the attenuated Friday Club or the all-inclusive AAA, exclusive enough to present a viable alternative to the NEAC. It became increasingly clear, however, that the London Group, functioning merely as an exhibiting society, could not fulfil all the needs of all its members. Evidently, in view of the group-forming which continued to animate the London art scene, the London Group could only meet one aspect of members' requirements; namely, to provide a forum in which they could exhibit and sell their work. By its very nature it could never hope to represent any consensus view on art. The needs of individual group members were expressed throughout 1914 in a series of group-formings and exhibitions suggesting that the London Group, far from being a homogenous society of artists with shared aims, was in reality an umbrella organisation under which separate artistic tendencies of a more or less 'modern' stamp could function. In March Lewis established the Rebel Art Centre at 38, Great Ormond Street. Conceived as a rival organisation to Fry's Omega Workshops, this coterie included such London Group members as Bomberg, Frederick Etchells, Gaudier-Brzeska, Hamilton, Nevinson and Wadsworth. During April and May, Gilman and Ginner proclaimed their independence with their Neo-Realist exhibition at the Goupil Gallery, while in June, Harold Squire (exh.1911-27) joined Manson and Pissarro, who had of course resigned from the London Group, for an exhibition at the Carfax Gallery.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.19.

<sup>2</sup> In February 1915 Wadsworth, in his capacity as group Secretary, wrote to Gertler inviting him to join the London Group. (J. Woodeson (1972), p.169.) He was represented at the group's exhibition in November that year. Bell and Grant finally joined in 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Manson's association with Pissarro was to lead to the formation, in December 1919, of the Monarro Group. Named after Monet and Camille Pissarro, this was a society of British and European artists whose work was supposedly indebted, at least in part, to that of the two French Impressionists. It is clear that Manson and Pissarro intended that their group, exhibiting at the same venue, would, to some extent, 'cock a snook' at the London Group. In an unpublished letter to Pissarro dated 11 January 1917, Manson wrote: "The success of our group would make the Sickertians, Gilmaniacs & the neurotics rather sick!" (Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). Ginner exhibited as a non-member at the group's second exhibition at the Goupil Gallery during March 1921 (cat. nos. 39 and 44).

At the very least the London Group provided a refuge for artists of more or less radical inclinations who had in any way fallen victim to reactionary forces from within the NEAC and other organisations. It was a rallying point in the face of conservative criticism and an exhibiting forum for artists whose work was frequently unacceptable elsewhere. At best, the group opened up dialogue between the various strands of contemporary art. Yet in spite of the far-seeing rhetoric which characterised Gilman's interview with The Standard early in 1914, it is curiously unsurprising to find Bevan, Gilman and Ginner reverting, with the formation of the Cumberland Market Group, to the old model of a small, closely knit society of artists. The London Group fulfilled an important function for them but they evidently missed the character of the old Fitzroy Street 'at homes'. The Cumberland Market Group clearly represented a return to a more homogenous, rather more 'domestic' society. When Rutter announced the group's formation in The Sunday Times he evidently had the Fitzroy Street model very much in mind, implying that the new society might, in some sense, replace the old Fitzroy Street meetings:

Bohemianism in London was sadly impoverished at the beginning of last year when the studio at 19, Fitzroy Street, was given up and the weekly Saturday shows were finally abandoned. Since it was first started by Mr. Walter Sickert this studio had become a feature of the art life of London, and there had gradually grown around him a group of young artists of great originality and distinction. Many of my readers will be interested to hear that three members of this Fitzroy Street (or Camden Town) group have lately set up a studio of their own at 49, Cumberland Market, N.W., where they are at home to all and sundry on Saturday afternoons from three to six.<sup>4</sup>

The notion of an informal Saturday afternoon studio gathering certainly recalled the Fitzroy Street meetings and it is clear that, like the Fitzroy Street Group meetings, those of the Cumberland Market Group were attended by a diverse company which spanned divisions among the various artistic coteries. In two separate letters to Carrington, John Nash referred to visits by both Clive Bell and Duncan Grant.<sup>5</sup> On a more corporeal level, the new group even followed the Fitzroy Street practice of doling out strong tea and slab cake to all comers.<sup>6</sup> Established in the 1820s for the sale of hay and straw, Cumberland Market, lying less than half a mile to the north of Fitzroy Street, was well within the old Camden Town stamping ground. Bevan had taken the studio at number 49 during 1914 in order to observe and paint, from his first floor window, the horses which assembled with their laden

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<sup>4</sup> F. Rutter (1915a). It is not known exactly when the studio at Fitzroy Street was given up and Rutter's article provides an interesting clue. Sickert was listed in the rate books as the tenant of number 19 in 1907. From 1908-11 Kelly's Directory lists Sickert and a surgical bootmaker named Ackrell at this address. In 1912 Ackrell's name alone survives. (M. Easton (1967), p.60.) In 1944, in a letter to The Times, Manson stated: "The studio at 19, Fitzroy Street rented by some members of the group was not Sickert's - it was used solely for the exhibition of their pictures." (J. Manson (1944).) This explains why the group was able to continue at this address after Sickert's resignation which took place after the first London Group exhibition in March 1914. The last meeting attended by Manson took place on 7 March 1914. (M. Easton (1967), p.61.) The evidence of Rutter's article indicates that the studio was given up very shortly after.

<sup>5</sup> Undated, unpublished letters from J. Nash to D. Carrington, Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>6</sup> R. A. Bevan (1965), p.18.

carts in the wide cobbled square.<sup>7</sup> The exact date of the new group's formation is not known but since Rutter's article, published on 24 January, states that the three artists "have lately set up a studio of their own", we can assume that the group was launched either late in 1914 or early January 1915. As a friend of all three artists, Rutter was no doubt concerned to publicise their venture and his article was clearly intended as a public intimation of the Cumberland Market Group meetings. At this stage the group had only three members and was evidently perceived as an alliance for the promotion of Neo-Realism. Rutter observed that at Cumberland Market: "... those who are interested in the progress of neo-realism may see the latest paintings of Mr. R. P. Bevan, Mr. Harold Gilman, and Mr. Charles Ginner."<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, Rutter's article was entitled The Neo-Realists and referred to "neo-realism, as practised by Mr. Bevan, Mr. Gilman, and Mr. Ginner."<sup>9</sup> With Neo-Realism coming under a hail of criticism in the Press from both Hulme and Sickert, the decision to form the Cumberland Market Group arose from an instinct of self-preservation and the need for Gilman and Ginner to publicise and promote their own particular type of art. In Bevan, Neo-Realism may be said to have acquired its first disciple. By the time the group's first and only exhibition opened in April 1915 it had recruited another in the person of John Nash. Nash had had no formal art training and it was largely due to the influence of his older brother, Paul Nash (1889-1946), who had attended the Slade, that he took up a career as an artist.<sup>10</sup> The two brothers held a joint exhibition in November 1913 which was remarkably successful in view of the fact that it was the first public showing of John Nash's work.<sup>11</sup> His brother was able to report that he had sold four drawings while John had sold seven.<sup>12</sup> Even more important than sales were the contacts which the exhibition brought them. Apart from a number of influential buyers, visitors to the show included Fry, Gore, Rothenstein and Sickert. Gore invited both artists to send work to the Brighton exhibition, Camden Town Group and Others.<sup>13</sup> They were also invited to join the Friday Club, probably by Fry. Paul Nash had already exhibited with the NEAC in the summer of 1913 and, following the success of their joint exhibition, both brothers were included in the club's winter exhibition. It was a glorious debut for two young artists: they were indeed, as Paul Nash wrote after the success of their joint exhibition, "quite the rising young men."<sup>14</sup>

The brothers each sent six works to the Brighton exhibition and as a result both were invited to stand for election to the London Group on 3 January 1914.<sup>15</sup> Only John Nash attracted enough

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<sup>7</sup> Bevan painted many pictures of the view over Cumberland Market from his studio window. Cumberland Market, North Side, 1914 (Southampton City Art Gallery) is a typical example.

<sup>8</sup> F. Rutter (1915a).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> J. Rothenstein (1983), p.12.

<sup>11</sup> London, Dorien Leigh Gallery, Drawings by Paul and John Nash, November 1913.

<sup>12</sup> C. Abbot and A. Bertram (1955), p.67. Letter from P. Nash to Gordon Bottomley, c.mid-November 1913.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.68. Letter from P. Nash to Gordon Bottomley, dated 27 December 1913.

<sup>15</sup> W. Baron (1979), p.61.

votes and was represented by four works at the group's first exhibition. His success may have been due to the influence of Gilman who, along with Bevan and Ginner, had also visited the brothers' exhibition.<sup>16</sup> Just over a year later, the admiration of these three for John Nash's work remained intact and they invited him to exhibit with the Cumberland Market Group. When Gilman and Ginner visited the Nash brothers' exhibition in November 1913 Ginner had probably already written Neo-Realism. They must have been struck by the remarkable coincidence between John Nash's work and their own views on art. Here was a young artist without any formal training who appeared, as it were, fully fledged; a recognisably 'modern' artist without apparent recourse to the 'formulae' of the so-called 'Post-Impressionists'. Nash missed the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, which took place when he was only seventeen, and in his own words, "did not dream of visiting the second which was held while I was constantly in London."<sup>17</sup> Concentrating on landscape subjects, Nash produced works which expressed his own highly personal vision of nature. It would be difficult to point to any artist whose work directly influenced him during these early years unless, perhaps, Ginner himself whose landscapes painted at Clayhidon during the summers of 1912-14 may have had some bearing on Nash's work. In 1913, there were no overt allusions in his art to the work of the 'Post-Impressionists'.

Reference to such artists too often resulted, in Ginner's opinion, in "unoriginal and monotonous Formula."<sup>18</sup> Central to the whole theory of Neo-Realism was the notion of a close communion between the artist and nature, a view which was echoed in a letter Nash wrote to Carrington from Gloucestershire in 1914: "I am convinced now even more than formerly that a strict adherence to nature is the only thing worth doing "even at the risk of being dull?" ... But how can nature be dull. What is cubism or anything else to nature."<sup>19</sup> Throughout his career, in the landscapes he executed in East Anglia, Suffolk, Essex, Cornwall and elsewhere and in his detailed plant studies, Nash maintained a close attachment to the essence of his subject. Preferring a 'domestic' landscape of fields, farms and lanes, Nash's pictures record specific localities. Travelling through the Chilterns, R. A. Bevan recalled his companion's observation that Nash "had so completely caught the individuality of those smooth but wooded chalk hills that he felt he was looking at a new John Nash at every turn of the road."<sup>20</sup> This aspect of Nash's work again accorded with Ginner's theories. In his article, The Cézanne Stunt, Ginner was to praise just this quality in the art of Cézanne, that it accurately recorded the character of the landscape of Provence.<sup>21</sup> Criticising those artists who, in his opinion, attempted to transpose Cézanne's personal methods onto an interpretation of the English landscape, Ginner cited Nash in a list of artists:

... capable of creating strong and personal works of art ... John Nash and

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<sup>16</sup> J. Rothenstein (1983), p.20.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>18</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>19</sup> Undated, unpublished letter from J. Nash to D. Carrington, collection of Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>20</sup> R. A. Bevan (1965), p.78.

<sup>21</sup> C. Ginner (1918), pp.41-3.

Lucien Pissarro - each with quite a different outlook - are giving us English landscape seen with an extraordinary truthful vision ... they are striving after truth each according to his own light. In that endeavour British art will find its salvation.<sup>22</sup>

Ginner contended that the aim of Neo-Realism was "the plastic interpretation of Life through ... intimate research into Nature."<sup>23</sup> This is, of course, an outstanding feature of Nash's work. While the relationship between art and nature remains a close one, his pictures invariably display a great deal of attention to surface pattern. This was partly due to his preference for cultivated landscape. Ploughed fields, strict hedgerows, regular tree plantations, all contributed to what has been described as "Nash's predilection for pattern - in plough and stubble or in small recurring motifs like ordered stooks or fencing ..."<sup>24</sup> A small watercolour entitled Tuscan Landscape, 1915 (Colchester, The Minorities) [138] is just such a work. Painted after Nash returned from a trip to Italy in 1914, the strict alignment of trees in the orchards with their regular shadows, create a sense of order which is balanced and reinforced by the repetition of curves throughout the landscape. Nash was to learn a great deal about the technical aspects of his craft from Gilman, stating many years later: "The only painter apart from Claughton who really gave me practical advice was Gilman. I learned a lot from him. He was a tremendous talker."<sup>25</sup> According to Nash's friend and biographer, John Lewis:

... it was Gilman who established John Nash's palette and also the way in which he painted. Gilman's advice was to use his oil paint dry, only to use opaque white (no rose madder) and never to use pure flake white and never to use black ... Gilman's additional and perhaps most valuable piece of advice was to tell John not to paint from nature but only from notes and drawings done on the spot.<sup>26</sup>

Rothenstein expanded on this aspect of Nash's debt to Gilman:

In one respect, but that crucial, John observed Gilman's advice, almost invariably, for the rest of his life. This was not to paint directly from nature but from drawings, preferably watercolours, made on the spot; and the existence of scores of his studies of all periods, many of them very slight, carefully squared up, testify to the consistency with which he observed it.<sup>27</sup>

When Rutter announced the formation of the Cumberland Market Group, he described Bevan, Gilman and Ginner as Neo-Realists. Nash, on the other hand, would have been most unlikely to submit to inclusion under that somewhat narrowing title. Although in agreement with many aspects of Neo-Realist theory, Nash's pictures generally look very different to those of Bevan, Gilman and Ginner. While Nash preferred the media of pencil, pen and ink and watercolour, the bulk of Bevan's, Gilman's and Ginner's contributions to the exhibition were executed in oils. Nash evidently felt himself to be with the "Cumbersome men", as he humorously referred to the group, but

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>23</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>24</sup> C. Neve (1978), p.1557.

<sup>25</sup> J. Lewis (1978), p.35. Nash was referring to Claughton Pellew (b.1890).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> J. Rothenstein (1983), p.24.

not of them.<sup>28</sup> In an undated letter to Carrington he wrote: "... Gilman, Bevan and Ginner have made me 'one of them' so to speak so that now I can show my pictures at Cumbers. Isn't it good of them & how queer my little water colours will look beside their oils & thickly painted oils at that ..."<sup>29</sup> When Nash did paint in oils there was none of the excessive *impasto* which often characterised the work of Gilman and Ginner. Reviewing the Cumberland Market Group exhibition, Rutter was careful to point out that there was "a wide difference between the outlooks of Mr. Bevan and Mr. Gilman, Mr. Ginner and Mr. John Nash."<sup>30</sup> This time he referred only to Gilman and Ginner as Neo-Realists. Bayes was quick to point out that Nash's work, in particular, was quite different to that of his fellow exhibitors:

... the inclusion of Mr. Nash reintroduces the element of nonconformity, so valuable in preventing such a group from degenerating into a mutual admiration society. We feel in Mr. Nash's laborious insistence on silhouette ... and in his rather coldly informing than sumptuous use of colour, an almost acid criticism of the ideals of his confreres. His severely flat sheets of paint contrast piquantly with their lavish impasto ... and to glance from Mr. Nash's meticulous drawings ... to the easy confidence of Mr. Gilman's solidly painted landscapes is to realize how admirably suited are the two temperaments to react on one another.<sup>31</sup>

The Cumberland Market Group exhibition opened at the Goupil Gallery in April 1915. This was, of course, the venue for London Group exhibitions and no doubt Gilman's Presidency helped to secure the premises for the new group.<sup>32</sup> After the show the gallery's owner, William Marchant, lent them a small upstairs room known as the 'grey room' where the group, then referred to as the 'Grey Room Group', held its meetings until the end of the war. Although Bevan, Gilman, Ginner and Nash were the only exhibitors it was a comparatively large show of 55 works, thirteen by Gilman and fourteen by each of the others.<sup>33</sup>

Even less likely than Nash to submit to identification as Neo-Realists were two new recruits to the Cumberland Market Group, Kauffer and Nevinson. It is not known precisely when they joined

<sup>28</sup> Undated, unpublished letter from J. Nash to D. Carrington. Collection of Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>29</sup> Undated, unpublished letter from J. Nash to D. Carrington. Collection of Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>30</sup> F. Rutter (1915b).

<sup>31</sup> W. Bayes (1915).

<sup>32</sup> According to Nash, he was given only ten days notice to exhibit. (J. Nash to D. Carrington, ?March 1915. Unpublished letter in the collection of Tate Gallery Archive). Either the Cumberland Market Group arranged the exhibition at the last minute or Nash was invited in order to increase the number of exhibits and help to fill the commodious Goupil Gallery.

<sup>33</sup> London, Goupil Gallery, Catalogue of an Exhibition of Works by Members of the Cumberland Market Group, London, 1915. The London Group exhibition of March 1915 had just closed. All four artists were represented there and they appear to have simply transferred their London Group exhibits to the Cumberland Market Group exhibition. Each artist showed four pictures with the London Group. All of Ginner's and Nash's and three each of Bevan's and Gilman's titles reappear in the Cumberland Market Group exhibition catalogue. Gilman, and possibly Bevan, each sold one picture from the London Group exhibition. Gilman's The Canal Bridge, Flekkefjord, no.26 in the catalogue, was bought by his fellow exhibitor Walter Taylor (1875-1943). Number 77 at the London Group exhibition was a painting by Bevan entitled The Market (date and present location unknown) which he presumably sold as well since it does not appear in the Cumberland Market Group exhibition catalogue.

the group but since neither was represented at the exhibition it was presumably after April 1915. Nevinson, who succeeded to the Secretaryship of the London Group after the defection of Manson, was a self-styled Futurist. Having made the mistake of appending the names of most of the Vorticists to Vital English Art, the English Futurist manifesto, Nevinson found himself repudiated by Lewis and other Rebel Art Centre members and when he appeared with Marinetti to lecture at the Doré Galleries on 12 June 1914, he was mercilessly heckled by the band of Vorticists who attended.<sup>34</sup> Nevinson found himself without allies in England. By the time the Cumberland Market Group was established he had already joined the army and departed for France. The works he exhibited with the London Group in March 1915 were all war paintings as, it must be assumed, were those he showed at the Cumberland Market 'at homes'.<sup>35</sup> It is not difficult to see why Gilman and Ginner were attracted to the work of Nevinson. The realism of his war pictures which depicted the horrors of trench warfare was combined with a strong sense of design, apparent in paintings such as Returning to the Trenches, 1915 (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada) [139] which adapted mechanistic images to portray a world in which human lives were apparently of less importance than the weapons they handled. Under the influence of Hulme and others, Gilman and Ginner were increasingly attracted to this combination of realism and formalism.

In the autumn of 1913, Kauffer, an American, went to Paris having spent several months at the Art Institute of Chicago where he saw the Armory Show in March 1913. The following spring, he went on a painting trip to Normandy, apparently taking with him a copy of Van Gogh's published letters.<sup>36</sup> It may have been his obvious interest in Van Gogh which attracted Gilman and Ginner to his work.<sup>37</sup> With the outbreak of war in August 1914, Kauffer moved to England where, in the autumn of 1916, he joined the London Group, becoming group Secretary the following spring. He also attended Sunday 'at homes' at Bevan's house in Hampstead as did both Gilman and Ginner.<sup>38</sup> He became friendly with Fry who was to write several articles on his work and who kept a portfolio of Kauffer's drawings on sale at the Omega Workshops.<sup>39</sup> In Kauffer's work we find the simplification of form, the paring down to essentials, which the Neo-Realists were increasingly to favour. He was evidently influenced by Nevinson's work. The Early Bird Poster, which he designed for The Daily Herald in 1918-19 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum) [140], has much in common with the simplified design of Nevinson's Returning to the Trenches. In both works, movement is indicated by the repetition of forms, the forward thrust of the composition and the paring away of incidental detail.

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<sup>34</sup> R. Cork (1976), vol.1, p.232.

<sup>35</sup> London, Goupil Gallery, London Group, March 1915. Cat. nos.27, 28, 87 and 89 all carried titles relating to themes of war.

<sup>36</sup> M. Haworth-Booth (1979), p.15.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Haworth-Booth observed: "A small oil painting of the Seine survives from this period and establishes Kauffer's discipleship to the milder aspects of Van Gogh's style." (Collection of Brian Petrie, London).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Under the influence of artists such as Kauffer and Nevinson, the Neo-Realists modified their creed somewhat. As we have seen, Gilman, in particular, now began to reorganise his work into much more rigid compositions. Although his attachment to Realism remained paramount, he began to perceive the possibilities for an art incorporating a stricter attention to design; that the forms of nature could be marshalled into something more solid and imposing, less accidental. The reconciliation of the demands of Realism and abstraction which this strategy implied was to prove extremely influential through the conduit of Art and Letters, a new illustrated quarterly which Gilman and Ginner edited jointly with Rutter. Advance publicity for the review, dated 30 May 1917, makes clear that Rutter was to be Managing Editor, responsible for the literary side of the review, while Gilman and Ginner were to act as joint Art Editors.<sup>40</sup> According to the editorial in the first issue of July 1917, it was a project which had been forming in their minds for some time. Originally conceived as a monthly review, planned publication for the autumn of 1914 had been forestalled by the outbreak of war. Rather than face the prospect of indefinite postponement the editors decided, almost three years later, to go ahead with publication in the modified form of a quarterly. The journal's timing - it had been proposed as far back as spring 1914, shortly after the publication of Neo-Realism - leads one to suspect that it was intended, to some extent, as an organ of Neo-Realism.<sup>41</sup> The contents of the first issue support the theory, dominated as it was by its editors. Ginner's article, Modern Painting and Teaching, appeared alongside a short story and a book review by Rutter and drawings by both Gilman and Ginner. Other contributions came from people of their immediate circle and included an article by Fergusson a drawing by Sickert, a woodcut by Pissarro and a drawing of cornfields by Kauffer, evidently, like Gilman, very much under the influence of Van Gogh's reed pen drawings.<sup>42</sup> Even the journal's advertising was dominated by its editors.<sup>43</sup>

Read, who came to know Gilman, Ginner and Rutter as a young student at Leeds University, contributed two poems and a book review. As Thistlewood suggests, it was not the university which conditioned the development of Read's aesthetic theories but his association with the Leeds Arts Club.<sup>44</sup> Thistlewood claims that Leeds was, at this time, the most progressive centre for the arts in England outside of London.<sup>45</sup> Abstract art was an accepted form of artistic expression and the club had links with the *Blaue Reiter* group in Munich.<sup>46</sup> Once a month the club met at the home of Michael Sadler whose pioneering art collection, as pointed out earlier, contained several works by Kandinsky. Thistlewood suggests that it was in debates at the Leeds Arts Club that the theory of

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<sup>40</sup> Copy of publicity notice held by the Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>41</sup> "Art and Letters" [editorial], Art and Letters, vol.1 (July 1917), p.1.

<sup>42</sup> R. Bevan (1946), p.57 draws attention to the correspondence between Gilman's pen drawings and the reed pen drawings of Van Gogh.

<sup>43</sup> The first issue carried advertisements for Gilman's and Ginner's art classes and dancing performances by Ginner's sister, Ruby. In a list of titles from the publishers, Grant Richards, no less than four were written or translated by Rutter.

<sup>44</sup> D. Thistlewood (1984), p.5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Neo-Realism took root and grew.<sup>47</sup> Both Gilman and Ginner were regular visitors to Leeds where their friend Rutter had taken the post of Curator at the Leeds City Art Gallery and where they executed a number of drawings and paintings of the city. Ginner's Notebooks record several visits to the Leeds Arts Club, made in a professional capacity. During 1914 he was paid £3 for criticising works of art shown at the club and, as pointed out in chapter five, during 1914 and 1915 he delivered two lectures there, entitled Modern Art and the Future and The Recent Movements in Modern Art.<sup>48</sup> In 1915 Read joined the army and was posted to France. Although his name did not appear alongside those of Gilman, Ginner and Rutter on the title page, Read was, in fact, an associate editor of Art and Letters. Describing himself as a co-founder with Rutter of the journal, Read pointed out that, as an army officer, he was unable to take any open part in the project.<sup>49</sup> Although serving at the Front, he was active in editing Art and Letters, receiving contributions sent to him for consideration by Rutter.<sup>50</sup>

A strenuous critic of Art and Letters was Orage who attacked the journal on the grounds that it contributed nothing new to present culture and that its very existence deprived publications such as his own of contributions, given that there were not enough accomplished writers to serve the journals already in existence.<sup>51</sup> Pondering Orage's criticisms in his War Diary, Read argued that it was unfair to judge the first issue of a journal appearing in wartime. Accusing The New Age of despotism, he pointed out that its coverage of the plastic arts was inadequate and left room for a journal which intended to place emphasis in that field. He further argued that Art and Letters represented a certain viewpoint with regard to politics and the arts which could only be expressed through a separate publication. This point of view Read somewhat vaguely adumbrated as follows:

Against the *New Age* we intend to insist upon the primacy of beauty - even in economics. And hence a return to the socialism of Morris in preference to that of Karl Marx. Qualitative rather than quantitative ideas ... They represent, in *Art and Letters*, the interpretation of Life in terms of beauty. They oppose the Realists who only show us life in a section: the Romanticists and Abstracts (poor me!) who do not relate their art to life at all: and so I think *Art and Letters* has a distinct right to exist.<sup>52</sup>

The vagueness of this statement would seem to indicate the lack of any coherent editorial policy. We are given to understand that the editors are informed by socialist principles but these are so generalised as to be quite inscrutable. What does emerge much more forcefully is the editorial commitment to one of the central tenets of Neo-Realist theory. The opposition to what were termed

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>48</sup> Ginner evidently spent a lot of time in Leeds during 1914. On 29 July, Rutter wrote to Esther Pissarro saying that Ginner was staying with them "doing some fine drawings of Leeds" and that he would be back for another visit in September. On 2 October, in a letter to Lucien Pissarro, Rutter wrote that Ginner was still there and intended to return to London on 7 October. (Unpublished letters in the collection of the Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.)

<sup>49</sup> H. Read (1963), p.257.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> A. Orage (1917), p.288.

<sup>52</sup> H. Read (1963), p.102. (Diary entry dated 14 August 1917).

'Realists' and 'Abstracts' implies a rejection of the stringent polarity between these two extremes which gave rise to and conditioned the Realist versus abstract debate in which Neo-Realism figured. Instead, Read appeared to collude with the notion of an effective combination of both tendencies now advocated by the Neo-Realists whose theories had, since 1914, undergone a significant sea-change.

In the first issue of *Art and Letters*, Ginner readdressed the problem of abstractionism versus Realism in an article entitled *Modern Painting and Teaching*.<sup>53</sup> The main drift of his argument was that the different art movements active in Britain at this time, which on the face of it appeared opposed to each other, might benefit by mutual co-operation resulting in the creation of a "great national Art."<sup>54</sup> Citing Vorticism as the chief movement in abstract art in this country, he suggested that "Realists of strong convictions, instead of venting their anger on this abstract vorticism movement, would do better to see if it has in it anything of importance, and if so to what use it could be applied."<sup>55</sup> While reserving his opinion that Vorticists were limited by what he described as their "monotonous repetition" of abstract patterns, Ginner suggested that artists who continued to work in a representational mode had much to learn from the Vorticists' strong sense of design. Vorticists, in turn, could learn from 'realists' the value of retaining what Ginner called "the interest of the place."<sup>56</sup> What he regarded as the Cubist tendency to reduce all elements of the composition to "abstract forms of cubes and lines" resulted, in his opinion, in the production of "mere pattern". He maintained that "The strength and rigidity of the design can still be maintained, keeping closer to a realistic interpretation, by selection and by emphasis of the outlines, the colours, the different planes, of the lights and the darks."<sup>57</sup> Ginner identified Gore as an artist who had succeeded in synthesising the best elements of representational and abstract art:

[Gore] did not close his eyes to the Cubist and Vorticist movements, but learnt much from them while remaining a realist in his outlook on life. He had received from these schools of painting a stronger sense of design, saw it in nature, and was on the road to being one of the greatest painters England had produced in modern times."<sup>58</sup>

Ginner's opinion of the work of the Cubists had undergone another adjustment by 1924 when he described Braque and Picasso as "two painters of undoubted talent."<sup>59</sup> He was now prepared to credit Cubism with a significant role in the regeneration of art through design:

Much controversy has raged around these cubist and "abstract" ideas ... but I will take a purely, what I might almost call, a technical standpoint and I see it as a violent reaction against the weak design, photographic transcription of nature and the false sentimentalism that had pervaded the

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<sup>53</sup> C. Ginner (1917).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> C. Ginner (1924), p.7.

major part of the Art of the nineteenth century. As such it has been an excellent and important movement.<sup>60</sup>

A belief in the regeneration of British art through mutual co-operation on the part of apparently opposed artistic tendencies had been the motive force behind the formation of the London Group. The notion that beyond financial considerations and the opportunity to exhibit, there could be a frank exchange of artistic absolutes of the order which Ginner anticipated was a view increasingly shared by Read and it is in this sense, as Thistlewood suggests, that we find Neo-Realist theory continuing to influence artistic matters throughout the 1930s and '40s.<sup>61</sup> Thistlewood maintains that Neo-Realism "conditioned Read's appreciation of art at an impressionable stage in his development, and indirectly influenced his analysis of modern English art in the 1930s and '40s."<sup>62</sup> As a member of the Leeds Arts Club, Read had been in on the debate from the start. On reading the theories laid down by Ginner in Modern Painting and Teaching, he wrote: "I think Ginner's article sums up the present position of modern art to perfection."<sup>63</sup> While Read found himself in complete agreement with Ginner in his conviction that the two strands of modern art - Realism and abstraction - could come together with dynamic results, his enthusiasm was qualified by his belief that the new art would be born out of individual perception rather than group effort.<sup>64</sup> In a diary entry dated 27 August 1916 he recorded his faith in the ultimate triumph of individualism:

... only they who stand alone, stand firm ... I believe that it is much more important to cultivate the individual than the mass ... Great philosophies and great works of art are not the products of an age or of a civilisation. They are rather the individual revolt against an age or a civilisation.<sup>65</sup>

Read's stress on the primacy of individual consciousness as opposed to group effort is extremely interesting for it gives substance to a tendency away from small art group politics which became increasingly apparent with the waning of the decade. Indeed, Group X, formed in 1920, was the last of its kind with which most of its members were associated. In 1910, Sickert had declared that the evolution of a painting method was achieved by "gangs" rather than by individuals.<sup>66</sup> The emergence of numerous art groups during the years which followed was largely at the instigation of Fry, Sickert and the generation of artists which included Gilman, Gore and Lewis. Read represented a younger generation and as such his attitude signalled the beginning of a move away from group endeavour towards an emphasis on the creative consciousness of the individual. This point of view was strengthened by a letter Read received from his friend, the artist Jacob Kramer (1892-1962), another member of the Leeds Arts Club.<sup>67</sup> Whereas Ginner had conceived the possibility of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> D. Thistlewood (1979), p.340.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> H. Read (1963), p.99. Diary entry dated 17 June 1917.

<sup>64</sup> D. Thistlewood (1984), p.32.

<sup>65</sup> H. Read (1963), pp.76-7.

<sup>66</sup> W. Sickert (1910e), p.109.

<sup>67</sup> D. Thistlewood (1979), p.343. Letter from J. Kramer to H. Read, dated 10 March 1918. (Lot 48, Read Archive, University of Victoria, B.C.) Unable to see the contents of this letter, the present writer has relied on Thistlewood's interpretation.

abstractionists and Realists learning from each other, Kramer recognised the existence of a similar struggle at work within his own individual creative mentality, a struggle between what he identified as "spiritual" and "intellectual" faculties; the one concerned with expression, the other with representation.

Ginner's theories and Kramer's experience were all grist to Read's mill for he had come to believe that art, poetry and philosophy were open to, and ultimately dependent upon, dialectical conjecture.<sup>68</sup> He was supported in his assumption by Bergsonian and Nietzschean philosophy gleaned mainly from his association with The New Age.<sup>69</sup> Read's knowledge of Bergson's work was further strengthened by the task, delegated to him by Orage, of editing Hulme's papers after his death on active service in France during 1917. As Thistlewood has pointed out, both Bergsonian and Nietzschean philosophy lent itself to dialectical conjecture - in the former by an opposition of intellect and intuition, in the latter by an antagonism between romantic and classical art.<sup>70</sup> Thistlewood has suggested that Read's attempt to reconcile the Constructivists and Surrealists in the 1930s and '40s may be seen as an attempt to put into practical effect the theory advanced by Ginner in 1917 that apparently opposed artistic tendencies could be combined with dynamic results. In an article entitled Realism and Abstraction in Modern Art, Read quoted Juan Gris (1887-1927) in an effort to illustrate this process at work within the individual creative mentality:

Painting for me is like a fabric, all of a piece and uniform, with one set of threads as the representational, aesthetic element, and the cross-threads as the technical, architectural, or abstract element. These threads are interdependent and complementary, and if one set is lacking the fabric does not exist.<sup>71</sup>

Read found that Barbara Hepworth (1903-75), Henry Moore (1898-1986) and Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) worked alternately in both abstract and realistic modes without the changeover apparently being accompanied by any artistic conflict. In a letter to Read, Hepworth attempted to clarify this seemingly paradoxical situation:

I don't feel any difference of intention or of mood when I paint (or carve) realistically and when I make abstract carvings ... The two ways of working flow into each other without effort ... working realistically replenishes one's love for life, humanity and the earth. Working abstractly seems to release one's personality and sharpen the perceptions, so that in the observation of life it is the wholeness or inner intention which moves one so profoundly: the components fall into place, the detail is significant of unity.<sup>72</sup>

Read's summing-up of this attitude was a neat application to the individual consciousness of Ginner's prescription for opposed artistic tendencies in 1917:

The consciousness of the artist alternates between the two poles of (a reciprocal tension). One pole may be left unexpressed, and then the artist is

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp.339-40.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp.341-2.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> H. Read (1952), p.92.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp.98-9. Letter dated 6 March 1948.

wholly realistic, or wholly abstract. But it seems reasonable to suppose that a better balance, if only in the mental personality of the artist, will be achieved by the open expression of both polar extremes of tension.<sup>73</sup>

This comes very close to the diagram and its explanation which were included in Hulme's article on Neo-Realism in 1914.

The content of Art and Letters was, to a certain extent, indicative of the Neo-Realists growing commitment to a dialectical approach to contemporary art. Increasingly, the use of realistic and abstract forms were seen to be equally valid. No longer treated as polar extremes, their simultaneous existence within the individual creative consciousness was regarded as a necessary condition of the "great national art" which Ginner envisaged. Thus works by Gilman, Ginner and Paul Nash were reproduced alongside those of Gaudier-Brzeska, Kauffer and Nevinson. In 1919 Lewis contributed an article on Wadsworth which expressed similar views to those which later conditioned Read's approach to the work of Hepworth, Moore and Nicholson.<sup>74</sup> It was through the conduit of a new society of artists that evidence of a developing dialogue between abstract and representative tendencies in contemporary British art made itself felt. The formation of the new group was under discussion during the late summer and early autumn of 1919 and although the chief instigator was Kauffer, Lewis later claimed the credit for himself: "... I founded 'X Group'. After a short while I left this Group and it fell to pieces."<sup>75</sup> It was evidently a fairly ambitious scheme and difficulties arose early on. The Maddox Galleries were not available and, replying to Kauffer's intimation of that fact, Lewis acknowledged Kauffer's greater role in the affair: "I am sorry that you had no luck with the Maddox Galleries. I am also sorry that it looks as though your enterprise would not thrive for the moment."<sup>76</sup> Kauffer was evidently disheartened by early setbacks but Lewis encouraged him to go ahead and collect members, worrying about premises later.<sup>77</sup>

The decision to form a new society appears to have been informed largely by the increasingly Bloomsbury-dominated nature of the London Group. Fry had joined in 1917, Bell and Grant in 1919. Fry evidently made his presence felt. One member wrote: "Roger's booming voice boomed and all was agreed upon."<sup>78</sup> Nevinson, too, was irritated by what he regarded as Fry's domineering behaviour, eventually resigning his Secretaryship although retaining membership of the group.<sup>79</sup> Fry evidently alienated a very large section of the London Group through his positions on the Jury and Hanging Committee, a fact of which he was made painfully aware. On 19 November 1919, he wrote peevishly to Vanessa Bell: "I was glad to hear from you about the London Group. Pamela told me I was abominably hung - why do all English artists hate me so much?"<sup>80</sup> The

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.99.

<sup>74</sup> W. Lewis (1919). The article was intended as a preface to the catalogue of an exhibition of Original Drawings and Woodcuts by Edward Wadsworth at the Adelphi Gallery, London, during March and April 1919. In the event it was never used.

<sup>75</sup> W. Lewis (1937), p.211.

<sup>76</sup> W. Rose (1963), p.115. Letter from W. Lewis to E. Kauffer, ? September 1919.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> F. Spalding (1983), p.211. Letter from Raymond Coxon to F. Spalding, September 1981.

<sup>79</sup> C. Nevinson (1937), p.91.

<sup>80</sup> D. Sutton (1972), vol. 2, p.469.

treatment accorded to Fry's work no doubt stemmed from group members' resentment of his own somewhat autocratic approach to public exhibitions. He believed that responsibility should be kept in the hands of a few elected artists.<sup>81</sup> Rejecting the London Group's essentially democratic approach, he remained unrepentant: "... I do think the London Group are idiots, having got hold of someone who knew how to hang well ( and I never shoved my things into posts of honour); their suspicion and jealousy seems to me ridiculous and mean ..." <sup>82</sup> The decision to form Group X seems to have been a direct result of dissatisfaction with Fry's increased prominence within the London Group. During 1919, Lewis wrote: "The present London Group is a bad working collection of individuals, and will not improve."<sup>83</sup> It was inevitable that Fry and Lewis would be unable to remain comfortably within the same society. Relations had been, at best, strained since their dispute over the commission to design a 'Post-Impressionist' room at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1913.<sup>84</sup> Rutter summed up the situation when he wrote: "There was not room enough in one society for both Lewis and Fry. Wyndham Lewis went out: Roger Fry ... stayed."<sup>85</sup> Further evidence of anti-Fry feeling within Group X can be detected in members' determination to forestall the London Group's twelfth exhibition. Failing to secure the Maddox Galleries, Group X decided to hold their first exhibition at Heal's Mansard Gallery which had been the venue for London Group shows since April 1917. Fry was apparently anxious that the new group should not exhibit before the London Group show; but this was precisely what Lewis intended.<sup>86</sup> Along with Ginner, who had been invited to join Group X, he interviewed the gallery's owner and fixed on 26 March as the opening date for their exhibition, writing to Kauffer: "Since Heal has the Gallery occupied up to March 6th: there is no chance of the London Group getting in before our show ..." <sup>87</sup>

Attitudes within Group X toward the London Group were also expressed in Lewis's introduction to the exhibition catalogue: "As to the London Group, several members of Group X have expressed their sentiments with regard to the utility of that now rather swollen institution (destined perhaps to become a New English Art Club up to date) by lately retiring from it."<sup>88</sup> There were ten exhibitors at the first, and only, Group X show: Jessica Dismorr (1885-1939), Frank Dobson (1888-1963), Frederick Etchells, Ginner, Hamilton, Kauffer, Lewis, Roberts, John (Jock) Turnbull (dates unknown) and Wadsworth. Dismorr, Dobson and Turnbull were not members of the London Group and Hamilton had not exhibited with the group since March 1914. The remaining six members of Group X boycotted the London Group's eleventh exhibition in November 1919 and none

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* Letter from R. Fry to Marie Mauron, dated 23 November 1920.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.469-70. Letter from R. Fry to V. Bell, dated 19 November 1919.

<sup>83</sup> W. Rose (1963), p.115. Letter from W. Lewis to E. Kauffer, ? September 1919.

<sup>84</sup> This episode is discussed in Q. Bell and S. Chaplin (1964).

<sup>85</sup> F. Rutter (1933), pp.186-7.

<sup>86</sup> W. Rose (1963), p.115. Letter from W. Lewis to E. Kauffer, ? September 1919.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> W. Lewis (1920), pp.4-5.

appear again in the group's exhibition catalogues until May 1921 when Ginner and Kauffer both made a comeback.<sup>89</sup>

Had Gilman been alive it is doubtful whether Group X would have come into being at all. As chief founder and President of the London Group he would hardly have sanctioned the formation of a society in any way opposed to it. Gilman's death seems to have precipitated a crisis within the group for it is doubtful whether, under his Presidency, anti-Fry feeling would have been allowed to dictate the group's policy. Following the death of the diplomatic Gore, Gilman had in turn exerted his influence to keep warring factions in check, symbolising the integrity of the group, upholding a policy of inclusion and encouraging members' co-operation and solidarity. Without his enlightened Presidency, the group resorted to petty quarrels and resignations. After Gilman's death, Adeney was elected President. Rutter evidently regarded him as a tool of Fry: "W. Bernard Adeney - a blameless echoer in biscuit and pale-green tints of Cézanne's less successful nudes and landscapes - succeeded Gilman in the Presidency. His approach to Cézanne made him worthy of the Chair: but Mr. Fry remained the power behind the throne."<sup>90</sup> Without Gilman the London Group seems to have lost sight of its original intention. His far-sighted conviction that the various exponents of Realist and abstract art had much to learn from each other, was apparently abandoned as the London Group passed into the hands of a clique dominated by Fry.

In his catalogue introduction, Lewis stressed that Group X had not come together through shared artistic aims, but exhibited together "for motives of convenience, and with no theory or dogma that would be liable to limit the development of any member. Each member sails his own boat, and may lift his sails to any wind that may seem to him to promise a prosperous cruise."<sup>91</sup> We learn, nevertheless, that "the founding of this small community is not entirely fortuitous."<sup>92</sup> What they did have in common, according to Lewis, was a shared antagonism toward the Royal Academy, the NEAC and the London Group.<sup>93</sup> We are forcibly reminded of the circumstances which had engendered the formation of the Fitzroy Street and Camden Town Groups and the London Group itself. The only artistic conviction to which Lewis would admit on behalf of Group X was a belief in the integrity of avant-garde tendencies in modern European art. According to Lewis, Group X members believed that:

... the experiments undertaken all over Europe during the last ten years should be utilized directly and developed, and not be lightly abandoned or the effort allowed to relax. For there are many people to-day who talk

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<sup>89</sup> The London Group listed all group members in their catalogues whether they were exhibiting or not. No Group X members' names appear in the catalogues of the London Group's 11th, 12th or 13th exhibitions between November 1919 and October 1920. Dobson joined the London Group in 1922 and, in 1924, was elected President. Dismorr exhibited as a non-member in 1924 and joined the group in 1926.

<sup>90</sup> F. Rutter (1933), p.187. Adeney was not named President in London Group catalogues until May 1921. If the group was, in fact, without a President between Gilman's death in February 1919 and May 1921 it would account for the evident instability and lack of solidarity within the group.

<sup>91</sup> W. Lewis (1920), p.3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

glibly of the "victory" of the Cubist, Vorticist or Expressionist movements, and in the next breath of now putting the armour off and becoming anything that pays best, repairing wherever, after the stress of a few years, the softest time is to be secured.<sup>94</sup>

The militant tone of this statement suggests that Lewis, at least, felt that "the Cubist, Vorticist or Expressionist movements" had not so far attained their deserved status, that the battle was yet to be won. He evidently still regarded the old model of a small, exclusive artistic group as a valid and effective response to artistic reactionism. That Group X was conceived in a spirit of rebellion is indicated by Lewis's claim that his fellow members: "... pressed me, as a born leader in such affairs, to up and 'blast' a way for them through the bourgeois barrage."<sup>95</sup>

This was to be the last time that Lewis participated in such a venture. After the Group X show, Lewis, as he put it, "went underground".<sup>96</sup> Looking back on his career in 1937, he found that before 1920 he "had accomplished nothing".<sup>97</sup> After the first and only Group X exhibition he took the decision to withdraw from the social side of art production and commit himself to a discipline of hard work. He found that conditions in England resulted in "a great deal of lunching, and dining and cocktailing for artists, but very little work."<sup>98</sup>

I had found from bitter experience that an artist in England is compelled to sacrifice so much time explaining *why* he is an artist at all, that the necessary time for the donkey-work, to do the stuff, is not available. For a few years after the war I had *some* money. So I resolved, in making this fresh start, to go about it in a very different way. My solitary "X Group" reversion to type was undertaken against my better judgement.<sup>99</sup>

Lewis's rejection of art group politics was accompanied by a gradual rejection of abstract forms in his work. In February 1919 he held his first one-man show at the Goupil Gallery. Entitled Guns, the exhibition was largely a portrayal, culled from his own experiences in the war, of "... the gunner's life from his arrival in the depot to his life in the Line."<sup>100</sup> As Lewis himself remarked, the paintings and drawings included "though decidedly angular, were naturalistic."<sup>101</sup> In his preface to the catalogue he wrote: "I have attempted here only one thing: namely, in a direct ready formula to offer an interpretation of what I took part in in France."<sup>102</sup> A number of explanations have been offered for Lewis's rejection of abstract art. Lewis himself attributed it to the fact that in his play The Enemy of the Stars, he attempted to subsume literature to the same abstract principles which he applied to the plastic arts.<sup>103</sup> The experiment proved unsuccessful when applied to the writing of a novel:

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>95</sup> W. Lewis (1937), p.211.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.213.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp.213-14.

<sup>100</sup> W. Lewis (1950), p.127.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> W. Lewis, "Enemy of the Stars", Blast, vol.1 (June 1914), pp.51-85.

It became evident to me at once ... when I started to write a novel, that words and syntax were not susceptible of transformation into abstract terms, to which process the visual arts lent themselves quite readily. The coming of war and the writing - at top speed - of a full-length novel ("Tarr") was the turning-point. Writing - literature - dragged me out of the abstractist (sic) cul-de-sac.<sup>104</sup>

Lewis was by no means alone in his disillusionment. The shortage of purely abstract works at the Group X show was commented on by most critics and perceptively interpreted by Rutter who wrote: "The real tendency of the exhibition is towards a new sort of realism, evolved by artists who have passed through a phase of abstract experiment."<sup>105</sup> The only exhibitors who showed allegiance to purely abstract principles were Dismorr and Hamilton. One critic wrote of Dismorr's work: "Miss Dismorr is very successful in avoiding both representation and pattern. Her exhibits are, in the ordinary sense, meaningless and have no effect upon the spectator of any kind. They are very perfect Dada."<sup>106</sup> Pound noted that "Hamilton alone preserves the simon pure abstraction of 1912-14."<sup>107</sup> Rutter described Wadsworth's two paintings of northern industrial landscape as "sternly ordered realism".<sup>108</sup> A drawing entitled The East Wind, c.1919 (present location unknown) [141] was reproduced in the exhibition catalogue. The scene is indeed realistically portrayed but with a strong emphasis on design and pattern-making, especially in the curls of smoke rising from the chimneys. The fact that Wadsworth turned to completely abstract forms later in his career in no way diminishes the significance of his rejection of pure abstraction during 1919.

Rejection of abstract principles was not confined to members of Group X. Bomberg, whose In the Hold, 1913-14 [142] and The Mud Bath, 1914 (London, Tate Gallery) had shown him to be one of the most innovative abstract painters working in Britain before the war, also turned to a more figurative style during this period. His *volte-face* during the early 'twenties has been attributed to the "shattering personal blow" which he received when Konody, who was in charge of commissions, refused to accept his Canadian War Memorials painting, 'Sappers at Work': A Canadian Tunnelling Company, 1918-19 (London, Tate Gallery), on the grounds that it was a "Futurist abortion".<sup>109</sup> The implication of an entirely passive approach to the sequence of his own work does Bomberg a disservice. In fact, his rejection of abstract art was a conscious decision based on the realisation that he had carried his pre-war manner to an extreme which precluded further development. In 1919 Bomberg refused an invitation to join the *De Stijl* group in Holland, recalling in 1953 his reasons for doing so:

There was evidence that they were not sensing design as that which emanated from the sense of mass, but depended more for their appeal on juxtapositions of form that found their way to Leyden via the Cubists and Paul Klee and Kandinsky, but more elementarily and architecturally

<sup>104</sup> W. Lewis (1950), p.129. (Tarr was published in 1918 by Alfred A. Knopf, New York.)

<sup>105</sup> F. Rutter (1920b).

<sup>106</sup> M. Sadleir (1920).

<sup>107</sup> E. Pound (1920).

<sup>108</sup> F. Rutter (1920b).

<sup>109</sup> R. Cork (1976), vol.2, p.516. (Interview with Lillian Bomberg, May 1970).

integrated. This I felt could only lead again to the Blank Page. I declined the Leyden invitation - I had found I could more surely develop on the lines of Cézanne's rediscovery that the world was round and there was a way out through the sunlight - this I have followed and matured in ever since.<sup>110</sup>

This reference to Cézanne is curiously close to a comment made by Nevinson in 1919:

"The immediate need of the art of today is a Cézanne, a reactionary, to lead art back to the academic traditions of the old masters, and save contemporary art from abstractions, as Cézanne saved Impressionism from 'effects'."<sup>111</sup> The debate had at last come full circle and whereas five years earlier, Hulme had cited Cézanne's preoccupation with geometrical forms in nature in order to sanction abstract art, Bomberg and Nevinson now evoked his name to plead for the rejection of abstraction. Like Bomberg and Lewis, Nevinson had abandoned the semi-abstract Futurist principles and mechanistic imagery which had informed his pre-war work largely, it seems, as a result of his experiences at the Front:

[Artists] were all ready for the great machine that is modern war. For some time before the catastrophe artists had recognized the fact that an engine is an extremely beautiful thing and were trying to express its beauty. But now that art has had its orgy of violence there has been an abrupt reaction. The effect of the war has been to create among artists an extraordinary longing to get static again. Having been dynamic ever since 1912, they are now utterly tired of chaos. Having lived among scrap heaps, having seen miles of destruction day after day, month after month, year after year, they are longing for a complete change. We artists are sick of destruction in art. We want construction.<sup>112</sup>

Nevinson's change of direction may be illustrated by a comparison between two of his war paintings.

Returning to the Trenches is one of the most arresting and potent images of war ever produced.

Entirely without recourse to sentiment, Nevinson, using Cubo-Futurist techniques - the breaking up of the image into separate planes and the repetition of movement allied to the dynamic forward thrust of the composition - has expressed the ruthlessness, the relentless dehumanisation of trench warfare.

Paths of Glory, 1917 (London, Imperial War Museum) [143], painted much later in the war, is a naturalistic portrayal of two dead soldiers lying face down in the mud and barbed wire of the battlefield. The contrast could not be more marked for whereas in Returning to the Trenches,

Nevinson conveyed an image of the brutality of war entirely through his innovative use of form,

Paths of Glory relied for its effect on the juxtaposition of image and title. Nevinson did not join

Group X having declared himself opposed to any further involvement in art politics. In a short

foreword to the catalogue of an exhibition of his work at the Leicester Galleries he declared: "I wish

to be thoroughly disassociated from every "new" or "advanced" movement; every form of "ist",

"ism", "post", "neo", "academic", or "unacademic".<sup>113</sup> As Lewis was to do after the failure of

Group X, Nevinson turned his back on the group-forming which had characterised London's pre-war

<sup>110</sup> R. Cork (1987), pp.131-2. Letter from D. Bomberg to Seigfried Giedion, dated 27 July 1953.

<sup>111</sup> M. Salaman (1919).

<sup>112</sup> C. Nevinson (1919a).

<sup>113</sup> C. Nevinson (1919b), p.3.

art world and what he described as: "TATAISM - The tendency of most of the moderns to group themselves together only to break away with loud and abusive farewells."<sup>114</sup>

Having been an unwilling participant in Group X, Frederick Etchells expressed his disillusionment by abandoning painting altogether to concentrate on architecture.<sup>115</sup> One of his last watercolours was Gunwalloe, c.1922 (private collection) which has been described as "markedly architectural".<sup>116</sup> Kauffer, too, gave up easel painting after 1921 to concentrate on poster design.<sup>117</sup> He is best known for the outstanding posters which he designed for the London Underground between 1915 and 1940. As Lewis put it: "... he disappeared as it were below-ground and the tunnels of the 'Tube' became thenceforth his subterranean picture galleries."<sup>118</sup> By abandoning easel painting altogether, both Etchells and Kauffer expressed their conviction that abstract principles could be carried no further by them in this medium. In retrospect, their recourse to architecture and poster design was entirely logical, for both media were highly susceptible to the strong sense of design evident in their work.

Rutter recalled that the name 'Group X' was chosen because the group had ten members.<sup>119</sup> Roberts, writing in 1957, could not recall that the name had any significance whatsoever:

... for want of something better, a large uninspiring 'X' was adopted as the group's device. This time no manifestos were issued; our plain 'X' offered no message or new theory of art. But what could possibly be done with an 'X'? Art at the cross-roads? 'X' marks our goal? No 'X' refused to co-operate. Group 'X' set out, but got nowhere. 'X' marked our beginning and end.<sup>120</sup>

Roberts evidently regarded his association with Group X as a waste of time. After holding only one exhibition, Group X disbanded and therefore failed in terms of its ability to cohere as a group. Yet for two of its members, Ginner and Wadsworth, Group X had a significance beyond its role as an exhibiting forum. For Ginner their association provided a vindication of his conviction that apparently opposed tendencies in contemporary British art were in fact reconcilable. In Modern Painting and Teaching, Ginner maintained that Whistler and, to some extent, the Impressionists had been responsible for a "move towards sloppiness in painting", that a "sense for emphasized design had been lost."<sup>121</sup> The Cubist and Vorticist movements represented, he believed, a reaction against this "decadence" and, by 1917, he had begun to perceive that, as a Neo-Realist, he had something to learn from what he described as a "regeneration of Art through design."<sup>122</sup> Of equal importance was his belief that Neo-Realism could, in turn, inspire artists working in a purely abstract manner with a sense of the importance of conveying ideas and emotions as well as pattern:

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<sup>114</sup> C. Nevinson (1937), p.211.

<sup>115</sup> W. Lewis (1937), p.211.

<sup>116</sup> R. Cork (1976), vol.2, p.545.

<sup>117</sup> M. Haworth-Booth (1979), p.30.

<sup>118</sup> W. Lewis (1937), p.211.

<sup>119</sup> F. Rutter (1920b).

<sup>120</sup> W. Roberts (1957), pp.11-12.

<sup>121</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.19.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.20.

This life interest is important in a work of art, which must not be a mere thing of beauty. A literary work which is only a subtle and delicate arrangement of words would not be so great as one which combined this arrangement with some emotional or intellectual idea, and a painting which is a mere beautiful pattern has not the importance of one which possesses this beauty strengthened by some intelligible idea or outlook on life.<sup>123</sup>

Despite the shortage of purely abstract works at the Group X show, Ginner was perceived by more than one critic as the group's 'odd man out'. He exhibited three drawings and one painting entitled Carting Lane (location unknown) [144] which, according to his Notebooks, was executed in 1920.<sup>124</sup> One reviewer wrote:

At the other end of the scale is Charles Ginner, laborious in his accurate naturalism, as ever a master of design, as ever fugitive from merriment. His single large oil has its Puritanism in common with many of its fellows; apart from that it suggests Hindenburg among Japanese acrobats.<sup>125</sup>

Another critic remarked: "Undoubtedly the sanest of the exhibitors is Mr. Ginner. We can almost see him being asked to resign."<sup>126</sup> The critic for The Times was rather more perceptive. After discussing the Vorticist element in the exhibition, this critic observed:

... Mr. Ginner's "Carting Lane" looks simply realistic; but his principles are really the same; he too is making pure design out of his houses ... The result is bracing in its lucidity and precision. It may be that the method is best applied to subjects such as this, in themselves complex and full of sharply distinguished planes.<sup>127</sup>

Rutter also singled out Carting Lane for praise, commenting on the "integrity" of its design.<sup>128</sup> They clearly perceived what Ginner was attempting to do in combining a Realist outlook with an attention to design and pattern. Ginner's choice of a street scene as the subject through which to articulate the fusion of these elements was given substance in a letter which he wrote several years later:

... I appear to react to a certain rigidity of design which is probably the cause of my choosing, as often as not, subjects in which there are buildings. Street scenes & citys (sic) generally have a fascination for me, also the quality of the buildings, i.e. the materials used.<sup>129</sup>

Ginner's training in an architect's office in Paris has frequently been offered as the reason for his interest and obvious skill in the depiction of buildings.<sup>130</sup> It is clear from this letter that he responded to the strong design possibilities afforded by such subjects.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., pp.20, 22.

<sup>124</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.II, p.43. The painting was reproduced in C. Marriott (1920), opposite p.235. According to one review, it portrayed the narrow alley next to the Savoy Theatre. (Anon., "A New Group", Truth (7 April 1920), p.668.

<sup>125</sup> M. Sadleir (1920).

<sup>126</sup> Anon., "A New Group", Truth (7 April 1920), p.668.

<sup>127</sup> Anon., "Principles of the X Group", The Times (1 April 1920).

<sup>128</sup> F. Rutter (1920b).

<sup>129</sup> Unpublished, undated letter from Ginner to the Curator of Manchester City Art Gallery, endorsed "Rec'd 7th March, 1925". Collection of Manchester City Art Gallery.

<sup>130</sup> F. Rutter (1922), p.46; M. Easton (1970), p.205.

Rutter's estimation of Wadsworth's contributions to the Group X show, as "sternly ordered realism", was a further articulation of the tendency which he had found in Wadsworth's work earlier that year. In January 1920, Wadsworth exhibited a series of drawings, woodcuts and lithographs of industrial scenes in the Black Country.<sup>131</sup> Reviewing the exhibition, Rutter wrote:

It is a remarkable revelation of what is gained by an artist of genuine talent when he returns to realism after having passed through a stage of abstract painting. Before the war Mr. Wadsworth was a prominent member of the Vorticist Group, whose work was almost purely abstract and non-representative, and the knowledge of design and inventive construction gained in this experimental picture-making is now applied with skill to express things seen and deeply felt in a manner that is extraordinarily vivid, arresting and decorative.<sup>132</sup>

During the previous year, Lewis pinpointed a transitional stage in Wadsworth's development when he identified three separate tendencies within his work: an almost completely abstract series, a group which adopted a much more naturalistic approach, and one which incorporated both modes of expression. Referring to the factionalism which had hitherto characterised the debate between representative and abstract art, Lewis suggested that Wadsworth had "struck a lonely and quiet patch" above the battle which allowed him to exploit both tendencies in his work: "We may really consider then two phases of this artist's work quite simply side by side, without any knitting of the brows and mental readjustment as we pass from the less to the more abstract works."<sup>133</sup> Rutter's description of Wadsworth's Black Country scenes conformed to the prescription for modern art which Ginner had advocated in Modern Painting and Teaching. In works such as Netherton Furnaces, 1919 (Manchester City Art Gallery) [145], Wadsworth drew together the strong sense of design which was the legacy of his purely abstract works such as Enclosure, 1915 (Houston, Museum of Fine Arts) [146], with the "interest of the place" which was such an intrinsically important feature of Ginner's work.<sup>134</sup> Even Wadsworth's subject matter was adapted to Ginner's formula. In Modern Painting and Teaching Ginner suggested that an ideal environment for the exploration of the new art he envisaged was the "great industrial towns of the north with their monumental clusters of houses and factories ..."<sup>135</sup> Ginner had, himself, explored industrial subjects in paintings such as Leeds Canal, 1914 (Leeds City Art Gallery) [147] and The Timber Yard, Leeds, an interest which was shared by Gilman who executed two ink drawings of factories in Leeds during 1915.<sup>136</sup>

Announcing the formation of the Cumberland Market Group in 1915, Rutter had placed particular emphasis on Ginner's paintings of Leeds, describing them as "... remarkable designs both in line and colour from the factory-chimneyed and smoke-laden cities of the North."<sup>137</sup> Pound observed that Wadsworth had "found in the Black Country slag-heaps a content just suited to his

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<sup>131</sup> London, Leicester Galleries, The Black Country, January 1920.

<sup>132</sup> F. Rutter (1920a).

<sup>133</sup> W. Lewis (1919), pp.86, 89.

<sup>134</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.20.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Leeds Factories and Leeds Factories II, 1915 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum).

<sup>137</sup> F. Rutter (1915a).

particular talent."<sup>138</sup> Industrial subjects were by no means a new departure for Wadsworth, having been fostered by his association with the Vorticist movement and its stress on dynamism and the industrial Machine Age. As the son of a Yorkshire mill-owner, Wadsworth was brought up in an environment dominated by mechanisation and after leaving school had studied engineering draughtsmanship in Munich.<sup>139</sup> Causey has suggested that the inspiration for Wadsworth's Black Country drawings was, however, qualitatively different to the stimulus behind his earlier industrial scenes which, as Cork has observed, were essentially celebratory.<sup>140</sup> Causey implicates Wadsworth in the sense of postwar disillusionment which informed the work of a number of British artists during this period, drawing a parallel between these works and Paul Nash's graphic record of the devastation of Passchendaele, exhibited at the Leicester Galleries during November 1918.<sup>141</sup> Certainly, drawings such as View Near Bilston, 1919 (Manchester City Art Gallery) [148] convey a sense of the bleakness of the post-industrial landscape which is absent in Wadsworth's earlier, tautly constructed depictions of the manufacturing towns of north Yorkshire. By contrast, Wadsworth's Black Country woodcuts, as opposed to the drawings, texturally richer and more imposing in their handling of masses, convey a sense of the sheer power which heavy industry wields over the landscape. In 1921, fourteen woodcuts by Wadsworth were published with an introduction by O. R. Drey who wrote: "... since the wood-cut provides the starkest means for dealing with the relationship of masses, actually compelling the artist to adapt his handiwork straitly to this end, its attraction for him becomes obvious."<sup>142</sup> Two of these woodcuts, Blast Furnaces, 1919 (present location unknown) [149] and Black Country, 1919 (private collection) [150], demonstrate the sureness with which Wadsworth handled the medium and the extent to which his work articulated Neo-Realism in its modified form. While the subject matter in both scenes is immediately recognisable, Wadsworth does not rely for his effect on a minute description of the details of his settings. Instead, he has chosen to convey his impressions of the scene before him through a complete fusion of subject, medium and technique. As Pound observed: "Here are slag-heaps and factories, very like - in fact, unmistakably like Mr. Wadsworth's own abstract painting. He has, in full sense, incorporated or given a body to an idea."<sup>143</sup> The square factory buildings, regular chimneys and long plumes of smoke provided Wadsworth with ample scope for the pattern-making which was so much a feature of his work, while enabling him to maintain the close relationship between art and life which Ginner demanded. The extent to which Wadsworth's work of the period 1919-20 marked a break with his earlier Vorticist phase is illustrated by comparing his Black Country scenes with woodcuts of the period 1913-17 depicting similar subjects, such as Fustian Town - Hebden Bridge, 1914-15 (private collection) [151], which are significantly less accessible in terms of their ability to be 'read' without

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<sup>138</sup> E. Pound (1920), p.206.

<sup>139</sup> R. Cork, Wadsworth and the Woodcut. Essay included in J. Lewison, ed. (1990), p.14.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp.16-18.

<sup>141</sup> A. Causey, Wadsworth in the Early Twenties. Essay included in J. Lewison, ed. (1990), p.30.

<sup>142</sup> O. Drey (1921), unpaginated.

<sup>143</sup> E. Pound (1920), p.206.

the aid of a title. As Ginner had predicted in Modern Painting and Teaching, the later works represent a combination of the strong element of design which characterised Wadsworth's earlier work, with a return to representational concerns. Causey has drawn attention to the fact that critical response to Wadsworth's Black Country scenes generally stressed the advantages gained from his association with Vorticism, while expressing satisfaction at the evidence they gave of a return to representation.<sup>144</sup> Ginner was no exception and, writing in 1924, he included Wadsworth in a list of artists who "having been through the non-representational abstract painting are producing works in which the steel like quality of the strength of design is one of the important factors ..." <sup>145</sup> Ginner was clearly influenced by this phase of Wadsworth's work and in 1924 he painted Yeadon Church, near Leeds (Christie's, 10 June 1983, lot 60) [152], a panoramic industrial landscape taking in the church in the middle distance and the smoking chimneys of factories and mills beyond. Like Wadsworth, Ginner has made patterns with the smoke which billows from these chimneys but it is interesting to note that he was unwilling to subsume his natural pleasure in the depiction of small details, such as individual bricks and rows of windows, to the instinct for simplification which informed the work of Wadsworth. In this sense, Ginner's painting was clearly executed to the prescription laid down in Modern Painting and Teaching:

The suppression ... of windows, dear to many modern painters, on their way to abstract Art, will perhaps add to the feeling of volume and solidity of a square building, but, on the other hand, the regular windows of a factory will give in a great many cases variety to the design and a life interest to the composition.<sup>146</sup>

The work which Wadsworth carried out immediately after the war followed too closely the theories articulated by Ginner in Modern Painting and Teaching not to have been influenced by them. In 1920 Art and Letters carried a preliminary notice for an art school to be opened early in 1920 and run jointly by Ginner and Wadsworth.<sup>147</sup> According to the advertisement, they intended to teach drawing and painting from life, woodcutting and composition, specifically "Design in relation to emotional and intellectual elements in picture making; the value and employment of abstraction."<sup>148</sup> In other words, Ginner and Wadsworth intended to inculcate their students with the principles which informed their own work; a combination of Ginner's attachment to Realism and the interest in design elements which was the legacy of Wadsworth's purely abstract work. The advertisement went on to state:

In view of the developments which have taken place in European painting during the last 50 years and the consequent interest taken in the problems

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<sup>144</sup> A. Causey, Wadsworth in the Early Twenties, *op. cit.*, p.32.

<sup>145</sup> C. Ginner (1924), p.8.

<sup>146</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.20.

<sup>147</sup> Art and Letters, vol. 3 (Winter 1920), p.ii. In fact, the school apparently never opened. It is not mentioned in Ginner's Notebooks where he recorded the school which he established with Gilman at 16 Little Pulteney Street on 12 January 1916 and which closed in December 1917. (C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.1, p.cxxxii.)

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

involved by the very general adaptation or inclusion of the Abstract in modern composition, it is felt that a school such as this, where the study of these problems, their development and value can be exhaustively pursued, will appeal to the intelligence of the student of to-day.<sup>149</sup>

Several strictures laid down by Ginner in Modern Painting and Teaching would no doubt have informed instruction at the school he intended to establish with Wadsworth, in particular the emphasis on design and clarity of form which were features of the work of both Ginner and Wadsworth:

Each object must hold its own in space. It must be seen as a thing definite in form and colour, separate from its surroundings and not simply as a tone in relation to another tone. That is the only way of insisting on its importance, its form and design. Each degree of light, shade or half-tone (i.e. each plane in each object) must hold its own with a definitely observed form, separate from its neighbouring tone. By the building up of these various planes with definite shapes in juxtaposition, the student will arrive at the depth and solidity of each object.<sup>150</sup>

In addition, Ginner believed that each colour should be kept as pure as possible:

What is most seriously needed at the present moment is the teaching of colour ... to bring it up as near the brilliancy of nature as possible ... In this country there is a complete lack of teaching of this kind, and it would be well if some of the younger men were put in the Art schools.<sup>151</sup>

Wadsworth was just such an artist, combining an attention to design and pure colour with an attachment to Realism. It was a blend of skills ably demonstrated in La Rochelle, 1923 (private collection) [153] which Rutter singled out for praise when it was shown at the NEAC's winter exhibition in 1923. His use of the term 'neo-realism' in connection with this painting suggests that he apprehended both the stage to which the theory of Neo-Realism had developed and its implications for the work of Wadsworth:

This brilliant painting is in many respects the most remarkable picture in the exhibition, being a particularly happy and successful example of the clear-ringing neo-realism which appears to be the logical outcome of cubism applied to vision ... The composition is eminently decorative, but it is a composition in three dimensions, expressing the realities of depth and distance, while preserving a clearly marked sense of pattern which we are more accustomed to associate with two-dimensional design.<sup>152</sup>

Executed in tempera following a trip to Italy during which Wadsworth was attracted to the work of Quattrocento artists such as Fra Angelico (c.1400-55) and Benozzo Gozzoli (c.1421-97), La Rochelle is clearly indebted to these sources. Yet parallels may be drawn between this painting and the work of Ginner. Like Ginner's Carting Lane, the scene is portrayed realistically but with an overriding preoccupation with the patterns which objects make, in the densely organised forest of masts and repeat pattern of sails which catch the light, exhibiting jewel-like planes and facets. Ginner, in turn,

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<sup>149</sup> Art and Letters, vol. 3 (Winter 1920), p.ii.

<sup>150</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.23.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., pp.23-4.

<sup>152</sup> F. Rutter (1923).

was preoccupied by the patterns made by windows, bricks and steps and the interplay of buildings cast in shadow against those in sunlight. Rutter commented that La Rochelle was "a little hard or lacking in atmosphere. Softness is not a quality which appeals to Mr. Wadsworth nor does he desire to envelop his scene in a romantic atmosphere."<sup>153</sup> It is an observation which could equally apply to the work of Ginner and to Carting Lane in particular. Ginner's belief that "Each object must hold its own in space" precluded any blending of object and background so that the buildings in Carting Lane stand out clear against the sky and against each other. The silhouetted figures do not seem to belong to the same atmosphere but look as if they had been imposed on the surface of the painting. Similarly, La Rochelle is a painting which is all edges. The beached yachts stand out clear against the sand and instead of being allowed to merge into the distance, the far away ships are given equal distinction with the foreground vessels.

There is some evidence of reciprocal influence between the work of Ginner and Wadsworth during this period, apart from their shared interest in industrial landscape. In Wadsworth's Rue Fontaine de Caylus, Marseilles, 1924 (Leicestershire Museums and Art Gallery) [154] there is an echo of the vertical, rectilinear composition of Ginner's Carting Lane, while the lines of washing in Wadsworth's painting find their equivalent much later in the flags strung out across a narrow street in Ginner's Flask Walk, Hampstead, on Coronation Day, 1937 (London, Tate Gallery) [155]. Probably the most attractive and successful of Ginner's paintings of the early 1920s is Plymouth Pier from the Hoe, 1923 (Christie's, 6 March 1987, lot 209) [156]. Despite the inclusion of figures, which are generally absent in Wadsworth's harbour scenes, a comparison with his work is irresistible. All the elements are there; the clear lucid colour, the choice of a port scene, the sailing ships with their pattern of masts and, in spite of the thick paint, a slightly surreal, hard-edged atmosphere. It is difficult to imagine Ginner finding common ground with the surreal marine still lifes set against imaginary seascape backdrops which Wadsworth produced from the mid-1920s through to the late 1930s. Yet the swing between the poles of representation and abstraction which characterised Wadsworth's career, was consistent with a similar tendency observed by Thistlewood in the work of Hepworth, Moore and Nicholson. Wadsworth was involved with all three artists in Unit One, founded in 1933, and it is worth pointing out that he, as much as Read, was aware of Neo-Realist theory and its advocacy of a constructive combination of the positive elements of Realism and abstraction, although, like Hepworth *et al*, he evidently perceived this ultimately in terms of the movement of a pendulum across a spectrum rather than as elements brought into play at a fixed point.

Given that the founder members of the London Group represented a broad range of tendencies in modern British art, Ginner and Wadsworth, at the beginning of 1914, appeared to occupy opposite ends of the spectrum. In 1915 Lewis had compared the work of Gilman and Ginner with that of Wadsworth, claiming that Wadsworth's Blackpool, to all appearances a totally abstract work, was in fact a more realistic portrayal than a Neo-Realist's likely depiction of such a scene.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

Lewis had expressed the hope that Gilman and Ginner would modify their work in favour of a more abstract approach. Yet when, in the early 'twenties, Ginner and Wadsworth adopted parallel modes of expression, we find that their concurrence was a result of compromise on both sides. While Wadsworth rejected abstract forms in favour of portraying the readily identifiable subjects and locations, the attachment to the sense of place, demanded by Neo-Realism, Ginner learned the value of utilising the design elements, the attention to naturally occurring pattern and the careful selection and suppression of details which remained a feature of Wadsworth's work.

## CONCLUSION

The significance of Neo-Realism, as the theory developed post-1914, resides partly in its appropriateness in typifying attitudes regarding visual representation among a section of British avant-garde artists during and immediately following the First World War. Having witnessed the unimaginable carnage of this horrific engagement, Lewis and Nevinson, for example, who served as both soldiers and war artists and who had found their pre-war manner particularly well-adapted to a portrayal of the modern war machine, turned away from their earlier emphasis on mechanistic imagery which they now, to some extent, equated with brutality and mass slaughter. Both Lewis and Nevinson had contributed significantly to a pre-war climate which Edwards has characterised as preoccupied with the notion of violent, even apocalyptic action, a tendency evident in literature and philosophy as well as the visual arts.<sup>1</sup> Although this did not take the form of the overt call to arms and the glorification of militarism so energetically promoted by the Italian Futurists, it carried, nevertheless, overtones of rebirth or cleansing through violent action. Significantly, it was Nevinson, Futurism's sole English disciple, who most strenuously and publicly rejected war after peace was declared. In 1919 he recalled that as early as Christmas 1914 his view of the war as a "great adventure" had been extinguished: "War became a horror ... all the pageantry and adventure were dead and war had become a stinking, loathsome thing."<sup>2</sup>

In suggesting that Neo-Realism encapsulated, in part, the spirit of the post-war avant-garde in British art, there is no intention to convey a direct causal link between Neo-Realism and the work of all those artists concerned. Although Neo-Realist theory was clearly aired and debated among the membership of the London Group, the Leeds Arts Club and the frequenters of Hulme's Frith Street *salon*, it is equally clear that an emotional response to war was, for the majority of these artists, a stronger motivating factor. A significant exception was Wadsworth who was evidently directly influenced by Neo-Realism in his rejection of the purely abstract forms which characterised much of his earlier work in favour of a return to the depiction of scenes in a manner which conveys a specific local identity. Interestingly, the sense of disillusionment experienced by Lewis, Nevinson and other artists, including Bomberg, was not anticipated by Ginner who, in the year before the war ended, observed: "Before the war the modern artistic movements were very much alive, and there is every reason to believe that afterwards it will be more so, as the violence of the present time will have excited minds and infused in them the spirit of action."<sup>3</sup> Although he served as an Intelligence officer in the war, Ginner did not see active service which no doubt accounts, to some extent, for his optimistic view of the likely effects of the experience of war on the work of his fellow artists.

Neo-Realism, as outlined in the document published in 1914, was in several respects a reactionary response to recent developments in European art, not least in its rejection of Cubism, a

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<sup>1</sup> P. Edwards (1992), pp.21-2.

<sup>2</sup> C. Nevinson (1919a).

<sup>3</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.20.

position which Ginner had taken up as early as 1911 when he reviewed the *Artistes Indépendants* exhibition for The Art News.<sup>4</sup> The writings of such nineteenth-century French Realists as Baudelaire, Courbet and Thoré had exerted a profound influence on Ginner's ideas regarding the nature and function of art in terms of its ability to "interpret its Epoch".<sup>5</sup> Ginner's division of artists into 'Realists' and 'formula painters' was based on his perception of the extent to which, in his opinion, they were concerned to convey, in an original manner, the spirit of their own times. An element of what might loosely be termed 'art historical nationalism' clearly informed these decisions for, implied in the Neo-Realist requirement that art fulfil a documentary role, was the notion that artists must depict the character of their own surroundings. The ideas contained in The Cézanne Stunt, published in 1918, indicate that Ginner stood by this conviction. The work of the Cubists was, he suggested, a recent form of 'academism' in the sense that he believed such art to be based largely on the work of Cézanne. A close reading of Neo-Realism suggests, however, that Ginner's rejection of 'Post-Impressionism' as the 'enemy' of constructive progress in modern British art was prompted by the theories promoted by Fry and Bell on behalf of the artists included in the two 'Post-Impressionist' exhibitions of 1910 and 1912. Ginner's dismissal of broad categories of modern French art was clearly a result of unease at the preoccupation with form at the expense of subject evident in attempts by both Fry and Bell to promote such art. As Neo-Realism made clear, subject matter was, and indeed remained, a priority in the work of both Gilman and Ginner.

It has been the aim of this thesis to present Neo-Realism primarily in terms of its evolutionary nature and its ability to adapt to the stimuli of fresh ideas. The theory underwent a decisive reconstruction during the years immediately following publication of the initial treatise, in order to accommodate the interest in design elements which became increasingly apparent in the work of both Gilman and Ginner. A propensity for decorative effects, evident in their work as early as 1910 when they began to apply pigment in small dabs and touches, composing colour fields in the divisionist manner, constituted an element of decoration quite apart from the forms described although not, it must be pointed out, at their expense. While this phase of their work did not represent a strict adherence to the principles of Neo-Impressionism whose exponents, according to Ginner, sank "into the Formula Pit" through their "scientific study of colour", it served to liberate an interest in surface texture which was to become a priority in their work.<sup>6</sup> This engagement was to be significantly extended as both Gilman and Ginner became interested in the work of such modern masters as Gauguin and Van Gogh and, in this context, their trip to Paris following the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition, was to have a significant impact. Ginner's renewed contact with the work of Van Gogh directly contributed to his realisation that the priorities of Realism and decoration were entirely compatible and capable of being combined in a single work of art. The influence of Gore is indicated for it was a perception which he had achieved immediately following his experience of the first 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition and which is apparent in his subsequent work. His interest in

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<sup>4</sup> C. Ginner (1911a).

<sup>5</sup> C. Ginner (1914a), p.272.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

decorative priorities culminated in the paintings he carried out at Letchworth during 1912, following his involvement in the Cabaret Theatre Club commission which clearly had a strong impact on his art in terms of the freedom to experiment which it afforded him. Ginner's involvement in this commission had a significant impact on his own easel painting, for the decorative nature of the work he produced clearly liberated in him a strong feeling for design in both form and composition. Onwards of 1914 it was a perception which also influenced the work of Gilman as he learned to carefully edit his compositions, paring away incidental detail in order to achieve a tighter, more controlled image in which each element of the composition contributed to the unity of the whole. The influence of the work of the artists with whom the Neo-Realists' associated in the London and Cumberland Market Groups is indicated as well as the critical influence of Hulme who advocated a greater degree of control on the part of the artist in terms of emphasis on, or suppression of, elements within the subject chosen.

The keystone in assessing the development of the theory of Neo-Realism is Ginner's second article, Modern Painting and Teaching, in which he presented a directive for the future development of British art, harnessing the positive aspects of abstract and Realist tendencies in order to create a "great national Art".<sup>7</sup> It was a perception which combined Neo-Realism's intrinsic commitment to representation with a growing respect for achievements in the field of abstract and semi-abstract art and the desire for a regeneration of the national school which had informed Neo-Realism from its beginnings. The Neo-Realists recognised that this regeneration would be achieved through co-operative endeavour rather than individually, a perception expressed in their active involvement in the London Group which represented an attempt to unite disparate factions. By 1917 Ginner was actively promoting an art which would combine the "sense of place" which was intrinsic to the Realist section of the group, with the "strong pattern and composition of line and colour" which he now found to be characteristic of the work of artists who employed abstract or semi-abstract forms.<sup>8</sup> This represented an enlightened compromise on the part of the Neo-Realists and by no means implied a wholesale adoption of Hulme's views which promoted the use of totally abstract forms. Ginner advocated the application within a representational framework, of the strong sense of design apparent in abstract art while reserving his opinion that the work of the Vorticists was limited by "their abstract patterns, which are liable to make one weary by monotonous repetition."<sup>9</sup> It was Ginner's opinion that a work of art must combine "beauty" in "pattern" with "some intelligible idea or outlook on life."<sup>10</sup> In other words, art must be accessible in terms of its ability to convey meaning to its audience. By 1918 Ginner was able to cite, among others, Bevan, Gilman, Lewis and the Nash brothers as artists who had achieved such a combination within their work, observing that "Wyndham

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<sup>7</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.19.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.22.

Lewis is no longer a cubist (sic), but has developed on abstract lines to a personal expression of something important he has to reveal."<sup>11</sup>

It has been demonstrated that a number of factors contributed to a mood of uncertainty among British artists during the closing years of the second decade of this century. The death of Hulme in 1917, deprived the abstractionists of their foremost theorist and publicist. Artists such as Bomberg, Etchells and Kauffer had perceived abstractionism to be a dead end in their own work while Lewis and Nevinson were apparently profoundly disaffected by their experiences at the Front. Neo-Realism came into its own at a time when many British artists faced a crisis in their development. Having rejected the use of abstract and near-abstract forms, they experienced some uncertainty as to the future direction of their work. Harrison has described the period 1919-24 as representing a hiatus.<sup>12</sup> He characterises the mood of the 'twenties as one of "isolation and retrenchment".<sup>13</sup> Group X represented an attempt to revive the spirit of the pre-war avant-garde: as such it was unsuccessful and, significantly, among the exhibitors only Dismorr and Hamilton showed purely abstract works. Group X, in fact, represented the end of an epoch in British art, a decade which had seen the formation and, in many cases, the closure of a large number of groups and societies of artists. Lewis, Nevinson and others now declared themselves vehemently opposed to any further involvement in art group politics. A measure of this must be due, in part, to the death of Gilman and the loss of his important work as a mediator between diverse factions. Whilst agreeing with Harrison's view that much had been lost through the early deaths of Gilman and Gore, it is necessary to quarrel with his estimation of Ginner's role:

... Ginner's inclusion in the X Group ... could only emphasize how much had been lost through the deaths of Gore and Gilman and how much might have been achieved had they lived to find common ground with Lewis in the twenties. Though a competent and sensible painter, Ginner had never really been a radical.<sup>14</sup>

Yet it was precisely this which dictated the strength of Ginner's position if we may take 'radical' to mean, in this context, an artist who utilised abstract or semi-abstract forms. Ginner's significance lay in his perception of the value of a combination of the positive design aspects of abstract art with an intrinsic commitment to representation. The almost universal rejection by British artists of abstract art during this period, whether or not we choose to attribute it in part to the influence of Neo-Realism, did apparently substantiate Ginner's theory that those artists who had previously employed purely abstract forms had "driven into a blind alley".<sup>15</sup> The significance of Neo-Realism as an articulation of this move away from abstraction should not be underestimated. Neo-Realism played a key role in the debate between Realism and abstraction so vigorously conducted in the pages of

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<sup>11</sup> C. Ginner (1918), p.43.

<sup>12</sup> C. Harrison (1981a), p.145.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

<sup>15</sup> C. Ginner (1917), p.20.

The New Age and elsewhere, and takes its place ultimately as a vivid indicator of the spirit and consciousness of a range of artists at a crucial moment in the development of modern British art.

The mid-1920s has presented a convenient cut-off point for this thesis although Ginner lived until 1952 and went on painting until two years before his death.<sup>16</sup> He continued to work in oils but increasingly favoured the media of pen and ink and watercolour, generally choosing landscapes or street scenes as his subjects. Although the extremely thick application of paint which characterised his early work was toned down, Ginner continued throughout his career to employ a substantial paint surface and a very precise technique. In fact there is nothing in the work which Ginner produced after the mid-'twenties which had not been substantiated during the early period. Group X was the last of its particular type with which Ginner was associated. In 1942 he allowed his name to be put forward for election to the Royal Academy, a move which would have been unthinkable in terms of his earlier unequivocally anti-establishment stance (it would have been equally unthinkable for him to have been asked). But this implied no break with, or infringement of, the tenets of Neo-Realism. In the same year that he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, Ginner painted Homage à Gauguin (private collection) which is dated 1942 in his Notebooks.<sup>17</sup> A late date is substantiated by the inclusion among the still-life objects of John Rewald's biography of Gauguin, published in 1938.<sup>18</sup> Yet there is nothing within the painting which Gilman would not have recognised as conforming to Neo-Realist principles: the thick application of the paint, the interest in decorative pattern-making evident in the inclusion of an area of floral wallpaper, the bright colour and attention to design within a representational framework and the devotion to the work of Gauguin implied in both title and treatment. However one might choose to speculate on the possible direction of Gilman's work had he lived, Ginner's late work does stand testimony to the endurance of Neo-Realist theory and practice.

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<sup>16</sup> M. Easton (1970), p.209.

<sup>17</sup> C. Ginner, Notebooks, vol.III, p.223.

<sup>18</sup> J. Rewald, Gauguin. New York, 1938.

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Among the chief sources of information on early twentieth-century British art are the numerous contemporary journals and newspapers which carried exhibition reviews. All those cited in footnotes are included in the general bibliography and, although space does not allow a more comprehensive list, these cover most titles consulted. Another, extremely useful, source of reference is Christie's and Sotheby's sales catalogues which, again for reasons of space, are not covered by the bibliography.

### UNPUBLISHED SOURCE MATERIAL

**ART AND LETTERS.** Preliminary notice, dated 30 May 1917. Pissarro Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

**CABARET THEATRE CLUB.** Letters, membership cards, club rules, photographs, minute book, etc. in the collection of Frederick Gore, R. A.

**GINNER, Charles, Notebooks.** 4 Volumes, 1908 - 1950. Copies in the possession of Dr. Wendy Baron.

**MINUTES** of Camden Town and London Group meetings kept by J. B. Manson. Tate Gallery Archive, London.

**SOMERSET HOUSE,** Wills of H. Gilman, C. Ginner, Ruby Ginner Dyer and Lydia Adeline Best. Death certificate of C. Ginner.

**WOODESON, John, Spencer F. Gore,** M. A. Report, 1968, Courtauld Institute Library, London.

### LETTERS

Comparatively little of Gilman's and Ginner's correspondence has survived. In a letter to the present writer, Gilman's niece, Mrs Barbara Duce, stated that no personal correspondence is extant, Gilman's letters to his mother having been destroyed after her death. Ginner's personal effects were inherited by his sister, Ruby, and in turn by his niece, Mrs Nancie Cappella, who informed the present writer that no letters were included. With the exception of extracts from S. Gore to D. Turner (J. Rothenstein (1957), pp.198-200; M. Easton (1967), pp.63-5; F. Gore and R. Shone (1983), unpaginated), W. Sickert to N. Hudson (W. Baron (1977), p.72 and (1979), p.158), C. Ginner to S. Gore (R. Cork (1985), p.303, n.76) and the complete text of C. Ginner to J. Manson (M. Easton (1967), p.65), the following letters have not been published.

#### **From Gilman to:**

L. Pissarro	Undated [1911]	Tate Gallery Archive
L. Pissarro	Undated [1914]	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro	Undated [1914]	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro	Undated	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro and E. Pissarro	Undated [1915]	Pissarro Archive

L. Pissarro	Undated [1918]	Pissarro Archive
<b>From Ginner to:</b>		
L. Pissarro	2 January 1911	Pissarro Archive
S. Gore	9 May 1912	Frederick Gore, R. A.
J. Manson	23 October 1913	Tate Gallery Archive
L. Pissarro	27 March 1917	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro	2 October 1922	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro	18 February 1923	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro	6 April 1923	Pissarro Archive
L. Pissarro	3 March 1925	Pissarro Archive
Curator, Manchester City Art Gallery	[Recd. 7 March 1925]	Manchester City Art Gallery
Curator, Manchester City Art Gallery	7 July 1925	Manchester City Art Gallery
L. Pissarro	31 December 1926	Pissarro Archive
E. Pissarro	26 August 1944	Pissarro Archive
E. Pissarro	11 December 1944	Pissarro Archive
E. Pissarro	31 December 1944	Pissarro Archive
E. Pissarro	4 January 1946	Pissarro Archive
E. Pissarro	17 January 1947	Pissarro Archive
D. Grant	3 July 1947	King's College Library, Cambridge

**Letters from:**

S. Gore to D. Turner	Typescript copies of 32 letters, dated from 8 June 1908 - 24 November 1913	Frederick Gore, R. A.
S. Gore to L. Pissarro	16 December 1912	Pissarro Archive
W. Lewis to F. Rutter	Undated {September/October 1915}	Tate Gallery Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	31 January 1914	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	30 September 1915	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	4 October 1915	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	15 October 1915	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to E. Pissarro	15 June 1916	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	9 October 1916	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	Undated	Pissarro Archive
J. Manson to L. Pissarro	11 January 1917	Pissarro Archive
J. Nash to D. Carrington	Undated [?March 1915]	Tate Gallery Archive

J. Nash to D. Carrington	Undated	Tate Gallery Archive
J. Nash to D. Carrington	Undated	Tate Gallery Archive
J. Nash to D. Carrington	Undated	Tate Gallery Archive
J. Nash to D. Carrington	Undated	Tate Gallery Archive
J. Nash to D. Carrington	Undated	Tate Gallery Archive
L. Pissarro to S. Gore	18 December 1912	Pissarro Archive
W. Rothenstein to J. Manson	12 October 1929	Tate Gallery Archive
F. Rutter to E. Pissarro	29 July 1914	Pissarro Archive
F. Rutter to L. Pissarro	2 October 1914	Pissarro Archive
W. Sickert to N. Hudson	Undated [July/August 1907]	Copy in possession of Dr. Wendy Baron

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