

***Picasso & Modern British Art* at Tate Britain, London
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Mr Wyndham Lewis's first action after the war will be to erect (with the aid of numerous accomplices) a statue of Van Gogh, and another to Pablo Picasso.

Wyndham Lewis, 'Artists and the War' (1915; B2 22)

The Three Dancers and Inertia

In 1960 Roland Penrose curated the immensely important *Pablo Picasso* exhibition at the Tate Gallery. Over 460,000 people attended.¹ Almost immediately after it closed, he began negotiations with the artist for the purchase of *The Three Dancers*; it took five years for these to be completed, and the work was acquired in 1965 for £80,000 of public money. Painted in 1925, Picasso himself felt that it surpassed even *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) in significance. At the moment of agreement Penrose sent Picasso photographs of all the works by him that were owned by the Tate Gallery or loaned to it, 'remarking in his accompanying letter that the deficiencies of the collection were all too obvious but that *The Three Dancers* would go a great way to remedying the situation', in Elizabeth Cowling's summary.² The origins of those deficiencies, both at the Tate Gallery and in public or private collections throughout Britain, are exposed, entirely deliberately, by this exhibition. To go around it is to experience the sickening realization of the extent to which early- to mid-twentieth century administrators and critics failed to understand Picasso's significance, and acted – or rather, failed to act – accordingly. Penrose had recognized the problem long before: in 1945 he drafted a letter to *The Times* urging that institutions comparable to the

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York should be set up 'if we wish to catch up on the habitual time lag in our artistic appreciation for which this country is notorious'.³ In *Picasso & Modern British Art*, the curators placed *The Three Dancers* – with what significance we shall see – in the final room of the exhibition.

Picasso told Penrose that, unlike the political *Guernica* (1937), *The Three Dancers* was 'painted to be a painting, without ulterior motive'.⁴ Despite some adverse comments in the House of Lords by Lady Summerskill, the acquisition of *The Three Dancers* was a high point in the history of Picasso's reception by the British art establishment. Penrose was by now a Trustee of the Tate Gallery, and had been a friend of the artist since 1936; the painting might well have been offered as a gift to the nation, but Picasso did not want to upset those museums and gallery owners who had supported him for many years. The significance of this purchase for our national collection cannot, therefore, be underestimated. *Les Demoiselles* had been in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art since 1939, but in Britain the history of acquisition was highly problematic, and symptomatic of the conservatism and lack of foresight demonstrated by curatorial staff at the great British art collections. That is why Tate Modern's holdings of the major modernist artists are relatively weak, compared with national museums and galleries in Europe and the United States. It is significant that Penrose was the agent for this purchase, since he was not only a Tate Trustee but also the co-founder of the rival Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), which had already held several Picasso shows. Public institutions in Britain could have acquired major works by Picasso (and by many other modern artists), when they first became available, but those in positions of responsibility – most particularly Sir John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery from 1938 to 1964 – failed to comprehend Picasso's central position in twentieth-century art, and let the opportunities pass.⁵ Nor has this attitude much altered, as a recent article in *The Guardian* by Jonathan Jones, suggesting that Tate Britain ignored a potential donation from Charles Saatchi worth about £30 million, has woefully demonstrated.⁶

If institutional conservatism forms the wider context to *Picasso & Modern British Art*, the main purpose of the exhibition is to explore Picasso's complex impact on seven artists who worked in Britain over a period of about seventy-five years. They are Duncan Grant, Wyndham Lewis, Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland, Henry Moore, Francis

Bacon, and David Hockney. The span of years runs from Lewis's *The Theatre Manager* of 1909 through to Hockney's collage *Paint Trolley, L.A. 1985* (1985). The former may refer to *Les Demoiselles*; the latter shows Hockney's set of Zervos's famous Picasso catalogue: the sense of *hommage* is strong here, and throughout.

This is to identify these seven artists as forming a modernist canon; a move that invites further discussion as to how such a canon might be settled upon, and by what criteria. It also places Picasso at the centre of that 'story', at the expense of other major European artists. As several critics have pointed out, the flaw in this otherwise fascinating exhibition is that its premise actually diminishes the achievements of the British artists, by setting up a structure to describe the all-embracing impact that one artist had on the lives and working practice of seven others. Picasso becomes the key influence on 'Modern British Art', and the considerable impact of others – such as Braque, Gris, Léger, Matisse, Mondrian, and Kandinsky – is ignored.

In her 'Foreword' to the catalogue, Penelope Curtis acknowledges the complicated genesis of the exhibition, which began as an idea from Richard Humphreys (who was also responsible for the selection of pictures by Wyndham Lewis). Humphreys worked with James Beechey and Robert Upstone, and when Upstone left Tate Britain in 2010, Chris Stephens, Head of Displays, became the 'lead curator'.⁷ Others contributed to the project, including Chris Green of the Courtauld Institute (who selected the work by Ben Nicholson and Henry Moore). Beechey and Stephens edited the catalogue, with assistance from Green. It contains a magnificently bitchy interview between Stephens and John Richardson, the great Picasso scholar, about the cultural politics of the art collector – and sometime partner of Richardson – Douglas Cooper. (With bouncy alliteration it is entitled 'Cooper's Capers and their Consequences for Picasso, Penrose and the Tate': consequences indeed, and not all of the best.) Wider historical narratives are explored in Chris Green's essay on the critical reception of Picasso's work, and in Andrew Brighton's study of Picasso's politics and Cold War Britain. Underlying the main themes of the exhibition is the complex question of what artistic influence is, and how it works, together with a rather trickier issue – the difficult and often negative consequences of that influence.

The first Picassos were seen in this country a little over a century ago, at Roger Fry's two post-Impressionist exhibitions at the Grafton Galleries in London in 1910 and 1912. During the two decades after

that, Picasso was largely absent from our major public museums and galleries, although his work could be viewed in a small number of private collections. The first Picassos to be exhibited at the Tate Gallery itself were loaned for the opening of the new foreign modern galleries, in 1926. These were *Child with a Dove* (1901), loaned by Mrs R. A. Workman (herself the subject of a fine pencil and wash drawing by Wyndham Lewis, hanging in this exhibition), and *Jars and Lemon* (1907), then owned by the art critic Clive Bell. Both those paintings are here, along with the deeply unrepresentative and impressionistic *Flowers* (1901), the earliest painting by Picasso to be purchased by the Tate, in 1933, for £700. Correspondence in the Tate archive reveals the justification: ‘The very fact that the flower painting is scarcely recognizable as a Picasso makes it an easy acquisition!’⁸ It astonishes that there were no Cubist pictures in the Tate’s modern collection until 1949, when *Seated Nude* (1909-10) was acquired from Galerie Pierre, in Paris. Although the Tate was bequeathed important works during the 1930s, and acquired others during the 1950s, it was not until 1965 that an outstanding painting by Picasso finally entered the collection: here, *The Three Dancers* is shown (almost on its own) in a room at the end of the exhibition – whether as end-piece or centrepiece isn’t wholly clear. The peculiar isolation of this great painting serves as an uncomfortable final reminder of (and apology for) the inadequacies of the Tate’s acquisition policy in the middle of the last century. Sadly, it also reminds us of the differences in ambition and innovation between the (mostly) derivative work of the British artists included in the exhibition, and Picasso at full stretch. *The Three Dancers* is an awkward, disturbing painting. Indeed, few Expressionist or Surrealist works generate a similar psychological unease and tension. With its ambiguities of surface and depth, its passages of crude, roughly-applied pigment, and its sexually ambiguous subject matter, it is perhaps more radical today than it was when first painted nearly ninety years ago. In that sense, its placing in this exhibition is an expression of triumphant success.

Abjection, and How to Resist It

As we follow Picasso’s career through the galleries devoted to his work in this exhibition, we are constantly reminded of the enormous scale of his artistic innovation, and the sense of liberation and purpose that he

gave to young British artists, renewed again and again over time. Curtis writes, with blinding obviousness, '[i]f Britain was of little importance to Picasso, Picasso has been very important to British art'.⁹ Yet Picasso was attracted by many aspects of British culture. Penrose reported that when he first left Spain in 1900, Picasso had intended to travel on to London. He admired, among other things, Victorian moralist painting, *The Yellow Book*, the poetic *tristesse* of Edward Burne-Jones, and the tailoring of Savile Row clothes. Richardson recalls that while staying in London, in 1919, Picasso bought 'suits from Poole, shoes from Lobb and hats from Lock'.¹⁰ By comparison, the British art establishment responded as if he was a hostile alien, and the catalogue provides many examples of the incomprehension demonstrated by those in positions of influence and power.

We are made acutely aware of missed opportunities, as well as of the cultural isolation and small-mindedness that Chris Stephens describes in his interview with John Richardson as 'this ever so British farce', by which (for example) Richardson and Cooper were sent to buy Picassos in Paris over the head of Rothenstein.¹¹ Not enough was acquired, of course; yet so many of the pictures brought into this exhibition from elsewhere might under different circumstances have been part of the national collection. We also learn that during the early 1930s the Tate failed to purchase, or even accept as gifts, paintings of the quality of *La Vie* (1903; now in Cleveland), *La Belle Hollandaise* (1905; now in Brisbane), and *Woman in an Armchair* (1927).

The core of the exhibition consists of six galleries containing eighty-eight works by Picasso, with *The Three Dancers* in its special place.¹² A further eleven are placed among the British art for comparative purposes. The exhibition assembles works that were either shown or collected in Britain from before the First World War through to Picasso's eventual acceptance by the British art establishment after the Second World War. Altogether there are nearly one hundred works by Picasso, in a variety of media, from *Flowers* to *Las Meninas (Group)*, from 1957; the very last work is a pencil drawing entitled *The Kiss*, dated 1967 and bequeathed by Joanna Drew in 2003. Although the curatorial structure of the exhibition determines the choices made, and many paintings are sourced from collections in the United Kingdom, there are nevertheless works on display from all parts of Picasso's career that have rarely been seen in Britain before. The exhibition provides a

fascinating insight into the tastes of British collectors, and confirms how timid many were when it came to purchasing Picasso's art.

This narrative of acquisition explores Picasso's reception in Britain by private collectors, followed eventually by the regional and major public collections. Despite the efforts of individuals (mostly from the circle around Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and the Bloomsbury group), it was not until the 1920s that important work by Picasso was taken into a public collection. Before that date Picasso was to be seen only privately; few early collectors bought the most radical work, preferring the Blue Period, or pictures that were slightly atypical.

Early collectors included the Dutch stockbroker and collector, Cornelis (Frank) Stoop, who owned *Girl in a Chemise* (c. 1905) and *Seated Woman in a Chemise* (1923), both bequeathed to the Tate in 1933, and Hugh Willoughby, a painter, art critic, and (possibly) dealer, who lent his Picassos to the Tate in 1934. He owned *Female Nude with Arms Raised* (1907) and *Guitar Suspended on a Wall* (1927). Douglas Cooper and Roland Penrose assembled – separately and in competition – the finest collections of Picasso's art in Britain. Indeed, Cooper amassed one of the great collections of Cubist art, on the back of a small private fortune. Several examples from Cooper's collection are here, including *Man with a Clarinet* (1911-12) and *Still Life with Garlands* (1918). At one stage Cooper had considered keeping his collection together in his chateau in the south of France, where he lived with John Richardson, but his Anglophobia meant that a putative relationship with the Courtauld was never likely to happen. In the long run that decision was quite as damaging to the Tate as the obdurate negativity of Sir John Rothenstein. Roland Penrose also built up a very fine collection, focusing more on Picasso's Surrealist work from the 1930s, and including *Nude on the Beach* (1932) and *Portrait of Lee Miller as l'Arlésienne* (1937). Penrose also owned the superb early Cubist portrait of Fernande Olivier, *Woman in Green* (1909-10), now in Eindhoven. A number of important Picassos from Penrose's collection eventually found their way into the national collections.

The exhibition also documents Picasso's visits to Britain, including the ten weeks he spent in London, in 1919, working with Serge Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, on the costumes and scenery for *The Three Cornered Hat* (*Le Tricorne*), and his later visit as a delegate to the World Peace Congress in Sheffield, in 1951. It was during this latter visit that Picasso, the only delegate of a party of fifty-two to be granted entry

to Britain, lamented to Roland Penrose: 'What can I have done that they should have let me through?'¹³ Yet Picasso considered Britain to be something of a spiritual home, and he was always keen to hear gossip about British artists that he knew, although it appears that he became irritated by the constant promotion of Duncan Grant.¹⁴

Another related narrative follows the reception by British critics and members of the art establishment to Picasso's work. A particularly fine example of establishment criticism comes from G. K. Chesterton, commenting in *The New Age*, in 1911, on Picasso's *Mandolin and Glass of Pernod* (1911), that the artist 'has had the misfortune to upset the ink and tried to dry it with his boots'.¹⁵ In 1949, when Alfred Munnings, outgoing President of the Royal Academy, was giving his farewell address, he told the story of being asked by Winston Churchill: "'Alfred, if you met Picasso coming down the street would you join me in kicking his ... something, something?'" he [Munnings] had heartily agreed that he would'.¹⁶ By that date Picasso's art had already influenced several generations of artists around the world.

Inevitably, the British artists are not presented with comparable coherence, nor do they form a coherent group; in some rooms the quality of work is higher than in others, and in some the nature of each artist's creative response to Picasso is clearer than elsewhere. Nowhere is it explained fully why these particular artists came to be selected instead of others with equal claims. A multitude of British artists came under Picasso's influence, and might have been chosen with equal effect. James Beechey comes closest to setting out a rationale: these are seven artists for whom 'Picasso's example acted as a vital stimulus and whose encounters with his art decisively affected their own practice'.¹⁷ Most knew Picasso, or had visited his studio, and some (Lewis included) had exhibited alongside him. Beechey claims that this 'is not a question of influence as a passive acceptance, but of study and appropriation as a conscious strategy in each artist's practice', always 'at a specific, pivotal moment' in their own development. This is a process of 'reshaping his reputation as they draw upon his precedent'.¹⁸ This suggests that an active encounter is taking place, but we shall argue that in at least three cases it was a much more passive occurrence. Beechey is well aware that 'it was not only this septet whose work was enriched by the lessons they took from Picasso';¹⁹ and he offers a lengthy list of other artists who might have been chosen, from Augustus John through Keith Vaughan to Goshka Macuga.

The outcome, nevertheless, is seven male artists – six painters and one sculptor – who demonstrate in different ways the ‘British’ art world’s response to Picasso over nearly seventy years – as perceived by the Tate’s curatorial team. Each of the seven ‘influenced’ artists has been given a separate room, except for Wyndham Lewis and Duncan Grant, who share their space in a way that exposes what might be called, in Grant’s case, the limits of influence: he does something with Picasso, but not much. Yet because each curator has made his (again, no women are involved) selection from a slightly different curatorial position, a diffuse and unfocused exhibition emerges. Clearly, a more coherent and inclusive exhibition might have been devised by selecting a broader range of British artists (both male and female), who could have been presented – whether chronologically or thematically – to demonstrate Picasso’s influence over the decades. After the question of ‘why these artists?’ comes the question of ‘why these specific pictures or sculptures?’ Presumably because they embody that mysterious process of ‘study and appropriation’ that Beechey mentions. It would have been interesting, we think, to have seen examples of Barbara Hepworth’s sculpture, on the grounds that she holds an equal claim with Henry Moore to belong in the canon of British modernism. A much richer and more varied context would have been established by interposing a room of work by artists not often seen these days, such as Christopher Wood, Robert Colquhoun, Keith Vaughan, Michael Ayrton, or Lynn Chadwick. Hockney is the youngest painter included here; others from his generation (more or less) that might have been selected for greater variety are Patrick Heron, Richard Hamilton, and Anthony Caro – the list is truly extensive.

The first room contains eight Picassos exhibited in Britain between 1910 and 1914, including several that were shown in Fry’s two Post-Impressionist exhibitions in London in 1910 and 1912. Present are two masterpieces of analytical Cubism, *Bottle and Books* (1910-11), the only work by the artist to have been purchased from the second exhibition, and *Head of a Man* (1912). Ownership begins to speak: *Jars and Lemon* was owned by Clive and Vanessa Bell, who bought the painting from Clovis Sagot’s gallery in Paris in 1914, while (a different) *Head of a Man*, from 1913, was purchased by Roger Fry directly from Picasso’s dealer Kahnweiler in the same year. Other well-known works include *The Frugal Meal* (1904), which may have belonged to Michael Sadler, and *Girl in a Chemise*, owned by Frank Stoop. It is to the credit of

all those who acquired these works that between them they recognized differing aspects of Picasso's extraordinary development. As for the implications of ownership, the 1901 *Child with a Dove*, shown in another room, is at present the subject of an export license ban, as efforts are made to match its current valuation of about £50 million.

This small room of Picassos is followed by seven pictures by Duncan Grant, all produced between 1912 and 1918, following his then-recent encounter with Cubist art in the Paris apartment of Gertrude and Leo Stein. Picasso's small painting of a *Vase of Flowers* (1908), which Grant recollected seeing in Picasso's studio, is included here as a reference for Grant's rather muddled study of Vanessa Bell in *The Tub* (c. 1913), while his *Design for a Firescreen* (c. 1912) is hung not far from Picasso's *Jars and Lemon*, which Grant saw in Bell's house in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. It is possible to demonstrate that Grant was directly influenced by Picasso's *art nègre* technique, where distinct brush strokes are applied in parallel lines and cross-hatchings that ultimately derive from the facial patterns sometimes seen in African carving. The most celebrated of Picasso's works using this technique is *Nude with Drapery* (1907), now in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, but then hanging in the Steins' collection in their Paris apartment. Grant first encountered this work there in 1909. Grant's use of Picasso's later technique of *papier collé* is more successful, notably *Interior at Gordon Square* (1914-15), with its tight composition and muted palette. Grant, however, was essentially an artist at home with pattern and rich brushwork, as his *Abstract Design* (c. 1913-15) for Fry's Omega Workshops clearly demonstrates.

This room also displays nine works by Wyndham Lewis that might possibly be traced to Picasso's influence. There are four pre-Vorticist drawings: *The Theatre Manager* (1909), *Smiling Woman Ascending a Staircase* (1911), *Self Portrait* (1911), and *Two Mechanics* (c. 1912). The first provides some evidence to suggest that Lewis had become aware of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* before he returned from France to live in London in 1908. Lewis's close friend and early mentor, Augustus John, had certainly seen it in Picasso's studio, for he mentions it in a letter of 5 November 1907, and – this is speculation – could have described it to Lewis.²⁰ The other three early drawings exhibit varying degrees of abstraction, and demonstrate that Lewis was certainly influenced by Cubism – although not necessarily by any specific work by Picasso. The features in Lewis's self-portrait are strongly formed, fusing

a three-quarters with a sideways view that is a typical early Cubist device. *Two Mechanics* is perhaps a parody of Arcadian fantasies by Derain or Matisse, while *Smiling Woman Ascending a Staircase* (which may be a study for a lost oil painting), and the important pen, watercolour, and pencil study, *Composition* (1913), provide further evidence of Lewis's fast-developing practice, but do not tell us much about his relationship with Picasso. Lewis was aware of the work of Braque, Léger, and Gris, as well as of such supposedly advanced painters as Gleizes and Metzinger. We know from his 1915 essay 'A Review of Contemporary Art' that Lewis had seen Metzinger's *Femme à la Tasse*, about which he is almost as critical – 'Impressionism, largely dosed [...] with a Michelangelizing of the everyday figure' (B2 40) – as John Richardson was later to be, using a different title but not dissimilar terms: 'It is difficult to see *Le Goûter* as anything but a traditional Salon subject genteelly geometrized'; it was later popularly known as '[T]he Gioconda of Cubism'.²¹ Work by these artists was easier to see at the Salon d'Automne than was Picasso's. There are two contrasting oils by Lewis: *Workshop* (c. 1914-15), one of the few completed Vorticist paintings still in existence, and the post-war *A Reading of Ovid* (1920-21), from the 1921 exhibition *Tyros and Portraits*. It must again be said that neither painting bears much resemblance to any specific work by Picasso; nor does the exhibition suggest that any direct relationship exists. Rather they were probably painted at some distance from Lewis's sources; or, in the case of *Workshop*, as a generalized critical response to the spatial dynamics of Cubism. A later watercolour, *Archimedes Reconnoitering the Enemy Fleet* (1922), and the pencil drawing of Mrs Workman, from 1923, complete this section. These nine representative works form an intriguing group by which Lewis's evolution in style, subject matter, and working method might be explored. They tell us very little about his complex relationship with Picasso. It is notable that none of Picasso's works is hung alongside any by Lewis, so that the viewer is unable to make direct comparisons (as happens elsewhere in the exhibition). Would it have been excessive to have placed one of Picasso's Ingresque drawings next to the soft arabesques and delicate draughtsmanship of *Mrs Workman*?

Grant and Lewis discovered radically different technical approaches in Picasso and in Cubism. Rather than adopting the more painterly treatment of the surface that Grant admired, Lewis appropriated the strong geometric modelling found in Picasso's work from around 1908. Both men had direct access to the Steins' great collection,

but saw different things. Indeed, Gertrude Stein remembers Lewis visiting the apartment in 1913 and using his thumb and hand to measure the proportions of Matisse's *Femme au chapeau* (1905); the outcome was his watercolour *Portrait of an Englishwoman* (1914-15).²² Both artists were well informed about Picasso's work and understood his significance for the future of contemporary art. But these contradictions and differences are never really explored in the exhibition.

It is clear that the most successful rooms in the exhibition are those that demonstrate a dependence on Picasso that can best be theorized by reference to the concept of abjection. By this we mean that there are here artists – performing as subjects – who cannot disengage from objects possessing conceptual power, specifically works by Picasso. Abject artists are unable to find the conceptual energy to exclude Picasso's pre-existing images from their own practice. They consequently experience Picasso as a dominant Other, a process that the viewer can identify in particular works.²³ Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland, and Henry Moore all reveal a dependence on already-existing images in ways that in the longer term was profoundly significant, but not always completely positive, for their own work. Where the mature artist shows an independence from Picasso's influence, the rooms do not work so well (although the art selected may be better in quality). Wyndham Lewis, Francis Bacon, and to some extent David Hockney all fall into this category, because each went on to develop work that was distinctly separate from that of Picasso. All three engaged in Beechey's 'study and appropriation as a conscious strategy', but their work also demonstrates how such an initial dependence was overcome. This success can be read as a resistance to abjection.

An extended instance of abjection is the room dedicated to Ben Nicholson, who first encountered Picasso's Cubist work on a visit to Paris in 1922, or a year later in Paul Rosenberg's Paris gallery. (He was aged twenty-nine or thirty at the time.) The selection of work here covers the period 1923 to 1933, when Nicholson attempted to engage fully with what he had seen, then and later. This includes *1924 (first abstract painting, Chelsea)* (c. 1923-4), and *1924 (painting-trout)* (1924). These canvases *mimic* collage in paint, using flat, overlapping pastel planes of colour, without actually utilizing (or risking) the form itself: there is no actual pasted-down newspaper or wallpaper. Other pieces by Nicholson include *1932 (Au Chat Botté)* (1932), and *1932 (crowned head: the queen)* (1932). The comparison between the latter and Picasso's *Guitar, Compote*

Dish and Grapes (1924) is cruel. Picasso's painting displays its pictorial logic with absolute clarity, while Nicholson's is a fudge of hesitant brushstrokes. Later works by Nicholson appropriate Picasso's invention of the so-called 'double heads' motif (that Lewis used so successfully in his 1911 *Self Portrait*). Picasso's portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter, *Head of a Woman* (1926), is compared with Ben Nicholson's study of Barbara Hepworth, *1933 St-Rémy, Provence* (1933). It is not that these paintings by Nicholson are bad, but that, displayed alongside examples of Picasso's mature work, they inevitably look tentative, or at best transitional.

Seventeen works by Henry Moore form the focus of this exhibition. There are ten sculptures in a variety of materials. Four comparative works by Picasso are interspersed among them, including the two oil paintings, *Nude Seated on a Rock* and *The Source*, both from 1921. These are works that probably provided Moore with much of his source material during the early 1930s. Picasso's Dinard works, such as *Standing Nude* (1928), were also important for Moore, who saw them in the dramatic black-and-white photographs published in the French periodicals *Cahiers d'Art*, *Documents*, and *Minotaure*. Picasso transforms the human body into monumental abstract forms, which are then reinvented into biomorphic pictorial shapes, as in *Standing Nude* (1928). Moore, however, was unable to follow Picasso into the more explicitly erotic world of his Surrealist-related work. Moore's sculptures may be bulbously fecund, but they lack completely the disruptive and dangerous sexuality of Picasso's work.

Few works by Moore here escape Picasso's influence, to the extent that a paradox emerges: of all these British artists, Moore has the greatest international reputation, but reveals the greatest dependence on Picasso. This was probably not the effect that the curators intended, but it does reveal Moore to be an over-dependent artist who lacks the innovative power and range of his mentor.

Graham Sutherland's work demonstrates a similar failure to progress very far beyond Picasso's influence. He saw *Guernica* (1937) and its extraordinary associated studies, in late 1938, or early 1939, but may also have been aware of the painting from the 1937 issues of *Cahiers d'Art*. Picasso showed Sutherland a way forward, beyond his early fixation with Samuel Palmer and English romanticism. As Sutherland told Douglas Cooper:

Picasso's Guernica drawings seemed to open up a philosophy and to point to a way whereby – by a kind of paraphrase of appearances – things could be made to look more vital and real. [...] Only Picasso however seemed to have the true idea of metamorphosis, whereby things found a new form through feeling.²⁴

To look at Sutherland's work in this exhibition, however, is to experience unease. *Crucifixion* (1946) is so dependent on Picasso's studies after Matthias Grünewald that the artist Michael Ayrton was outraged at Sutherland's submissiveness. There was a personal encounter, Ayrton declaring (according to Sutherland) that to go on in 'my present vein – which he thought was "very Freud" and "so obviously derived from Picasso" [...] would be a "grave national calamity"'.²⁵ Overstatement apart, Ayrton had a case. There is a distinctly melodramatic quality to the drawing here, and an unpleasant texture and tint to the paint handling. Whereas Picasso's drawings show a powerful imagination transforming his sources, Sutherland's painting seems no more than an illustrative pastiche.

Francis Bacon was also strongly influenced by Picasso, whom he too encountered in Paris, probably in 1928. Bacon went on to achieve mastery in a different mode of expression, however; it might indeed be argued that he came to his later work following an early study of Picasso, but that he decisively rejected that point of reference as he moved on towards his mature style. Bacon's works here – his 'pivotal moment' – date from between 1933 and 1935, and they are here because they are among the very few early pieces that he failed to destroy. Bacon admitted that seeing Picasso's work in Paris had shown him 'the possibilities of painting', but the famous *Three Studies at the Base of the Crucifixion* (c. 1944), which dates from ten years later, shows a quite different Bacon: a mature artist whose work can be compared with that of Picasso, in a very different relationship than that of master and pupil.²⁶ Dependence, or abjection, has been renounced.

These seven works from 1933-35 are essentially an excavation. We are fortunate that they survive, but they are emphatically the direction not taken. Bacon has seen the Dinard works, shaped by the relationship with Marie-Thérèse Walter. The relevant Picasso exhibited here is *Bathers at the Beach Hut* of 1929, which shows one figure emerging from a beach hut, and another standing, arms raised, outside. The

former has the iconographic attributes of Marie-Thérèse (innocent, cool, in possession), the latter the troubled form (awkward head, breasts loose, ribs distinct) that stands for Picasso's wife Olga. Bacon could not have known – because nobody knew – what this pairing meant. His interpretation – in four works on paper – keeps the pairs of figures and the tiny heads, but moves them indoors into a room or studio where they engage each other with such ferocity and alarm that ink and gouache are smudged and the room can hardly contain them; though *Corner of the Studio* might be two male lovers whose heads and lower bodies are engaged, contradicting the awkward – but intended – distancing of the Picasso. Three of these four works (94, 95, and 97) are set in rooms with floors, but introduce a dado rail that is also the Dinard horizon. Separately, two *Crucifixions* from 1933 have also the attributes of dancers, in both cases picking up the raised arms of *The Three Dancers*, which Bacon could have seen (as Chris Stephens proposes) in the Surrealists' journal *Documents* in 1930. Equally, Picasso's *Head* of 1929 (with its vertical line of vicious teeth) may indeed relate to Bacon's *Interior of a Room*, dated to 1933-35, as is proposed here; but in this context, these comparisons are relevant only to a consideration of why Bacon very soon chose to do otherwise. One is always pleased to see *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, but it exists in a different world, ten years or more beyond any Picassoan 'pivotal moment': indeed these three linked canvases are not pivotal at all, but an achievement that set the agenda for art after the Second World War. Bacon's Hanover Gallery exhibition of 1949 attracted Wyndham Lewis's praise: 'Bacon is one of the most powerful artists in Europe today and he is perfectly in tune with his time. [He is] one of the darkest and most possessed'.²⁷ To achieve this, Bacon needed more than an early interest in Picasso.

David Hockney says that he visited the Tate Gallery's 1960 *Pablo Picasso* exhibition at least eight times. Picasso has always been important to him, and the work selected by Chris Stephens comes from a period between 1973 and 1984. Hockney borrowed much of his working method from Picasso, admiring the Spaniard's speed of execution, his eclecticism, and his exhaustive innovation. Hockney's later photographic compositions drew a great deal from Picasso's Cubism, which is slightly unexpected, given the difference in media and the technological turn taken by the younger artist. What remains, for Hockney, is the stimulus towards a more profound understanding of the relationship between the

artist and the world, whether the camera or the pen is used to process that information. Hockney's references to Picasso are gently ironic, as in the etchings he made for Wallace Stevens's *The Blue Guitar* (1976-77). He also looked carefully at Picasso's designs for the ballet when working on his own design for *Parade* (1980).

We have so far tried to keep use of the word 'influence' to a minimum, not least because we are mindful of Michael Baxandall's critique of the way the word is misused in art criticism. The problem is simply put: an already-existing work does not perform on its own behalf, 'influencing' successor works; rather, a successor work is doing something to our understanding of the work that has been chosen as a significant predecessor. Baxandall's main example – relevant here – is the relationship between Picasso and Cézanne: 'Picasso acted on Cézanne quite sharply', he writes, by making the older artist more significant in 1910 than he had been in 1906: 'he shifted him further into the main tradition of European painting', and he 'changed for ever the way we can see Cézanne', even though Picasso's reading of him was 'idiosyncratic'.²⁸

Hockney's etching *Artist and Model* (1973-74) is directly relevant here. His response to Picasso may be affectionate, but it also raises important questions that are at the core of this exhibition. The etching is an image depicting the young (and symbolically naked) artist presenting his work to a much older Picasso, like any art student hesitantly showing his portfolio to his tutor for assessment. Picasso stares expressionlessly at a sheet of paper, the submitted artwork; the naked Hockney occupies the place that Picasso himself so often allocated to the female model, herself invariably the object of an interpretive gaze: the gaze, that is, of the artist figure whom Picasso has invented in order to ensure the submission of the female Other. Here, Hockney chooses to submit his work to that gaze. In his commentary, Chris Stephens speaks of 'the master Picasso and the subservient Hockney', so we are assured that the exhibition was curated in full awareness of the submissive, or abject, relationships that recur in it.²⁹

Two small rooms of Picasso's later work include the superb Expressionist print, *Weeping Woman* (1937), from the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, and the oil painting *Weeping Woman* (1937), now at the Tate; both were at one time owned by Penrose. These powerful works, strongly associated with the brutal attack on Guernica during the

Spanish Civil War, are joined here by *Woman Dressing her Hair* (1940), from MoMA, and the great still-life *The Enamel Saucepan* (1945).

When Picasso himself reworked earlier art, was he a subject figure, submissive, or in some way abject? He responded with deliberation to Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, to Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, and – most significantly, perhaps – to Delacroix's *Les femmes d'Alger*. Roland Penrose was able to report directly on the process, after he visited Picasso's studio in February 1955 and saw the series based on *Les femmes d'Alger*.

P. showed me about 6 large canvases and 12 small. The theme taken from Delacroix[s] "Demoiselle[s] d'Alger" which he has not seen for years and refuses to look at while he is still at work [on] this series.³⁰

Picasso transforms this iconic source into something that is so utterly his own that it is difficult to say exactly how he was 'influenced', or whether the word applies at all. The outcome is more akin to an act of possession, made from a position of confidence and authority that resists 'influence' and in doing so refuses to be abject. The abjection towards Picasso's own work that is endured by several British artists in this exhibition is entirely distinct from this. There is no *necessity* in abjection.

Wyndham Lewis and Abjection

Are the works by Wyndham Lewis exhibited here part of that submission by the Other to superior powers of invention? We have already remarked that the exhibition does not propose that Lewis was influenced by any specific work of Picasso; further, that it would be difficult to establish any direct relationship between, say, *A Reading of Ovid* and anything in Picasso: not least because Picasso is not often a satirist of ideas, but also because of the absence of any visual congruence. On the other hand, Lewis's 1911 *Self Portrait* is a skilful exercise in 'cubing' the surface of an image that is self-critical or (it might be said) self-satirical. This shows knowledge of Cubism in general terms, but it might have derived from a knowledge of Braque as much as of Picasso. He would not have taken anything from the Salon Cubists

Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, for as we have seen Lewis was not deceived by the sentimentality of such a 'glib painting' (Richardson's words) as Metzinger's *Le Goûter* (1911).³¹ If we pursue not weak Cubism of this kind, but the powerful image-making of a work that Lewis specifies in *BLAST*, Picasso's *L'homme à la clarinette* of 1911-12 (and no. 56 in this exhibition, as *Man with a Clarinet*), then we can take the argument further. In the *Self Portrait* Lewis's critique of self is harsh in concept and execution. The eyes, particularly the eye represented on the left of the picture, are turned directly at the viewer in a sceptical glance, firm and self-possessed. In his *Wyndham Lewis* of 2004, Richard Humphreys rightly calls it 'delicate yet chilling', a mask of someone identifiable as 'Wyndham Lewis' who is a new presence in London's art scene, but not the complex person also bearing that name.³² Humphreys develops this further in the catalogue. The 'focus and clarity' of the design has to do with self, with identity: 'a metaphysical realm of being [that is] typical of his idea of the self at this time', in which, to quote from *BLAST*, "'You must catch the clearness and logic in the midst of contradictions'" (see B2 91).³³

In *L'homme à la clarinette* there is no such sense of self, for the head at the top of this piled-up triangle is inexpressive. The mouth is two crossed lines, the eyes either bulbous or concealed by spectacles. All that is meaningful about this work lies in its construction, its subtle and varied colouring, its refusal of earlier modes of art, its critique of them, and its powerful new conception of the human figure. It is not about identity. None of the great Cubist portraits makes Uhde, Volland, or Kahnweiler recognizable as selves (except perhaps for Uhde's primly pursed mouth, which lightly signifies his sexuality). They are, rather, structures on the canvas which refer to the bodies of men who were important to Picasso. If *L'homme à la clarinette* is not the representation of an identity, it is nevertheless an interpretable image. What is represented as the clarinettist is an opportunity for interpretation that will generate much of importance, but will not eventuate in the establishment of a human identity. By contrast, Lewis's self-portrait is a presentation of self, a psychic event mobilized by the use of a mild Cubist vocabulary that permits identity to persist within radical modernism. It is in this respect that Lewis resists abjection. Indeed, it might be said that *BLAST* itself is an act of resistance, not least to the crass objections to developments in modernist art that such a critic as G. K. Chesterton was capable of, and which determined the hostile atmosphere into

which the Vorticists projected their work. Its assertive typography and vigorous language is not a display of egotism or aggression, but an insistence that this art is the product of psychic realities that should be recognized.

Lewis himself uses the term 'abject' when he objects to what he identifies as Picasso's tastefulness – he is describing synthetic Cubism – where wallpaper and 'pieces of cloth, etc.' are 'tastefully arranged, wonderfully tastefully arranged', and that Roger Fry's Omega Workshop is the place where such tastefulness is to be found: 'The most abject, anaemic, and amateurish manifestation' of an impulse originating with Picasso and Matisse (B2 41). This use of 'abject' resists a particular cultural formation deriving from Cubism, and which is a weakening of the original impulse. Lewis's other use of 'abject' concerns an essential move in modernist art, the decision not to imitate nature. To copy a person or a scene 'with scientific exactitude' is no longer possible: to do so 'would imply the most abject depths of intellectual vacuity' (B2 45). Modernism in art resists abjection by refusing to reproduce the object chosen for representation, together with its ordinary cultural meanings, and insists instead upon altering and interpreting it, so that the artist now controls the object and its meanings.

Lewis, Picasso, and Architecture

With *L'Homme à la clarinette* in mind, as well as such works as *The Poet*, *The Accordionist*, and *Woman with Guitar* ("Ma Jolie"), the three last all of 1911 (and each with Richardson's titles), let us consider what the friends of Picasso had to say about the structure, or *architecture*, of Cubism. The most extravagant remark came from Picabia, who in 1922 'mock[ed] Picasso's Cubist paintings as "*cathédrales de merde*", in Richardson's words.³⁴ There is a satirical potency to this remark that goes beyond mockery: cathedrals made of shit is a thought impossible only for those in an excessive state of reverence before these works: for the abject mind, perhaps. For the disrespectful mind they are indeed coloured in that way, and *L'Homme à la clarinette* and *L'Accordéoniste* both build upwards precisely as if they sought to be, or could be, the thick spire of a cathedral.

In 1954 Roland Penrose visited Banyuls-sur-Mer with Picasso and others. He wrote that 'the evening light is very lovely, subtle greys and

greens dominate and the architect[ure] of the town below is unmistakably cubist'.³⁵ In this invocation of architecture, the colours of Cubism are treated reverentially. Picasso, Penrose reports, 'is not interested in architecture at all', and specifically not in Gaudi.³⁶ This means that Picasso was not interested in *new* architecture; already-existing buildings are a different matter, as we shall see. Penrose himself makes the Cubism-cathedral comparison at a later date. Responding in 1956 to a first sight of what was probably *The Studio at 'La Californie'* (1955), he found it '[v]ery moving in its cathedral-like effect [...]. Cubism had evolved into a superb architectural effect in which each object played its essential role'.³⁷ In the catalogue to *Picasso & Modern British Art*, Helen Little applies Penrose's remark about the 'cathedral-like effect' to another in the same series, no. 121 in this exhibition.³⁸ By this route a particular idea of 'architecture' reaches from Picasso's studio, through his friends, and into Tate Britain.

We may feel that Penrose is too willing to see a continuity between analytic Cubism and work executed some forty or more years later. Nevertheless, the sense that a Cubist architecture existed, and that Cubism was architectural in conception, persists across decades. We have only to return to one of the moments of origin of Cubism, Picasso's second visit to Horta de Ebro in 1909, to recognize how important for its development were the built forms existing there. This is a different matter from being interested in new architecture. Two works of that year confirm this, *Reservoir at Horta* and *Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro*, with their insistent representation of blocky local forms. These are non-modern architectural structures that Picasso is about to convert into one of the visual languages of modernity.³⁹

While 'architecture' in this sense emerged from among those close to Picasso himself, two British critics used the term as part of a wider critical attempt, made during the 1920s, to establish 'all that was most "modern" in new art', in the words of Chris Green.⁴⁰ We rely here upon the research in Green's catalogue essay, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c. 1910-c. 1945', where he brings together R. H. Wilenski and Roger Fry, two critics opposed to each other, who yet both describe 'the modern' in architectural terms. In *The Modern Movement in Art*, published in 1927, Wilenski wrote of Cubism as a 'period of austere "abstract" architectural experiment'. Then, with Picasso's classicizing work of 1918-26 in mind, Wilenski writes of Picasso engaging 'the problem of building a classical art that would recapture the peculiar serenity of

Greek architectural sculpture'.⁴¹ Here, 'architectural' applies not only to Cubism and its direct descendants, in the Picabia-Penrose sense, but also to Picasso's 1920s reworking of classicism. This is surely a step too far; it has certainly never been adopted. Beyond that, for Wilenski modern art is continuous with the art of 'the last five centuries'; in other words, modern art is classical.⁴² The tendency to integrate, together with the pursuit of 'architecture' as a metaphor, has led to an absurd paradox.

Chris Green's research in the Fry archive at King's College, Cambridge, shows that in a lecture of 1929 Fry proposed 'the architectural theory' of modernity:

It [the theory] takes as a datum that the aesthetic sense finds its satisfaction in certain harmoniously & [*sic*] rhythmically ordered relations of notes in music and volumes and spaces in architecture and declares that the essential quality of painting is to produce similar results.⁴³

This is, in our view, a very conservative theory (if it is one at all), and is very different from the uses of 'architecture' that derived directly from Picasso's circle. The metaphor from music is consistent with Renaissance theory, but is seriously discordant with post-Picassoan concepts of architectural space in painting. Commandeering 'the aesthetic sense' and 'essential' qualities, Fry dissolves modernity into a sensual, harmonizing aestheticism which challenges nothing. Green criticizes both Fry and Wilenski for insisting upon 'integration' and 'unity'; there are no 'fragments' for them, only wholes. Green invokes Lewis on this question, praising him for his response to photographs of the Cubist constructions of 1912 that were shown at the Alpine Club Gallery, by Fry, in January 1914. Green writes:

Of British writers on Picasso and cubism, Wyndham Lewis alone was responsive to the challenge that the material "reality" of Picasso's constructions presented to the notion of modern art as aesthetically "pure" and reassuringly cohesive.⁴⁴

This refers to Lewis's review, 'Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work', published in the first *BLAST*, and from which Green quotes one word, 'reality' (B1 139). Although Lewis is brought in here to support Green's overall view (with which we concur), this is the only positive remark that

Green makes about Lewis's many discussions of Picasso. And the word 'reality' is the only quotation that Green takes from anything that Lewis wrote about Picasso between 1914 and 1919. He quotes from other sources *as if* they were about Picasso, but that is a different matter (as we shall see). Nor does Green engage with anything that Lewis has to say about Picasso over the next forty years. Yet Fry is worth a trip to the archive.

With this sense of the architectural in place, we are now in a position to return to Lewis's remarks about Cubism, and specifically what he wrote about *L'Homme à la clarinette* in 1915. Lewis writes, with necessary pedantry, 'Picasso, in his L'HOMME A LA CLARINETTE [...] is giving you the portrait of a man', and continues:

But the character of the forms (that is the now famous Cubist formula) is that of masonry; plastically, to all intents and purposes this is a house: the colour, as well, helping to this effect.

This is getting close to Picabia's sense of the colour of Cubism. Further:

The supple, soft and vital elements, which distinguish animals and men [...] are here transformed into the stolid masonry of a common building.

They might be the buildings of Horta:

The whole Cubist formula, in fact, in its pure state, is a plastic formula for stone or for brick-built houses. (B2 43)

Long before Picasso's friends and supporters began, in the 1920s, to describe Cubism as architectural, Lewis had already described it as that. He is, demonstrably, the originator and precursor of all subsequent discussion of 'architecture' as it was applied to Cubism, including Roger Fry's.⁴⁵

Lewis then generalizes radically from 'architectural':

This dehumanizing has corresponded happily with the unhuman character, the plastic, architectural quality, of art itself. (B2 43)

This generalization about art is a modernist one, untrammelled by Fry's 'music', or Wilenski's abjection before a dominant past. The modernist term here is 'dehumanizing', which derives from what it is in Cubism that so converts the human form that it resembles masonry, buildings, a house, stone, or brick. There is plenty in the history of art, Lewis writes, that has '[a] rigidity and simplification' that gives 'a more tense and angular entity' to the work of 'several great artists' – he mentions Mantegna, with justification. Equally, he has in mind the new modernist reference points, the arts of Egypt, Africa, and North America, primarily sculpture, some of it monumental. This, 'the grandest and most majestic art in the world', has a non-naturalist tendency that has 'rather divested man of his vital plastic qualities', and instead 'changed him into a more durable, imposing and in every way harder machine'. There is a European history to this too: artists, Lewis writes:

have always represented men as more beautiful, more symmetrically muscular, with more commanding countenances than they usually, in nature, possess. (B2 43)

Lewis is arguing that all art is in a distinct sense *not Nature*, and this makes him modernist. To argue from Cubism back to 'art itself', so that the qualities of Cubism are treated as normative, or even as an origin, is to make a provocative modernist gesture that is far closer to the divisive and disruptive purposes of Cubism than the attempts of Wilenski and Fry to argue for inclusiveness, sensual aestheticism, or classical authority. The difference between Lewis and Fry is that Fry is seeking to establish his authority as a critic, out of the Bloomsbury power nexus, in order to determine what is thought in the culture; Lewis is a significant practitioner who, as a critic, is engaged in attempting to establish the authority of new work within the immediate *practice* of art.

Lewis develops a criticism of Cubism, nevertheless. 'Picasso's structures are not ENERGETIC ones', he writes, but 'very static dwelling houses'. This arises from 'the naturalistic method, of "cubing" on a posed model' and the outcome is 'calculated deadness' (B2 44). This was precisely Picasso's method: in 1910 Uhde, Vollard, and Kahnweiler sat many times for their 'cubed' portraits, and so did the professional model Fanny Tellier. Richardson remarks revealingly that '[m]aybe Picasso did not want to admit even to himself that cubism necessitated models': so it is that Picasso's modernism still begins in

flesh, still begins with the body observed in the studio, as it had done for centuries.⁴⁶ 'Cubed', it came to resemble masonry, and then was structured, in the minds of observers, as architecture.

Lewis argues against the way Cubist portraits of 1911-12 were deprived of human vitality by their proximity to representations of masonry: 'The forms of masonry' are

inappropriate in the construction of a man, where, however rigid the form may be, there should be at least the suggestions of life and displacement that you get in a machine. If the method of work or temperament of the artist went towards vitality rather than a calculated deadness, this would not be the case. (B2 44)

Lewis is not arguing that the human form in Cubism does, or should, resemble a machine. Nor is he arguing for the forced vitality of Futurism. He is saying that within and after the Cubist revolution the human image should retain its humanity, maintain an intrinsic and moderate energy, and keep away from forms, and particularly architectural ones, that imply stasis and the non-human. He invokes the machine because it is active, not because it is 'inhumanly mechanical' in some clichéd sense. Machines for Lewis are examples of effective movement ('life and displacement') that are *not Nature*.

It may be said that Lewis's critique is more sensitive to the ways in which the human should be represented by images that tend towards the abstract than were Picasso's devoted friends and supporters when they endorsed the Cubist 'architecture' that they identified as intrinsic to his images of the human form. Lewis realized that this permitted the intrusion of static and hardening features which diminished the humanity of what was being represented. The eager adoption of 'architecture', whether by Picasso's circle or by more distant critics such as Fry and Wilenski, shows a certain insensitivity to the need for a continuing sense of the human in Cubist portraiture. When Lewis writes that instead of 'cubing' on the model, 'taking the life of the man or animal inside your work, and building with this life fluid, as it were', would be preferable, he is asserting humanistic values that encourage the persistence of identity in portraiture, and with it the psychic presence of the person portrayed. In this respect, Humphreys's account of Lewis's *Self Portrait* is precisely relevant, since it provides a basis for making this distinction.⁴⁷

We have shown that Chris Green has excavated Fry's 'theory of architecture' from the archive, and developed it as one basis of his discussion of the various Picassos constructed by British criticism between 1910 and 1945. What he does not do is recognize the importance of Wyndham Lewis's architecturally-based critique of Cubist appearances. This is difficult to understand, because what Lewis noticed as early as 1915 should have been crucial to the completeness of his argument.

That argument is in any case conducted through misreadings and a notable misquotation. Green's purpose is to set out the *positive* view of Picasso as it was elaborated by British critics down to 1945. In this process, Roger Fry is the important figure, along with Clive Bell and Wilenski; Lewis, of course, was not 'positive'. He was a skilled practitioner who had mastered Cubist methods in his art, and who in his Vorticist work attempted to develop the visual revolution which Picasso and Braque had initiated. But he was *critical* too, and this prevents him being *positive*. That he was a better critic than Fry (let alone the hopeless, hapless Bell) counts for almost nothing.

The most deplorable omission is any discussion of Lewis's short book *The Caliph's Design*, published in 1919 as Lewis's move back into European modernism after the War. The book is subtitled: *Architects! Where is your Vortex?* and is substantially about the possible role of architecture in changing ordinary life after the First World War. Green does not mention it, and Fry's soft 'theory of architecture' is treated with undeserved respect.

Here are some of Lewis's remarks about Picasso from *The Caliph's Design*:

[T]he Lady with the Mandolin appears to me as interesting as a typical Cézanne portrait, and it is a powerful and inventive variation on Cézanne. (CD 113)

This refers to *Girl with a Mandoline (Fanny Tellier)*, which Penrose owned for nearly twenty years. Are Lewis's comments not *positive*? He turns to the constructs of synthetic Cubism:

[Y]ou wonder if they are not more important as experiments, and important because of their daring and new nature, than as final works. (CD 115)

This too is positive, and is a view few would reject today. Lewis continues in almost rapturous terms to describe Picasso's work between 1906 and 1913:

But the whole character of these things: the noble structural and ascetic quality, the feeling that he must have had [...] that he was doing something at last worth while, and in fitting relation to his superb painter's gift – this makes them a more serious contribution to painting than anything else done by him. (*CD* 115)

As this implies, Lewis was critical of other periods of Picasso's work, notably the dependence on Cézanne and the reinterpretations of Daumier and El Greco. Perhaps this is all that Green noticed, if he noticed this critique at all. Lewis is very specific about what he valued in 1919: 'All the admiration that you feel for the really great artist in Picasso finds its most substantial footing' in the works between the *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* of 1906, through what Lewis calls 'Dame assise', which is presumably the 1909-10 *Seated Woman in Green*, and on to the constructions of 1913. Lewis ends by saying that his commentary 'has been a critical, and, in intention, destructive analysis' (*CD* 115), and parts of it are certainly that; but when Lewis is positive, in Green's sense, he should be allowed to be heard, and be considered as a critic like Bell, Fry, and Wilenski, all of them his inferiors. Fry, after all, concluded in 1931 that Cubism 'exercised almost no appeal [for him] except by its formal arrangement'.⁴⁸ How is it possible to take that remark seriously in 2012? By contrast, in 1919 Lewis recognized and understood the significant works, and the general tendency of Picasso's art, in what is arguably its most important phase.

In places, Green turns Lewis's perspicaciousness against him. Lewis understood Picasso's collages and constructions, he says, because 'he welcomed their sheer ugliness', and gives as his source an essay in which Lewis says no such thing. This is 'The Exploitation of Vulgarities' from the first *BLAST*. Lewis writes that Ingres's wife protected him from the sight of any 'uncomely' person, whereas '[t]oday the Artist's attention would be drawn [...] to anything particularly hideous or banal, as a thing not to be missed' (*B1* 145). There follows a brilliant verbal improvisation on this theme, during which Lewis says that if artists (and people generally) enjoy vulgarity, they must *also* show 'an unimpaired

and keen disgust with it'. Green has missed this doubling; so that when Lewis *denies* Picasso's vulgarity, he misses that too:

But he [the artist] must not so dangerously identify himself with vulgarity as Picasso, for instance, inclines to identify with the appearance of Nature. (B1 145)

Lewis is not welcoming ugliness here; he is criticizing Picasso's naturalism.

Green then picks up from Lewis's essay the phrase 'monotonous paradise', misreads it, and uses that misreading to structure a large part of his discussion. Lewis wrote this sentence in defence of vulgarity:

We don't want today things made entirely of gold (but gold mixed with flint or grass, diamond with paste, etc.) any more than a monotonous paradise or security would be palatable. (B1 145)

This may be a little obscure, but 'monotonous paradise' is not about modern art. It is about an ideal life, and how undesirable that would be. Lewis means that we don't want an art in which everything is made of gold (read: Rembrandt, Ingres), *any more than*, in real life, we would want to live in a paradise that was so perfect as to be dull and monotonous. Green persistently applies this misunderstanding by inserting the phrase 'a monotonous paradise' into his discussion as if Lewis thought that this is what art had become. So Fry's invocation of a 'universal tradition' was for Lewis 'a monotonous tradition' – which he did not say.⁴⁹ When modernist innovation in French art cooled after 1919, mainstream criticism in Paris was 'well on the way to accepting the "monotonous paradise" Lewis had feared in 1914' – which he did not fear.⁵⁰ Finally, 'monotonous' is turned around to insult Lewis himself by suggesting that he had no regard for tradition: 'Tradition and monotony went together for Lewis; sex and monotony went together for Fry'.⁵¹ The very real differences between Lewis and Fry are dissolved into a misconceived play upon words. To suggest that Lewis had no regard for tradition in art is simply perverse.

It is, of course, a tiresome necessity to make these corrections. For readers of this journal our reverse excavation will confirm what many may already feel: that there are critics for whom Lewis remains unreadable. We have one final example. This concerns not misreading

but misquotation. Chris Green turns to Lewis's comments on the huge female figures, often set by the sea, which Picasso began to produce in the early 1920s. Examples are *The Race* (1922) or *Family by the Sea* (1922; fig. 8: 24), those 'classicizing' but distorted figures in which neither Fry nor Wilenski saw any irony or parody but which Lewis 'predictably perhaps' found 'disturbing'. According to Green, Lewis wrote of these 'colossal' figures using the following words:

"But if you compare one of Picasso's giantesses ... with a giant from the Sistine Ceiling, you will find that the Picasso figure is a beautifully executed, imposing doll."⁵²

On this basis Green remarks that Lewis is writing of them 'almost as resembling clockwork dolls': though how anyone could think that anyone else would imagine that these huge, sumptuous, and fleshly bodies resembled clockwork is difficult to work out. But that is the absurd view that Green attributes to Lewis. Unfortunately for the 'clockwork' argument, Lewis actually wrote in *Time and Western Man* (1927) that 'the Picasso figure is a beautifully executed, imposing, human *doll*' (*TWM* 61).⁵³ The word 'human' makes the 'clockwork' argument unfeasible, as does the italicized *doll*, which attempts to reduce these giants to manageable size. Green's argument is only possible, we believe, because 'everybody knows' that Lewis thought the human form should be represented as intrinsically mechanical; he did not believe this, of course, but it is a misconception that has proven difficult to shift. Let us hope that Green's mistake will start a revolution in recognition. As a first move, art critics could perhaps look at his work, and not misquote his words.

To return to Fry and his weak understanding of Cubism as being predominantly 'abstract' and an aspect of 'design'. Green ironizes Fry's position but does not criticize him outright, writing of '[w]hat he [Fry] saw as the abstraction of cubism' was a 'fatal limitation' and recording that by the end of the 1920s 'Picasso's cubism had become, for him, a salutary failure'.⁵⁴ Fry's struggle with these inflexible concepts can be seen in the varying titles he gave to the 1913 *Head of a Man*, which he had bought from Kahnweiler late in that year. By January 1914 Fry thought it should have been called *A Design*. Picasso, or his dealer, had evidently got the title wrong. In 1921 Fry exhibited it as *Nature Morte, 1914*, which is absurd.⁵⁵ *Head of a Man* is indeed highly abstracted, but

representational elements are clear – eyes, an ear, the roughly triangular head. These retitlings, and the fetishized concept of abstraction that led to them, show how limited was Fry's understanding of Cubism.

The counterweight to the belief that Cubism was abstract is to be found in Lewis's 1915 essay 'A Review of Contemporary Art', from which we have been quoting. Here, he argues that representation is inevitable and unavoidable. The argument begins from a reading of Kandinsky, 'the only PURELY abstract painter in Europe', in whose work Lewis nevertheless found that 'there are lines and planes that form the figure of a man' (B2 40). On this basis, it is not possible not to represent: 'If it is impossible, then, to avoid representation in one form or another', what are the consequences? Difficulties arise for the abstractionist if 'the objects in your most abstract picture always have their twins in the material world' (B2 43), 'that the content, in detail [of a picture], must be that of the material universe', where, for example, 'ample, bland forms are intrinsically either those of clouds, or spaces of masonry, or of sand deserts' (B2 45). Lewis's ideas about the inevitability of representation are those of a practitioner familiar with the processes of abstraction, and are far superior to Fry's misreading of Cubist work as 'abstract' and as 'design'. Yet Lewis's discussion is nowhere mentioned in Chris Green's essay.

In 2010 the Fundación Juan March in Madrid held a major Lewis exhibition. Every day, up to five hundred visitors came to see work by an artist of whom few could have heard. At Tate Britain the possibility of a Lewis retrospective has been quietly urged for decades, but it is now apparent that such an exhibition is unlikely to happen. Lewis's fate as an artist is to be adjunct to others considered more significant, and *Picasso & Modern British Art* is an example of that process at work: a clutch of works by Lewis is set, half-explained, among many others, in a collective show. This is unjust to Lewis as an artist, and – if it persists – will be a cultural, critical, and curatorial failure of the worst kind.

Notes

¹ Elizabeth Cowling (ed.), *Visiting Picasso: The Notebooks and Letters of Roland Penrose* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 233. One of the authors of the present discussion attended, aged fifteen; evidence, perhaps, of the exhibition's long-term significance.

² Ibid., 274.

³ Ibid., 55-56. This letter (which may not have been sent) was prompted by adverse criticism of an exhibition of Picasso and Matisse held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1945-46, which also attracted large crowds.

⁴ Ibid., 382, n. 178. Picasso's actual words, responding to Penrose's remark that the beginnings of *Guernica* could be seen in it, were: 'Peut-être mais des deux tableaux je préfère de beaucoup les "3 D". C'est peint comme un tableau sans arrière pensée' (276) [Penrose's abbreviation and French spelling].

⁵ Rothenstein also failed to purchase Matisse's great painting *The Red Studio* (1911), which found its way, perhaps inevitably, to MoMA.

⁶ Jonathan Jones, 'The bed with no home', *Guardian G2* (21 August 2012): 18.

⁷ Penelope Curtis, 'Foreword', in James Beechey and Chris Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012): [7].

⁸ Helen Little, 'Picasso and Britain: A Selected Chronology of Exhibitions and Acquisitions 1900-1960', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 220-27, 222.

⁹ Curtis, 'Foreword', [7].

¹⁰ Richardson, in 'Cooper's Capers and their Consequences for Picasso, Penrose and the Tate: John Richardson interviewed by Chris Stephens, October 2011', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 41-50, 46.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² A pencil drawing, *The Kiss* (1967) is in the same space, as a tribute to Joanna Drew, the Arts Council exhibitions officer with whom Penrose worked on the 1960 Tate show, and on several others.

¹³ Andrew Brighton, 'The Politics of Picasso in Cold War Britain', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 30-39, 35.

¹⁴ James Beechey, 'Duncan Grant and Picasso', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 62-71, 63. "Why, when I ask about modern artists in England, am I always told about Duncan Grant?", Picasso is said to have enquired'. Beechey suggests the source (via Geoffrey Grigson) is 'unreliable'.

¹⁵ James Beechey, 'Picasso and Britain', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 10-19, 10.

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

- ²⁰ Michael Holroyd, *Augustus John: A Biography*, rev. ed. (London: Vintage, 1997), 257.
- ²¹ John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso Volume II: 1907-1917* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), 211.
- ²² See Michael Durman and Alan Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism', in Giovanni Cianci (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura* (Palermo: Sellerio editore, 1982): 101-18, 108.
- ²³ We are attempting to develop a passage from Georges Bataille's 'L'Abjection et les formes misérables' (itself the first use of 'abject' in this sense), cited by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 64. First published as *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).
- ²⁴ Chris Stephens, 'Graham Sutherland and Picasso', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 172-83, 173. The quotation is from Douglas Cooper, *The Work of Graham Sutherland* (1961).
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.
- ²⁶ Chris Stephens, 'Francis Bacon and Picasso', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 150-61, 150 and 218, n. 3.
- ²⁷ Wyndham Lewis, 'Round the London Art Galleries', *The Listener*, XLII, 1086 (17 November 1949): 860. See *Wyndham Lewis's Art Criticism in The Listener, 1946-1951*, which, among other materials, can be located at the following webpage: <http://www.unirioja.es/listenerartcriticism/index.htm> (accessed 03/11/2012).
- ²⁸ Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 61. James Beechey's formulation concerning 'study and appropriation' as a conscious strategy, which we have referred to more than once, is derived from Baxandall (see 214, n. 26).
- ²⁹ Chris Stephens, 'David Hockney and Picasso', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 198-211, 200.
- ³⁰ Cowling (ed.), *Visiting Picasso*, 103. For Picasso's reworking of earlier artists, see *Picasso et les maîtres*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008). The 'Variation Delacroix: *Les Femmes d'Alger*' is illus. 206-17. For the English version of this exhibition, see *Picasso: Challenging the Past* (London: National Gallery Company, 2009). *Women of Algiers* is illus. 122-26.
- ³¹ Richardson, *A Life of Picasso Volume II*, 211.
- ³² Richard Humphreys, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 16.
- ³³ Richard Humphreys, 'Wyndham Lewis and Picasso', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: [72]-81, 74.

³⁴ John Richardson with the collaboration of Marilyn McCully, *A Life of Picasso [Volume III]: The Triumphant Years 1917-1932* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 290.

³⁵ Cowling (ed.), *Visiting Picasso*, 88-89. This effect remains apparent in some of the photographs (not the video) of Banyuls attached to Google Street View (accessed 01/08/2012).

³⁶ Cowling (ed.), *Visiting Picasso*, 138. There was no Cubist architecture arising from within the movement, as David Cottingham has made clear: 'architecture was not seen as integral to the project of cubism either by the majority of cubists themselves or by the movement's critics'. Cottingham cited in Philip Head, 'Vorticism and Architecture', *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies* 2 (2011): 45-67, 53 and 65, n. 29.

³⁷ Cowling (ed.), *Visiting Picasso*, 151 and 364, n. 28. If this work is Zervos XVI, 496 (as Cowling proposes), then it must be closely related to no. 121 in the exhibition we are discussing, which is Zervos XVI, 497. The latter was exhibited in the 1960 *Pablo Picasso* show.

³⁸ Little, 'Picasso and Britain', 194.

³⁹ For photographs of Horta, see Richardson, *A Life of Picasso Volume II*, 130. For *Reservoir* see *ibid.*, [122]; for *Houses* see *ibid.*, 129.

⁴⁰ Chris Green, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c.1910-c.1945', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 20-29, 23. Green praises an essay by Charles F. B. Miller – 'Interwar Picasso Criticism', in Yve-Alain Bois (ed.), *Picasso Harlequin 1917-1937* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2009): 37-45 – remarking that '[o]ne can see why' it excludes all British criticism. This is because for the British Picasso was only 'modern', whereas for the French Surrealists and others he was 'proto-postmodern' (21). Miller's 'brilliant unwrapping' (21) of European Picasso criticism is an exegesis of discussions of Picasso's 'genius', 'magic', and 'spirituality', of theology, of Surrealism, and Hegelian dialectic, of his recovery from a 'schizophrenic episode' (Jung), and his supposed Jewish or (alternatively) Arab origins. The research is brilliant; it is a question of establishing the value of what is discovered.

⁴¹ Green, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c.1910-c.1945'. The quotation is from *The Modern Movement in Art*, 160; the book was completed in 1926.

⁴² Green, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c.1910-c.1945', 23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 215, n. 19. Unpublished lecture notes from the Roger Fry Archive, King's College, Cambridge, recovered by Green. In a lecture of 1927, Fry said: 'Architecture, though it may be abstract, gives us space – cubism could not do this without using likeness to real space, without representation' (*ibid.* 215, n.32). This seems to mean that Cubism *did* represent.

⁴⁴ Green, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c.1910-c.1945', 20.

⁴⁵ For an outstanding contextualizing study of Lewis's understanding of architecture, see Head, 'Vorticism and Architecture'.

⁴⁶ Richardson, *A Life of Picasso Volume II*, 150.

⁴⁷ Paul Edwards makes a related or overlapping point about Lewis's humanism as it persisted under the impact of Cubism. Referring to two 'blue period' works of 1912 by Lewis, he writes: 'If Lewis does not abolish the integrity of forms with the analytical rigour of Cubism at its most hermetic, he has reasons not to. His art may incorporate the epistemological and ontological uncertainties of Cubism, but it remains within the arena of humanism' (*WLPW* 93-94).

⁴⁸ Green, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c.1910-c.1945', 24, quoting from Fry's unpublished lecture notes, 1931.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵³ Lewis goes on to make the point that Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel figures – another instance of the colossal – 'are creatures of an infectious life' (*TWM* 62). This is essentially the same point that he made about Cubist 'architecture' in 1915.

⁵⁴ Green, 'The Picassos of British Criticism c.1910-c.1945', 23.

⁵⁵ This sequence is traced by James Beechey, 'Picasso in Britain', in Beechey and Stephens (eds), *Picasso & Modern British Art*: 52-61, 60.