

THE ARTIST'S CAUSE AT HEART: MARION HARRY SPIELMANN AND THE LATE VICTORIAN ART WORLD¹

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... [you are] not only clear-minded, but have the artist's cause at heart. You have never done anything (and never will) to shake our entire confidence. (Hubert von Herkomer in a letter to Marion Harry Spielmann, 1 January 1893)²

Marion Harry Spielmann was one of the most prominent and powerful figures of the late Victorian art world. Editor of *The Magazine of Art* for seventeen years (1887–1904), he was also art critic of *The Graphic*, art editor for *Black and White* (which he helped to found), and critic of *The Daily Graphic*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *London Illustrated News*, *Westminster Gazette*, *Morning Post*. He published essays on art education and museum administration in *Contemporary Review*, *Nineteenth Century*, *The New Review*, *National Review*, *Figaro Illustré*. He was the art editor of the 10th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (and contributed articles to subsequent editions) and the author of numerous monographs on major artists of the period, of miscellaneous studies including catalogues of international exhibitions, popular surveys of art works and studies of portraiture and sculpture. He wrote for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters*.³ An indefatigable member of many official committees for public memorials, international exhibitions,

¹ This essay was written with the help of a National Endowment for the Humanities Travel-to-Collections Grant in November 1986, which enabled me to study the large collection of Spielmann letters at The John Rylands University Library of Manchester. I also received a sabbatical from the University of Montana which allowed me time to do further research on Spielmann's essays and books, and a Summer Research Grant 1987, which funded photocopies of Spielmann letters and writings from libraries in Canada, England, the United States, and a visit to the University of British Columbia, Special Collections Library. I wish especially to thank Miss Glenise Matheson of The John Rylands University Library, and Mr George Brandak, Special Collections Library, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.

² Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/41.

³ Percy Edwin Spielmann, *The Early History of the Spielmann Family and of Marion Harry Alexander Spielmann (1858–1948) to the Year of his Marriage (1880)* (Reading: printed . . . by the Berkshire Print Co., 1951). Percy also wrote an unpublished typescript of his father's life until Marion's death in 1948; this typescript is in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Art Library. See Marion's obituary, *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal*, lvi (1948), 96–7; *Who Was Who* (1921), 2488 (see footnote 9 below), and his will dated 14 December 1944. Reference to Spielmann's work on the *OED* was found in MS Onions 402, letter from Spielmann to C.T. Onions, dated 21 December 1933, in the collection of Birmingham University.

war funds, and public art collections, he was also a member of the Athenaeum and the Arts clubs, lecturer at the Royal Institute, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Officer of the Order of the Crown of Belgium (the chevalier order of Leopold, King of Belgium) and an Honorary Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Spielmann was born on 22 May 1858, in Mecklenburgh Square, Bloomsbury, son of Adam Spielmann, head of a prosperous money exchange and banking firm. Marion was educated at the University College School, briefly in 1874–75 at a *lycée* in France (to which he was sent as a precaution against signs of lung trouble, his sister having died of tuberculosis), and at the University College. His education was remarkably modern: since 1875 University College taught social science, chemistry, chemical physics, and natural philosophy, as well as bookkeeping and drawing. Spielmann acquired fluency in French and German and won the German Prize at the College. In the 1870s he travelled through Europe, and in 1877 he began to study first architecture and then engineering, being elected Graduate of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers in November of 1877 (he resigned from this Institute in December 1884). Spielmann married his first cousin Mabel Henrietta in 1880 and declared himself a civil engineer in 1883. He maintained an interest in a variety of scientific topics, including gas burners and the arctic expedition of Commander J.P. Cheyne.⁴ Spielmann also read voraciously; among his favourite authors were Thackeray, Dickens, Herbert Spencer, Charles Reade and Charlotte Brontë. In the 1880s he began collecting small pictures and Old Master drawings. He even became a conjuror and entertained Ruskin with his tricks.⁵ Withdrawing from the art world in the face of advancing modernism, he moved increasingly in literary circles, becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1897 and a member of the Royal Literary Fund in 1908.

John Bacon's full-length portrait of Spielmann, reproduced in *The Graphic* in 1904, depicts him sitting at his desk, surrounded by drawings at his feet and in the midst of writing. Spielmann's small head, high forehead and fine-featured face give him the appearance both of delicacy and intensity. Mortimer Menpes' sketches of Spielmann (*The Magazine of Art*, 1899) depict a more lively, smiling, genial image, consistent with Spielmann's love of British humorists about whom he wrote so much in his detailed study of *Punch* and his many essays on popular illustrators.

Spielmann's personality seems to have been kindly and modest almost to a fault. His biography, written by his son Percy, concludes

⁴ Spielmann, *Early History*, 49–51.

⁵ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/546, dated 27 May 1893, from Arthur Severn to Spielmann. Letters from Maskelyne are in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/415–27.

with homage to Spielmann as a lovable man, known for his kindness and generosity, despite the restrictions on his social life due to the long illness of his wife. He is curiously absent from the autobiographies and biographies of the many artists who wrote to him, perhaps due to his limited social life or to the commercial nature of his relationships with artists which they did not wish to recall or thought indelicate to mention. His letters indicate an extraordinary humility in his repeated appreciations of artists and his willingness to help them. Such characteristics are consistent with his own philosophy of criticism: he wrote as a transparent channel of information, presenting artists' own ideas, usually in their own words. Avoiding attacks at any cost, his criticism was characteristically anecdotal, intimate and laudatory. He believed a critic needed a good heart, a cool head and catholic taste 'that he may sympathise with every mood of every honest artist'. Ford Madox Brown called him 'the kindest of critics'.⁶

Spielmann is briefly cited by art historians in several biographies of Victorian artists in which his letters are sometimes reproduced. Limited examinations of his activities, however, appear mainly in three areas: his early contribution to the promotion and support of the New Sculpture movement, particularly in the case of Alfred Gilbert; his research and appreciation of popular graphic arts in magazines and newspapers; his activities as critic and editor, disparagingly cited as too wholeheartedly and unquestioningly academic. Praised for his promotion of sculpture and graphic art, Spielmann has been attacked, however, for failing to comprehend the avant-garde in its various forms in art and in literature, whether Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, George Bernard Shaw's drama or the new novel (which Spielmann dubbed 'modern formless narrative').⁷ As late as 1933,

⁶ Spielmann's quote appears in Percy's typescript, 86. Brown's remarks are taken from Ryl. Eng. MS 1290/40, 19 September 1889. Spielmann is absent from memoirs of those closest to him, such as Herkomer and Frith, and from biographies of others, like Sidney Colvin or Edmund Gosse; see E.V. Lucas, *The Colvins and their Friends* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), and Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape, 1849-1928* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984). Spielmann is described as 'perhaps the brightest and most accomplished art critic in London' by H.J. Thaddeus, *Recollections of a Court Painter* (London, 1912), and also praised in the memoirs of Douglas Sladen (editor of *Who Was Who*), *Twenty Years of My Life* (London, 1915).

⁷ Spielmann's editorial activities are occasionally cited: his perpetuation of sensationalistic art gossip while art editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette* is mentioned in Leonee and Richard Ormond, *Lord Leighton* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 116-17; his letters to Fildes concerning Whistler's interest in membership in the R.A. are reprinted in L.V. Fildes, *Luke Fildes, R.A., A Victorian Painter* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), 168-70. Spielmann's contributions to the promotion of the New Sculpture are cited in Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982); Susan Beattie, *The New Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983); Richard Dormont, *Alfred Gilbert* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985); Renee Free, 'Late Victorian, Edwardian and French Sculpture', *Art Gallery of New South Wales Quarterly*, xiii: 2 (1972), 646-63; Lavinia Handley-Read, 'Alfred Gilbert: A New Assessment', *Connoisseur*, clix (1968), 22-7, 85-91, 144-51. His contributions to the graphic arts are noted in Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (New York: Praeger, 1971), and R.C.G. Price, *A History of 'Punch'* (London:

Spielmann railed against 'the horrors of Van Gogh and Gauguin (acknowledged lunatics), and of Picasso, too'.⁸

An unpublished, typed biography written by his son Percy⁹ details his father's busy life and frequent travels due to his wife's fragile health. He notes that, when Spielmann decided to devote himself to journalism, he learned shorthand in 1882, learned the then-new interview technique and introduced new topics, such as notes on works in progress and the activities of societies, museums, galleries. In Percy's published biography he records his father's debate with a rabbi during a traditional pre-nuptial meeting in which Spielmann adhered to a secular faith based on the writings of Herbert Spencer without a belief in a personal God. Spielmann's scepticism resulted from a loss of ideals: 'I asked for spirituality and I was given antiquity or archaeology.' Spielmann complained that he yearned for 'the purely ideal or spiritual side, the sublime, the comforting resignation',¹⁰ qualities he discovered later in art and literature.

His writings combined this search for idealism with his scientific interests. In his studies of artists and their lives and creativity, Spielmann expressed the spirituality he sought but failed to find in religion, often idealizing artists, as well as art itself. His historical scholarship followed his scientific bent; his methods incorporated the new historicist connoisseurship based on Morelli's empirical morphology, typical methods of his contemporary generation of art specialists who wrote for *The Magazine of Art* and other journals: Sidney Colvin, Slade Professor of Art, Cambridge; R.A.M. Stevenson, a gifted art critic, protégé of Colvin's and cousin of Robert Louis Stevenson; Lionel Cust, Keeper of the National Portrait Gallery; Walter Armstrong, Director, National Gallery of Ireland.

Believing action more indicative of moral character than words or thoughts,¹¹ Spielmann was himself a man of action as much as he was a scholar and writer. As a writer for *The Pall Mall Gazette* in the early

Collins, 1957). Criticism of Spielmann's academic and populist tastes appear in Simon Nowell-Smith, *The House of Cassell, 1848-1958* (London: Cassell, 1958), 144-7; and Leila Rumbaugh Greiman, 'William Ernest Henley and *The Magazine of Art*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, xvi (1983), 53-62. Spielmann's comments on Shaw appear in a letter to Henry Arthur Jones, dated 2 February 1918, in the collection of the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds; a microfilm of the Jones-Spielmann correspondence is in The John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

⁸ Spielmann letter to Miss Barling, dated 4 September 1933, Birmingham University MS Onions 402, Add. 1133.

⁹ Percy Edwin Spielmann (1881-1964) was a prominent chemist, educated in England and Switzerland. He owned a unique collection of 848 miniature books, auctioned at Sotheby's on 21 July 1964; he wrote a catalogue for these books in 1961. See *Who's Who* (1921), 2488. In the same edition and page of *Who's Who* are biographies of the rest of the Spielmann family: Marion's brother Sir Isidore, an active participant on government art boards and an organizer of many international exhibitions; Marion's wife Mabel Henrietta, a writer of fiction and children's books.

¹⁰ Spielmann, *Early History*, 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

1880s, he tried (often unsuccessfully) to interview such luminaries as Gladstone, Parnell, and Randolph Churchill. In *The Magazine of Art* Spielmann continued the practice of W.T. Stead, his editor at *The Pall Mall Gazette*,¹² of seeking controversy by coaxing artists into written debates on timely subjects, such as copyright laws, the encroachment of photography into the fine arts, or art nouveau, looking for articles 'calculated . . . to lash up the experts and raise discussions'.¹³ Spielmann's writings aimed at expanding the audience for art and, therefore, focused on accessible facts such as art market prices, artists' domestic lives and stated intentions, historical traditions and precedents for works and styles, and technical achievements. Spielmann was a popularizer who shared not only his tastes but also his pragmatism with his middle-class audience. One artist, in a letter about Spielmann's attack on the Royal Academy, asked, 'Why do you not, in this affair, go in on the ground of what is *just*, rather than what is expedient and practicable?'¹⁴ Spielmann's tendencies were always to be expedient and practical in the business of art.

The nucleus of Spielmann's activities in the art world was his role as editor of *The Magazine of Art*, the third and most successful art magazine published by Cassell's.¹⁵ It had a large circulation and was cheaper than the more established *Art Journal*. The academically inclined art editor Edwin Bale first worked under W.E. Henley, general editor, whose avant-garde tastes, particularly his advocacy of Rodin and his employment of the best young writers, as well as his difficult personality, resulted in conflicts between Henley and Bale, ending in the resignation of Henley.¹⁶ When Spielmann became editor in 1887, he went to the Royal Academy for artists and writers on art, a decision which fell in line with the philosophy of Bale and of Cassell's: edification and expansion of both middle-class virtues and artistic tastes. Spielmann's easy-going, convivial personality also differed sharply from Henley's prickly character.

The two men differed on one other significant point: whereas Henley's decisions were dictated by his choice of artistic quality over

¹² Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/652, telegram from W.T. Stead to Spielmann asking him if he is able to 'do Whistler's marriage for us tomorrow', dated 10 August 1888. Percy notes in his typescript that his father learned interviewing from Stead who learned it, in turn, from American journalists he visited.

¹³ Spielmann letter to W.M. Rossetti, dated 9 September 1894, in Angeli-Dennis Collection, box 24, folder 5, University of British Columbia, Special Collections Library.

¹⁴ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/96, dated 9 September 1889, George Clausen to Spielmann.

¹⁵ John Cassell, and his successors who took over after his death in 1848, maintained an evangelical drive to educate the working class, an intention that informed the publications under Cassell's: cheap editions of books, family magazines for edification, working-class newspapers. In the 1880s Cassell's publishing house had directed its publications more to the middle-class audience or those who aspired to, and worked for, a place in the middle class. See Nowell-Smith, *House of Cassell*, 9, 36–40, 132–47.

¹⁶ Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Eng. d.458, fos. 214–15, mentions Bale as the art editor in 1894.

commercial success, Spielmann tried to bring to artists an understanding of commerce, in the forms of advertising and new markets for the purchase of art, for example, international exhibitions and expanded formats for reproductions by engraving, illustration and photography. Artists' letters to Spielmann reveal the nature of the advice he distributed concerning their careers, participation in the new artists' societies, realistic market prices and expectations, the timing of publicity announcements of their new works or technical innovations, and ways to approach patrons and dealers.

This epistolary relationship was symbiotic. On his side, Spielmann was rewarded with secret inside information about Royal Academy voting or names of members of the Hanging Committee and with content for his articles. He stimulated debates and symposia by asking artists for their views on art nouveau, copyright laws, art education and the Academy; he then published their comments on these topics, always with their approval, in *The Magazine of Art* and in his art criticism in other periodicals and newspapers. In these printed debates, he did indeed take the artist's cause, as Herkomer claimed. Spielmann was a communicator of artists' educational and economic situations to the general public, more than of their aesthetic values. For example, he fought ardently for the addition of art to the university curriculum, for copyright protection for artists, and against taxing inherited art collections.

In order to fully comprehend Spielmann's influence, it is important first to note the range of his correspondence. Of the 1,294 letters in the John Rylands University Library collection, two generations of artists are represented who sought his advice and whose letters reflect the changing conditions of artistic life in England in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Spielmann corresponded with the first generation of Pre-Raphaelites – Ford Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, William Michael Rossetti – and the leading academic artists of his generation, such as William Frith, Hubert von Herkomer, Hamo Thornycroft, Alfred Gilbert, Sir Frederick Leighton, Sir Edward Poynter, G.F. Watts, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Sir William Richmond, as well as with dozens of lesser-known artists. Spielmann befriended the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites, designer-artists, and English Impressionists, such as Walter Crane, James Whistler, Mortimer Menpes, Frank Brangwyn. In addition, he often assisted the protégés of successful artists at the request of their mentors who were well aware that Spielmann would be willing to publish works by young artists and that he also knew well those patrons and museum directors who could help them.

As reflected in his correspondence, Spielmann's tastes, inextricably tied to moral virtues and social status, upheld the academic values of respectability, institutional validation and national superiority. These concerns which overrode aesthetic values earned him the approbation of the 'New Critics' who were sympathetic to

French Impressionism and to Art Nouveau both of which Spielmann abhorred. Writing to Spielmann on 19 November 1910, Thornycroft expressed his horror, shared by Spielmann, of the new taste imported from France and infiltrating England through the Grafton Gallery, the 'mass of insincere bosh and ignorant trash' exemplified by the works of Manet whom Thornycroft believed had had a deleterious effect on art. He further blamed the New Critics for encouraging the 'fungoid growth that has smothered French art and now is coming here': 'The continued denunciation of everything Academic by most art critics is vastly responsible for this disaster in art; and I fear they will not allow the evil they have done'.¹⁷ Spielmann's ready appreciation of the influential new realism of Bastien Lepage and his early advocacy of the Newlyn School (he corresponded with Stanhope Forbes from 1892 to 1910)¹⁸ reveal the parameters of his taste: he appreciated *plein air* direct observation and modest innovations in colour and brushwork within the framework of traditional anecdotal or didactic realism and domestic sentiment. He could never appreciate Impressionism or Post-Impressionism and gradually eased himself out of his position as art critic of *The Graphic* in favour of a new generation of critics with a taste for modernism. Spielmann's own interests were primarily in art works of the more commercial genres, such as illustrations, posters, engravings, and photographic reproductions, and his eagerness to write for so many newspapers further indicates his willingness to associate with popular media in which his art criticism jostled side by side with advertising and timely news reports.

Of Spielmann's own collection little is known. He received art works from artists as tokens of their gratitude: a bronze from Thornycroft, a portrait by John Bacon, the offer of sketches by Whistler, among others.¹⁹ He avidly collected the works of graphic

¹⁷ The 'New Critics' included D.S. MacColl and R.A.M. Stevenson. Spielmann refers to them (and to the critic Harry Quilter and the critic and etcher Joseph Pennell) in a letter to Fildes, cited in Fildes, *Luke Fildes*, 169–70: 'As to their attempts at mischief-making by setting me up as the "apologist", the "champion", or the "lackey" of the Academy, which has been said over and over again, all this is simply intended to sow discord'. Letter from Hamo Thornycroft to Spielmann, dated 10 November 1910, Ryl. Eng. MS 1300/21. The underlying moral content of British art criticism has long been recognized, having become established in the nineteenth century by Ruskin. See Kate Flint, 'Moral Judgment and the Language of English Art Criticism, 1870–1910', *Oxford Art Journal*, vi (1982), 59–66; and Flint, 'The "Philistine" and the New Art Critic: J.A. Spender and D.S. MacColl's Debate of 1893', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, xxi (Spring 1988), 3–8. On the taste for populist academic art, initially promoted for the mass audience by the Art Union, see Lyndel Saunders, *The Industrialization of Taste* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985).

¹⁸ Letters to Forbes are in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/185–8. The influence of Bastien-Lepage in England was due to his ability to combine new techniques and *plein air*, a renewed realism through direct observation, with narrative or genre subjects, usually rural peasants, which tapped conventional Victorian sentimentality. See Kenneth McConkey, 'The Bourguereau of the Naturalists: Bastien-Lepage and British Art', *Art History*, i (1978), 371–82.

¹⁹ Thornycroft bronze is cited in Ryl. Eng. MS 1300/10, dated 19 December 1901; Bacon portrait was reproduced in *The Graphic*, lxi (1904), supplement with photographs of selected R.A. Exhibition paintings (Bacon's work is described in the review on page 630); Whistler offers

artists, especially his favourite Cruickshank.²⁰ According to his son's account, as a young man he collected Old Master drawings and small pictures. No works are cited in his will dated 1944 in which he leaves all his possessions to his son Percy in whose will, in turn, no major art works are cited; an auction at Sotheby's in 1949 largely contained rare books. Percy mentions an art collection at his grandfather's family home at Hereford which came with the house. Though he remembers little of the collection, he notes that it included a Goya, a Constable owned by his father and several oils owned by his uncle Sir Isidore Spielmann, Marion's brother. Although Sir Isidore was an energetic organizer of national and international art exhibitions and was one of the original founders of the National Art Collections Fund, Percy criticizes his taste and notes that Marion Harry 'was continuously and unobtrusively guiding him' in matters of taste.²¹ Spielmann did have a reputation as a perceptive connoisseur; his most well-known discovery was a misattributed Velasquez, *The Annunciation to the Shepherds*, which appeared at auction in 1912.²² In general, his taste in Old Masters was expert; his taste among his contemporaries less consistently upheld by posterity.

Spielmann advised the Academy of Art at Newcastle-on-Tyne and a gallery at Hull, but his taste is best represented in the collection he created for the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda shortly before World War I. Called a 'masterpiece of intelligent selection', it contained a survey of the history of European Art.²³ Spielmann collected fine works while paying little, the result of his expert connoisseurship. The Maharaja wanted an educational collection for students and art lovers, an intention coherent with Spielmann's own public-minded motives as editor, critic and consultant. Among the artists in the collection are Sir Peter Lely, Paul Delaroche, J.F. Lewis, Sir George Frampton, Cornelius Varley, John Hoppner, John Linnell, Simeon Solomon, Millet, Tissot, Meissonier, Ilya Repin, J.L. Gerome, Bastien-Lepage, Courbet, Fragonard, Ary Scheffer, Gaspard Poussin, Cuyp, Wouvermans, Paul Potter, Jusepe Ribera, Alonzo Cana, Sir Alfred East, W. Onslow Ford, Hogarth, Reynolds, Turner, Lawrence, Constable, Landseer, Watts, Frith, Millais, Leighton, Poynter. As the list indicates, there are some major artists from earlier periods and many

some sketches to Spielmann in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/649, n.d. Whistler and Spielmann had a cool relationship, Spielmann being suspicious of Whistler's Impressionism and of his French influences in general.

²⁰ Spielmann, *John Ruskin: A Sketch of his Life, his Work, and his Opinions, with Personal Reminiscences* (London: Cassell, and Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1900), 122.

²¹ Spielmann, *Early History*, 21.

²² Spielmann's discovery of the Velasquez painting is described in *The Graphic*, lxxxvii (12 April 1913), 580, and the painting is reproduced in this issue as well. It is now attributed to a Neapolitan follower of Ribera; see Percy's typescript, 245.

²³ E. Rimbault Dibdin, *The Art Gallery of the H.H. Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda, G.C.S.I. Formed by M.H. Spielmann* (London, 1920), 13. See Percy's typescript on Spielmann's advising for Newcastle and Hull.

popular academic artists from the nineteenth century.

Although his taste was academic and in some cases overtly sentimental, Spielmann was an innovator in the promotion of the New Sculpture. His most enduring relationship was with Alfred Gilbert, perhaps the greatest sculptor of this movement. Upon Gilbert's death Spielmann became his executor.²⁴ Spielmann assisted Gilbert by publicizing his school in Bruges and by printing Gilbert's protestations of innocence in the pirating and copying of his works. He further intervened to negotiate for royal favour when Gilbert wanted to return to England after the disgraces of accusations of copying his own works were made against him, whereupon Gilbert had earlier felt obliged to resign from the Royal Academy.²⁵ In 1901 Spielmann wrote one of the first studies of Victorian sculpture which he structured by genre and artists, emphasizing, in his usual manner, the artists themselves. Thornycroft, among others, praised this book as a significant assistance to sculptors.²⁶ Spielmann, along with Edmund Gosse and Sir Frederick Leighton, attempted to promote sculpture through the exhibition and commission of small works, hoping to advance the career of sculptors by making smaller works accessible to middle-class buyers, an attempt which unfortunately bore little fruit. In 1902 he helped to organize an exhibition, 'Sculpture for the Home', at the Fine Art Society Gallery in the hopes of encouraging patrons for the small bronzes which characterized the creations of this movement. He accompanied Rodin during his visit to England and showed the Frenchman the works of many English sculptors, especially Gilbert's works which Rodin seems to have greatly admired.²⁷

A brief glimpse at this movement reveals some of the aesthetic principles which underlay Spielmann's taste in sculpture. The New Sculptors reintroduced modelling through the use of bronze, in preference to marble. Bronze offered a rich colourism in its reflections of light and its patina. Its rich surface texture also revealed the process of creation itself in the still-visible touch of the artist, since the bronze was cast from plaster which had been modelled by the sculptor without the intervention of tools as in the case of chiselled marble. Along with the innovations in medium, the movement revived Florentine Renaissance naturalism and attention to nature, especially anatomy, and attacked the simpering imitative classicism that marked

²⁴ Dorment, *Alfred Gilbert*, 229 and 233. Of particular interest is Spielmann's letter of 22 November 1937 to Isabel McAllister (Royal Academy MS Sp/8/2/8) in which he mentions that he received permission from Gilbert's solicitor Gerald Keith to destroy 'such letters and pages in A.G.'s diaries as I wish'. See also Handley-Read, 'Alfred Gilbert' for details of his life and career.

²⁵ Handley-Read, 'Alfred Gilbert', 146-8, describes the events from Gilbert's bankruptcy to his resignation. See also Dorment, *Alfred Gilbert*, 256-75, for a discussion of the events leading up to Gilbert's resignation of the Victorian Order and of membership in the R.A.

²⁶ Thornycroft letter, dated 19 December 1901 (Ryl. Eng. MS 1300/10).

²⁷ Leighton's efforts on behalf of sculptors are noted by Handley-Read, 'Alfred Gilbert', 22. Leighton commissioned a 3' high *leucus* from Gilbert. Dorment, *Alfred Gilbert*, 77, mentions Spielmann's taking Rodin around London.

so much earlier nineteenth-century British sculpture. In its vitality, interest in a wide variety of body gestures and physical motion, individuality of facial images, and the intimacy of its small scale and imagery, this movement revived the art of sculpture.

Yet Spielmann's taste was hardly based solely on aesthetic principles. His taste for academic paintings of coy domestic subjects – everything from mothers and children to cats and their kittens – is best explained by a variety of other values, social and ideological. Despite the naturalism of the New Sculpture, Spielmann favoured the tempering idealism of the allegorical and symbolical subjects of the New Sculptors and in the nostalgic illustrations of childhood by Kate Greenaway. Spielmann's taste was heavily affected by his conjunction of nationalism and art (most fully expressed in his catalogue for the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908); his advocacy of the New Sculpture was motivated by his vision of it as a decidedly British movement. His belief that artists represented the national self further explains his unrelenting defence of artists as reputable, noble, well-read, gentlemanly. In *The Magazine of Art* he provided a long series of articles on artistic life, entitled 'Glimpses',²⁸ in which he described and justified all aspects of studio life, beginning with the most suspicious, the studio smoke (a practice Spielmann himself maintained) and the relationship between artist and model. He vigorously defended artists against suspicions of Bohemianism; he argued that truly great artists were gentlemen, as concerned with social respectability as was the Royal Academy itself, whose annual banquet which brought together artists and patrons was the subject of one of the 'Glimpses'. High seriousness inevitably characterized much of his taste, despite his love of graphic humorists, a genre he believed also to be thoroughly British. Respectability and domesticity are other values which explain the diversity of artists he supported and promoted. Finally, Spielmann's taste was affected by his belief that art must exist in a middle-class setting, whether by virtue of its domestic subjects, realistic portrayal of daily life, uplifting didacticism or adaptability to the interiors of middle-class homes.

He was also a devoted and loyal friend for whom it seems loyalty outweighed aesthetic quality. In this respect, he was always willing to help artists and to accept their own stated purposes. As editor and friend, Spielmann received information from artists about the intentions behind their works. Thornycroft promised to give Spielmann

²⁸ The patriotic intentions behind the 1908 Exhibition (one of whose organizers was Sir Isidore Spielmann) and Spielmann's expression of those intentions in the catalogue are described in Paul Greenhalgh, 'Art, Politics and Society at the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908', *Art History*, ix (1985), 434–52. In Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/98, 3 June 1890, George Clausen praised the 'Glimpses' series, as did the critic Joseph Grego in a letter dated 10 May 1887, in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/290. Spielmann describes the 'smoke' he held in a letter now in the Angeli-Dennis Collection, box 24, folder 1, dated 3 June 1889, in University of British Columbia, Special Collections Library.

sole permission to publish photographs of his *Cromwell* hoping that Spielmann would publish a preliminary note before the unveiling to keep up public interest until then. To provide content for such notices, Thornycroft described the meaning of *Cromwell* in one letter and the symbolism of his *Alfred* in another.²⁹ Watts, Holman Hunt and William Richmond also described their intentions in detail, explaining images, symbolism, working conditions, titles.³⁰

The letters reveal the kind of help Spielmann offered and the source of the material in his essays and art gossip, or 'art causerie', as he called his column in *The Graphic*. In their letters artists requested public mention of their activities in progress, as well as advice on how to structure their careers. Spielmann's place in the infrastructure of the late Victorian art world is apparent through the tone as well as the content of these letters. Even beyond the relationship between artists and critic, or the place of Spielmann in the art world, these letters reveal the network of relations lately classified as socio-aesthetic: the relationship among institutions (for example, the press, galleries, museums, and schools), market factors (dealers, prices of living artists and Old Masters, fluctuations in the fortunes of patrons and of the State as patron), social preconditions (class, education, income of artists), and audience expectations (with regard to media and genre, their educational level, myths about art and artists). Spielmann sought to educate his readers about the entire range of art topics, from techniques which he learned through artists' descriptions in their letters,³¹ to auction prices and the sales of national treasures outside England. He attacked the administration of the South Kensington museum for hiring civil servants instead of art specialists and scrutinized the government's plans for locating the Tate Museum and the Wallace Collection. Finally, he tackled the problems of connoisseurship and forgeries, promoting a plan to display the forgeries at South

²⁹ Letter from Thornycroft to Spielmann, dated 7 September 1899 (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1300/6). In a letter dated 20 September 1899 (Ryl. Eng. MS 1300/8) Thornycroft mentioned that he saw a notice about the unveiling of the *Cromwell* statue but had himself not heard anything about it. He believed that the patron would prefer to keep it quiet and hoped that Spielmann would only publish the preliminary note until the unveiling, i.e., would not reveal too much to the public. Thornycroft then went on to explain the meaning and style of his sculpture of *Cromwell*, probably in the hope that when Spielmann did publish information about the statue, he would inform the public of Thornycroft's artistic intentions, something Spielmann always did whenever he had such information. In a letter dated 25 September 1901 (Ryl. Eng. MS 1300 9) Thornycroft explained the symbolism of the *Alfred* statue in terms of the combined Anglo-Saxon and Christian imagery.

³⁰ These explanations appear throughout the respective correspondence of Watts (Ryl. Eng. MS 1301), Hunt (Ryl. Eng. MS 1294), Richmond (Ryl. Eng. MS 1298).

³¹ Letter from Hubert von Herkomer, dated 8 February 1891, Ryl. Eng. MS 1293 16, corrected Spielmann on a watercolour which Spielmann had described as *impasto*; another letter from Herkomer, dated 14 April 1891, Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/20, explained his etching technique to Spielmann. Artists also explained the costs of materials to Spielmann: Thornycroft, in a letter dated 15 January 1902 (Ryl. Eng. MS 1300/12), described the costs and sizes of his statues of *Cromwell*, *Gordon* and *Queen Victoria*, as well as the cost and size of the foundation of the statue of the *Queen*.

Kensington in order to educate museum-goers.³² He consulted with Sir Edward Poynter, President of the Royal Academy, about the authenticity of several works.³³

One special concern was the success of women artists. He wrote essays and books on Rosa Bonheur, Kate Greenaway and Henriette Ronner, a popular painter of cats and a particular favourite of Spielmann's. These women, whose characters were unassailably pure and lady-like, were academic in technique, conventional in subject matter, and nostalgic in sentiment, like many of the male artists Spielmann championed. Spielmann believed women possessed lesser talents than men which may explain his willingness to support an artist such as Ronner. Letters to Spielmann indicate how helpful he was in promoting women.³⁴ He devoted a section of his book on sculpture to women sculptors, and in *The Magazine of Art* he published a series of essays on women's art education in England and on the Continent.

Perhaps the most thorough example of Spielmann's intervention in an artist's career is the case of Hubert von Herkomer. Their long correspondence, from 1889 to 1912, records Herkomer's requests for advice on how to present his technical innovations, for reviews of his books, for notices to the public about the production of his plays or the achievements of students who attended Herkomer's art school at Bushey. Herkomer proclaimed his confidence and trust in Spielmann: 'I write to you because I feel that I must let you know all that is going on, as a true and faithful friend who has helped me through many things, and I hope will help me through many more'. He frequently asked Spielmann to assist a protégé or student.³⁵ Herkomer, in turn,

³² In 'Reform for the South Kensington Museum', *The Contemporary Review*, lxx (1896), 15–16, Spielmann proposes a forgery section in the museum.

³³ Ryl. Eng. MS 1297/13, dated 2 April 1907.

³⁴ *Henriette Ronner* (London: Cassell, 1892); *Kate Greenaway* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905). Rodney Engen, in *Kate Greenaway: A Biography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 208–9 and 214, criticizes Spielmann's biography of Greenaway for being disjointed as a result of attempts to maintain decorum, and says that Greenaway's family did not like Spielmann's book. Helen Allingham writes about Spielmann's article on her in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/13, dated 13 January 1899. Feodora Gleichen, sculptor, responds to Spielmann's query concerning his revised entry on her for the second edition of his book on English sculptors in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/74, dated 21 July 1907. Amelia Edwards, an Egyptologist, asked Spielmann to publish a notice of one of her lectures in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/181, dated 13 January 1889.

³⁵ In a letter dated 12 April 1889, Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/2, Herkomer asks Spielmann in confidence to make a public notice that one of his pupils, a Mr D'Urban, is now Art Master and Art Lecturer to Yorkshire College, Leeds, and was chosen from a competitive field of candidates. In a letter dated 22 October 1890, Herkomer offers Spielmann the chance to publish two drawings by a Miss Sawyer for a smaller amount than another customer is willing to pay, implying that publication in Spielmann's paper would do more good to Miss Sawyer's career than the sale. In Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/6, dated 26 May 1889, Herkomer rather elaborately explained his timing of the press for the performance of his play, and then mentioned that *The Illustrated News* and *The Graphic* were doing drawings, but that no paper had a drawing of Herkomer's except Spielmann's paper: 'I have told this as a compliment to you'. Spielmann frequently received exclusive publication rights to reproductions and engravings, and he reviewed books, such as William Frith's *Autobiography*, early because artists sent him copies before they were available to other reviewers and critics.

provided Spielmann with confidential information about Royal Academy votes, the composition of the Hanging Committee, and secret votes on new members.³⁶

Herkomer seems to have asked Spielmann's advice at every turn of his career: on printing retaliations against Joseph Pennell who attacked Herkomer's claim to originality in his printing process, on how to co-ordinate publicity and his presentation to the press of his new printing technique, on whether or not to apply for the Directorship of South Kensington, and on how to approach running for President of the Royal Water-Colour Society (an election campaign that was particularly bitter) or for President of the Royal British Artists.³⁷ He consulted Spielmann during the period in which he created an official badge for the Water-Colour Society.³⁸ He asked Spielmann's approval of his book *My School and My Gospel* before he dared send it to a publisher and later asked Spielmann to review the book in *The Graphic*, which Spielmann did, honouring all such requests from artists.³⁹ Spielmann, in turn, duly announced every honour awarded Herkomer – the German knighthood (allowing him to use the prefix 'von'); commissions to paint portraits of the American millionaire Astor, or the Prince Regent of Bavaria; the crowds of 2,000 to 3,000 that Herkomer estimated attended his lectures.

Herkomer's letters reveal the thoroughness of Spielmann's role in advising artists about their career activities in professional societies, public works, museum and gallery exhibitions and promotions of projects. Spielmann often brought artists and patrons together, as in

³⁶ Herkomer mentioned that he was on the Hanging Committee, and that this was private information, in a letter, Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/38, dated 15 March 1892; writing on 29 January 1894 Herkomer asked Spielmann to swear to secrecy concerning the information he was giving him on the votes over the issue of whether to resort to the use of partial nudes in life classes at the Royal Academy (Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/55).

³⁷ Letters in Ryl. Eng. MS 1293 in which Herkomer discusses the debate over the originality of his etching technique and the attack on his claims to innovation by Joseph Pennell, with comments on the public debate by Seymour Haden (Haden and Pennell were highly respected etchers, very knowledgeable about the history of engraving), include the following: 14 April 1891 (1293/20); 16 April 1921 (1293/21); 15 February 1892 (1293/33); 18 February 1892 (1293/34); 20 February 1892 (1293/36). Examples of letters in which Herkomer asked Spielmann's advice about when and how to tell the press of his new etching technique are 2 February 1892 (1293/29); 17 March 1895 (1293/66); 14 April 1895 (1293/68). Herkomer to Spielmann, 7 February 1893 (1293/56), described his creation of an official badge for the Royal Water-Colour Society, an idea that seems to have been his from the first. He had hoped to replace John Gilbert as President of the Society after Gilbert's death, and he described his feelings about the election and some of the intrigues in letters of 29 February 1897 (1293/87); 7 October 1897 (1293/88); 8 October 1897 (1293/89); 31 November 1897 (1293/91); 1 December 1897 (1293/92). Herkomer asked Spielmann's advice on the Royal British Artists election in a letter of 13 May 1906 (1293/126): 'A large section of the Royal British artists think I am the right man to take Sir Wyke Bayliss's place and I have been approached. Tell me your opinions in *confidence of the situation*. I don't want it – but as I said to them who spoke to me – I am willing, provided there was an unmistakable sign in the voting that they do want me'

³⁸ Herkomer reported the progress of the badge at several stages, e.g., in a letter of 17 May 1896, Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/78, in which he described to Spielmann his receiving the consent of the Queen and her acceptance of his wax model.

³⁹ Herkomer letter, 30 May 1907, Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/132.

the case of sending the Hull Committee in 1907 to numerous artists' studios to scout for works for their municipal museum.⁴⁰ Edward Stott, citing prices he wished to charge a friend of Spielmann's, mentioned the prices his works brought at auction as justification for the prices he asked. His letter indicates the kind of bargaining tools artists had at their disposal.⁴¹ While on the committee for the Cosmo Monkhouse Memorial, Spielmann successfully persuaded the National Portrait Gallery to accept Monkhouse's watercolour portrait of Turner.⁴² Spielmann attempted with great difficulty to negotiate the sale of a painting by G.A. Storey to D.S. MacColl, Director of the Tate (and later of the Wallace Collection), despite the National Collection's lack of funds which meant that the artist would only receive a fraction of his asking price.⁴³ Herkomer assumed in one letter that Spielmann knew the authorities who selected paintings for the Louvre and the Luxembourg Museums in the hope that one of his works would be picked.⁴⁴

The letters also reveal the esteem in which Spielmann was held by the prominent artists of the day. The architect R. Norman Shaw admitted that he 'profited by much of the information you gave me'.⁴⁵ Mortimer Menpes considered Spielmann 'as my very best friend'.⁴⁶ Frith, who repeatedly revealed secret votes and changes sanctioned by the Royal Academy to Spielmann, called Spielmann his 'guide, philosopher, and friend "of the future"'.⁴⁷ Poynter acknowledged Spielmann's expertise in the areas of drawing and illustration, the 'black and white arts'.⁴⁸ Madox Brown asked Spielmann to be the Honorary Secretary of the Rossetti Memorial Committee 'as one name favorably viewed by Academicians and all parties'.⁴⁹ Val Prinsep credited his book's success to Spielmann's help.⁵⁰ Briton Riviere wished all art critics were as sensitive as Spielmann to the difficulties artists had with dealers.⁵¹ Holman Hunt, generally reluctant to speak

⁴⁰ From Poynter regarding the Hull Committee, Ryl. Eng. MS 1297/12, dated 26 March 1907, and from Rothenstein following the visit of the Hull Committee to his studio, Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/529, dated 24 March 1907.

⁴¹ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/579-83, in which he referred to the patron as Spielmann's 'Indian friend', probably meaning the Maharaja Gaekwar, for whom Spielmann was creating an art collection.

⁴² Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/449, dated 30 January 1902. The portrait was officially presented to the Tate by Spielmann and Alma-Tadema.

⁴³ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/569-78; this transaction took from April 1910 to January 1912.

⁴⁴ Ryl. Eng. MS 1293/65, dated 14 March 1895.

⁴⁵ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/552, dated 13 April 1904. In Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/192, dated 8 August 1891, W. Gilbert Fisher thanked Spielmann for introducing him to Wyke Bayliss who was going to propose Fisher for membership in the Royal British Artists.

⁴⁶ Ryl. Eng. MS 1296/3, n.d.

⁴⁷ Ryl. Eng. MS 1292/19, dated 26 September 1887; changes revealed in 1292/64, dated 10 April 1889.

⁴⁸ Ryl. Eng. MS 1297/10, dated 25 December 1901.

⁴⁹ Ryl. Eng. MS 1290/15, dated 22 July 1886. Seddon, the architect of the memorial, was very pleased with Brown's choice of Spielmann.

⁵⁰ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/479, dated 26 September 1901.

⁵¹ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/516, dated 23 March 1904.

in public, agreed to participate in the Westminster Palace Hotel Meeting in 1887 for the Peace and Arbitration Society of which Spielmann was an active organizer during the Boer War (and later that year Hunt requested Spielmann to publish a long article by Hunt in *The Pall Mall Gazette*,⁵² one of the more obvious examples of the reciprocity in Spielmann's relationships with artists).

One of Menpes's letters indicates why he and other artists sought Spielmann's counsel: 'The Sickert, Steer, and Co. seem to be managing their affairs badly and so does the little master [Whistler] . . .'⁵³ The number of artists whose careers were badly managed is difficult to estimate, but the fact that some of the better-known artists suffered from naive business transactions indicates the importance of Spielmann's role. As the son of a banker and a man familiar with the worlds of money and manufacturing, and with the art patrons whose fortunes were made by those activities, Spielmann was especially qualified to be the artists' career and financial counsellor. Letters from artists thanking him for his advice, as well as the letters seeking advice, indicate, too, that his advice proved advantageous. Frith asked Spielmann for a notice in *The Pall Mall Gazette* to announce that he was taking advanced pupils into his studio in the Continental style of art training and repeated his request in order to get a few more students two years later.⁵⁴ When Gilbert returned to England after his self-imposed exile in Belgium, Spielmann advised him not to keep the press at arm's length too long or risk their hostility.⁵⁵ In the place where art meets commerce, artists' letters to Spielmann document their uneasiness, an uneasiness which Spielmann seems to have placated by taking care of their careers. Mentioning his new entrepreneurial scheme, Harry Furniss wrote, 'I have always taken the liberty to bother you with my secrets since I have [*sic*] the pleasure of knowing you'.⁵⁶

⁵² Ryl. Eng. MS 1294, Hunt to Spielmann, letter 1294/2, dated 10 July 1887, on his willingness to speak before the public; and letter 1294/4, dated 27 July 1887, on the publication of his article in *The Pall Mall Gazette*.

⁵³ Ryl. Eng. MS 1296/3, Menpes to Spielmann, n.d., probably 1897.

⁵⁴ Ryl. Eng. MS 1292/3, dated 15 May 1886 and 1292/34, dated 2 June 1888.

⁵⁵ Dormant, *Alfred Gilbert*, 308, citing a letter from Spielmann to Gilbert dated 5 August 1926.

⁵⁶ Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/213, dated 20 November 1890. Other examples of Spielmann's economic relationships with artists include a transaction between Briton Riviere and Spielmann concerning a work of art mentioned in Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/503, dated 9 November 1902 (Riviere thought Spielmann would be paying too much for the work); Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/37, dated 19 October 1888, in which C. Barnard asked Spielmann for money. In another letter Barnard admitted to a drinking problem which he overcame eventually. Spielmann continued to find work for him until at least 1903. Spielmann seems to have been generous in such cases. Although Holman Hunt decried the social pretensions and hobnobbing of the Royal Academy, its banquets and courting of aristocrats and wealthy patrons, he was not above requesting that Spielmann publicize the fact that he was in the process of painting *May Morning at Magdalene Tower* or mentioning that the painting had already been cited in *The Oxford Times* (Ryl. Eng. MS 1295/5, dated 23 January 1889). He provided Spielmann with details about the painting and the ceremony it depicted. Although Frith argued against the commercialism of art in response to the Pears Soap advertisement using Milla's *Bubbles* (in *The Magazine of Art*, xii (1889), 421-3,

Even the most reclusive painter in England, George Frederick Watts, who strenuously avoided publicity (and feared its effects on young artists)⁵⁷ and who declined a baronetcy, felt obliged, over the period from 1885 to 1903, to explain to Spielmann his general philosophy and the specific allegories of his paintings. Spielmann wrote several studies of Watts and greatly admired him as much for his high-minded character as for his art. In his letters Watts reveals his own peculiar phobia of publicity; he was ever-watchful of his own words and deeds, excessively worried over his public image, afraid of appearing dogmatic, and continually revising his statements. In short, he proved to be the exact opposite of Herkomer in response to the conditions of artists in this period. Watts, in ill health after 1888 and always pressed for money, was perhaps the only artist among Spielmann's friends and acquaintances who believed his work was worth more if *not* reproduced in *The Magazine of Art*.⁵⁸ He was unusually hesitant about publicity and frequently requested that Spielmann refrain from 'forcing his works' into notice.⁵⁹ Watts claimed in 1893 that he never painted for an exhibition and never even participated in 'show Sunday', the Sunday before the Royal Academy Exhibition when artists opened their studios to the public.⁶⁰

One of Watts's attractions for Spielmann was Watts's conviction that he produced art for the Nation, an art with 'the stamp of our English Nationality in character'.⁶¹ Watts came to signify a national art, which Spielmann, in pursuing the international exhibition markets, turned into a nationalistic art. Spielmann tried to demarcate as clearly as possible the differences between England and other countries, especially France, in terms of their cultural life. If he did not consider French art as decadent as did Hunt or Thornycroft, it was

followed by a reply from Spielmann, 423–7), he was, at the same time, notoriously anxious for self-promotion. In one letter he asked Spielmann to mention in a short notice how many volumes of his autobiography had already been sold (Ryl. Eng. MS 1292/45, dated 28 October 1888). Another time he manoeuvred to get Spielmann the proofs of his autobiography from the publisher so that a favourable review would be certain to appear at the moment the book was published (Ryl. Eng. MS 1292/17, dated 21 September 1887). Edwin Abbey described at length his slow method, which he refused to hurry for the sake of commercial gain, but he mentioned that he would not mind it if Spielmann wrote 'upon "my career"', and he even promised to send Spielmann illustrations to accompany such an article from the copyright holders (Ryl. Eng. MS. 1288/2, dated 7 October 1890, on his slow method and 1288/7, dated 13 July 1898, on his interest in an article on his career). H. Stacy Marks, questioning Frith's attack on Millais, argued that if Frith had a chance to sell a work to an advertiser he would 'with his elastic temperament well get over his grievance' about the collusion between art and advertising. Marks believed that such a union was 'simply a matter of business' and not a concern of art '(with a large A)'. Furthermore, Marks welcomed the association with other, more prominent poster artists, such as Herkomer, Poynter and Walker (Ryl. Eng. MS 1302/414, dated 11 July 1889).

⁵⁷ Ryl. Eng. MS 1301/80, dated 26 October 1903.

⁵⁸ Ryl. Eng. MS 1301/17, dated 31 May 1888.

⁵⁹ Ryl. Eng. MS 1301/40, dated 29 April 1890, and Watt's letter (1301/54), dated 1 May 1892.

⁶⁰ Ryl. Eng. MS 1301/61, dated 7 March 1893.

⁶¹ Ryl. Eng. MS 1301/74, dated 7 February 1897. Watts typically retracted his statement, later denying that he felt he represented Englishness in his art.

because the French art he preferred was as academic as the English art he loved. For Spielmann Watts was the standard for measuring the Englishness of art by its sincerity, lofty commitment to a pure (i.e., allegorical or symbolical) content, and creation by a truly dedicated, unBohemian, gentlemanly artist. Spielmann held Watts up as an ideal artistic character.

While he promoted art as the representation of a country's best national self, following the belief of his mentor Ruskin, Spielmann's admiration for Ruskin reveals his differences from the sage as well. In writing the first book to commemorate Ruskin in 1900, Spielmann acknowledged Ruskin for his role in the formation of art criticism and British taste and for his ability to separate his sentiment from his critical faculty.⁶² Spielmann admired Ruskin's fusion of scientific attention and artistic beauty, midway between the religious and scientific lines of thought, believing as did Ruskin that 'the teaching of art is the teaching of all things'.⁶³ Indulgent toward Ruskin's idealism and 'Quixotic purity of commercial morality carried almost to the point of impracticability and stagnation, and a religious view of higher art developed almost to the point of monastic exclusiveness and ethical fervour',⁶⁴ Spielmann nevertheless departed radically from Ruskin's extreme idealism. Spielmann's espousal of modern technology, such as the new photographic and printing techniques, and his hearty acceptance of commercial demands on artists distinguished his functions in the art world from those of Ruskin who sought to educate the aesthetic tastes and technical knowledge of his Victorian audience. Spielmann informed his readers not about nature and its artistic expression, which were Ruskin's subjects, but about art market prices, art educational and professional institutions, and the comings and goings of famous artists, patrons and collectors.

One of the more striking examples of the different purposes and intentions between the two men is demonstrated by Spielmann's pragmatic and nationalistic extension of Ruskin's appreciation for the Pre-Raphaelites. In his own revisionist art history, Spielmann inflated the importance of the movement, claiming that modern British art was entirely built upon Pre-Raphaelitism, an argument which served several purposes: to create a thoroughly British tradition without French or German influences; to justify Spielmann's hostility toward Art Nouveau which he condemned as a decadent continental style; to defend the importance of domesticated realism and direct observation

⁶² Spielmann, *Ruskin*, 115. Greenhalgh, 448-9, describes Spielmann's views on Pre-Raphaelitism and Art Nouveau. Although Spielmann's book on Ruskin mentioned personal reminiscences, these only refer to letters from Ruskin in response to Spielmann's request for an essay by Ruskin in *The Magazine of Art*. Ruskin sent him an essay entitled 'The Black Arts; A Reverie in the Strand' in 1887 as part of a series of essays which Ruskin never finished after the first installment.

⁶³ Spielmann, *Ruskin*, 84, 91-2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-7.

in British art with all the concomitants of recognizable subject matter, descriptive colour, middle-class virtues.⁶⁵ In contradistinction to the sage, Spielmann clearly addressed the very circumstances Ruskin so ardently avoided and eventually attacked: commerce, patrons, dealers, mass media and publicity. Spielmann's success in the official art world as editor, critic, advisor to government schools and museums, as well as to two generations of artists, patrons and dealers, indicates the nature of the professional validation desired by late Victorian artists straining to win membership in societies and to expand their activities into new markets being opened up by the mass media, reproduction and international exhibitions. Spielmann provided the expertise to help artists enter commerce with ease, meet private and governmental patrons, learn to shape their public image as representative of the nation's best qualities: hard working, selfless, idealistic, progressive, adventuresome in their artistic conceptions and material productivity. He provided artists with an understanding of economic realities and social decorum typically anathema to our modern image of the avant-garde or Bohemian artist. The late Victorian art world was not dominated by the modern avant-garde sensibility, which was only then just beginning to take on its current shape and authority.

Although we have studied the lives of avant-garde artists thoroughly, our understanding of the lives of more conventional, economically successful, and typical artists must also be expanded, if we are to understand the concrete material and social conditions of artistic life. The enormous body of correspondence between Spielmann and nineteenth-century artists reveals a great deal about artistic life during this period. Despite Spielmann's authority, artists actively and assertively participated in their own careers by attempting to gain notice so that their names were before the public as often as possible to attract commissions. Artists did not bargain or plead from a position of weakness; they recognized that their works were wanted for cultural and social legitimacy by patrons, museum directors and dealers, and that Spielmann needed them in order to carry out his tasks as editor, critic and government cultural ambassador. Their letters illuminate the nature of the institutions that shaped their careers and promised them success, from new artists' professional societies and dealers' galleries, to more established museums and the Royal Academy. More important than his taste, Spielmann's combined roles as broker and connoisseur signify the nature of the late Victorian art world in its economic and professional structures.⁶⁶ Spielmann was unusual in functioning within both the worlds of connoisseurship and the commercial art market. The result was a busy and useful participation

⁶⁵ Greenhalgh, 448–9.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Green, 'Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Art History*, x (1987), 59–78.

in the art world but without any contribution to aesthetic philosophy or critical discourse. The very blandness and imprecision of his critical language reflect the dominance of his promotional and interpersonal interests.

Spielmann's importance lies precisely in his mundane participation in the economic and professional areas of art; his voluminous letters reveal the infrastructure in which artists, patrons and public expressed the changing values and roles of art itself as England moved from the Victorian to the modern world. The breakdown of the authority of the Royal Academy with the multiplication of exhibition spaces and the plurality of critical positions, artistic styles and media departed from the more unified Victorian art world in which Spielmann and many of the academic artists he promoted grew up. Recent studies of the nature of the art world in late nineteenth-century France have revealed a complex infrastructure in which artists' lives were intertwined with the activities of critics, journalists, dealers and scholars, a few of whom functioned, like Spielmann, in several capacities.⁶⁷ The collusion between scholarship and connoisseurship on the one hand and the commercial interests of dealers and collectors on the other has been documented in the context of the late nineteenth-century attention to contemporary artists as distinct from the market in Old Masters.⁶⁸ While the values of Old Masters were clear, with the exception of the recurring problem of forgeries, contemporary art was a more speculative area with uncertain and shifting prices necessitating a class of taste arbiters. The complex and symbolic cultural associations surrounding an art work further elevated critics and collectors in their cultural status, not only for their taste but also for their new roles as civic-minded contributors to national cultural life. These qualitative values which the collector assimilated (as art became a sign of intelligence, taste, social acceptability, economic success, historic and traditional ties) created an art market in which much more than labour or a commodity was purchased. Michael Baxandall has used the term 'troc' to characterize the loose bartering nature of the art market, a condition which, when combined with the speculation in the market of contemporary living artists, served to elevate the intermediary critic or dealer.⁶⁹

While scholars have noted close ties in France between the new commercial roles of art critics and dealers and the official ideology of

⁶⁷ Ibid., 62–73.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 61–3. See also Miriam R. Levine, *Republican Art and Ideology in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986).

⁶⁹ Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 47–9. Spielmann's defence of artists against charges of Bohemianism is not entirely unusual. Even a critic as avant-garde as Apollinaire presented Matisse as a middle-class family man. Baxandall, 51, considers Apollinaire an ideologue and moralist rather than a critic in the modern sense. Spielmann, too, was more an ideologue and moralist than an aesthetic critic.

the Third Republic's conception of the citizen,⁷⁰ such ties, while less clearly articulated in England (due to the traditional lack of governmental interference first in the Royal Academy and subsequently in the art world in general), also existed in the context of British self-definition as bearers of the highest values of civilization both at home and abroad, for example, in the case of Spielmann's collection for the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda. Spielmann's interests included a revival of the concept of the artist-as-citizen articulated by Reynolds and reborn in Spielmann's many essays on eighteenth-century art.⁷¹ For Spielmann art was most valuable as a signifier of civilized virtues epitomized not only by the best artists, but also by connoisseurs and collectors on whom he lavished as much praise as he did on the artists themselves.

As scholars have noticed in the case of France, the last quarter of the nineteenth century experienced new commercial demands and a redefinition of the functions of art, artist and art expert. Spielmann's roles as broker and scholar and the major influence he sustained in so many artists' careers reflect the effects of the expansion of speculative capitalism into the art market in England. Further study of the careers and dealings of critics, connoisseurs, collectors and dealers, in relation not only to artists' careers but also to more widespread social and economic conditions of late Victorian life, would illuminate the problematic relationship between articulated aesthetic principles and the realities of professional artistic life.

⁷⁰ Green, 'Dealing in Temperaments', 61.

⁷¹ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting: From Reynolds to Hazlitt* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 75–82. Spielmann's writings on eighteenth-century art include his studies on British portraiture, popular pictures, and the Wallace Collection (see attached bibliography), as well as numerous articles in journals and newspapers.

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'The Works of Mr. George F. Watts, R.A., with a Complete Catalogue of his Pictures', *Pall Mall Gazette 'Extra'*, No. 22, unpaginated.

2. PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Black and White. Spielmann was one of the founders of this publication which began in 1890; he resigned in mid-1891, however, due to ill-health, according to his letters. When his resignation was made public, he received numerous letters of regret at his decision from a large number of artists, many of whom were mere acquaintances, and a large number seem not to have known him personally, but still to have expressed their regret at his leaving.

Daily Graphic. This was published under the auspices of *The Graphic*.

The Graphic. Spielmann began writing art criticism around 1882. Spielmann greatly expanded the art section going well beyond reviews to include short essays and myriad reproductions. His essays disappear by 1914.

The Illustrated London News. Spielmann wrote occasional articles for this publication which was close in format to *The Graphic*.

The Magazine of Art. Spielmann was the editor of this magazine from 1887 to its last issue in 1904. The previous editor was William Henley, followed briefly by temporary editors, until Spielmann took over.

The Morning Leader (after 1909).

The Morning Post.

The Pall Mall Gazette. Spielmann joined the staff in 1883 and wrote a great deal for this newspaper, including long articles for its supplements.

Westminster Gazette.

3. PRIMARY DOCUMENTS IN COLLECTIONS

Bodleian Library, Oxford: Approximately 21 miscellaneous letters.

The British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects, London: Three folders of papers pertaining to 1904 lecture on the Queen Victoria Memorial and correspondence with sculptors and architects in connection with the memorial. This material is filed among the Goodhart-Rendel Papers.

The British Library, London: Miscellaneous letters, including Spielmann's correspondence with the Society of Authors between 1909 and 1914 and correspondence with Gladstone in 1887–88, as well as four of the Brontë-Heger letters of 1844, which Spielmann gave to the British Museum.

Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds: Contains 113 letters, mostly correspondence with two minor writers, Henry Arthur Jones (1917–28) and Clement K. Shorter (1905–25).

Duke University, Durham, North Carolina: Spielmann material is contained in the Alfred Tennyson Papers, and consists of two letters by Spielmann but signed by his wife Mabel Henrietta, who occasionally acted as his secretary.

Glasgow University Library, Glasgow: Contains 12 letters between Whistler and Spielmann.

The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre, The University of Texas at Austin: Contains miscellaneous correspondence, including, among others, letters to Richard Garnett, Theodore Watts-Dunton and from William Michael Rossetti.

The Huntington Library, San Marino, California: Two letters, one from Spielmann and one from Mabel Spielmann praising a novelist W. Graham Robertson for his book *Time Was*.

The John Rylands University Library of Manchester: This is the largest collection of Spielmann material and includes 1,294 letters to him from a wide variety of artists, most notably from Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, Frith, Leighton, Poynter, Menpes, W.M. Rossetti, Crane, Herkomer, Thornycroft, Watts.

The Royal Academy of Arts, London: Contains a very large collection of material, including an extensive correspondence in the Gilbert Papers and a large body of material concerned with Spielmann's interest in the R.A. and his attempts to reform the R.A. through petitions circulated among artists, letters in *The Times* and articles in other periodicals. His suggested reforms were to cut down the number of submissions by both outsiders and R.A. members; these were popular suggestions among artists, although some were hesitant about the latter as infringing on the autonomy of the R.A.

The State University of Rutgers, Special Collections and Archives, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Two letters only to Spielmann from Watts-Dunton.

The University of Birmingham Library, Birmingham: A large and miscellaneous collection of letters and postcards.

The University of British Columbia Library Special Collections Division, Vancouver, British Columbia: Several letters in the Colbeck Collection and the Angeli-Dennis Collection.

Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, London: Contains notebooks and jottings relating to the Select Committee on the Museum of the Science and Art Department at South Kensington which seem to have been taken during testimony before the Select Committee investigating the management of South Kensington. There is also Percy's typescript biography of his father, and several boxes of letters from artists to Sir Isidore Spielmann over a twenty-year period during which he organized international exhibitions from the 1890s to the eve of World War I.