

# Monet's London

ARTISTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE THAMES

1859 - 1914

Essays by

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# The Lu(c)re of London

FRENCH ARTISTS AND ART DEALERS IN THE BRITISH CAPITAL, 1859-1914

Petra ten-Doesschate Chu

“ must absolutely go to England every year instead of going to Paris.” Thus the French painter Gustave Courbet wrote to his sister in 1859, suggesting that he would have a better chance to exhibit and sell his paintings in London than in his home town.<sup>1</sup> Though he failed to heed his own advice, Courbet was not mistaken.<sup>2</sup> England was on the verge of an art market boom that, from an economic point of view, would make the country attractive for European as well as American artists in decades to come. Beginning in the early 1860s, they would travel in increasing numbers to London, departing, more often than not, from Paris. London offered the best economic climate for the arts, but Paris would long remain the foremost center of art training. It also retained, at least until World War I, the reputation of a place conducive to creativity for its history, its physical beauty, its museums, and its ambiance of cafés, dance halls, and cabarets. For the novelist Léon Gozlan, writing in the *Nouveau Tableau de Paris* (1834), London was the Thames, meaning commerce and industry, but Paris was the Louvre—art, beauty, and entertainment.<sup>3</sup> Hence the trajectory of many young artists, both French and non-French, who would study in Paris at the famed Ecole des Beaux-Arts or in one of the many private ateliers in the city (such as the Ateliers Julian or Colarossi),<sup>4</sup> then travel to London in hope of making sales. Whether or not they were successful in their commercial ventures, many of them became drawn to the modern grandeur of its urban landscape. The Thames with its bridges and its busy boat traffic; the Houses of Parliament, mysteriously veiled in London’s famous “smog”; the sprawling public parks so different from the formal *jardins* in Paris; even the docks in London’s East End—all had the fresh appeal of modernity.<sup>5</sup> And for some artists, such as James McNeill Whistler, Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, and André Derain, the experience of the modern beauty, or perhaps we should say the sublimity, of London, had a decisive impact on their work, helping to give it “a resolutely modernist turn.”<sup>6</sup>

*The International Exposition of 1855  
and the French Perception of the British Art Scene*

In 1855, the government of Napoleon III organized France’s first major international exposition in response to the highly successful Crystal Palace Exhibition in London four years earlier.<sup>7</sup> The French knew they could not compete with the British in the fields of technology and industry, the products of which had been shown to splendid effect in the Crystal

Palace. Hence it was decided to create a new focus for the Paris exhibition by adding a major international art show, housed in its own building. Twenty-eight nations were represented in the Palais des Beaux-Arts, where their artistic accomplishments were measured against one another. Though the French had made sure that they would dominate the show, the British also cut a striking figure. Indeed, the British school was singled out by many Parisian critics as the only one that could rival the French, because it had not succumbed to its influence.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike the French exhibit, which was centered on grand-style history painting, the British show was dominated by genre pictures. Both its admirers and detractors saw the predominance of this “lower genre” over history painting as a consequence, at once, of the limited control of the British Academy and of a different patronage system. In France, the major patrons during the middle of the nineteenth century were the state and the church; British artists were working primarily for the art market. Their works were bought by bourgeois collectors who preferred genre paintings, as well as portraits, landscapes, and still lifes, over paintings of historical and biblical scenes. While conservative French critics felt that this “submission to the whims of rich collectors” was the cause of the decline of British art, progressive ones saw the existence of a flourishing art market as a positive sign. They argued that it gave British artists an independence that their French counterparts lacked.<sup>9</sup> For French artists, the liberal stance of the Royal Academy, the presence of many alternative exhibition opportunities, and the realization of the existence of an art market catering to bourgeois collectors made London a place of great interest.

*Artists’ Moves from Paris to London, 1859–1870*

Beginning in the middle of the century, French artists increasingly looked to London as a place to showcase and sell their works. The city offered numerous exhibition possibilities. Besides the annual exhibits of the Royal Academy (founded 1760), which were the British counterpart of the French Salons, there were the periodic shows of the British Institution (1806–1867), the (Royal) Society of British Artists (founded 1824), the Royal Watercolour Society (founded 1805), and the Royal Institute (founded as the New Water-colour Society in 1832). Additional art clubs and exhibition societies were established, and by the mid-1880s there were about forty such associations in England and Scotland,<sup>10</sup> a far cry from Paris where



fig. 16 Henri Fantin-Latour (*French, 1836–1904*)  
Homage to Delacroix: Cordier, Duranty, Legros, Fantin-Latour, Whistler, Champfleury, Manet,  
Bracquemond, Baudelaire, A. de Balleroy, 1864  
Oil on canvas 160 x 250 cm  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

In this painting, the three members of the Société des trois are prominently shown on the left side of Delacroix's portrait. Fantin, dressed in a white blouse, is seated between Legros, standing behind him to the left, and Whistler, standing in front of him on the right.

the exhibition society of the impressionists, the Société anonyme des artistes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc., was still considered pioneering when it was founded.

In addition to numerous group shows, London had a long tradition of private one-person exhibitions.<sup>11</sup> In the eighteenth century, artists such as John Singleton Copley, Henry Fuseli, and Benjamin West had organized periodic exhibitions of one or more of their own works. This practice continued in the nineteenth century and proved attractive to French artists. In 1820, Théodore Géricault showed his *Raft of the Medusa* (Paris, Musée du Louvre) in Bullock's Roman Gallery in London, before touring it in the British provinces.<sup>12</sup> More than forty years later, Gustave Courbet arranged a tour of his scandalous painting *The Return from the Conference* in England.<sup>13</sup> And though he never acted on it, Edouard Manet gave serious consideration to a private show in London in 1868.<sup>14</sup> Apparently, there was enough of an art public in London, both in terms of spectators and patrons, to support these many and varied exhibitions, as well as those organized by art dealers, about which we'll have more to say later.

To take advantage of the possibilities offered by London, the American artist James McNeill Whistler, who had been living in Paris since 1856, decided to move to England in 1859. As a student in the atelier of Charles Gleyre, he had met several British art students, including Edward Poynter, Thomas Armstrong, and George Du Maurier, who must have briefed him about the London art scene.<sup>15</sup> When his first major painting, a large-scale genre picture called *At the Piano* (Cincinnati, Taft Museum), was refused by the jury of the 1859 Salon, Whistler may have thought that his chances of having his works shown and sold would be better in London.<sup>16</sup> He was right. The following year, *At the Piano* was hung in the Royal Academy exhibition and bought by the Scottish painter John Phillip. Meanwhile, Whistler had taken rooms in Wapping on the Thames and had embarked on a series of etchings of life on and near the river. Shown in Paris in 1861, the *Thames Set* was the first sustained effort by a non-British artist to capture the modern beauty of the Thames River (see cats. 95–104).

While still in Paris, Whistler had met two Greek students, the brothers Luke and Alexander ("Alec") Ionides. Back in London, they introduced Whistler to their father, Alexander, who was a major patron of contemporary art. By then, Alec and Luke had themselves begun to collect art and both became patrons of Whistler, buying some of his most important

works and introducing him to other art lovers in the Greek community of London, such as the Spartalis and the Dilbergoglous. These collectors liked to surround themselves with artists and often bought from them directly rather than through the intermediary of dealers.

In 1858, Whistler had closely befriended two French artists, Henri Fantin-Latour and Alphonse Legros, with whom he had formed the Société des trois (Society of Three; fig. 16). After his move to London, he encouraged them to join him. Fantin, whose paintings had likewise been refused by the jury of the 1859 Salon, crossed the Channel in July of that same year. Though his first visit did not lead to any sales, Fantin returned to England in 1861 to stay with a judge-turned-artist, Edwin Edwards. At Edwards's house in Sunbury, he painted several still lifes, which were admired by everyone who saw them. This prompted Fantin to ask Edwards to send one of his still lifes to the Royal Academy exhibition in 1862. In the meantime, Whistler, acting as Fantin's agent, showed some of them to his collector friends. In 1864, he convinced Fantin to bring several still lifes, almost all of which found buyers in London. Henceforth, Fantin regularly sent still lifes to the Royal Academy exhibitions, submitting a total of sixty-eight between 1862 and 1890 (see appendix). He made four trips to London, the last in 1881, but was never tempted to move there. Lacking all interest in outdoor scenery, he seems to have stayed away from the Thames, limiting his sightseeing to museums. But if there are no landscape paintings to commemorate his London trips, he did paint several portraits in England, including one of Mrs. Edwards (Paris, Musée du Petit Palais) and another of Mrs. Potter, the wife of a Manchester industrialist (whereabouts unknown). In 1864, he made an etching of Edwards and his wife playing music, which he entitled *A Piece by Schumann* (fig. 17).<sup>17</sup> It offers a glimpse into the daily life of the well-to-do and educated bourgeoisie that collected modern art in Victorian England.

Legros, the third member of the Société des trois, traveled to London in 1863. Though his works were well received by Parisian critics, he had been unable to sell them in France. Whistler introduced him to the Greek community in London. As a result, the Ionides, and especially Constantine, the older brother of Alec and Luke, became important patrons of Legros. Like Whistler, Legros eventually settled in England where, in 1876, he became a professor at the Slade School.

Several other French artists explored England in the 1860s

British Academy exhibitions were Rosa Bonheur and her two brothers François-Auguste and Jules Isidore, Félix Bracquemond, Jean-Baptiste Corot, Charles-François Daubigny, Emil Signol, and François-Xavier Winterhalter (see appendix). Some artists even traveled to London to explore the art market firsthand. Daubigny, for example, visited London in 1865, with the dealer and print publisher Alfred Cadart. He returned in 1866 and made several drawings and watercolors in London, some of which became the basis for finished paintings executed upon his return to France. Among these were *The Thames at Erith*, now in the Louvre (fig. 18) and the *Thames at Woolwich* (current whereabouts unknown), which Daubigny exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1867. *St. Paul's from the Surrey Side* (cat. 6), was the product of a later trip, undertaken in October 1870 to escape the Franco-Prussian War. During his stay in London, which was to last until May 1871, Daubigny made a number of sketches. Some of these served as the basis of finished paintings, executed even as late as 1873, which is the date inscribed on *St. Paul's from the Surrey Side*.

While several French artists were trying to gain a foothold in London on their own, some English dealers also promoted French art in the British capital. Foremost among them was the Belgian-born Ernest Gambart (see fig. 19). The son of a printer and bookseller in Courtrai, Gambart had moved to Paris in his late teens. There he became interested in the print trade. As a representative of the well-known printselling firm of Adolphe Goupil, he moved to England in 1840 to sell prints after French paintings. Before long, however, he decided to strike out on his own, starting a business that combined the sale of reproductive prints and authentic works of art. Beginning in 1846, Gambart regularly organized exhibitions of contemporary artists in his gallery at Pall Mall, which would become extremely successful, thanks to his clever cultivation of art critics and wealthy art patrons.<sup>18</sup>

Taking advantage of his Belgian background, Gambart regularly showed French, Belgian, and Dutch paintings, though his mainstay was British art. To mark the rapprochement between France and England as a result of the Crimean War, he began, in 1854, a series of yearly exhibitions of French art, which caused his gallery to become known as the "French Gallery." For the most part these group shows featured the works of academic and *juste-milieu*, or "middle-of-the-road," artists such as François Biard, Alfred Dedreux, Edouard

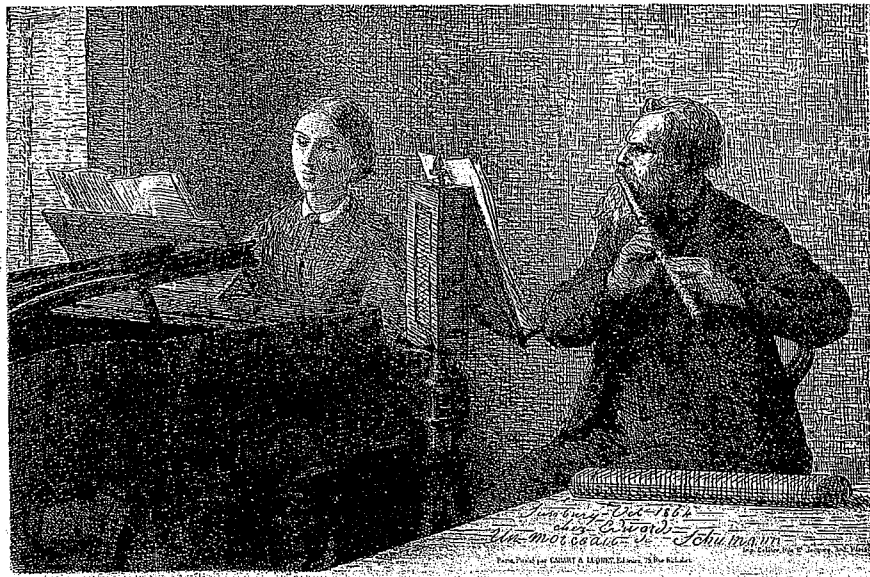


fig. 17 Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836–1904)

A Piece by Schumann, September 1864

Etching in brown ink with plate tone on paper

24 x 34.6 cm plate: 18.6 x 27.7 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

This etching represents Fantin-Latour's British friends and patrons Edwin Edwards and his wife, Ruth, making music together in their house at Sunbury, where the artist visited them several times.



fig. 18 Charles-François Daubigny (*French, 1817–1878*)  
The Thames at Erith, 1866  
Oil on wood panel 38 x 67 cm  
Musée du Louvre

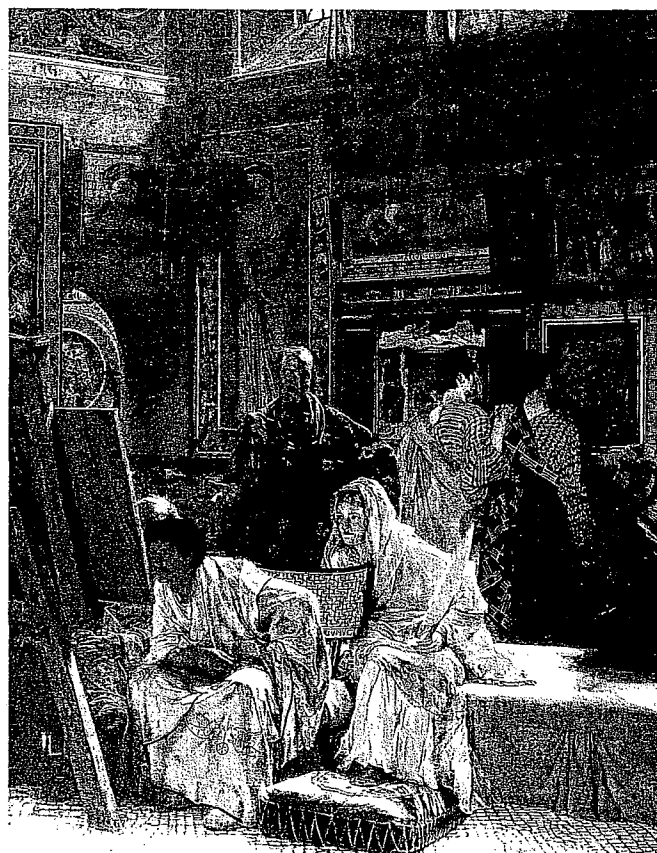


fig. 19 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (*British, 1836–1912*)  
The Picture Gallery, 1874  
Oil on canvas 218.4 x 166.4 cm  
Townley Hall Art Gallery, Burnley, Lancashire, England

The painting was commissioned by Ernest Gambart for his house in Nice. Gambart himself is standing in the center. His nephew Charles Deschamps is in the lower left, leaning forward to inspect a painting.



Dubufe, Edouard Frère, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Ernest Meissonnier, Antoine Plassan, and Ary Scheffer. Gambart also promoted the artists of the Barbizon school, notably Jules Dupré, Théodore Rousseau, and Constant Troyon,<sup>19</sup> and he represented some realist painters, most importantly Fantin-Latour, whose *Homage to Delacroix* (fig. 16) he bought in 1864.<sup>20</sup> Realizing the popularity of animal painting in England, Gambart aggressively promoted French *animaliers*.<sup>21</sup> Rosa Bonheur, painter of the famous *Horse Fair* (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), became his “special project” to the mutual benefit of both.<sup>22</sup>

#### *The Franco-Prussian War and French Artists' Discovery of London's Urban Landscape*

The years 1870 and 1871, saw something of an exodus of artists from Paris. They traveled to England to escape military service and the dangers of the Franco-Prussian War, as well as to find a place where they could work in peace and, hopefully, sell their works—something that seemed impossible in Paris as the city was ravaged first by the Prussians, then by the civil war that was the Commune. Among the numerous artists who went to England were François Bonvin, Charles Daubigny, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Ferdinand Heilbuth, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Guillaume Régamey, Jules de la Rochenoire, and Edmond Wagemez.<sup>23</sup> Others, who participated in the Commune, left Paris later, in order to escape the punishments and retributions that were meted out to ex-communards. The painter James Tissot may have been one of them.<sup>24</sup>

Though several of these artists initially contemplated living in London for a long time or even permanently, most of them ended up staying for no more than a year, leaving as soon as order had returned to France. Unable to speak English, they felt alienated in London and disappointed by the lack of interest in their art. Bonvin wrote to his dealer Hector Brame, who had taken refuge in Belgium, “I had intended to try to support myself in London, but the trouble I've had making myself understood is leading me to abandon the idea.”<sup>25</sup> Pissarro was even more disenchanted. To his friend Théodore Duret he wrote:

Indeed, my dear M. Duret, I won't stay here. Only when one is abroad, one realizes how beautiful, grand, and hospitable France is. What a difference with this place, where we encounter nothing but contempt, indifference, and even incivility; [and], among colleagues, jeal-

ousy and the most selfish diffidence. Here, there is no art, it is all a matter of business.<sup>26</sup>

With all their misgivings about the London art world, Bonvin and Pissarro both became fascinated with the city's urban scenery. Bonvin made a series of drawings and watercolors of the Thames (fig. 20), which, back in France, he would translate into finished paintings.<sup>27</sup> Pissarro, who lived in the suburb of Lower Norwood, painted several small canvases representing local scenery, as well as some well-known London sights, such as *Dulwich College* (private collection) and *The Crystal Palace* (fig. 21). These works, as well as some paintings by Monet of the Pool of London, the wide section of the Thames at the western end of the former London Docks (see fig. 10) are among the first impressionist paintings to feature industrial progress. In addition to the Crystal Palace, emblematic of this theme, they show harbors, trains, and factories.<sup>28</sup>

While some French artists felt alienated in London, others felt right at home. Gérôme, who had been an honorary member of the Royal Academy since 1869, was represented in its exhibitions in 1870 as well as 1871.<sup>29</sup> He had many friends in England and good connections with dealers, such as Henry Wallis, who had taken over Gambart's French Gallery in 1867, and the people at Goupil's. Gérôme's meticulously detailed orientalist genre scenes were well received in London, in part because they already were known through print reproductions that were widely circulated in England.<sup>30</sup>

James Tissot also had some contacts in London when he arrived. Having drawn cartoons for *Vanity Fair*, he knew the magazine's owner, Thomas Gibson Bowles, who introduced him to artists and collectors in London. Tissot welcomed the market opportunities in London and decided to stay in England, at least until 1882.<sup>31</sup> Like Gérôme, Tissot had already exhibited at the Royal Academy.<sup>32</sup> He now resumed doing so, exhibiting sixteen paintings between 1872 and 1881. *The Thames* (1876; cat. 44), a painting in this exhibition, was among the works he showed there. This highly finished picture of fashionable life in London, with its mild erotic tinge, exemplifies the style and subject matter that made Tissot popular in London. It is interesting to note the dramatic difference between his vision of the Thames and that of Bonvin, Monet, and even Whistler. While those artists foregrounded commercial activity, labor, and industry, Tissot pushed these elements to the background to prominently feature the bourgeois leisure life that they made possible. It is no wonder that the captains of industry, who were



fig. 20 François Bonvin (*French, 1817–1887*)  
Gravesend, 1871  
Watercolor and pen and ink on paper 15.8 x 23.8 cm  
Musée du Louvre

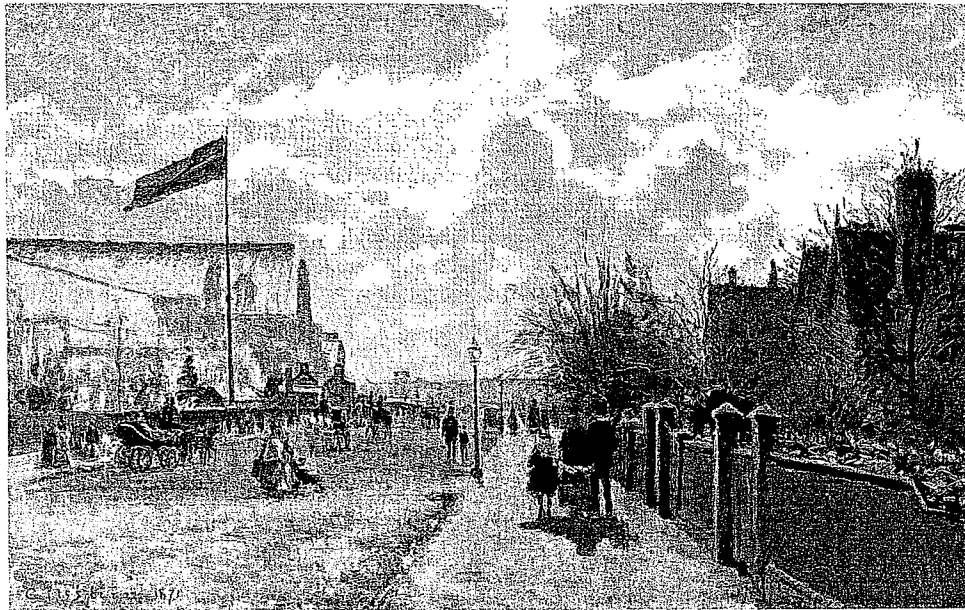


fig. 21 Camille Pissarro (*French 1830–1903*)  
The Crystal Palace, 1871  
Oil on canvas 47.2 x 73.5 cm  
The Art Institution of Chicago  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. B. E. Bensinger

the major art collectors in England, preferred the works of Tissot over those of his French colleagues. They would rather contemplate the fruits of labor than labor itself.

Just as Whistler had tried to persuade his friends Fantin-Latour and Legros to come over to England, so Tissot worked on his close friend Edgar Degas.<sup>33</sup> The latter had made a brief trip to London in October 1871, during which he had been in touch with both Whistler and Legros. A year later, he had traveled to Liverpool to board the *Scotia* bound for the United States. After a visit with family living in New Orleans, he wrote to Tissot that he had "acquired the taste for money."<sup>34</sup> With that in mind, he seriously considered moving to London, where he felt there might be a market for his work. Indeed, his *Cotton Market at New Orleans* (Pau, Musée des Beaux-Arts), conceived in New Orleans but finished in Paris, was made with a British buyer in mind. In February 1873, he wrote to Tissot that it was "destined for Agnew," a reference to the well-known gallery of Thomas Agnew and Sons, which had its main branch in Manchester. Degas felt that Agnew would have a good chance of selling it to the wealthy spinning-mill owner and art collector William Cottrill, which, as he wrote, "would suit me and would suit Agnew even better."<sup>35</sup> None of these plans materialized, however. Degas had miscalculated the interest of British collectors in industrial scenes. The *Cotton Market* was bought, instead, by the museum at Pau, which delighted Degas, who found it "terribly flattering" for his work to enter a public collection.<sup>36</sup> The artist renounced his contemplated move to London, which, like most of his French contemporaries, he saw as a dirty industrial city. In a letter to Tissot he wrote that if he ever were to move to London, he would have to "sweep the said place a little, and clean it by hand."<sup>37</sup>

#### *Durand-Ruel and Impressionism in London*

If artists saw London as a better marketplace than Paris-in-ruins, so did art dealers. At the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Paul Durand-Ruel (fig. 22) moved the contents of his gallery from Paris to London. With the assistance of Henry Wallis, the new owner of the French Gallery, he found a temporary storage and exhibition space at 7 Haymarket.<sup>38</sup> There, in November, he held a makeshift exhibition of works in his stock, for the most part paintings by Barbizon and realist artists, including, among others, Gustave Courbet, Camille Corot, César de Cock, Daubigny, Dupré, Rousseau, and Georges Bellenger.<sup>39</sup> In December, Durand-Ruel found better



fig. 22 Anonymous  
Portrait of Paul Durand-Ruel, c. 1910  
Photograph, Durand-Ruel, Paris

quarters at 168 New Bond Street in an exhibition space that, ironically, was known as the “German Gallery.” To discourage patrons from using that name, Durand-Ruel decided to organize all his exhibitions under the aegis of the so-called Society of French Artists, which he founded for the express purpose.<sup>40</sup> On December 10, he opened an exhibition of paintings from his stock as well as some works he had acquired from French artists then living in London. Among them were three recent works by Monet and Pissarro, including Monet’s *Entrance to Trouville Harbor* (Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum), Pissarro’s *Fox Hill, Upper Norwood* (fig. 23) and the same artist’s *A Snow Effect*, both painted in England.<sup>41</sup> Durand-Ruel had only just met the two future “impressionists.” Monet had been introduced to him by Daubigny; Pissarro had dropped off a painting at the gallery, after which Durand-Ruel had written him a note inviting him to come back.<sup>42</sup> Thus London played an important role in forging the connection between Durand-Ruel and the impressionists, whose relationship would prove highly successful for both.<sup>43</sup>

Durand-Ruel maintained his Society of French Artists in London until 1875. After his return to Paris in 1872, he found a manager in Charles Deschamps, the nephew of Ernest Gambart (see fig. 16). During the four years of its existence, the Society of French Artists featured on the average two yearly exhibitions of French art, which included an ever-growing number of impressionist paintings.<sup>44</sup> In addition to Monet and Pissarro, visitors could become acquainted with works by Manet, Renoir, Sisley, and Degas.

It took some time before the exhibitions of the Society of French Artists, and particularly the avant-garde impressionist paintings they featured, were recognized. The British public apparently was not ready for them in the 1870s. When Monet and Pissarro submitted works to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1870, they were refused.<sup>45</sup> Their paintings, two each, entered by Durand-Ruel in the French section of the First International Exhibition in South Kensington in the spring of 1871, remained unnoticed. It was not until three years later that an anonymous critic of the *Times* complimented Durand-Ruel for acquainting the British public with new French art: “Mr. Durand-Ruel... is a Frenchman, influenced by contemporary French modes in art, and thus secures for some of the more daring and eccentric of these a representation which but for him they would fail altogether to obtain in London.”<sup>46</sup> The same critic was ready to admit, however, that the British public

might not be ready for the “very strong and raw diet as this new school serves up,” and he reassured his readers that they could also find “examples of a more delicate kind of work in this gallery.”<sup>47</sup>

British collectors of the works by the new impressionist painters were few and far between. A notable exception was Captain Henry Hill from Brighton. Hill had started to collect in the early 1860s, first buying nineteenth-century British paintings. He later became interested in contemporary French art, acquiring works by Barbizon artists as well as realist painters such as Bonvin, Fantin-Latour, Antoine Vollon and the female artist Marie Cazin. In 1874, he made his first visit to the Durand-Ruel Gallery; less than two years later he had bought seven paintings by Degas, including the famous *Absinthe Drinkers* (Paris, Musée d’Orsay) and six ballet scenes. It is noteworthy that he focused on Degas’s paintings, whose genre subjects and relatively academic early painting style made his work more acceptable in England than that of Monet and Pissarro.

Despite the purchases of Hill and occasional sales of works by Barbizon artists to other collectors, Durand-Ruel could not keep his gallery in London afloat; in 1875, he decided to close it. His manager, Deschamps, organized one more exhibition in the gallery in 1876, entitled *French and Other Foreign Painters*, which received a positive review but only because it contained “less than the usual proportion of protest-provoking pictures.”<sup>48</sup> The few impressionist paintings that it did feature, such as Manet’s *Les Canotiers* (Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts), received nothing but scorn. “Cynicism in conception,” “singularly offensive,” “unpleasing,” “exaggeration of the coarsest methods”—described the painting, which according to the critics represented an “unaccountable deviation of French taste.”<sup>49</sup>

#### *French Art in London, 1875–1899*

After Durand-Ruel’s departure from Paris and Deschamps’s move to 1A New Bond Street, where he opened his own gallery, the presence of French art and artists in London was greatly diminished. Swept up by the national enthusiasm to rebuild their country and sharing in the optimism that took hold of the French nation, French artists stayed at home and focused on France. Influenced by British initiatives such as the Society of British Artists or the Royal Watercolour Society, young French painters and sculptors began to organize their own exhibitions, independently from the Salon or art dealers. The Société anonyme des artistes, peintres, sculpteurs,

graveurs, etc., an exhibition society founded in 1873, organized eight exhibitions between 1874 and 1886 and put impressionism on the map, aided by Durand-Ruel, who organized regular exhibitions of their works in his Paris gallery.

But the London market was not forgotten. In the summer of 1882, Durand-Ruel rented a gallery at 13 King Street, St. James, where he showed a small number of impressionist paintings. The exhibition made little impact, so the following year Durand-Ruel organized a much larger show in the Dowdeswell Galleries at 133 Bond Street under the title *La Société des Impressionnistes*. Containing no less than sixty-five works, by all major impressionist artists, it was widely reviewed. Since the last impressionist show in 1876, the British may have been a little better informed about impressionism than they were a decade earlier, as a number of articles had appeared in British papers reviewing the impressionist exhibitions in Paris. Previously, the impressionists had received an overwhelmingly negative press, but now reviews tended to be positive and full of praise. Wrote the anonymous reviewer for the *Daily Telegraph*: "[The exhibition at Dowdeswell Galleries] is abundantly striking and admirable."<sup>50</sup>

As Durand-Ruel was trying to regain a foothold in England in the 1880s, the French Goupil Gallery was also beginning to sell paintings in London. The firm of Goupil & Co had been established by Adolphe Goupil as a print publishing house in 1827. By partnering with Léon Boussod in 1856 and with the Dutch dealer Vincent van Gogh (an uncle of the painter) in 1861, Goupil turned it into an international fine arts firm with branches in Paris, London, Berlin, The Hague, and New York.<sup>51</sup> Like the other Goupil affiliates, the London branch began as a wholesale outlet of print and photograph reproductions of contemporary French and Old Master paintings. When the young Vincent van Gogh joined it as an assistant in 1873, the London gallery still did little more than that, though his boss Charles Obach was charged with expanding its activities to the sale of paintings and drawings.<sup>52</sup> In 1875, Obach organized a first major group show, which included works by such academic artists as Jean-Léon Gérôme and Ernest Meissonier, as well as Barbizon painters like Camille Corot, Jules Dupré, Jean-François Millet, and Constant Troyon.

In 1878, the management of the gallery was taken over by David Croal Thomson. He had a special interest in Whistler and the artists of the Barbizon school, about which he wrote a book in 1890. Perhaps inspired by Whistler, Thomson tried to



fig. 23 Camille Pissarro (French, 1830–1903)  
Fox Hill, Upper Norwood, 1870  
Oil on canvas 35.3 x 45.7 cm  
National Gallery, London

break into the impressionist market, organizing a show of twenty paintings by Monet in 1889. Two critics who reviewed the show for the *Times* and *Artist* respectively acknowledged Monet's originality. But the *Times* critic warned that Monet's work might "severely strain the faith of the ordinary British visitor." As he saw it, "*le gros public*... would as soon think of dining off caviare as of satisfying itself with these strange and wayward productions."<sup>53</sup> The show was not a success, either in terms of visitors or buyers. Thomson would not repeat the experiment though he would include occasional impressionist paintings in group shows he organized in subsequent years.

While the impressionists avoided England during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, as they saw it as a country where collectors were only interested in academic art and Barbizon landscapes, some of their contemporaries as well as slightly younger French artists saw London as a viable marketplace. The naturalist painter Jules Bastien-Lepage, Monet's junior by eight years, first visited England in June 1879 and returned every summer until 1882, two years before his premature death at age thirty-six. He formed fast friendships with Lawrence Alma Tadema and Edward Burne-Jones and arranged to have his works exhibited at the Royal Academy (see appendix) and the Grosvenor Gallery.<sup>54</sup> Though his paintings had a mixed reception in London, where many critics felt the artist had broken with the academic tradition and his works lacked sentiment,<sup>55</sup> Bastien-Lepage was to have a considerable following in England among artists slightly younger than himself, such as George Clausen and Henry Herbert La Thangue.<sup>56</sup>

The British capital inspired not only Bastien-Lepage's famous *London Bootblack* (Paris, Musée des arts décoratifs) and *Flower Girl* (private collection), but also most of the rare landscapes in his oeuvre, such as *Blackfriars Bridge and the Thames* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), *A Bridge in London* (Paris, Musée des Beaux-Arts), and *The Thames, London* (cat. 1). Other French artists had connections with England as well during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Théodore Roussel moved to England in 1878. Largely self-taught, he was an eclectic artist who painted scenes from modern life in styles derived from the Old Masters. In England, he became acquainted with Whistler, who greatly influenced his artistic development. Roussel took up etching and produced prints of London urban scenes, such as *Chelsea Palaces* (cat. 82) and *The Street, Chelsea Embankment* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Hatton Gallery),<sup>57</sup> which

have much in common with Whistler's etchings of the same subject matter (see cats. 94–97).

But perhaps most important for the relations between Paris and London was the presence in England of Pissarro's son Lucien, who moved there in 1890. Through his frequent travels back to France and the visits of his father, Camille, to England (see cat. 55), Lucien Pissarro would gain an influential place in the English art world by acting as a *trait-d'union* between England and the Continent.

#### *London in Paris*

Thomson's choice of Monet as the first (and only) impressionist artist to feature in the London Goupil Gallery may have been inspired by Whistler. The two artists, who had known each other at least since 1865, had become increasingly close in the 1880s. In December 1887, as president of the Royal Society of British Artists, Whistler had invited Monet to contribute two paintings to the annual exhibition. Eight months later, Monet visited London, perhaps in the company of John Singer Sargent, with whom he may have struck up a friendship as early as 1867.<sup>58</sup>

Was Monet inspired by Whistler's etchings and paintings of the Thames when he began to contemplate doing a London series? Whistler's *Thames Set* had been well received when it was published in London in 1871, in an edition of one hundred, leading the artist to paint several views of the Thames in the course of the 1870s. As early as December 1880, Monet planned to return to London to paint his own series of views of the river.<sup>59</sup> These plans did not materialize until nearly twenty years later, though in the intervening time Monet traveled to London twice, first in 1887, then again in 1891. In 1899, however, he set out on a series of trips to London to paint a Thames series that ultimately would include nearly one hundred canvases.<sup>60</sup> In May and June 1904, Durand-Ruel exhibited this series in his Paris gallery. Billed as *Claude Monet: Vues de la Tamise à Londres*, it included thirty-seven paintings that had been selected jointly by Monet and Durand-Ruel. The exhibition was subdivided into three groups of paintings: "Charing Cross Bridge," "Waterloo Bridge," and "Parliament."

*Vues de la Tamise* was a critical success, if only for the sheer number of reviews that were devoted to it.<sup>61</sup> It was also a financial boon for both Monet and Durand-Ruel. The latter immediately bought twenty-four of the thirty-seven canvases in the exhibition; in 1905 and 1906, he would acquire twenty-two

more Thames views. Durand-Ruel had little trouble selling these paintings to collectors as well as to museums, for prices ranging from 15,000 to 20,000 francs.

Though the success of the Thames paintings had much to do with Monet's high reputation as an artist by the beginning of the twentieth century, it may also have been caused by their motif. For while early in the nineteenth century, London had been criticized for its ugliness, particularly by Frenchmen who compared its *laideur* with the graceful beauty of Paris, from the 1860s onward there had been a growing appreciation for its industrial center. Beginning with the Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851, French tourism to the city had steadily increased. Initially, French travel guides had warned visitors that they should expect a city different from Paris. The *Nouveau Guide à Londres pour l'Exposition de 1851* called London "above all a city of business and commerce."<sup>62</sup> Another guide, written that same year, defined the city as "work and action, stirring in immensity."<sup>63</sup> But two years later A. de Colombel wrote, "London is a city that astounds, Paris a city that pleases," differentiating between the aesthetic qualities of the two cities in terms that resemble Edmund Burke's definitions of the "sublime" and the "beautiful."<sup>64</sup> The Englishman William Blanchard Jerrold, visiting Paris in 1855, invited the French to discover London's poetic side: "It is left to the French to discover that poetry can sometimes reside in London."<sup>65</sup> Four years later, he convinced a Frenchman, Gustave Doré, to produce together with him a comprehensive "portrait of London." Published in 1872, *London: A Pilgrimage* made London fashionable (see cat. 58). The book was adapted to the French market by Louis Enault, whose *Londres*, published in 1876, became enormously successful in Paris and on the European continent in general. It and other books published about England at the same time, such as Alphonse Esquiros's *L'Angleterre et la vie anglaise* (1869) and Hippolyte Taine's *Notes sur l'Angleterre*, made England, and especially London, increasingly fashionable in France. To all these literary effusions we may add the effect of the pictorial views of London, by such artists as Whistler, Daubigny, Bonvin, Bastien-Lepage, and Pissarro, which also contributed to change French opinion of England's capital city.

That the success of Monet's *Views of the Thames* exhibition had much to do with the new popularity of London was readily understood by the dealer Ambroise Vollard (fig. 24), who in 1906 sponsored Derain and in 1911 Maurice de Vlaminck to travel to London to likewise paint series of views of the city.



fig. 24 Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867–1947)  
Portrait of Ambroise Vollard, c. 1904  
Oil on canvas 73 x 60 cm  
Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection, Zürich

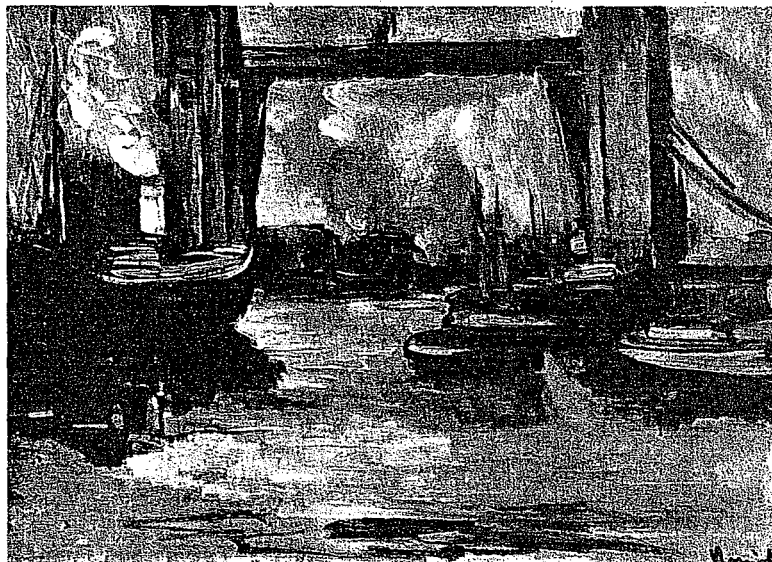


fig. 25 Maurice de Vlaminck  
Tower Bridge, 1911  
Oil on canvas  
New York, private collection

This was an unusual move for a dealer, and Vollard was, as he wrote himself, “bitterly reproached for having taken these artists “out of their element,” by directing them from their “usual subjects.”<sup>66</sup> But apparently Vollard was so convinced of the popularity of the “London theme” in France, that he considered it a smart thing to do. It appears that the artists themselves did not object, even though they were well aware of Vollard’s strategy.<sup>67</sup> Derain, for one, welcomed the opportunity, offered by Vollard, to emulate Monet in a series of paintings that would show a new approach to the painting of urban scenery. He had visited the Monet exhibition in 1904 and had written to Vlaminck that, as much as he admired Monet’s works, he himself was looking for something quite different: “As for me, I am looking for something else, something that, in contrast [to Monet’s paintings] has something solid (*fixe*), eternal, complex.”<sup>68</sup> It is in keeping with Derain’s new approach that he only spent ten days in London, as opposed to the multiple and lengthy stays of Monet. Indeed, of the thirty views he painted of London (see cats.7–10), few were done *sur place*. Unlike Monet, to whom the visual perception of the scenery was the essential theme, to Derain the scenery was only a trigger, or even a pretext, for the synthesis of the self, “...*synthétiser le Moi-même*.”<sup>69</sup>

Vollard never organized a show of Derain’s views of the Thames, as Durand-Ruel had done for Monet, but these paintings, nonetheless, became famous in their own right. The same does not hold true for Vlaminck, whose views of the Thames, such as *Tower Bridge* (fig. 25) failed to become a celebrated part of his oeuvre—this, despite the fact that, painted in the dark, dramatic style that Vlaminck had adopted after 1907, they beautifully convey what the writer Alphonse Esquiros had referred to in 1869 as the “somber, profound, laborious, and powerful” qualities of the Thames.<sup>70</sup>

#### Conclusion

“Complex” and “tenuous” are the words that best describe artistic relations between France and England in the second half of the nineteenth century. French artists and their dealers looked to London as a major market for art but soon discovered that in this country, which was so “modern” in every other respect, there was little interest in pictures of modernity and in modernist approaches to art. And, if young artists like Whistler, Pissarro, and Monet were decisively influenced in their artistic development by the industrial landscape of London, their



scenes of London and others like it, produced after their return to France, had little appeal to the London captains of industry. Only the dogged attempts of art dealers like Durand-Ruel and, to a lesser extent, Goupil would eventually cause the acceptance of modernist painting in London and the realization that it was eminently suited to the depiction of the city's

scenery. It is interesting that at about this time, London, as a city, came to be appreciated in France. Indeed, the success of the Thames paintings by Monet and Derain in France had much to do with the French acceptance of London, by the late nineteenth century, as a city unequalled in Europe for its "grandeur and immensity."<sup>71</sup>

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- 1 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed. and trans., *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 166.
- 2 Though Courbet claimed as early as 1854 that he had traveled to London (see Chu 1992, p. 132), there is no evidence that he ever made a trip to England. After 1870, some of his works were exhibited in England, thanks in large part to the efforts of Durand-Ruel.
- 3 See Claire Hancock, *Paris et Londres au XIXe siècle: Représentations dans les guides et récits de voyage*, Paris: CNRS, 2003, p. 87.
- 4 Two private ateliers that were run by the painter Adolphe Julian and the sculptor Filippo Colarossi.
- 5 On the French perception of London's modernity, see Hancock 2003, pp. 276–86. See also M. Warner, ed., *The Image of London Viewed by Travelers and Emigrants, 1550–1920*, London: Trefoil Publication and Barbican Art Gallery, 1987, p. 11ff.
- 6 These are the words used by Joachim Pissarro, who, in his *Camille Pissarro*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993, gives a detailed account of the importance of the experience of London for the development of Pissarro. Joachim Pissarro uses the term "modernist" in the way it is currently used in art historical discourse, to refer to "artistic strategies that seek not just close but essential connections to the powerful forces of social modernity." See *Grove Dictionary of Art Online* ([www.grovecart.com](http://www.grovecart.com)), s.v. "Modernism."
- 7 The official name of the exhibition, organized by Henry Cole under the auspices of Prince Albert, had been "The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations."
- 8 Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1987, p. 105.
- 9 Mainardi 1987, pp. 106–7.
- 10 See Lyndel Saunders King, *The Industrialization of Taste: Victorian England and the Art Union of London*, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985, p. 204.
- 11 See Oskar Bätschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World*, Cologne: Dumont/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 29–44.
- 12 Four years earlier, Guillaume-Guillon Lethière and Jean-Baptiste Wicar had each exhibited a colossal painting in London. Bätschmann 1997, pp. 47–49.
- 13 Courbet had already imitated the British example of one-man exhibitions earlier by organizing, in 1855, a private exhibition of his work on the grounds of the International Exhibition in Paris. On the British tour of the *Return from the Conference*, which was aborted early on, see Roger Bonniot, *Courbet en Saintonge*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1972, pp. 305–6.

- 14 In July 1868, Manet visited London and came back full of enthusiasm. He wrote to Emile Zola that he was "enchanted by his visit" and that he had been very well received. "There is something that I can do there, I think, and I will try it next season" ("il y a quelque chose à faire là-bas pour moi, je crois, et je vais le tenter la saison prochaine"). Cited in Paul Jamot and Georges Wildenstein, *Manet*, Paris, 1932, vol. 1, p. 84. Of course, Manet did not specify that he planned a private exhibition but as he had just organized one in Paris in 1867, that is possibly what he had in mind.
- 15 Du Maurier would later describe the artistic life of these young British artists in Paris in his famous novel, *Trilby* (1894).
- 16 Whistler's *At the Piano* was seen in Paris as it was exhibited, together with works by Fantin-Latour, Legros, and Théodule Ribot, in the atelier of François Bonvin in the rue Saint-Jacques. See Geneviève Lacambre, "Whistler and France," Essay in Richard Dorment and Margaret F. Macdonald, ed., *James McNeill Whistler*, exhibition catalogue, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995, p. 40.
- 17 Fantin would paint another portrait of Ruth and Edwin Edwards in 1874–75, during their visit to Paris (London, Tate Gallery). By then, the Edwardses had become his sole agents in England; this business relation had led to a gradual cooling of their friendship. All information in this paragraph is derived from Douglas Drueck and Michel Hoog, *Fantin-Latour*, exhibition catalogue, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1983.
- 18 On Gambart, see Jeremy Maas, *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian Art World*, London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975.
- 19 Millet was notably absent from Gambart's gallery, as the dealer did not like his "wooden figures." Maas 1975, p. 274.
- 20 Fantin had been introduced to Gambart by Haden, during a Royal Academy dinner in 1864. See Drueck and Hoog 1983, p. 117.
- 21 The first one-person show (1849) in his gallery had been devoted to the animal sculptor Pierre-Jules Mène, whose popularity in England owed much to Gambart.
- 22 See Gabriel P. Weisberg, "La Fortune des oeuvres de Rosa Bonheur en Angleterre et en Amérique," in *Rosa Bonheur 1822–1899*, exhibition catalogue, Bordeaux: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1997, pp. 55–73.
- 23 Valuable information on the presence of French artists may be found in the diary of Bonvin. See Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Bonvin*, Paris: Geoffroy-Dechaume, 1979, p. 99. See also *The Impressionists in London*, exhibition catalogue, London: Hayward Gallery, 1973, *passim*.
- 24 There are questions about Tissot's participation in the Commune, and it is possible that the artist traveled to London for purely economic reasons.
- 25 Cited in Weisberg 1979, p. 100.
- 26 Janine Bailly-Herzberg, ed., *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980, vol. 1, p. 64. Author's translation.
- 27 He would exhibit two of these at the Salon of 1876: *La Tamise à Gravesend, Environs de Londres* (based on the watercolor reproduced in fig. 20) and *Le Bateau abandonné: Boyds de la Tamise*. Both were painted in 1875 and were last seen in a private collection in the Netherlands. Reproduced in Weisberg 1979, nos. 212 and 213.

- 28 Pissarro's *Lordship Lane Station* (London, Courtauld Institute Galleries) and *Landscape under Snow: Upper Norwood* (private collection), particularly come to mind.
- 29 See Gerald Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, Paris: Editions ACR, 2000, p. 90.
- 30 Prints after Gérôme's work were widely distributed in Europe and the United States by the Goupil firm. See *Gérôme & Goupil: Art and Enterprise*, exhibition catalogue, Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000.
- 31 Tissot had come to know Bowles intimately as, in 1870, the latter had come to Paris to write his *The Defence of Paris, Narrated as it was Seen*, for which Tissot had drawn the illustrations. For some time, Bowles and Tissot seem to have lived together. See Nancy Rose Marshall and Malcolm Warner, *James Tissot: Victorian Life – Modern Love*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 201.
- 32 In 1864, he had exhibited a painting that had no title, only a number (408) in the catalogue.
- 33 On the friendship between Degas and Tissot, see Jean Sutherland Boggs et al, *Degas*, exhibition catalogue, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988, pp. 130–32. Degas's *Portrait of James Tissot* is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.
- 34 In a letter dated November 19, 1872. Cited in Albert Boime, *Art and the French Commune*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 55.
- 35 On Degas's business plans for this painting, see Marilyn R. Brown, *Degas and the Business of Art: A Cotton Office in New Orleans*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994, especially 16–17 and 43–46. The citation from Degas's letter to Tissot is found on p. 17.
- 36 Boggs 1988, p. 185.
- 37 Marcel Guérin, ed., *Degas Letters*. Marguerite Kay, trans., Oxford: Cassirer, 1947, pp. 70–71.
- 38 Maas 1975, p. 223.
- 39 See Anne Distel, *Impressionism, the First Collectors, 1874–1886*. Barbara Perroud-Benson, trans., New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990, 24.
- 40 Maas 1975, p. 223.
- 41 It is difficult to determine exactly which paintings by Pissarro these titles referred to as he painted more than one snow landscape as well as several scenes of Upper Norwood. It is generally assumed that *A Snow Effect* is identical with *Fox Hill, Upper Norwood*, reproduced in fig. 23.
- 42 Wrote Durand-Ruel: "...you brought me a charming picture and I regret not having been in my gallery to pay you my respects in person. Tell me, please, the price you want and be kind enough to send me others when you are able to. I have to sell a lot of your work here." Cited in Joachim Pissarro, *Camille Pissarro*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993, p. 76.
- 43 For a detailed account of the early contacts between Durand-Ruel, Monet, and Pissarro in London, see John House, "New Material on Monet and Pissarro in London in 1870–1871," *Burlington Magazine* 120 (October 1978), pp. 636–42.
- 44 For a complete listing, see Kate Flint, *Impressionists in England: A Critical Reception*. Boston: Routledge/Kegan Paul, 1984, pp. 356–60.
- 45 See *The Impressionists in London* 1973, p. 29.
- 46 Flint 1984, p. 34.
- 47 Flint 1984, pp. 34–35.
- 48 Flint 1984, p. 36.
- 49 Flint 1984, pp. 36–37.
- 50 April 26, 1883, Flint 1984, p. 60.
- 51 In 1878, Boussod's son-in-law René Valadon became an associate of Goupil's. Six years later, Boussod and Valadon started their own firm, Boussod, Valadon & Cie, with the financial backing of Adolphe Goupil and his son Albert. It became the successor to Goupil et Cie after the retirement of Adolphe two years later, but continued to be popularly referred to as "Goupil."
- 52 See Martin Bailey et al., *Van Gogh in England: Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*, exhibition catalogue, London: Barbican Gallery, 1992, pp. 30–31. Van Gogh had worked four years in his uncle's gallery in The Hague, before moving to London.
- 53 Flint 1984, p. 311.
- 54 On Bastien-Lepage's stay in London, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing 1830–1900*, exhibition catalogue, Cleveland, OH: The Cleveland Museum, 1980–81, pp. 196–97, n. 1.
- 55 See Alastair Ian Wright, "Bastien-Lepage and English Critical Taste," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 6th ser., v. 116 (Sept. 1990), pp. 94–104.
- 56 See Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992, p. 108ff.
- 57 Reproduced in Margret Dunwoody Hausberg, *Prints of Théodore Rousseau: A Catalogue Raisonné* London, 1991, cat. no. 26.
- 58 On the friendship between Monet and Sargent, see especially Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent*, New Haven: Yale University Press, vol. 1, pp. 155–56.
- 59 *The Impressionists in London* 1973, p. 35.
- 60 On this series, see especially Grace Seiberling, *Monet in London*, exhibition catalogue, Atlanta: High Museum, 1988.
- 61 For a sampling, see Seiberling 1988, pp. 94–97.
- 62 "Londres est surtout une ville d'affaires et de commerce." Cited in Hancock 2003, p. 97.
- 63 "Londres, c'est le travail et l'action se mouvant dans l'immensité." Hancock 2003, p. 97.
- 64 "Londres est une ville qui étonne; Paris, une ville qui plaît." Hancock 2003, pp. 97–98.
- 65 W. B. Jerrold, *Imperial Paris*, London: Bradbury & Evans, 1855, p. 30–31.
- 66 Ambroise Vollard, *Recollections of a Picture Dealer*, Violet M. Macdonald, trans., London: Constable, 1936, p. 201.
- 67 In 1953, Derain wrote to the president of the Royal Academy: "He [Vollard] sent me in the hope of renewing completely ...the expression which Claude Monet had so strikingly achieved, which had made a very strong impression on Paris in the preceding years. Cited in *The Impressionists in London* 1973, p. 71. (I made two slight changes in the text to correct what seemed printing errors).
- 68 Cited in *Derain et Vlaminck*, exhibition catalogue, Lodève: Musée de Lodève, 2001, p. 46.
- 69 *Derain et Vlaminck* 2001.
- 70 Alphonse Esquiros, *L'Angleterre et la vie anglaise* (1869). Cited in Hancock 2002, p. 95.
- 71 Interview with Emile Zola after his visit to London, *The Guardian*, October 3, 1893. For the full interview, see <http://books.guardian.co.uk/fromthearchives/story/0,12137,1115135,00.html>. Last accessed September 1, 2004.