THE AESTHETIC CONSISTENCY OF GEORGE MOORE

by

Cynthia B. Baxter

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Department of English,
McGill University,
Montreal.

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INTRODUCTION

A. A Description of Purpose

> I have been accused of changing my likes and dislikes -- no one has changed less than I, and this book is proof of my fidelity to my first ideas; the ideas I have followed all my life are in this book -- dear crescent moon rising in the south-east above the trees at the end of the village green.[1]

When George Moore wrote these words in his preface to the revised 1904 edition of his youthful autobiography, he still had almost thirty years to live. On the other hand, he had passed all the crises of his career, domestic, financial, amorous, and literary, and was firmly on the course he was to follow all his remaining years. In 1904 he wrote The Lake, sent his first version of Avowals to America to be serialized, and was preparing Memoirs of My Dead Life. Disillusionment with his Irish venture had already set in and the germs of Hail and Farewell were probably in his mind. In short, all the major changes of which he has been accused by literary critics were behind him, and he denied their existence. Why? Was he sincere and was he justified in so doing? It is the general aim of this essay to find the answers to these questions.

The diversity of Moore's achievement has led most critics to explore the various influences he underwent and the phases through which he passed, while ignoring

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[1]George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man (London, 1904), p.xii.

the constant aspects of his aims, attitude and artistic interests. Moore himself, however, was always more acutely aware of the continuity or consistency of his life. In December, 1896 he wrote to Lady Cunard, "I don't expect to find you changed; we do not change; we develop; I am just what I was at twenty."[1] Although this thought may seem hyperbolical and probably should not be read literally, it deserves more than casual notice in any consideration of Moore's writing career, for it represents the general tenor of most of his pronouncements concerning his own life. He habitually stressed the sameness of his early and later selves, treating the obvious differences as incidental or minor.

Moore made no attempt to deny that he was, of all writers, one of the most susceptible to the influences of his fellows. On the contrary, he blithely announced, "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve,"[2] and publicly admitted the validity of Edward Martyn's famous bon mot about his friend and cousin, that Moore "developed upward from the sponge."[3] Such bold confessions, however, must be seen in

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[1]George Moore, Letters to Lady Cunard: 1895-1933, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London, 1957), p.22.

[2]Joseph Hone, The Life of George Moore (London, 1936), p.114.

[3]George Moore, Hail and Farewell, pt. 3, Vale, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), p.69.

relation to others among Moore's reflections on his life and works. His notorious shamelessness very probably tempted him to turn an accusation into a kind of boast, thus robbing his critics of a ready line of attack, but his most consistent attitude presupposes the awareness of certain innate standards which he retained unchanged throughout life.

Moore believed always that he, in common with the whole human race, was subject to the inscrutable demands of destiny. The echo-augury of which he spoke so often in his Confessions of a Young Man (1888) is the same calling of destiny that later brought him back to live in Ireland.[1] Despite the constant references to an ideal George Moore in whose image the real man strove to create himself, and despite his obviously theatrical approach to himself in all his autobiographical writings, the sentiment of destiny pervades them, and with it, a sense of constancy.

> All the instruction we get from the beginning of our lives is to the effect that man is free, and our every action seems so voluntary that we cannot understand that our lives are determined for us. Another illusion is that nothing is permanent in us, that all is subject to change.[2]

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[1]George Moore, Hail and Farewell, pt. 1, Ave, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), p.276.

[2]Ave, p.168.

In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) Moore explained the operation of destiny in his own literary career as a series of "brain instincts" and he preserved this interpretation in the revised editions of 1904 and 1916. As he invariably showed respect for the instinctive and inspirational gifts of other artists, there is no reason for doubting his sincerity when he writes:

> Never could I interest myself in a book if it were not the exact diet my mind required at the time, or in the very immediate future. The mind asked, received, and digested. So much was assimilated, so much expelled; then, after a season, similar demands were made, the same processes were repeated out of sight, below consciousness, as in the case of a well-ordered stomach. ...I am inclined to think that as you ascend the scale of thought to the great minds, these unaccountable impulses, mysterious resolutions, sudden, but certain knowings, falling whence, or how it is impossible to say, but falling somehow into the brain, instead of growing rarer, become more and more frequent.... But I say again, let general principles be waived; it will suffice for the interest of these pages if it be understood that brain instincts have always been, and still are, the initial and determining powers of my being.[1]

"Destiny" and "brain instincts" are vague terms implying a philosophy which may strike the reader as shallow, naïve, pretentious, or just plain false, according to his own beliefs and habits of mind. But such judgements are immaterial here. What is important to this

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[1]George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man, 2nd ed. (London, 1888), pp.35-38. This passage remained substantially unchanged through the later revisions.

thesis is that Moore felt that there existed in himself not only a certain hard core of permanent characteristics, but also an innate selective force which determined the line of development of his talent and his life. Why was he influenced by Balzac and not by Stendhal, why by Pater and not Henry James, why by Yeats and not Oscar Wilde? Some critics have been quick to assert that he admired the works of those he liked, yet Moore never liked Pater as a man. Personal sympathies explain neither the appeal that certain writers had for him nor their literary influence on him. This thesis is written in the belief that there was indeed a not entirely conscious or voluntary process of discrimination operative in Moore throughout his writing years, and that this was founded upon instinctive artistic predilections, deep-rooted interests, and early acquired aesthetic standards -- tastes and critical tenets that can be closely examined, that need not be dismissed as "unaccountable impulses" or "mysterious resolutions."

It is, then, the purpose of this paper to discover what was consistent in George Moore's literary career, in, firstly, his attitude toward art, his aim as a novelist and his general approach to the writing of prose fiction, and secondly, in his particular aesthetic ideals and his attempts to realize them. By "consistent" is meant constant in regard to principles, tastes, and

beliefs, not rigidly invariable, but changing only in degree and not in kind.

B. The Opposition Appraised

The immediately obvious obstacles to an attempt to discover aesthetic consistency in George Moore's literary career seem many and vast. Apart from the variety in inspiration and merit of Moore's fiction, there are his famous recantations to be considered, the instances of flagrant imitation, even occasional plagiarism, in his works, and his astounding inability to evaluate correctly his own creations. And finally, many eminent scholars and critics have been convinced that Moore was a poseur, an opportunist, or at least a fickle joiner of movements in his life as a writer, that he was loyal to no set of artistic criteria, no course of literary endeavour.

Taken as a whole, the opposition seems dismayingly strong, but if its elements are examined one by one, weaknesses soon become clear.

For the first, the question of the diversity in Moore's novels, one needs only to plead the company of many of England's literary masters, from Shakespeare -- even Chaucer -- to the present day. Very often an artist tries several modes and subjects before lighting upon the one which is most congenial with his talent and temperament.

If Moore stumbled often, it was because he was searching for many years and was not content merely to duplicate his early successes. Nor was his search at random. A chronological study of his novels reveals an increasingly precise sense of purpose and several trends in technical experimentation and formalization, which will be specifically discussed in their appropriate places. These indications of continuity and advance in Moore's practice of the craft of fiction strongly suggest that the unevenness of his achievement during his first twenty years of writing, far from reflecting pliability and opportunism, resulted from a genuine and sustained effort to realize in his own work an ideal of beauty and literary merit to which he faithfully adhered.

Moore's recantations, especially of Zola and Flaubert, are not more difficult to understand. In 1877 he read Zola's articles in the Voltaire and was enchanted by the theory they expounded of the new art, based upon science rather than upon the imagination, treating the world as its laboratory in which, by observation of the effects of heredity and environment upon concrete individuals, life might be understood more truthfully than ever before and so represented in the literature which should record the findings of the writers who embraced the scientific method. The theory was modern, logically

presented, and sensational, just the sort of theory that most ardent young men will espouse. Moore later recalled that "...it was the idea of the new aestheticism -- the new art corresponding to modern, as ancient art corresponded to ancient life -- that captivated me, that led me away, and not a substantial knowledge of the work done by the naturalists."[1]

Greater familiarity with Zola's works and three attempts to employ, at least partially, the theory and techniques of the roman expérimental in his own novels brought dissatisfaction followed by disillusionment. As early as Confessions of a Young Man (1888) Moore admitted that he had been deceived, that his enthusiasm had blinded him to the fact that those qualities which he had most admired in Zola's books, their grandeur of design and scope and their richness and force of language, were romantic in nature and highly unsuitable in work which pretended to the clinical veracity of science.[2] At the same time Moore's own mastery of form and language was progressing and he was less impressed by the flamboyant artistry of the master of Médan. It was natural and reasonable, then, that, disabused of the merit of Zola's

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[1]Confessions (1888), p.119.

[2]Confessions (1888), pp.120-121. Unchanged in later editions.

naturalism, like Huysmans and others, he should turn elsewhere for inspiration. Moreover, the reasons for his recantation were the same as those for his initial impulsive subscription to the school of the French naturalists -- a firm belief in realism in prose fiction and a great admiration for technical excellence.

Moore wrote in "A Visit to Médan" that Zola sadly said to him: "'I am sorry you have changed your opinions; after all it is the eternal law -- children devour their fathers.'"[1] The maxim is true, whether Moore heard it from Zola or not, but it would be a poor world if children did not learn to see and profit from the shortcomings of their parents.

In the case of Flaubert, Moore's admiration of the French realist was never unmixed and was never entirely lost.[2] His enthusiasm died, but that was the normal consequence of having himself assimilated what most

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[1]George Moore, "A Visit to Médan," Confessions of a Young Man (London, 1928) Travellers' Library , p.255. In A Communication to my Friends (London, 1933), p.53, Moore recalls the same words spoken by Zola and records them this time in the original French.

[2]In Avowals, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), p.237, Moore calls Flaubert a better novelist than Zola, Daudet, or Goncourt.

attracted him -- the elegance of diction and the detached realistic treatment. Mr. Walter D. Ferguson, who has made a comprehensive study of the Flaubertian influence in Moore's novels, concludes that it is "largely surface influence."[1] Moore's recantation then, if, indeed, it can be called a recantation, in no way reflects a change in fundamental ideals and aims. In the chapters to come much will be said on Moore's fidelity to the great majority of his early enthusiasms; all that is important for the moment is to recognize that his changes of opinion on Zola and Flaubert do not preclude belief in his fidelity to many of the basic aims and doctrines of the French realists and to other views on style, structure, content, theme, and manner of presentation of prose fiction which may have been either the cause or the result of his first immoderate veneration of the two renowned novelists.

Moore was no more shy of imitating and even plagiarizing than he was of admiring; especially in his early years as a writer he seems to have been unable to admire without in some degree copying. But although his professional ethics may be questioned, aesthetic principles are not concerned here. Moore found his niche by experimentation; he never imitated slavishly or plagiarized inopportunely; and he regularly chose excellent

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[1]Walter D. Ferguson, The Influence of Flaubert on George Moore, University of Penn. Theses, Vol. III (Philadelphia, 1934), p.94.

models. Close study of his works shows that what he copied or borrowed Moore usually wove skillfully into his own narratives and modified according to his own vision and purpose. To him, whether he found material for a book in life or in literature was of no account, nor in his treatment did he discriminate between the sources. All things that came within the scope of the artist's experience were, to him, valid components of his art. Sir Max Beerbohm, who, before moving to Italy, knew Moore well, recalled that Moore seemed unaware that in appropriating the witticisms or ideas or even words of others he was behaving at all irregularly. He quite naturally absorbed all that appealed to him in what he heard or read; in his own mind it became his.[1] One may argue that he was morally deficient, but on the grounds of the borrowings that are in his novels, one cannot accuse him of lacking artistic convictions.

The fourth fact which seems to cry out that Moore was a spineless waverer, irresponsible and inconstant in his literary career, is his conspicuous incompetence in judging his own writings. In the light of his often perspicacious and sensitive criticism of other authors -- Kipling or Verlaine or Turgenev, for instance -- it is amazing that he could have been so wrong so frequently

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[1]Sir Max Beerbohm, "George Moore," The Atlantic Monthly, CLXXXVI (December, 1950), 37-38.

about his own works. Although sometimes shockingly immodest, he did not as a rule overrate his talent or his position in the ranks of English men of letters, in print or, it seems, in conversation; on the other hand, he continually misjudged the worth of his individual books. He wrote to Edouard Dujardin on May 17, 1887 to say of A Mere Accident (1887), "...it is my best book; I shall never do better."[1] Less than a year passed before he called Mike Fletcher (1889) "certainly my best book."[2] Twenty years later he wrote of his revised Evelyn Innes (1898), "...I have converted filth into beauty."[3] All three of these books he repudiated sooner or later. Spring Days (1888), Sister Teresa (1901), and A Modern Lover (1883) (re-written as Lewis Seymour and Some Women in 1917) also incurred widely varying assessments by Moore and ended by being excluded from the canon of his works. His friends had repeatedly to convince him of the value even of his best novels, for he was inclined throughout life to solicit and sometimes to accept the judgements

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[1]George Moore, Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin, 1886-1922 (New York, 1929), p.20.

[2]Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin, p.23.

[3]Letters from George Moore to Ed. Dujardin, p.65.

of those he respected. So at least he has often said, in his prefaces and autobiographical writings, and no one appears to have challenged these confessions of a professional diffidence which is likewise a recurring note in the letters to Lady Cunard.

One, possibly the only explanation for this extraordinary inadequacy of self-criticism lies in Moore's paradoxical temperament. He was naturally impressionable and excitable and optimistic, sometimes absurdly, before an event. However, he was also essentially modest and unsure of himself, despite his little vanities and tyrannies. Even had he not told this to the world,[1] his letters, his recorded conversations, and the testimonies of his friends would have made it abundantly clear. Moore was so deeply absorbed in each book as he wrote it, so single-minded in his work and thoughts, that he was quite unable to assess his own creations objectively until long after they were finished, and then, until age bestowed on him some measure of complacency, he tended to be unduly critical and disparaging.

Although this combination of characteristics resulted in Moore's often trusting the judgement of his literary friends and of the public, and in his continually starting afresh in his labours to produce first-rate prose fiction, it does not necessarily follow that he

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[1] *Ave*, pp.35-39.

lacked the integrity and consistency of artistic standards. An artist striving after an ideal is every bit as likely to be blinded with optimistic enthusiasm and subsequently harshly aware of failure and vulnerable to criticism as one who reckons his success by press notices and sales figures.

The last and most imposing of these arguments which appear at the outset to mock the purpose of this essay is that a large proportion of Moore's critics have either aimed to expose his inconsistencies or acquiesced in the judgement that they were the salient feature of his writing career, while the contrary opinion has been voiced less frequently and less loudly.

Of course, the critics have not been uniformly concerned by Moore's apparent total plasticity. Most have simply accepted it as the frame of reference within which they must proceed; a few have found it too contemptible to be spared explicit and often elaborate censure; and many have fallen between these positions, manifesting disapprobation or regret but without insistence. A sampling of the more important and prestigious of these critical opinions will indicate the weight and extent of the opposition on this front.

Mr. Malcolm Brown has written the only book in which Moore's plasticity is adopted as the central and

determining fact in his life. In the preface Mr. Brown first put forward his point of view, that Moore's ideas and opinions changed rapidly, that every major literary trend of the era engaged his attention briefly, and that he embraced successively seven distinct literary styles and manners.[1] Chapter after chapter stresses the variety of Moore's achievement and tends to represent the stages of his career as violent reactions one to another. Only his formalism seemed to Mr. Brown to have been fairly constant and at the same time significant throughout Moore's several veerings.[2]

Mr. Albert J. Farmer, concerned only with the first half of Moore's career in which he introduced into England many of the new ideas and trends of French literature, recognized a certain professional courage and devotion in Moore but also shallowness and fickleness. "Premier sur plusieurs voies artistiques, il s'en détourne presque invariablement avant de les avoir explorées."[3] Mr. Abel Chevalley held much the same opinion. He considered Moore an excellent artist but a drifter and

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[1]Malcolm Brown, George Moore: A Reconsideration (Seattle, 1955), p.xii.

[2]Brown, pp.204-205.

[3]Albert J. Farmer, "George Moore et les Influences Françaises," Le Mouvement Esthétique et "Décadent" en Angleterre (1873-1900) (Paris, 1931), p.114.

dilettante who espoused in turn every literary vogue of the fin de siecle.[1] Even Mr. Ernest A. Baker, who approached the question from a strictly historical point of view, asserted at the start of his essay, "No human being was ever more plastic,"[2] and went on to interpret Moore's career as aimless, floundering experimentation among a variety of methods and modes until 1901.[3]

More censorious have been Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who found Moore much to blame for lacking tenacity of conviction in his aims and crusades,[4] and Mr. Malcolm Elwin, who devoted sixty pages of his book on the demise of the Victorian literary tradition to depicting Moore as a trifler and a phoney, constantly self-dramatizing, posing and borrowing, very rarely original and then usually worthless.[5]

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[1]Abel Chevalley, Le Roman Anglais de Notre Temps (London, 1921), p.77.

[2]Ernest A. Baker, "George Moore," The History of the English Novel, IX (London, 1938), p.161.

[3]Baker, p.180.

[4]G. K. Chesterton, "The Moods of Mr. George Moore," Heretics (New York, 1905), pp.133-134.

[5]Malcolm Elwin, Old Gods Falling (London, 1939), pp.46-106. The chapter titles, "George Moore: The Comedy of a Card" and "George Moore: Tragedy or Farce?", suggest Mr. Elwin's point of view.

But it is Mr. Stuart P. Sherman whose voice sounds most loudly in disapprobation. He regarded Moore as a flagrant opportunist, to be feared and discredited particularly because he was so talented and ingratiating.

> Purely intellectual initiative he has none: but he has been swiftly responsive to every new influence in art and literature. All his life he has lurked in the purlieus of schools and insinuated himself into movements... ...he has been wooed, won, and lost by "aesthetism," naturalism, and the symbolism of the Irish Renaissance.[1]

In only one regard, thought Mr. Sherman, was Moore consistent in his art, and that was in his loathsome naturalism, sugar-coated and insinuating.

Others who have in general acquiesced in these opinions, sometimes, however, with important qualifications, are: Mr. James Gibbons Huneker,[2] Mr. Holbrook Jackson,[3] Mr. Robert Lynd,[4] Mr. Herbert J. Muller,[5] Miss Ruth

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[1]Stuart P. Sherman, On Contemporary Literature (New York, 1917), pp.121-122.

[2]James Gibbons Huneker, "The Recantations of George Moore," Variations (New York, 1922), pp.20-29.

[3]Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (London, 1927), passim.

[4]Robert Lynd, "Falseness in Literature," Books and Writers (London, 1952), pp.132-136.

[5]Herbert J. Muller, Modern Fiction (New York, 1937), pp.196-198.

Zabriskie Temple,[1] Mr. Cornelius Weygandt,[2] and Mr. W.B. Yeats.[3] Even Moore's two major biographer-critics, Mr. John Freeman[4] and Mr. Joseph Hone,[5] while believing in the artistic integrity of their subject and presenting unified portraits of his life and career, have depicted his plasticity and variety more conscientiously and convincingly than his consistency.

Although prejudices, insufficient research, limitations in the scope of inquiries, and too ready acceptance of traditional beliefs may in part account for some of these critics' attitudes, there can be no real question of dismissing or refuting this scholarly opposition as a whole. One can, however, declare oneself of the contrary camp, among those who have discerned in Moore a singleness and honesty of ambition and effort, and attempt a fuller exposition of Moore's aesthetic consistency than has yet been made.

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[1]Ruth Zabriskie Temple, The Critic's Alchemy (New York, 1953), pp.231-271.

[2]Cornelius Weygandt, A Century of the English Novel (New York, 1925), pp.253-262.

[3]W.B. Yeats, "Dramatis Personae, 1896-1902," Dramatis Personae (London, 1936), pp.54-55, et passim.

[4]John Freeman, A Portrait of George Moore in a Study of his Work (London, 1922).

[5]Hone, The Life of George Moore.

THE CONSISTENCY OF MOORE'S AIMS AND OF HIS APPROACH TO THE WRITING OF PROSE NARRATIVES

A. His Literary Integrity

The life, the writings, the friends, even many of the enemies of George Moore testify to one pre-eminent fact: that Moore devoted himself, if not exclusively, at least unreservedly to his art. Except for very brief periods, his last fifty years were spent working eight hours a day or more. It was, he wrote, when he first settled in London that "...I at last discovered myself to be irreparably aesthetic..."[1] Certainly the evidence assembled by his biographer shows that even in his earliest days in Cecil Street, The Strand, he could not be diverted from literature and art.[2] As he grew older, he became yet more truly the monk of letters he was so often called. He frequently postponed or cancelled his projected visits to friends when some book was not progressing as he wished; luncheon invitations he automatically declined; and even the woman he loved and admired above all others, Lady Maud (later Emerald) Cunard, had often to excuse him from attending the brilliant social functions that she held. Moreover, Moore was still writing when he died,

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[1]George Moore, A Communication to my Friends (London, 1933), p.46.

[2]Hone, p.92.

aged eighty-one, although for years the effort had been exhausting and sometimes painful.

Art was a life in itself, a religion, a sacred shrine to George Moore from his early twenties to the end of his life. He deliberately promoted the analogy between the devotion of the pious to God and his own to Art and exploited it as a central theme of Hail and Farewell (1911-1914). Avowals (1919), in an obvious attempt to amuse or outrage by overstatement, explicitly proposes the analogy in the transcript of a letter to a cousin, a Carmelite nun.

> Mais quoique nos idées ne soient pas les mêmes nos âmes sont germaines et nous sommes les deux rêveurs d'une famille peu rêveuse; les deux qui ont su faire des sacrifices -- toi pour Dieu, moi pour l'Art. Qu'importe le sacrifice pourvu qu'on se sacrifie![1]

More seriously, but still self-consciously, Moore said to Geraint Goodwin, "'I have sought and found and taken refuge in art. Art to me is elemental.'" He added, "'Art to me is sacred. It is my religion.'"[2]

Others, too, used this metaphor and related ones when speaking of Moore. As early as 1891 Arthur Symons praised him for "a tireless industry and a single-minded devotion to art."[3] John Freeman, writing in 1922, corroborated this early testimony in his own interpretation

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[1] Avowals, p.258.

[2] Geraint Goodwin, Conversations with George Moore (London, 1929), pp.114-115.

[3] Hone, p.176.

of Moore's career.

> The moral of George Moore's whole attitude to his calling is overwhelming, the moral of priest-like devotion to the creating of a sphere in which his characters, the most commonplace in the world, may live and move and have their being... Even in the beginning it was a conscious aim...[1]

Tracing this attitude to the time of Moore's sojourn in Paris in the seventies, Humbert Wolfe wrote: "He learned from his masters what he had already guessed, that Art is not an interlude, but a martyrdom. The artist can have no divided loyalty... He must give up all and follow the faith..."[2] In her recently published reminiscences about Moore,[3] Nancy Cunard, also, recalls how hard he worked and with what intensity of application, and Virginia Woolf likewise paid tribute to his devotion to his art.[4] These and other opinions and observations seem to establish beyond dispute Moore's unswerving adherence to the duties and rigours of an artistic life.

Despite a number of accusations to the contrary, there is also abundant evidence that Moore neither courted popularity nor allowed financial considerations to

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[1]Freeman, p.85.

[2]Humbert Wolfe, George Moore, (London, 1933), p.42.

[3]Nancy Cunard, GM: Memories of George Moore (London, 1956).

[4]Virginia Woolf, "George Moore," The Death of the Moth (London, 1942), p.104.

influence his work. He did not grow indifferent to public recognition or to fair payment for his efforts until his old age, but neither did he sacrifice his principles for facile success.

This was true even at the start of his career. Although he had to live by his pen in his first years in London, he did not hesitate to do battle with Mudie and Smith, the circulating libraries without the patronage of which few writers could hope to prosper. Nor did the modicum of favorable attention he received for A Modern Lover (1883), A Mummer's Wife (1884), and A Drama in Muslin (1886) influence him to capitalize on his good fortune. A Mere Accident (1887) he sincerely thought was a good book when he was writing it.[1] Spring Days (1888) was an ambitious and serious attempt to "'recreate Jane Austen's method...'"[2] Mike Fletcher (1889) was another experiment that Moore at first thought both successful and significant, although he recognized that it would not likely be praised by the critics.[3] As for Vain Fortune (1891), Moore firmly denied that it was a pot-boiler or that, in writing it, he made any concessions to anyone,[4] and the testimony of one of his editors, Mr. J.T. Grein, on how diligently and

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[1]See manuscript, p.12.

[2]Hone, p.148.

[3]Hone, p.150.

[4]Hone, pp.170-171.

earnestly he prepared the book precludes disbelief.[1] Finally, the genuine merit of Moore's journalism throughout this period is clearly seen in the collections of his essays, Impressions and Opinions (1891) and Modern Painting (1893). From this time forward Moore's artistic integrity was never questioned in connection with any new work.

A letter to his mother, dated July 29, 1891, reveals Moore's resolute independence, which he preserved despite his natural love of commendation. He wrote:

> Praise does not elate me but it is a pleasure after having been made for years the target of every fool's abuse to find that the reaction has come. I did well not to take the advice of every silly person. I had something to say and I said it regardless of the shrieking of the crowd. I have more to say and I shall say it regardless of the praise that may be given.[2]

In his autobiographical and critical works Moore often reiterated these sentiments, but here, being less self-conscious, they sound more spontaneous and sincere.

Moore's detractors have often criticized him for the decision he made in 1918 to publish thenceforth only limited editions of his books. They say he was motivated by greed, that he expected to receive more money thus, and they often ascribe his passion for revising and re-writing to the same ignoble aim. There is, however, no

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[1]Hone, p.171.

[2]Hone, p.172.

evidence which supports this idea and much which opposes it.

First, Moore publicly announced that he adopted the policy of limited editions because of the annoyance and indignities he suffered in combatting an attempt to interdict The Brook Kerith (1916) under the blasphemy laws and an unsuccessful libel suit brought against him by one Louis N. Seymour.[1] As for his constant revisions, Moore's whole career and many hundreds or thousands of words show that he considered correcting to be an essential part of the artist's creative work and that he spent many years of his life trying to improve on what he had previously written. His great friend, Sir Edmund Gosse, although he was not himself in sympathy with this practice, described with respect the longing for perfection that prompted Moore's countless painstaking revisings.[2]

Secondly, those who knew Moore best all agree that, while he was extremely thrifty and shrewdly business-like over such matters as the division of royalties between collaborators, the desire of gain was probably the least of his considerations while he was actually engaged on a book. Humbert Wolfe wrote that he "never yielded an inch

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[1]George Moore, "A Leave-Taking," A Story-Teller's Holiday, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), prefatory note. The circumstances are related more fully in "Apologia Pro Scriptis Meis," The Fortnightly Review, CXVIII, N.S. no. DCLXX (1922), 529-544. See also Goodwin, pp.59-60, and Moore's letters in Hone, pp.340-342.

[2]Sir Edmund Gosse, "Second Thoughts," More Books on the Table (London, 1923), pp.327-330.

either to popular taste or to critical fashions."[1] On another occasion Wolfe said that The Untilled Field (1903), suggested as propaganda for the Gaelic League, was the disappointing issue of "the first and only time in his life of an artist [that] George Moore wrote with a purpose other than a purely literary one."[2] "His temptation has not been to court the world but to shock it,"[3] wrote John Freeman. Believing that Moore was indifferent to the financial advantages of limited editions, Mr. Freeman ascribed his concern for the outward appearance of his books to a kind of "jealousy for the honour of English letters."[4] Joseph Hone was of the same opinion, but he felt that more personal vanity than humble pride of calling motivated Moore in this instance.[5]

Finally, an anecdote related by Nancy Cunard further reinforces the evidence for Moore's literary integrity. It seems that Moore refused to autograph an edition of a short story, The Talking Pine, because he understood that copies would be sold at three guineas

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[1]Humbert Wolfe, "George Moore," Dialogues and Monologues (London, 1928), p.31.

[2]Wolfe, George Moore, p.62.

[3]Freeman, p.202.

[4]Freeman, p.201.

[5]Hone, p.343.

each and he would not be a party to such unethical practices.[1]

Clearly, then, George Moore did not prostitute his talent for the sake of popularity or money. Notoriety always held more appeal for him than either of these, and he frequently indulged in small ways, occasionally in greater ones, his desire to scandalize. But it was almost an artistic policy with him so to broadcast his freedom from the accepted and hypocritical views of the late Victorians and their heirs;[2] because he felt, oftenly rightly, that he was contributing to the emancipation of literature, his vanity, personal and professional, was much gratified by the indignation he aroused. Dominating even his vanity during the fifty odd years of his writing career was the sincere, disinterested ambition to contribute all that he could to Art, and, particularly, to the prose literature of the English language.

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[1]Nancy Cunard, p.192.

[2]See manuscript, pp.29-30.

B. His Aims

In his old age George Moore liked to tell of how he returned from Paris to London with the purpose of establishing in England the aesthetic or philosophic novel. Although he adopted his favorite mildly satirical attitude towards his own life, calling himself "A Literary Quixote,"[1] he nevertheless sincerely attributed to his youthful self the same ambition he then held, to write what he variously called serious, artistic, truthful, aesthetic, or philosophical prose narratives. In this field the English had accomplished very little, he thought, and there is no reason to doubt that this opinion of his ante-dated its first famous expression in Confessions of a Young Man (1888) and post-dated its last in Conversations in Ebury Street (1924).

Moore arrived in England equipped with considerable knowledge and understanding of the works of Balzac, Flaubert, the Goncourts, Zola and others and determined to emulate their achievements in his own language. Only a few available letters and the early novels reveal what he then deemed essential in fiction and what detrimental. In 1882 he wrote to Zola:

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[1]Goodwin, p.64.

> You can't realise how we stand, you are unaware of the combinations which force us to be sentimental, to write flat and conventional novels and which prohibit all observation and analysis. It would take ten pages in which to explain the situation. If it were only the public [I] could destroy the inflexible prejudices which have caused the fall of the novel in England, but it is a question of libraries.[1]

All of Moore's French masters relied on observation and analysis, and this was to be his own approach throughout his career. At this time, however, Moore was an avowed disciple of Zola, and undoubtedly his words implied a more scientific attitude towards writing than he would have accepted four or five years later. In A Modern Lover (1883) Harding speaks for the modern school, of which Moore claimed to be a member, when he says:

> "We do not always choose what you call unpleasant subjects, but we try to go to the roots of things; and the basis of life, being material and not spiritual, the analyst inevitably finds himself, sooner or later, handling what this sentimental age calls coarse.[2]

Although Moore's concept of the serious novel became less exclusive as he shed his naturalistic theories, it remained essentially the same. In 1896 he published his views on English novelists, criticizing them for having abandoned primary ideas for secondary ones, having written of superficialities, appearances, manners, without seeking

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[1]Hone, p.94.

[2]George Moore, A Modern Lover, 2nd ed. (London, 1885), p.41.

to penetrate the subconscious, to the deepest motivating forces of life.[1] Since this continued to be one of the main grounds of Moore's criticism of English literature throughout his life, it is accurate to say that from first to last he considered that a novel should attempt to reveal the concealed springs of character and action, that these "roots of things" or "primary ideas" were to him a sine qua non of the serious, aesthetic, or philosophic novel, and, furthermore, that they were to him real, in the strict sense of that word, and intelligible, in no way mystical or mysterious.

The most obvious facet of Moore's aim was his attack on Victorian prejudices as they were represented and enforced by the great circulating libraries of Mudie and Smith. This attack, so often called Moore's most significant contribution to English literature, was continued by him until the enormous success of Esther Waters (1894) forced the libraries to capitulate and took the forms of publication in cheap, single volume editions, letters and articles in the journals of the day, and a satiric pamphlet entitled Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals (1885). It was directed primarily against the tabu on matters of sex which compelled most authors to skirt one of the elemental aspects of life.

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[1]George Moore, "Since the Elizabethans," Cosmopolis, IV (October, 1896), pp.42-58. See especially p.57.

Moore regarded this as a major obstacle to good literature, since it drastically limited the subjects on which a serious novelist might write. "'I was obliged to attenuate dreadfully...,'"[1] he wrote to Zola in 1883 about A Modern Lover. Once having read such books as Mademoiselle de Maupin, Gervaise, and l'Assommoir and felt the charm and power of their frankness, Moore always considered the fearless handling of love affairs and sexual irregularities essential to any true representation of the social life of the human race. He engaged himself wholeheartedly in the struggle against conventions in A Mummer's Wife (1884); A Modern Lover (1883) had been a sort of test case, presenting a model and a mistress but without much insistence or sensuality.

In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) Moore published his best known protest against Respectability and all its satellite institutions. After six years, nothing had changed. These were the same "combinations which force us to be sentimental, to write flat and conventional novels and which prohibit all observation and analysis."[2] The absurd reticences fostered by bourgeois prejudices were again attacked in the Cosmopolis article of 1896.[3] Only after the battle was won did Moore

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[1]Hone, p.96.

[2]See manuscript, p.28.

[3]"Since the Elizabethans," Cosmopolis, IV (October, 1896), p.48.

stop campaigning for freedom for the artist; never did he stop reminiscing about the struggle and his role in it.

Freedom of the artist was always of great concern to Moore, freedom of thought and feeling and speech. In the early novels Harding represents the ideal of emancipation. He is detached, keenly observant, somewhat cynical, and a lone wolf, although associated with the school of the moderns. When Moore abandoned the theoretically clinical, scientific approach of the school of Zola, he retained and pursued this ideal and voiced it on many occasions, never more completely or felicitously than in his discourse on Manet in Vale (1914). There, with deliberate vehemence and probably some rhetorical hyperbole, he wrote:

> Well-mannered people do not think sincerely, their minds are full of evasions and subterfuges. Well-mannered people constantly feel that they would not like to think like this or that they would not like to think like that, and, as I have said, whoever feels that he would not like to think out to the end every thought that may come into his mind should turn away from Art. All conventions of politics, society, and creed, yes, and of Art, too, must be cast into the melting-pot; he who would be an artist must melt down all things; he must discover new formulas, new moulds, all the old values must be swept aside, and he must arrive at a new estimate. The artist should keep himself free from all creed, from all dogma, from all opinion. As he accepts the opinions of others he loses his talent, all his feelings and his ideas must be his own, for Art is a personal re-thinking of life from end to end, and for this reason the artist is always eccentric. He is almost unaware of your moral codes, he laughs at them when he thinks of them, which is rarely, and he is unashamed as a little child.[1]

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[1] Vale, p.115.

The serious novelist, wishing to penetrate to "the roots of things," to interpret life as truthfully as he is able, must be thus, thought Moore. His quarrel with Mudie and Smith, with the British public, and with certain other writers was that, for the sake of a false morality, they would not recognize the right, indeed, the necessity of the artist to look at everything for himself and to tell what he has seen and experienced.

> ...real literature is concerned with description of life and thoughts about life rather than with acts. The very opposite is true in the case of pornographic books. It is true, however, that in real literature a good deal of licence is asked for by the author. He must write about the whole of life and not about part of life, and he must write truth and not lies.[1]

Mr. John Freeman has told that in the early anti-library articles, including Literature at Nurse, Moore based his claims for the freedom of the author on the noble spirit of scientific inquiry, not the privileges of imaginative creation, and Mr. Freeman considered that the later George Moore was quite unconcerned about the spirit of scientific inquiry.[2] This is a common opinion but not an accurate one. Moore did come to believe that the truth about a character, situation, or condition of life might best be revealed to the author by an effort of

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[1] Avowals, p.111.

[2] Freeman, p.91.

the imagination,[1] but this effort itself had to be founded upon keen observation and fearless, detached scrutiny of both things and ideas.[2] Therefore it should be said that, although Moore rejected the application of scientific methods to literature, he always regarded the attitude of dedicated inquiry after the truth as an essential part of the equipment of the serious novelist.

The same ideal was one of the bases of Moore's attacks on sentimentality, melodrama and sensationalism. In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) he chose to criticize English novelists primarily on aesthetic grounds, but implicit in all his talk of rhythm and harmony and inevitability is the idea that the perceptive and discriminating reader rejects the improbable. Heroics, horrendous acts of Fate, and fairy-tale conclusions are disastrous when introduced into the stories of ordinary, realistic lives. Moore did not object to pure romance of the sort written by Homer, Hugo, or Scott, but neither

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[1]For instance: "That which is firmly and clearly imagined needs no psychology," in Avowals, p.186.

[2]George Moore's own practice reinforces many passages from his writings to support this statement. Goodwin, p.120, records Moore's opinion that "...the best books in the world are pictures of men. ...if an intelligent man were to take down the life and ideas and sympathies of, let us say, a Norfolk farmer, he would draw a man who would endure." (Italics supplied).

did he consider it the domain of the serious modern novelist. What he deprecated was the "admixture of romance and realism, the exaggerations of Hugo and the homeliness of Trollope..."[1]

This same fault Moore found in the works of the playwrights of the day. In "Our Dramatists and Their Literature" he stressed the philosophical æspect of the common failing rather than the aesthetic. False, melodramatic sentimentality spoils a play by making it "inconsequent and untrue."[2] Over twenty years later Moore was proud to boast that "'Spring Days' is as free from sentiment or morals as Daphnis and Chloe."[3] (Morality, as it is commonly interpreted, meant much the same thing as sentimentality to George Moore). Avowals (1919), of course, presents numerous criticisms of authors, such as the Brontë sisters or Hawthorne, who spoiled otherwise good writing by adding sensational or melodramatic episodes. And even though Moore was willing to concede in Conversations in Ebury Street (1924) that melodrama can be justified if it attains to poetry and does not destroy the intellectual appeal of the work, he continued to disparage Hardy's use of this technique.[4] Clearly he

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[1]Confessions (1888), p.273.

[2]George Moore, "Our Dramatists and Their Literature," Impressions and Opinions (London, 1891), p.192.

[3]George Moore, "Preface," Spring Days, Carra ed. (New York, 1922), p.xi. This preface was first written for the revised edition of 1912.

[4]George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street, Carra ed. (New York, 1924), pp.118-119.

held the same views in his seventy-third year as he had in his thirty-sixth -- that sensationalism and sentimentality are in opposition to the primary ideals of the serious novelist.

A glance at Moore's own work shows how carefully he himself tried to avoid all such modes. Despite the romantic nature of the story of Héloïse and Abélard (1921), sentiment and melodrama are as virtually non-existent in Moore's version as they are in Esther Waters (1894) or A Modern Lover (1883). Occasionally in the poorer novels, as A Mere Accident (1887) (later "John Norton") and Vain Fortune (1891), Moore had recourse to a somewhat sensational critical episode, but he soon purged his work of such elements so entirely that one looks in vain for them in the final Uniform Edition.

Another quality of writing which Moore did not consider congenial with the aims of the serious novelist was humour. It is impossible to ascertain whether he consciously held this opinion when he started writing or whether he developed it when the critics began to complain of the lack of humour in his own books. What is meant here is, of course, that broad sense of comedy and farce which had become a staple ingredient of English fiction. Irony and satire were other matters; Moore often admired them and regularly employed them, even as late as 1930, in Aphrodite in Aulis, although much more sparingly there

than in the early novels.

Moore does not seem to have often expressed his views on this subject. Confessions of a Young Man (1888) ignored the question of humour in literature, and it was not until the Cosmopolis articles in 1896 and 1897 that Moore spoke out against the tradition of buffoonery and the whole idea that the novel should aim rather to divert than to illuminate.[1] It is in Avowals (1919), however, that he defined his position, when, in a discussion of Dickens, he wrote:

> A few years [in Paris] would have been sufficient to dissipate the vile English tradition that humour is a literate quality. He would have learnt that it is more commercial than literary, and that, if it be introduced in large quantities, all life dies out of the narrative. A living and moving story related by a humorist very soon becomes a thing of jeers and laughter, signifying nothing. We must have humour, of course, but the use we must make of our sense of humour is to avoid introducing anything into the narrative that shall distract the reader from the beauty, the mystery, and the pathos of the life we live in this world. Whosoever keeps humour under lock and key is read in the next generation, if he writes well, for to write well without the help of humour is the supreme test. I should like to speak in my essay of the abuse of humour, but it would be difficult to make this abuse plain to a public so uneducated as ours, whose literary sensibilities are restricted to a belief that some jokes are better than others, but that any joke is better than no joke... In the days of our youth, Gosse, The Athenaeum was our first literary journal, and I do not think I exaggerate when I say that it must have published some hundreds of articles enforcing the doctrine that humour is a primary condition of prose narrative...[2]

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[1] "Since the Elizabethans," pp.42-58, and "A Tragic Novel," Cosmopolis, VII (July, 1897), p.38.

[2] Avowals, pp.79-80.

These references to Paris and to The Athenaeum of Moore's early years in London, combined with his own abstention from the use of humour, seem to indicate that Moore was always averse to its inclusion in the serious or aesthetic novel, although he may not have formulated his opinion until after he had put it into practice in many books.

If these attitudes were constant, the only significant change that time and experience wrought in Moore's concept of the aesthetic novel concerned the subject matter. In his first book, Harding, leader of the moderns, said: "'The novel, if it be anything, is contemporary history, an exact and complete reproduction of social surroundings of the age we live in.'"[1] This definition is taken straight from the writings of Zola, and by the time Moore wrote Confessions of a Young Man (1888) he was no longer of the school of the French naturalists, who thought to imitate in literature the work of practical scientists. Through Pater, as he has often told, he had learned that "mire is not more real than clouds."[2] In the first collection of his critical essays is this passage:

> But Art is always something more and something less than Nature, and none but the fool will enter

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[1] A Modern Lover, p.42.

[2] Impressions and Opinions, p.123.

> into a competition where defeat is inevitable. In these letters the characters of the Duke [of Wellington] and Miss J. are painted with that complete and vivid truth which is not Art but Nature, and Nature is not the end and aim of Art -- she is, at most, the means to an end.[1]

And about the same time, he wrote: "The mission of art is not truth, but beauty..."[2]

The "contemporary history" definition no longer satisfied Moore. Having realized that no "exact and complete reproduction of social surroundings" is possible in literature, no matter how thoroughly documented a subject may be, that impersonality is unattainable by the artist, since there must always be a process of selection in the acts of both observing and writing, he spoke out for the more enlightened type of selection practised by what he called the "thought school," as opposed to the "fact school," saying:

> Shall we tell how people perspire or how people think? ...it is thought, and thought only, that divides right from wrong; it is thought, and thought only, that elevates or degrades human deeds and desires; therefore turgid accounts of massacred negroes and turgid accounts of fornicating peasants, are in like measure distasteful to the true artist... What I wish to establish here is that it is a vain and fruitless task to narrate any fact unless it has been tempered and purified in thought and stamped by thought with a specific value.[3]

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[1] Impressions and Opinions, p.140.

[2] George Moore, Modern Painting (London, 1893), p.119. References will be to this edition unless otherwise noted.

[3] George Moore, "Turgueneff, "The Fortnightly Review," N.S. XLIII (1888), 238. Also in Impressions and Opinions, pp.67-68.

In short, Moore came to understand that "the roots of life" were to be found not in facts themselves but in the hearts and minds of the characters concerned, as understood and interpreted by the artist. "It is in the under life that the great novelist finds his inspiration, and the business of his art."[1]

But the change was not as great as it at first seems; it was a shift only of emphasis from the outer life, the physical and physiological, to the inner life, the mental and emotional. Moore could still write in Avowals (1919) that fiction is "a literature whose subject must always be, perhaps to a large extent, a description of social life..."[2] and "literature cannot become pornographic, for the subject of literature is the normal life of man, the commonplace, which, when enlightened by genius, becomes the universal..."[3] With his refutation of positivism and environmentalism, Moore retreated only one step in his theory, to the position of most of the realists.

In practice, the subject matter of Moore's novels was, until 1916, essentially normal and social life, although artistic and religious characters were

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[1]"Since the Elizabethans," p.57.

[2]Avowals, p.17.

[3]Avowals, p.122.

proportionally more numerous than they are in actuality. Only three of his books, however, could be classified as dealing with the commonplace: A Drama in Muslin (1886), Spring Days (1888), and Esther Waters (1894). Only A Mummer's Wife (1884) paid much attention to environment. Then, with The Brook Kerith (1916), Moore turned away from things contemporary, and Héloïse and Abélard (1921), Ulick and Soracha (1926), and Aphrodite in Aulis (1930), all his later novels, were on historical subjects. Moore said he turned to the past for inspiration because the present was too "fuddled" and individuality had been crushed, almost lost, in modern times.[1] It was the individual that interested him, not social surroundings or modern life in themselves, but the ever contemporary variations on human behaviour and psychology. His characters and stories were always of two kinds: those which seemed most ordinary yet had hidden peculiarities of vital importance, and those which seemed highly romantic and extraordinary which yet were far more "normal" than not. Kate Ede and Joseph of Arimathea had much in common with each other and with all humanity. This was Moore's particular strength and stamp, that all life to him was equal -- equally natural and equally wonderful.

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[1]William Lyon Phelps, "Conversations with George Moore," The Yale Review, N.S. XVIII (1929), 558.

He saw nothing either more or less remarkable in a disciple of Jesus whose name had become legendary than in a seamstress from the Potteries who dreams of adventure and romance. He had the gift of seeing right through the accidents of time and condition and situation and of reducing all things to the grave, rational, familiar common denominators of life.

In view of his practice, however, Moore in his old age could not have insisted that the subject of a serious novel be contemporary. Thus he must have abandoned the last specification in his early definition, as it was expressed through Harding. It was on this question that his opinion had most changed. Starting from a very narrow point of view, he expanded it until almost any human story that fulfilled his other criteria might be admitted as the subject of an aesthetic novel.

Essentially, nevertheless, Moore's goal had not changed. It should be remembered that Moore was all his life of the school of Théophile Gautier inasmuch as he believed in the doctrine: "The correction of form is virtue."[1] To him, as to all who subscribed to this aestheticism, specific content was only a secondary consideration in a work of art, and therefore the question of the subject matter of the novel was of much

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[1]See Brown, pp.41-48.

less concern to him than the many other aspects of treatment, form, and style. It did not take him long to realize that the quality of philosophic content and the artistic beauty he wished to achieve in prose fiction were contingent not on the new subjects adopted by Zola and his disciples but on the attitude of the realist and genuine artist.

C. His Approach

The general aim of Moore's literary career having been considered, it is now appropriate to examine his general approach. Here there are two facets to be noted: Moore's constant realism, and his constant aestheticism. Both were part of his enduring legacy from his French masters as well as innate tendencies of his own mind.

1. Realism

Until Moore went to Paris, he tells us in Confessions of a Young Man (1888), Shelley had been the dominant literary experience of his life. Then he stumbled

upon Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835) and its challenging preface, which sounded the call of art for art's sake.[1] Moore was most struck by what he called "this great exaltation of the body above the soul" which "at once conquered and led me captive..."[2] Of Gautier's works he wrote: "I am what they made me."[3] Nor was he exaggerating. Mysticism and idealism are totally absent in Moore's books, and only the wistful, respectful portrait of AE in Hail and Farewell (1911-1914) suggests that he retained some of his early admiration for the haunting poetry of dream and longing. There is no indication of such admiration in The Brook Kerith (1916), where Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus, and Paul represent three types of men influenced each in his own way by the physical and intellectual environment of the age who, in conjunction and almost by accident, contrive to give birth to Christianity. The Gospel story is rationalized, stripped of supernaturalism and mystery, transformed into a perfectly comprehensible episode in history by a vigorous imagination which recognizes nothing less "visible" than the mind of man and seeks even in the Bible for the

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[1]This theory was first propounded by Gautier in Albertus (1832).

[2]Confessions (1888), p.74. Basically unchanged in later editions.

[3]Confessions (1888), p.79. Unchanged in later editions.

harmony and clarity of natural human motives and actions.

The same is true of Evelyn Innes (1898), of Celibates (1895) and its later rewritings, and of The Lake (1905). In all, there are reasonable, although not necessarily reasoned, explanations of the promptings of the soul. In fact, it is irrelevant to talk of souls in relation to Moore's works; the characters have intellects, personalities, and bodies -- thoughts, feelings, and reactions -- but they do not have souls in the common sense of that word.

The example and precepts of Gautier were followed in Moore's experience by those of Balzac, Flaubert, and the Goncourts, Zola and his disciples, with the result that he became confirmed in the realistic approach to life and art. This, however, was almost certainly Moore's natural habit of mind. The majority of his contemporaries who recall him as a young man describe him as rather conspicuous and ridiculous but unusually observant and possessed of an extraordinary memory for precise detail. Their testimonies corroborate Moore's own words, again from Confessions of a Young Man (1888):

> And just as I had watched the chorus girls and mummers, three years ago, at the Globe Theatre, now, excited by a nervous curiosity, I watched this world of Parisian adventurers and lights-o'-love. And this craving for observation

> of manners, this instinct for the rapid notation of gestures and words that epitomise a state of feeling, of attitudes that mirror forth the soul, declared itself a main passion; and it grew and strengthened, to the detriment of the other Art still so dear to me. With the patience of a cat before a mouse-hole, I watched and listened...[1]

> ...save life I could never learn anything correctly. I am a student only of ball-rooms, bar-rooms, streets, and alcoves... But in me the impulse is so original to frequent the haunts of men that it is irresistible, conversation is the breath of my nostrils, I watch the movement of life, and my ideas spring from it uncalled for, as buds from branches. Contact with the world is in me the generating force; without this what invention I have is thin and sterile...[2]

Nancy Cunard writes of how Moore took a keen interest in such things as the wild flowers and the lives of the farmers and labourers near Holt. Humbert Wolfe records his unfailing gifts of observation, patient inquiry, and memory.[3] Charles Morgan, John Freeman, Joseph Hone, and Geraint Goodwin all emphasize the same inclinations and faculties.

Mr. Goodwin wrote that Moore never really stopped being a naturalist, that he departed from the school of Zola only in declining to include in his own narratives the uglier aspects and details of environment and life.[4] Since it is in just this respect that

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.30. Unchanged in later editions.

[2] Confessions, (1888), pp.131-132. Unchanged in later editions.

[3] Wolfe, George Moore, pp.120-121.

[4] Goodwin, p.32.

naturalism, as a school of writing, differed from the earlier realism of Balzac and Flaubert, Mr. Goodwin's words are misleading. Naturalism was an exaggeration of realism, based on the positivist theories of Comte and Taine and the example of scientists, which repudiated the artistic ideals of the earlier realists and was designed to justify the brutality, degradation, and ugliness which had never before been the subject of literature and was to fill the new naturalistic novels. Moore, from 1888 on, was a naturalist only insofar as is everyone who rejects or ignores the supernatural; he had quite lost faith in the literary and artistic potential of Zola's roman expérimental.

A Mummer's Wife (1884) is Moore's sole contribution to the roman expérimental. A Drama in Muslin (1886) retains many characteristics of French naturalism: correspondences between psychology and physiology, explicit analogies between man and nature, particularly in the story of May Gould and descriptions of Dublin slums, the theme of the great matrimonial hunt engaged in by mothers and debutantes, many long, detailed, purely descriptive passages, a certain amount of explicit environmentalist theory matched with accounts of social conditions in Dublin and Galway, some facile positivist

philosophizing, and the usual sprinkling of obvious symbols and supercilious ironies. However, these characteristics are little more than a gloss; they are almost entirely deleted in the revised Muslin (1915) and the book stands unimpaired, indeed considerably improved, as a strongly realistic, but not a Zolaesque naturalistic novel. Esther Waters (1894) is sometimes regarded as a recrudescence of Moore's early naturalism, despite the fact that Esther's story asserts the dignity, not the misery and brutality of human life and emphasizes not the laws of heredity and environment, but those of personality and character. Even Mr. Sherman conceded that Moore replaced the "mechanistic" formula of A Mummer's Wife (1884) by a "vitalistic" one,[1] which is to say that he had retreated from -- or advanced beyond -- the position of Zola and his followers. Also, in this book Moore avoided nature: man analogies, except as a means of emphasizing the novelty of country life to Esther at the start, and he refrained from playing upon the available theme of mind: body interdependence. Such discretion in the treatment of a subject from low life, which might so readily have been turned into an English parallel of Germinie Lacerteux by the Goncourts, can indicate only one thing: that Moore had firmly adopted the more moderate approach of the French realists and renounced

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[1]Sherman, On Contemporary Literature, p.147.

naturalistic extremes of sordidness and materialism.

Charles Morgan, although not always a reliable critic of Moore, has correctly assessed his master's point of view in the words:

> He was at first a naturalist of the French naturalistic school; then a realist whose realism was strengthened and intensified, on the earthly plane, by the fact that it did not strive to penetrate beyond that aspect of things which lies within reach of the sensuous, as distinct from the apprehensive, intellect; but he was very far from being a materialist as man or as artist.[1]

Moore had been too impressed by the brilliant psychological penetration of Balzac to ignore for long the infinite possibilities of the mind. It is only in A Mummer's Wife (1884) that character and individuality are portrayed as helpless against the overwhelming forces of instinctive nature and society. Alice Barton in A Drama in Muslin (1886), for no reason than can be explained by her heredity, environment, or experience, finds within herself the unselfish goodness, honesty of mind, and courage to make her own life as she wishes, despite the countless pressures to which all her friends succumb. With Alice, as with almost all his characters, Moore seems to have simply accepted certain fundamental traits and qualities, perfectly comprehensible but not

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[1]Charles Morgan, Epitaph on George Moore (New York, 1935), pp.44-45.

themselves explicable by the materialistic laws of cause and effect. From this basis of character he develops his story always realistically with no suggestion of mysterious, unknowable depths or heights of experience and motivation. In short, character is to him the determining, active agent in any narrative, and thought, conscious or subconscious, is the initiator of action. A materialist, on the other hand, sees external reality -- physical or physiological -- as the dominant power in life and does not recognize the potency of the peculiarly human capacity for thought, for imagination, and for experiencing emotion.

Frank Escott of Spring Days (1888) illustrates Moore's approach. Spring Days was written many years before Moore had achieved the full scope of his talent for psychological realism and it is further impaired by a diffuse, formless construction that confounds the reader. Escott, however, is an excellent character study. This young man, sensitive, thoughtful, and of fair intelligence, is unwittingly extremely sentimental. He is weak and irresolute and quite unknown to himself; while he considers himself sophisticated and worldly, he clings to the memory of childhood and to the irresponsibility that life inevitably is forcing him to relinquish. However, it is not chance, not external events, as he himself imagines, that bring about his final rupture with boyhood, but his own passionate sentimentality which, held long in

abeyance by his indecisiveness, finally asserts itself in search of new and greater satisfaction.

In the same year that Moore was writing this book, he was also concluding Confessions of a Young Man (1888), where he revealed in somewhat fuzzy language the kind of realism to which he aspired.

> The power of the villa residence is supreme: art, science, politics, religion, it has transformed to suit its requirements. The villa goes to the Academy, the villa goes to the theatre, and therefore the art of to-day is mildly realistic; not the great realism of idea, but the puny reality of materialism; not the deep poetry of a Peter de Hogue, but the meanness of a Frith -- not the winged realism of Balzac, but the degrading naturalism of a coloured photograph.[1]

When he came to think back on the early years of his career, Moore admitted that "...in the nineties we were all cowed by the spell of realism, external realism, myself less than Henley[2] for there had always been misgivings..."[3] Whether he truly always had misgivings will perhaps never be known; what is certain is that even before the nineties he learned to discriminate between varieties of realism and, in so doing, to understand that it is a means, not an end in literature.

In 1888 Moore wrote his first criticism of Turgenev, summing up his essay in the words: "Now if the

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.229. Virtually unchanged in later editions.

[2] William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), poet, journalist, and editor.

[3] Avowals, p.143.

reader can imagine a beautifully cultivated islet lying somewhere between the philosophic realism of Balzac and the maiden lady realism of Miss Austen, he will have gone far to see Turgueneff as I see him."[1] Moore did not know it then, but he was to emulate that "islet," that simple, serene, reserved, yet imaginative realism.

Realism demands two things in an author: the habit of careful observation, and the habit of detached objectivity. For the first, biographical and autobiographical evidence of Moore's life-long curiosity and keen perception has been examined. A glance at the novels shows that Moore also wrote largely out of his own immediate experience in his early works but later tended to rely more upon accumulated knowledge, reading, and analogy for such characters as those of Jesus and Paul, Héloïse, Abélard, Kebren, Rhesos, and Biote. A Modern Lover (1883) draws upon Moore's friendship in Paris with Lewis Weldon Hawkins; A Mummer's Wife (1884) was written out of several weeks spent touring the English provinces with a theatrical company;[2] for A Drama in Muslin (1886) Moore returned to Ireland to observe all he could of county society and the Dublin season; A Mere Accident (1887), later "John Norton," was based upon the character of

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[1]"Turgueneff," The Fortnightly Review, N.S. XLIII (1888), 250. Reprinted in Impressions and Opinions, p.96.

[2]According to Moore, A Communication, pp.30-33, not an entirely reliable source. Cf. Hone, p.98.

Edward Martyn, Moore's cousin and friend; Esther Waters (1894) combined Moore's youthful acquaintance with racing and betting circles with the life of domestic service of which he had gained some knowledge through Emma, the scrub girl in his Strand lodging-house; "Mildred Lawson" (1895) is believed to have been inspired by Mrs. Pearl Craigie, with whom Moore had been in love; and The Untilled Field (1903) and The Lake (1905) came out of Moore's Irish venture and his boyhood, his familiarity with many members of both the Catholic clergy and the peasantry. It is impossible not to surmise from this record that many other elements in Moore's works were taken from his memory and experience, possibly even in the so-called historical novels.

Objectivity is a quality in an author which is very difficult to assess. Possibly the most valid test is whether the reader's attitude toward a story and its characters arises purely from the thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds of those characters and the action, situation, and other circumstances of the story as they are represented, or whether it is influenced by "editorial" comment, words or passages which imply a judgement on the part of the author, unequal emphasis, or shrewd reticences. As an author cannot escape adopting a point of view and making a selection of material, this criterion must always be only a relative one.

It is generally agreed that Flaubert, particularly in Madame Bovary, achieved a more nearly perfect detachment than any other major novelist of the nineteenth century. In England, the Victorian tradition of the novel fostered a highly partisan approach where goodness was emotionally praised and all departures from the accepted ideals and codes of behaviour rigorously censured. When Moore began writing prose fiction, he determined to follow the example of the French, and he did achieve even in his first novel a commendable, if somewhat cynical, objectivity.

A Modern Lover (1883) engages the reader's interest and curiosity, his imagination and his intelligence, but it provokes very little emotional response, perhaps because one is rarely invited by Moore to admire, like, scorn, or loathe, or feel strongly in any other way about any of the three main characters. The methodical, almost callous manner in which Moore scrutinizes them imparts a cynicism to the book, for he parades all the pettiness and weakness that is the cause of actions which appear on the surface highly romantic and generous. Harding, who comes and goes through the pages of the novel, adds a recurrent note of skepticism which mixes well with this general tone. Success and failure, strength and weakness are equally contemptible,

for Moore saw little either noble or beautiful in the story he told.

In time, this cynicism was outgrown; A Drama in Muslin (1886) contained much less than A Modern Lover (1883), and Spring Days (1888) was almost entirely free from this fault. By the time Moore wrote Esther Waters (1894) he had mastered his mode and achieved the kind of sympathetic objectivity that was to be one of the hallmarks of all his best books. In them, he tempered his understanding, no less shrewd than previously, with geniality and quiet tolerance, and a generally more sanguine disposition.

To illustrate this attitude a comparison between Esther Waters and Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) can be very useful, particularly as Moore intended his novel to be regarded in part as a parallel to Hardy's on a higher aesthetic plane. He considered subjectivity an artistic fault and despised Hardy's moralizing tendency, because it disrupted the innate harmony of the story and superimposed a philosophy and a purpose, which contradicted the tenet, to which Moore subscribed from his Paris years on, of art for art's sake. Hardy's Tess is a pure child of nature who is made the victim of society's hypocritical morality, which regards propriety of conduct more

highly than goodness of heart. The reader is never unaware of Hardy's own attitude, his admiration and sympathy for Tess, his contempt and hatred for conventional, shallow ethics. Almost every technique from symbolism to rhetoric is employed to ensure this interpretation's acceptance. Moore, on the other hand, very rarely introduces into the narrative even a word which makes the reader conscious of the author. The whole story, except preliminary background material, appears to be as factual and reserved an account of Esther's life, thoughts, and feelings as possible. Sympathy for Esther is not generated by "editorial" comment, but by her own character as it is directly portrayed, and by the attitudes of other characters in the book toward her. Naturally Moore contrived this reaction simply by choosing to focus the narrative almost entirely upon Esther's intimate experiences, but the reader accepts this point of view at the start and from then on finds virtually nothing to remind him that the story is being directed from outside itself.

Tess and Esther both have illegitimate children. Hardy introduces the catastrophe thus:

> Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the

> finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order...
>
> As Tess's own people down in those retreats are never tired of saying among each other in their fatalistic way: 'It was to be.' There lay the pity of it. An immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers...[1]

Moore makes absolutely no comment at the time of the seduction, and when he reveals that Esther is expecting a child, it is entirely through her own thoughts.

> When the faintness passed she started to her feet, her arms were drawn back and pressed to her sides, a death-like pallor overspread her face, and drops of sweat appeared on her forehead. The truth shone upon her like a star -- she had realised in a moment part of the awful drama that awaited her, and from which nothing could free her, and which she would have to live through hour by hour. And so immeasurably dreadful did it seem, that for a slight moment she thought her brain must have given way. But no, no, it was all too true.[2]

Greater objectivity without coldness and without shallowness could hardly be achieved. This was to be Moore's constant manner: a pervading sympathy never actively engaged for the characters of his creation, combined with a cultivated detachment which excludes his voice while it cannot conceal his personality. As late as in Aphrodite in Aulis (1930) this outlook found perhaps its happiest expression.

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[1]Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, MacMillan pocket edition (London, 1950), p.93.

[2]George Moore, Esther Waters (London, 1894), p.81.

In his approach, therefore, Moore's realism soon was complete, for he disciplined himself to both observe and write dispassionately. It must, however, be acknowledged that Moore neither saw as profoundly into life and character nor conveyed what he did see as skillfully and memorably as other great realists. Esther, indubitably, is one of the best results of his realism, Father Oliver Gogarty and Héloise others. But the reader suspects that such characters as Mildred Lawson, Jesus, and Abélard have been oversimplified, that the many enigmas in these sensitive human beings have been exposed and resolved altogether too easily. One is so accustomed to meeting and appreciating the inexplicable that when a hardy realist reduces it to a simple pattern, one casts about -- and often with complete justification -- for possibilities which have not been considered and other flaws in the resolution of the mystery. Moreover, all the modern sciences and arts have taught that there is rarely one answer only: straightforwardness and simplicity have long been discredited. In the interests of simplicity and unity, two of his constant ideals, George Moore frequently neglected to perceive or to convey all the subtle complexities in a character which, more than the clearer dominant traits, make that character a vital creation.

Moore's natural limitations, intellectual and emotional, were partly responsible for the shallow facility which mars some of his books. Another cause, however, was the conflict between his realism and his aestheticism, which could not always be happily resolved.

2. Aestheticism

Moore's lifelong concern with the problems of form and style has already been mentioned.[1] Of all the facets of his lengthy career, this is the single most important one. His amazing diligence and energy in writing, his many revisions and rewritings, his harsh criticisms of some English novelists, his loyal devotion to others, such as Pater and Landor, and many eccentricities in his character and conduct derive from his complete acceptance of the creed of aestheticism. "'Should I ever have a tombstone,'" he said to Geraint Goodwin, "'I should like this written on it -- let us phrase it correctly,' and there was a pause:

'HERE LIES GEORGE MOORE, WHO LOOKED UPON CORRECTIONS AS THE ONE MORALITY.'"[2]

The qualities in painters and writers which Moore most admired were those of artistry, not those of spirit or vigour or scope. Among the artists he loved

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[1]See manuscript, pp.41-42.

[2]Goodwin, p.73.

best, only Balzac was not a superb craftsman. In his first essay on Balzac Moore set the pattern for all his later criticisms of the French novelist by praising him as a thinker and as the creator of a world of profoundly, brilliantly imagined characters. He acknowledged and tried to excuse the lack of style in Balzac's works,[1] but he felt that Balzac's mind was "at least in the conception of subject, so unfailingly artistic."[2] He found the larger beauties of design in the Comédie Humaine, but not those of language and style which he also prized.

Although the power, not the perfection of Balzac's writing enthralled Moore for life, just as that of Zola held him briefly, his preference for more refined artistry dictated the majority of his tastes. Manet he admired for his virtuosity,[3] Ingres for his classically beautiful drawing,[4] Corot for his perfection of rhythm and harmony and his search for pure beauty.[5] Moore's respect for Flaubert was always founded largely upon that author's workmanship; technical excellence impressed him in Zola;

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[1] Impressions and Opinions, pp.56-57.

[2] Impressions and Opinions, p.25.

[3] Modern Painting, p.29.

[4] Modern Painting, pp.72-73.

[5] Modern Painting, pp.74-79.

and the diction of the Goncourts was an exciting example to him.[1] When he read Marius the Epicurean, he was most struck by the language, for it revealed to him the existence of beauties latent in the English tongue,[2] and for this he loved Pater thenceforth. Sterne's works also appealed to Moore because of their style,[3] and those of De Quincey and Landor because of their excellent prose,[4] as well as other merits. The list might be extended to several times this length, for Moore praised or criticized often exclusively and always in part according to the artistic achievements or faults which he discerned.

On his own efforts to create works of art Moore has received widely varying judgements. Many critics feel that in the interests of formal beauties he gave too little of the complexity, vigour, and diversity that are properly attributes of good novels. Often, Moore's later style and fluid organization appeal to them less than the more traditional and architectural composition of A Drama in Muslin (1886) or Esther Waters (1894). There

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.289. Unchanged in later editions.

[2] Confessions (1888), pp.291-292. Unchanged in later editions.

[3] Avowals, pp.21-23.

[4] Avowals, p.35.

are others, however, who have been so captivated by The Brook Kerith (1916) or Héloïse and Abélard (1921) that in their enthusiasm for the manner in which these books are written they all but overlook the content.

The primary importance of aesthetic questions in Moore's own opinion is very clearly indicated by his method of writing. The genesis of a novel was the conception of a story and of the characters upon which it depended. When he had mulled over the initial idea and perhaps talked about it with some friends or literary acquaintances, he started to write it down directly, or to dictate it in his later years. The first draft, according to him, was only another re-thinking of the idea.

> 'Yes, but the first process is rubbish. What I dictate is nothing at all. It is only after two or three times that I even begin to recognise it. The first thing in writing, to my mind, is a conception of the scene -- the environment, the planning of it, the proportioning of it in regard to itself and the story of which it is a part. It is easy enough to write when you have it before you. But I have to try several times before I can get that. I must get it into my head -- no, take possession of it -- if you understand me. I cannot get it by looking into the fire or walking round Belgrave Square. Sometimes it fails completely. It is of no use painting the galley-pots with eighteenth-century figures or any other figures. Afterwards comes the choice of words, the felicitous phrases, the conception of the scene -- how much to put in and how much to leave out -- since no scene is to be isolated but each must depend upon the other.
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> '... It's impossible to say just when the finished thing takes shape.[1]

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[1]Goodwin, pp.108-109.

Often, Moore said, he revised pages at least twenty times.[1] Such a concern for detail is concern for the manner of presentation, for the artistic rendering of a story, not for the story itself.

It is not known whether Moore worked over his early novels so minutely and tirelessly; probably less rigorous standards and the demands of time shortened his labours considerably. It is evident even from A Modern Lover (1883), however, that he was very concerned with the proportions of scenes, the balance of scenes, effective transitions, and the acquisition of a vivid vocabulary. Just two years after he had written A Mummer's Wife (1884), he revised it carefully for stylistic defects,[2] and Confessions of a Young Man (1888) was no sooner printed than he was planning a new edition with some changes and several entirely new pages of dialogue between the "I" of the book and his "Conscience."[3] It would seem, therefore, that Moore was always entirely committed to the aesthetic belief that, provided one had something suitable to write, the most important thing was to write it well.

Because of Moore's specific artistic tastes and theories, his aestheticism did not always combine happily

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[1]Hone, p.374.

[2]Royal A. Gettmann, "George Moore's Revisions of The Lake, The Wild Goose, and Esther Waters," PMLA, LIX (1944), 541.

[3]Letters...to Dujardin, p.29.

with his realism. Ideologically Moore, like the French realists, inherited many of the values and attitudes of the nineteenth-century romantics. The individual, the particular, the "little man" were what most interested him, and the bizarre always held great fascination for him. Then, he abhorred all orderly systems of thought, religion, and morality. His criticism of art and literature, too, was of the impressionistic school which proposes as the only justifiable and significant criterion for criticism the individual's own reaction to the work and the depth and force of that reaction. On the other hand, Moore's natural artistic predilections were for unity, clarity, simplicity, grace, and harmony, classical attributes which were hard to reconcile with romantic interests and realistic interpretations.

In the early novels, Moore's realism tended to overshadow his aestheticism, but gradually the ratio was reversed, with the consequences in the later novels that have already been noted. Since this was the most important development of Moore's literary career, the three following chapters will be devoted to a closer study of his aestheticism, as it grew from small but tenacious beginnings into the central and dominant feature of his life's work.

MOORE'S AESTHETICISM: THE BEGINNINGS

If there is any one thing about George Moore on which critics, whether hostile or devoted, generally agree, it is that he was an excellent artist. A few, notably Yeats, have refused to recognize anything more than a considerable talent for realism among Moore's artistic qualifications, but their voices are feeble against the consensus of less partisan writers. Sir Max Beerbohm, for instance, praised Moore for the perseverance with which, starting with absolutely no gift, he taught himself to write beautifully.[1] Abel Chevalley, who considered Moore a dilettante and opportunist, nevertheless conceded: "...George Moore pense en concierge, mais écrit en artiste."[2] For almost purely artistic reasons, Burton Rascoe assigned to Moore a place in his book Titans of Literature, where the only other twentieth-century writers similarly honoured are Verlaine, Proust, and Anatole France. To explain his selection Mr. Rascoe wrote: "Moore is the most conspicuous example I can recall of a man who became a great prose artist by virtue of perseverance alone."[3]

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[1]Beerbohm, The Atlantic Monthly, CLXXXVI (December, 1950), 39.

[2]Chevalley, Le Roman Anglais de Notre Temps, p.80.

[3]Burton Rascoe, "George Moore the Man of Letters," Titans of Literature (New York, 1932), p.472. Mr. Rascoe's "titans" are of many sizes and shapes.

Probably the most impressive voice on this subject is Stuart P. Sherman's. This prolific and highly respected American scholar allied himself with God and the humanists and waged a fierce intellectual battle against every form of naturalism and its concomitants. He abhorred George Moore, the man and his books, and published at least seventy pages of intensely hostile personal and literary criticism. However, even he had to admit that "every one of George Moore's books that I have seen repays the study of the artist..."[1] Still more revealing is Mr. Sherman's justification of his attacks on Moore, for he confessed to having been very much impressed by "the fascinating flexibility and variety of his craftmanship."

> Why have I always admired George Moore? And why, for the last twenty years, have I given far more attention to his works than to those of Stevenson and Pater...? I shall not have to grope for answers to these questions... I have admired George Moore because he is a "born man of letters," master of the means for expressing whatever is in him, and "as beguilingly various in the moods and forms of his personal effusions as in the matter and manner of his ostensibly objective prose fiction."[2]
>
> When I set myself the task of painting his portrait I could conceive no more fitting tribute to the power of his "aestheticism" upon me than to paint him as he paints his own friends -- at frequent risk of losing them -- remorselessly, with purring

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[1]Stuart P. Sherman, "George Moore: An Irish Epicure," The Main Stream (New York, 1927), p.187.

[2]Sherman, The Main Stream, p.193.

admiration, and velvety cat's paw pats, and deep, indelible scratches of truth.[1]

Those critics who, despite acknowledging Moore's constant determination to master the art of writing and his considerable success, accuse him of unprincipled literary fadism, of hopping on the band-wagon of every new artistic movement which showed signs of being important or popular, have, with the notable exception of Malcolm Brown, made no attempt to study the original aesthetic attitudes and beliefs held by Moore. Had they looked more closely at Moore's early works and at the art that most impressed him in his formative years in Paris, they might have concluded with Humbert Wolfe, that although Moore may be likened to a sponge, he was a highly selective one.[2] His aestheticism evolved like the proverbial oak from the acorn, and the acorn took nourishment from every congenial source and some uncongenial ones, which were eschewed after a trial period.

Because of the regrettable lack of objective information about Moore's earliest literary ventures[3] and

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[1]Sherman, The Main Stream, p.195.

[2]Wolfe, George Moore, p.37.

[3]Few critics have paid more than passing attention to the two volumes of poetry and the two early plays by Moore. Only Joseph Hone and Malcolm Brown provide any details about them. Moore's own comments, especially in Confessions of a Young Man (1888) and later editions), are not very informative.

the unavailability of Worldliness (1874?), Flowers of Passion (1878), Martin Luther (1879), and Pagan Poems (1881),[1] this history of the acorn must begin with Moore's entrance upon the career of novelist. An examination of his aesthetic theory and practice in the years 1883 to 1886 will reveal that Moore already held those fundamental ideals and interests which were to determine the nature of his development as a writer.

According to the Confessions of a Young Man (1888), Moore had intense artistic aspirations long before he went to France, in 1873, and his sojourn in Paris was motivated by his ignorant but sincere desire to learn to paint. About 1876 he abandoned the brush and took up the pen. By great good fortune he fell in with the impressionist painters and realist writers who frequented the Nouvelles Athènes and for some not readily apparent reason was accepted among them. Henceforth Moore looked upon himself as a devotee of Art and identified himself with the "moderns," to whom he listened ardently and paid lifelong homage.

Back in London, Moore retained and strove to combine in use the many lessons he had learned from the French. First in importance was the dictum of Théophile

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[1]These books are very rare and could not be obtained through McGill's facilities. Worldliness seems to have quite disappeared.

Gautier, "that the correction of form is the highest ideal..."[1] In short, Art consisted less in what one wrote than in how one wrote it. That this was a belief acquired by Moore long before he left Paris seems to be made quite clear by the three extant early works, in which the theories and example of Gautier are followed.[2] Certainly, in the poetry at least, Moore did not seem to care what he wrote or who had written it first, but sought primarily to achieve formal and technical merits. After the publication of Flowers of Passion (1878), he wrote cheerfully to his uncle Joe Blake, "I am terribly abused for immorality but not for bad writing. ...None could make out that I write badly although very indecently."[3]

Realism and its corollary, impressionism, were the two great artistic currents abroad in Paris in the eighteen seventies to which Moore was both thoroughly exposed and constitutionally susceptible. From Balzac to Zola, from Gautier and the Parnassiens to Baudelaire and Verlaine he discovered in his reading the same interest in actualities, the visible world with its endless variety, its vast storehouse of material waiting for the artist to

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.79. Unchanged in later editions.

[2] Brown, pp.66-81.

[3] Hone, p.69.

transpose it into some work of beauty. He found, too, the same interest in sensations, immediate, real, and individual, that Manet and his contemporaries sought to capture in paint. Furthermore, he recognized the technical brilliance of all these artists, and he determined to become one of them. He adopted their bias toward formalism, their objective approach even toward subjective material, and their diligence in the pursuit of perfection of detail.

Almost every scholar who has undertaken to disclose the literary influences in A Modern Lover (1883), A Mummer's Wife (1884), and A Drama in Muslin (1886) has reached a different conclusion. One finds strong traces of Balzac and fainter reminiscences of Zola and the Goncourts; another claims Flaubert was the guiding light, but a third insists it was Zola; still another believes he detects the influence of Huysmans, while one or two concede that Gautier may have inspired certain characteristics of the works. All this is very confusing to one who can make no claims to a profound knowledge of nineteenth-century French literature. On the other hand, one is comforted by the realization that all the differences of opinion and the contradictions in theories point to one supremely important fact: that Moore drew on the whole body

of French realistic fiction, imitating the subject matter, the dispassionate approach, the superbly vivid and original diction, the careful planning and arranging, and many other aspects of his masters' works.[1]

There were, however, more specific lessons and ideals which Moore brought back to London from Paris. One of these he acquired through his association with Bernard Lopez, perpetual collaborator and disciple of the prolific M. Scribe, with whom Moore wrote the ill-fated drama Martin Luther (1879). In the preface to that play, presented as an exchange of letters between the co-authors, Lopez pronounces with authority this final dictum: "To violate the unity of subject is the negation of all art."[2]

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[1]There can be nothing gained by a necessarily cursory account of these influences in Moore's novels. The reader may refer to:

Milton Chaikin, "The Influence of French Realism and Naturalism in George Moore's Early Fiction," New York University Dissertation Abstracts, XV, Pt. 2 (1955), 1068.

Abel Chevalley, Le Roman Anglais de Notre Temps (London, 1921).

Albert J. Farmer, "George Moore et les Influences Françaises," Le Mouvement Esthétique et "Décadent" en Angleterre (1873-1900) (Paris, 1931), pp.76-120.

Walter D. Ferguson, The Influence of Flaubert on George Moore, University of Penn. Theses, Vol. III (Philadelphia, 1934).

William C. Frierson, L'Influence du Naturalisme Français sur les Romanciers Anglais de 1885 à 1900 (Paris, 1925).

[2]Brown, p.70.

Moore seems never to have forgotten or questioned this advice. His latter-day preoccupation with the problems of unity and of "the even distribution of the theme" will be studied in the next chapters, but it is important to notice that, although he did not talk or write much about it in the eighteen eighties, he studiously preserved the unity of theme and subject in each of his early novels, with the exception of Spring Days (1888), in writing which he seems to have lost track of what his subject was. In 1883, however, Moore never strayed from his theme in A Modern Lover, the simultaneous making and destroying of a beautiful, weak man by three women who loved him and wanted to help him. Only a very little material, Zolaesque touches such as the descriptions of the tennis match and party and of the county society, might be omitted or curtailed to the advantage of tight cohesion. A Mummer's Wife (1884) sags somewhat near the middle, but the total impression made by the book is of the strictest possible adherence to a simple and very powerful subject, so that the story seems to gather its own momentum and propel itself on to its close. A Drama in Muslin (1886) is quite different, much more intricate in plot, broader in scope, subtler in meaning. But the subject, the impossibly narrow, out-dated, artificial, degrading lives that the daughters of the Irish gentry

are reared to and expected to accept, is never lost sight of as the reader follows the fortunes and misfortunes of Alice Barton, her sister, and her friends. Moore had learned his lesson well. He shunned parallel plots and secondary themes, all the temptations to introduce variety and cleverness and, perhaps, a panoramic effect into his books. Clearly, then, the principle of unity was not acquired by Moore as he learned to write, but was in his mind even before he began his first novel.

Concomitant with his insistence on unity was a natural bias toward formalism. As Malcolm Brown points out, "From Gautier to [Roger] Fry, form was the key to the arcanum of art, and in Moore's time to be preoccupied with form was to be 'in the movement.'"[1] Moore must have learned much from Lopez about the construction of <u>la pièce bien faite</u>, of which Scribe was the master, and he must have found that many of the rules and techniques might be applied with equal felicity to a realistic, psychological novel as to a play. However, he obviously looked more to other masters to guide him in his attempts to devise a form to replace the ponderous Victorian one, which had to be abandoned along with the worn out philosophy and morality of Victorian fiction. The ordered simplicity, the continuous rhythmical development of the subject

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[1]Brown, p.205.

practised by Flaubert, Maupassant, the Goncourts, and sometimes Zola evidently appealed strongly to him. It was ideally suited to Moore's essentially deterministic view of life, the sense of inevitability which he wished to infuse into all his works, the autobiographical ones included. It matched his ability to reduce psychological contradictions and obscurities to a clear, natural character pattern often dominated by one central passion or trait. And it suited Moore because he did not have the gift of fruitful invention necessary in the author who chooses a rambling or discursive or episodic form in which to write his novel, or in the author who delights in intricate plot machinery or vast architectonic structure. With the exception of the unfortunate Spring Days (1888), all Moore's novels are constructed around a single subject, a single story, a simple linear plot, and very often a small cast of characters.

A Modern Lover (1883) might be summarized adequately in three short paragraphs, corresponding to the three phases of Lewis' career and the three women who furthered it, just as might The Brook Kerith (1916). A Mummer's Wife (1884) is in outline even simpler than Héloïse and Abélard (1921). And A Drama in Muslin (1886), while somewhat more complicated, still has the clear, vigorous narrative line that characterizes all of Moore's

best work. His earliest and his latest novels, although very disparate in manner and tone, are alike in this: each grows directly out of the conception of the central characters; each seems more to unfold bit by bit out of itself in natural, straightforward progress than to be built up in so many stages by a narrator conscious of his craft; and each -- of the best at least -- is so unsensational and apparently simple that the reader sometimes wonders in retrospect how it filled so many pages.

Indeed, tediousness is the worst failing of some of Moore's books. A Modern Lover (1883) insists too much and too loudly on its slender subject. When Moore came to rewrite it, he added new incidents and graceful digressions and omitted what was heavy-handed and redundant or accidental in the original. As a result Lewis Seymour and Some Women (1917) tells essentially the same story but at a faster, smoother pace, with much greater delicacy, subtlety, and lightness of heart. The critics[1] usually condemn this new version as frivolous and inconsequential and tending toward obscenity, but it is nevertheless much more readable than A Modern Lover. The reason is not hard to find. Moore had learned to overcome the pitfalls of simplicity, to avoid tediousness by swift writing and felicitous embellishment.

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[1]Joseph Hone, John Freeman, and Desmond Shawe-Taylor, for instance.

A Mummer's Wife (1884) and Evelyn Innes (1898) are two books in which he never quite managed to eliminate dullness. The first flags only in the central portion where the peregrinations of the troupe of actors and the adventures of Kate prior to the birth of her child are related. Moore improved slightly on the original in his revisions but never banished the impression that there is almost a suspension of the development of the narrative at this place. Evelyn Innes, on the other hand, although it has a few devoted admirers,[1] seems to most readers critically lacking in direction and inevitability and carrying a weight of analysis and inner conflict far beyond the capacity of the quiet plot to support. The book starts with considerable energy and excitement then gradually dwindles into the morass of Evelyn's doubts and fears and indecisions.

A great part of Moore's later success was dependent upon his mastery of his medium, but his interest in language and style did not date from his discovery of Pater or his acquaintance with Yeats, as is commonly believed. Its roots, once again, are in his study of French literature. When Moore prepared to revise A Drama in Muslin (1886), he wrote that he detected in his younger

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[1]See Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "A Plea for Evelyn Innes," Southerly, IX (1948), 198-203.

self "An engaging young man...that life...seems to have affected through his senses violently, and who was (may we say therefore) a little over anxious to possess himself of a vocabulary which would suffer him to tell all he saw, heard, smelt, and touched."[1] His "desire to write well is apparent on every page, a headlong, eager, uncertain style (a young hound yelping at every trace of scent)..."[2] Moore called this young man "my immediate ancestor."[3]

What Moore observed in his own earlier self and what a few critics have remarked is much the same. From the start of his literary career he was very interested in language and style and determined to learn both well. As the "Preface" to Muslin (1915) says, Moore was intent on acquiring a vivid vocabulary first. He had been greatly impressed by Gautier's powerful celebration of the world of the senses, which combined a philosophy with the technical brilliance to illustrate and realize it.[4] He noticed the revolutionary language of Flaubert and his

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[1]George Moore, "Preface," Muslin, Carra ed. (New York, 1922), pp.viii-ix.

[2]Muslin, p.x.

[3]Muslin, p.ix.

[4]See Confessions (1888), pp.74-78. Unchanged in later editions.

successors in prose fiction, also their "constant and intense desire to write well, to write artistically."[1] He must have observed and studied the hard, clear precision and the bright colouring of Flaubert's diction. The suggestive impressionism of the Goncourts' adjectival and verbal expressions must have appealed to him as the literary equivalent of the painting he admired so much. Furthermore, he met Mallarmé and Verlaine, who introduced him to symbolism and the evocative possibilities of words. Finally, there were Zola and later Huysmans, with language as lush and violent as their books.

Moore does not seem to have hesitated over which direction to take first. Clarity was his natural preference, suggestion a secondary aim. Moreover, the English language had lost much of its vitality through the years of polite writing and conversation. Moore wanted and needed more vigour and raciness for his realistic prose and novel subjects. These qualities had to come before subtlety and delicacy of expression.

As might be expected, the language and style of A Modern Lover (1883) are quite latinate, sometimes awkward, rarely good. The following cumbersome sentence shows Moore trying to brighten the narrative with similes and metaphors of both pictorial and emotional impact.

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.306.

> His soft nature, although it yielded at the slightest pressure, was as difficult to escape from as a sensuous thought; it depraved with warm water-like treachery, corroded like rust, and soon the fine steel of Lady Helen's character lost its temper and became tarnished.[1]

A Mummer's Wife (1884) reveals that Moore was trying hard to improve his vocabulary. Some of his colourful, Zolaesque phrases are: "hulk of flesh," "livid-hued nightmares," "puling pulp," "reed-like shanks," "straggling light," and "sluggish night." Words like "sweat," "guffaw," "sick," and many others common but powerful, not emasculated by drawing-room usage, appear throughout. More accomplished and much more flamboyant is the diction of A Drama in Muslin (1886), but plain strength is often sacrificed to florid opulence. The purple passages describing the yards of luxuriant fabrics in Mrs. Symond's establishment are the most obvious illustrations of this failing. Participial adjectives and phrases, more active and forceful verbs, and more effective disposition of the elements of a sentence are also new features with this novel. On the whole, Moore was rapidly learning to write well, and, most important, he was proving his real and ambitious intention of exploring all the latent possibilities of the English language which might serve him in his work.

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[1] A Modern Lover, p.297. This passage, incidentally, is one of Moore's most flagrant departures from the objectivity he normally tried to achieve.

Moore was always ready to experiment, not only with diction, but also with new ideas and techniques which came to his attention. As he told frankly in his Confessions of a Young Man (1888), he could assimilate everything for his own use.[1] Since he continued to look primarily to France for artistic guidance, it was not long before he was trying out the new, elaborated theories of "correspondences" expounded by René Ghil and the exquisite refinement of sense impressions to which J.K. Huysmans turned in A Rebours (1884). In A Drama in Muslin (1886) Moore, evidently dissatisfied with the descriptive limitations of both the mot propre and the profusion of vivid detail, introduced passages derived from each of these French writers, gaudy passages in their context but nevertheless successfully impressionistic.[2] Although these examples of indisputable imitation are the most sensational, they are certainly not the sole occasions on which Moore, at the start of his career, experimented with the techniques developed by others. He was impatient with the restrictions imposed by conventional modes of literary expression, even those of the French prose realists. In this he never changed, for he was always

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.325. Unchanged in later editions.

[2] These passages appear in A Drama in Muslin, 8th ed. (London, n.d.), p.162 and pp.172-173, and in Muslin, Carra ed. (New York, 1922), p.144 and pp.153-154.

impatient, always seeking for some new technical means to improve his writing generally or to achieve some particular effect.

The fourth significant ideal which Moore acquired in Paris and brought back to London, never to lose it, was already out of vogue in France and was not destined to cause much stir in English literary circles. This was a neo-classical ideal, derived from a genuine but unscholarly interest in and admiration of pagan antiquity, particularly of the Greek and Roman cultures. Moore's early experiences in painting probably prepared him to accept this ideal, the hours passed listening to and watching Jim Browne among his enormous, sensuous mythological canvasses, and the hours in Julien's studio trying to sketch classically proportioned nudes. It was Gautier, however, who, once again, was Moore's teacher. Gautier sang of pure beauty in his poems and looked for it to the ancient pagan world. So did his fellow Parnassiens, Leconte de Lisle and Hérédia. But, more important, the first French book which totally enraptured Moore was Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin, the story of how a highly refined and sensitive young man seeks and briefly finds his ideal of pure beauty in a woman who has "delicacy and strength, grace and colour, the lines of a Greek statue of the best period and the tone of a Titian."[1] Moore's own early poem

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[1]Théophile Gautier, Mademoiselle de Maupin, Modern Library edition (New York, n.d.), p.289. "Statue" is misprinted in this edition, corrected in the quotation above.

"Nostalgia," which he chose to reprint in Confessions of a Young Man (1888),[1] expresses weakly but clearly the same longing for the serene, simple, sensuous beauty that the ancient Greeks admired, the same ideal that emerges in many passages of Aphrodite in Aulis (1930).

In these four important attitudes and standards held by Moore at the outset of his career as a novelist lay the germ of all his later artistic development. The insistence upon unity, which was the first practical lesson he learned, the formalism which he assimilated with his earliest studies of contemporary literature, and his immediate preference for simplicity were the essential ideals of his ultimate achievement, the "melodic line." His preoccupation with style and the different but not contradictory aims of vigour and clarity and of subtlety, the one from the realists, the other from the impressionists and symbolists, was the necessary precursor of the technical mastery without which he could not have written his later books. And in his admiration of the pagan world so joyously celebrated in Confessions of a Young Man (1888) were contained all the same ideals and more -- the acceptance of sheer material beauty devoid of spirituality, high standards of grace, rhythm, and harmony, and the sense of art being eternal, from which

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[1] In first and all subsequent editions.

arose his belief in belonging to a tradition as old as civilization itself.

For ten years Moore cast about in search of the means of achieving all his ideals at the same time. He wrote straight drama, tragedy, some satire, and serious comedy; he tried low life, artistic life, London life, and suburban or rural life; he chose everyday characters and exotic ones, healthy ones, weak neurotic, and weak sensuous ones. Yet no combination of elements satisfied him. Finally, about 1893, he discovered what it was he had been looking for, and from that time on his progress was steady and his goal clear before him.

MOORE'S AESTHETICISM: ITS EVOLUTION

A. Contributing Causes

The evolution of Moore's aesthetic theory and practice from the rudimentary state of each in the years 1883 to 1886 was the natural result of his own literary activity, creative and critical, of his reading, and of his friendship and acquaintance with other writers, painters, musicians, and scholars.

In the later eighteen eighties he wrote a great deal and undoubtedly gained in experience and facility, despite the generally inferior nature of his novels. Mike Fletcher (1889), for instance, which Moore in later life wished to forget entirely, is technically better than even A Drama in Muslin (1886). The writing is of a better quality, more fluent and rhythmical, more restrained, in spite of the melodramatic subject, more elegant and less colloquial and "modern." Lapses of time, changes of scene, transitions between objective and subjective matter, digressions, descriptions, and philosophical interpolations, all are handled on the whole with greater ease and certainty and infinitely more subtlety.

At the same time that Moore was practising the art of writing, he was doing a considerable amount of

reading and criticism. He discovered Pater's Marius the Epicurean in 1885 and, as he has written time and time again, was enraptured not only by the content but also by the form. Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Maupassant, James, and many others were read by him, and as he wrote his critical essays he formulated his maturing ideas and opinions.

By expression thoughts are shaped and tested. Moore was an inveterate talker and liked to present his newest theory, however fantastic it might be, to his friends or other intelligent company for full-scale debate. Contemporaries have recorded how, after sitting in silent abstraction for a long period, Moore would suddenly broach a topic which was totally unrelated to the earlier conversation, then would proceed to direct and dominate the discussion aroused by the idea he had announced. Almost invariably the same idea, or a better one put forward by someone else during the conversation, would soon after be published in an article or a book by Moore. In this way he gradually built a very serviceable and moderately original body of aesthetic ideas to buttress and implement those attitudes and standards which he held from the start of his literary career.

Very important in shaping these principles were Moore's friends and associates. As he himself admitted in Confessions of a Young Man (1888),[1] and as John Eglinton

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[1]Confessions (1888), p.33. Unchanged in later editions.

later confirmed, "...certainly friendship with Moore was always accompanied by the idea of utility."[1] Many a new interest or enthusiasm of Moore's was inspired by one of his current intimates, one who, if he failed to continue to provide stimulating company, might find himself dropped and even publicly ridiculed or belittled by Moore. Such was the fate of Yeats, with whom Moore became acquainted in the early eighteen nineties and from whom he undoubtedly derived much of his understanding of the literary potential of folk stories and folk speech forms and, more particularly, of Ireland. Yeats found he was the subject of a very clever satiric portrait which figures prominently in Hail and Farewell (1911-1914).

Other friendships were just as important to Moore. There was Edward Martyn, his cousin from Tillyra, near Coole. With Edward he shared enthusiasm for Ibsen and admiration for Wagner, and from him he learned about Palestrina and Renaissance music. Together the cousins made frequent trips to the Bayreuth festival, sustaining the intimacy which the proximity of their homes in the Temple and in Ireland encouraged, despite their vastly different temperaments and ideals.

Moore first met Arthur Symons in Paris in 1890,[2]

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[1]John Eglinton, "Recollections of George Moore," Irish Literary Portraits (London, 1935), pp.93-94.

[2]Arthur Symons, "Confessions and Comments," Dramatis Personae (Indianapolis, 1923), p.132.

and back in London they regularly visited each other's chambers in the Temple. Although their friendship seems not to have lasted long nor developed real strength,[1] it was assisted by similar French backgrounds, the firm and un-English belief in the autonomy of art, and their joint championship of the French symbolist poets. Of these last, Symons had a far better appreciation and understanding than Moore, who probably respected and sought out the young critic for just that reason. Late at night, about one o'clock, Moore used to stroll over to Symons' rooms, where they would talk for hours on end about literature and aesthetics and prose style.[2] Symons, who knew much about music, also helped Moore while he was writing Evelyn Innes (1898).[3] Moore later accused Symons of being commonplace and thin in his talk,[4] but it is evident from the whole conduct of his life that Moore would never have developed such intimacy with anyone had he not at the time derived much intellectual stimulation from him.

Wilson Steer, Henry Tonks, and Walter Richard Sickert were Moore's best friends from the New English Art

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[1]Nancy Cunard, p.107.

[2]See Ave, p.12.

[3]Hone, pp.208-209.

[4]Ave, p.20.

Club, of which he was for several years a sympathetic critic. He met these men soon after he settled in London and continued intimate with them until illness, age, and death divided them. All three were competent painters dedicated to the practice and teaching of their art. Tonks and Sickert, who also wrote commendable art criticism, were eager and excellent conversationalists, while Steer was more inclined to enjoy good company in silent contentment. At first, they were all united in admiration for Manet, Degas, and Impressionism, but gradually Sickert began to defect from the principles of the Slade school and to succumb to the seductions of Post-Impressionism and the theories of Roger Fry. In his old age Moore saw little of him. But by that time Moore's tastes and opinions had assumed their final shape; the years of growth were over. It was during these intermediate years of growth that the intimacy of the four men was greatest, and their long evenings of discussion about painting and pictures were influential on Moore as he essayed to formulate his ideas in the articles later collected in Modern Painting (1893). Since Moore regarded all the arts as essentially analogous, his opinions on paintings usually had their counterparts in the field of literature. Thus all his talk with his associates from the New English Art Club, all the problems and principles of drawing and colouring and brushwork and subject matter that they voiced to each other, had indirect

but important bearing upon Moore's own literary career.

Most significant of all Moore's friendships was that with Edouard Dujardin, which he celebrated in Conversations in Ebury Street (1924).[1] In their letters and in their almost annual reunions in France Moore and Dujardin exchanged ideas about literature, music, philosophy, religion, and countless other subjects, and Moore often benefited directly from his friend's mind. Dujardin first inspired him with enthusiasm for Wagner, taught him much that he used in Evelyn Innes (1898) and Sister Teresa (1901); Dujardin introduced him to many of the symbolists and young French writers of the eighteen eighties who published in the Revue Wagnérienne; Dujardin's interest in the origins of Christianity and his book, La Source du Fleuve Chrétien (1906), fanned Moore's mild interest in the gospels into the zeal that provoked him, an elderly man, to undertake a journey alone to Palestine and that produced The Apostle (1911 and 1923), The Brook Kerith (1916), and The Passing of the Essenes (1930); Dujardin's experiments with "interior monologue" in Les Lauriers Sont Coupés (1887) first brought the possibilities of this mode to Moore's attention, led to the great technical triumph of The Lake (1905), and exerted

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[1] Conversations, pp.186-207.

considerable influence upon the evolution toward Moore's final stylistic achievement, where action, description, thought, and speech are all blended in a narrative of constant muted flux.

There were many other men, and some women, from whom Moore drew inspiration, encouragement, and ideas during his long career. Some were French, some English, and many Irish, encountered during the critical first years of his sojourn in Dublin when all the attitudes and principles he had held were being shaped into their last and most satisfactory theoretical and practical combination. T. W. Whittaker, Richard Best, John Eglinton, and AE were very important, but to mention more would be to embark upon a catalogue of dubious value.

The inescapable impression derived from a study of Moore's life in relation to his work and his aesthetics is that he was much less influenced by events and circumstances of a vivid and practical nature than he was by words and sensations and associations with others. For instance, although he was presumably appalled by the Boer War[1] and shocked to the point of panic by the horrors of World War I,[2] the personal impact of those momentous

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[1]See Ave, pp.272-276.

[2]St. John G. Ervine, "George Moore," Some Impressions of my Elders (New York, 1922), pp.162-165.

periods never made itself felt in his art. In short, the evolution of Moore's aesthetics proceeded according to that of his mind and his artistic experience. The vicissitudes of life and history had but slight, indirect bearing upon his writing and increasingly less as he matured. This impression is substantiated by the testimony of most of Moore's acquaintances who have published biographical material about him, by many of his most authoritative critics, and by his friend and literary executor, Mr. C. D. Medley.[1]

B. Rhythm

As soon as Moore began to write criticism, he began also to insist upon the necessity of rhythm in art. Probably he first noticed the importance of rhythm early in his stay in Paris, or perhaps one of his associates in the art studios or a frequenter of the Nouvelle Athènes

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[1]In an interview with Mr. Medley I expressed this opinion and he agreed with it, saying that all Moore saw, read, and heard he tested against his own experience and used in his books, but what he felt most deeply and knew most intimately he excluded from his work and his mind until it had become not an emotion but a memory.

pointed it out to him. We can be sure only that by 1888 it concerned him above all other elements of art and that it remained throughout his life the single most important component of his aesthetic creed.

At first Moore used the word "rhythm" with little discrimination to refer to almost every aspect of artistic creation, but by the end of his career the word itself rarely appeared in his books. Other terms, "melodic line" and "narrative flow," had supplanted it, but they implied the existence of rhythm.

Rhythm may be defined as the ordered, patterned effect produced, in works of art, by the conscious or instinctive disposition of the materials being used. Rhythm can be very strict and apparent or so subtle that one is scarcely aware of its presence. It should accomplish two things: the reduction of chaos to order and the consequent generation of a sense of satisfaction and pleasure in the reader, viewer, or listener.

In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) Moore spoke of rhythm in prose literature in relation to the story content, the formal arrangement, and the style of writing, and he insisted that the serious aesthetic novel must be "...art as I understand it, -- rhythmical sequence of events described with rhythmical sequence of phrase."[1]

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[1]Confessions (1888), p.278. Unchanged in later editions.

Critics who have regarded Moore's interest in the art of story-telling as a latter-day enthusiasm and a pose, arising out of a sense of failure in the traditional modes of psychological realism, have not noted how closely this early statement resembles the concept of the "melodic line." In both, sequence or continuity are emphasized; in both, form and content are inseparably linked together; in both, the artist's role is regarded as an unobtrusive one.

The rhythm that Moore demanded in the content of a book was the classical quality of inevitableness. His philosophy of realism and his determinism are implicit in his insistence upon this quality in art. A novel, he said, must have "...rhythmical progression of events, rhythm and inevitableness (two words for one and the same thing)..."[1] This statement more than any other early one suggests how Moore looked upon the relationship between life and art. Art was to him simply nature observed, then interpreted, and communicated by a stylization. The difference was all a matter of rhythm. In 1893 Moore was sufficiently confident of his opinion to write: "And, after all, what is art but rhythm? Corot knew that art is nature made rhythmical..."[2] Inevitableness has the same effect

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.280. Omitted in 1916 and subsequent editions.

[2] Modern Painting, p.75.

on and appeal to the mind as verbal rhythm has to the ear, the sense of anticipation satisfied because each successive component follows naturally, logically, and, it seems, necessarily upon another.

Moore, it has already been shown, based his adverse criticisms of many English authors of both novels and plays upon the lack of inevitableness in their stories. Even as late as in Avowals (1919) this was one of his major complaints about English literature, and he clearly regarded it as the supreme artistic fault. Although he never restated the basis of this belief, it evidently remained unchanged over thirty years, for at the time when the flow of his own books was his chief aesthetic interest, it could only have been the interruption of the flow, or the lack of rhythm in others that prejudiced him against them so strongly that he maintained that England had never produced a serious, aesthetic novel.

Rhythm in the story itself obviously implies the existence of rhythm in the presentation. The selection and ordering of events achieves both rhythms if they achieve the first. Moore was seemingly unimpressed by purely formal accomplishments of this sort, at least from the time that he became dissatisfied with Zola's technical brilliance. He rarely commented upon

the "rhythmical progression of events" of works that he criticized for lack of inevitableness or related feelings, Either he could not or he would not regard form and content separately, and if the narrative fell short in his opinion, then the formal plot construction had little value. He made a notable exception in his comments upon War and Peace, of which he admired the vast design at the same time that he deplored the ugly, moralizing temperament of Tolstoy, felt throughout the work.[1] He made no similar gesture of artistic recognition to Hardy, however, nor did he praise the design of novels by Austen, Eliot, James, or others, although he considered them excellent writers. It would seem, then, that Moore took for granted the mastery of the rhythms of form by a competent novelist and was tolerant of all types. In his essays he normally preferred to point out particular scenes or episodes that he considered mishandled or misplaced rather than to deal in generalities about fugal or contrapuntal or any other arrangements.

This, of course, is true of all Moore's criticism; it is impressionistic and specific and does not pretend to be either comprehensive or analytical. It is not surprising, therefore, that Moore never gave any clear explanation of what he meant by "rhythmical sequence

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[1] Avowals, pp.144-145.

of phrase." Many times, first in the Confessions of a Young Man (1888) and subsequently in every major critical work, he expressed his delight in Pater's unusual cadences and long-sustained rhythms. He often had words of praise for stylistic achievements of this nature by other authors, even by such a one as Kipling, whose technical brilliance he had to admire.[1] However, it is not by any particular passages on prose style that the importance of rhythmical writing to Moore is revealed, but by the sheer quantity of his remarks throughout the years. Nor did this quantity vary at different periods; relative to the amount of literary criticism in the books, it is constant in Confessions of a Young Man (1888), Hail and Farewell (1911-1914), Avowals (1919), and Conversations in Ebury Street (1924). As style did not at any time weigh heavily in Moore's final judgements of novelists, although it had great influence upon his personal tastes, it is significant that he regularly remarked upon prose styles as disparate as those of Meredith and Stevenson, Hawthorne and Landor, usually with an ear to the sound of the sentence, not the sense or the precision or even the diction.

"But it is impossible to write the simplest sentence without some rudimentary sense of rhythm. Rhythm

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[1] Avowals, p.170, p.172, p.178.

is beauty."[1] This Moore wrote in Avowals (1919), when, possibly, he was somewhat more tolerant than as a younger man. Nevertheless it is a good summary of the aesthetic principle which dominated his thinking all through his literary life, or at least from as early in his career as can be ascertained. From his constant insistence on rhythm as the essential characteristic of art gradually evolved his concept of the "melodic line."

An important element in this evolution was the analogy between literature and music to which Moore early turned his attention and which he embraced whole-heartedly. Probably he first became interested in the theory of correspondences between the arts through reading Baudelaire:

> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.[2]

René Ghil's treatise on synesthesia, J.K. Huysmans' interest, Gustave Kahn's works, and the poem "Voyelles" by Rimbaud undoubtedly made an impression on Moore, although he could not accept, and indeed ridiculed somewhat the pseudo-scientific theories which developed from the original idea. However, the most decisive influence almost certainly derived from Dujardin and the cult of

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[1] Avowals, p.144.

[2] From the poem "Correspondances," Les Fleurs du Mal (1857).

Wagner. Dujardin's enthusiasm for and profound knowledge of the music of Wagner was the source of Moore's own admiration, and in many of his references to the great German composer are echoes from the pages of the Revue Wagnérienne and the Revue Indépendante.

To confirm Moore's belief in the close relationship between literature and music was the authoritative voice of his avowed master, Pater, who wrote in The Renaissance, which Moore read in the latter eighteen eighties, this celebrated passage:

> All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation -- that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape -- should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.[1]

Evidence that Moore accepted this aesthetic theory is abundant even in Confessions of a Young Man (1888). He wrote of "the music of sequence and the massy harmonies of fate" in the OEdipus;[2] he compared Lorna Doone

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[1]Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," The Renaissance, Modern Library Edition (New York, n.d.), p.111.

[2]Confessions (1888), p.269. Unchanged in later editions.

to a "third-rate Italian opera, La Fille du Régiment or Ernani";[1] he described the necessary balance between man and his actions in terms of melody and chords;[2] he likened The Mill on the Floss to the music of Beethoven;[3] and, finally, he wrote this eulogy of now forgotten Margaret Veley:

> One of the few writers of fiction who seems to me to possess an ear for the music of events is Miss Margaret Veley. Her first novel, "For Percival," although diffuse, although it occasionally flowed into by-channels and lingered in stagnating pools, was informed and held together, even at ends the most twisted and broken, by that sense of rhythmic progression which is so dear to me, and which was afterwards so splendidly developed in "Damocles."... The wrath and the lamentation of the chorus of the Greek singer, the intoning voices of the next-of-kin, the pathetic responses of voices far in the depths of ante-natal night, these the modern novelist, playing on an inferior instrument, may suggest, but cannot give; but here the suggestion is so perfect that we cease to yearn for the real music, as, reading from a score, we are satisfied with the flute and bassoons that play so faultlessly in soundless dots.[4]

Again, in his article on Turgenev, first written also in 1888, Moore drew an extended analogy between literature and music. Speaking of the subtle artistry of the Russian novelist, he said:

> These are things that the artist sees better than the public, des questions de métier, but very interesting to those who would look behind the

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.270. Omitted in later editions.

[2] Confessions (1888), p.272. Modified in 1916.

[3] Confessions (1888), p.280. Unchanged in later editions.

[4] Confessions (1888), pp.281-282. Omitted in later editions.

> scenes and understand a little of the art of fiction. It is by such little touches that we judge our confrères; our approbation is won not by the big drum parts, or the violin solo which captivates the public, but by a little bit of -- shall I call it instrumentation? that is to say, the sound of a certain sentiment at a certain moment; the introduction of physical phenomena, used either in alternate or combined effect with the theme of suffering or joy which the characters are uttering.[1]

When he began to write criticism of painting, Moore carried over the theory that music is the purest form of art to apply to it. He drew many audacious analogies, more extensive, however, than profound or subtle. Of a portrait by Whistler, for example, he wrote: "Just as Shelley's 'Sensitive Plant' thrills the innermost sense like no other poem in the language, the portrait of Miss Alexander enchants with the harmony of colour, with the melody of composition."[2] He did not scruple to vary the comparisons to fit his subject or mood. Corot's "rhythms" and "harmonies" are examined at considerable length with this quite different conclusion being drawn to illuminate the question of values:

> The colour is the melody, the values are the orchestration of the melody; and as the orchestration serves to enrich the melody, so do the values enrich the colour. And as melody may -- nay, must -- exist, if the orchestration be really beautiful, so colour must inhere wherever the values have been finely observed.[3]

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[1]"Turgueneff," The Fortnightly Review, N.S. XLIII (1888), 244. Also in Impressions and Opinions, p.82.

[2]Modern Painting, p.11.

[3]Modern Painting, p.78.

These and several other passages in the early critical works prove that Moore was acutely aware of correspondences between the arts at least sixteen years before his own "melodic line" was born, that he early accepted music as the criterion of artistic achievement, that he readily thought of literature in terms of melody and harmony, and that his insistence upon rhythm in all art forms was closely associated with this manner of thought.

To attempt to show any considerable progress in rhythmical expression in Moore's own works prior to 1903 would be an unrewarding pursuit. He tried such varied subjects and tones and produced such unequal results that all that can be said is that his good books improved in this respect as time went on, while his failures were not usually due to lapses in the rhythms of narrative, form, or style. In A Mere Accident (1887), Spring Days (1888), Mike Fletcher (1889), Vain Fortune (1891), and Evelyn Innes (1898) the main cause of failure was, on the contrary, the incompatibility of the subjects with the manner of orderly, sustained progression in which they were treated. All five subjects had elements of violence, luxury, or excess in them, and Moore had neither learned to minimize these to harmonize with his simple, generally restrained view and management of both life and art, nor acquired either

the inclination or the talent to handle flamboyant material in a flamboyant manner.

Mike Fletcher (1889) is the most conspicuous illustration of this incompatibility. The story is of an ambitious, debauched dilettante who, although he possesses a very delicate and imaginative sensibility and many high moral and intellectual qualities, allows in his youth his animal nature so to command his life that he cannot later escape from it, and successively he becomes a victim of sensual ennui, of Schopenhauerian pessimism, and finally of suicide. In his usual manner Moore wrote the story in straightforward, single-stranded style, with few digressions, the end always clearly in view. He saw the story as a logical progression of character and actions and wrote it as such. As a result, the sensual element looms larger than it is and the very real psychological conflict dwindles to small significance. The book becomes another rake's progress and the sympathetic aspects of the hero, of which a writer more interested in dramatic effects might have made a great deal, attain only minimal recognition. As with Mike Fletcher (1889), so it is with the other poor novels of this period. Moore's strong sense of measured, rhythmical progression of story and form was ill suited to the writing of narratives in which ugly or violent elements play an important part.

On the other hand, this same sense was largely responsible for the success of Esther Waters (1894) and "Mildred Lawson" from Celibates (1895). In Esther Waters Moore for the first time was able to write a narrative in which nothing, no episode, no character, no thought, seems accidental or incidental to the whole. More even than A Mummer's Wife (1884), which, as has been said, lags in the middle section, this book is tightly composed, like a well-wrought piece of music. Its rhythm is more uniform and therefore more striking, although it has not the volume or insistence that marks the earlier work. John Freeman described the novel well when he wrote:

> Esther Waters has a beginning and an end, and because all between is an easy, harmonious development, flowing like waters to a stream or like branches to autumn and winter, the quiet end has the beauty of music and clouds.[1]

Esther was written more slowly and with greater care than any of the earlier novels, and the result is that for the first time Moore achieved a work that pleased him even in later life, for it fulfilled his strict demands for inevitableness and form, although it had not the more elegant stylistic rhythms which he mastered some years after. Moreover, in this book for the first time Moore invented a narrative and characters that were perfectly

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[1]Freeman, p.112.

in accord with his natural preference for order and tranquillity, so that there is no incompatibility of spirit between the subject of the book and the author's attitude and treatment.

"Mildred Lawson" cannot, of course, be compared with Esther as a work of art. It has many faults, not the least of which is the clumsy handling of interior monologue, in which Moore was making gingerly experiments preparatory to writing Evelyn Innes (1898). But again in this story Moore found a congenial subject, and again he wrote a unified, harmonious work with a quiet rhythm and careful attention to form. Unfortunately, Moore's lack of experience with subtle shades of character resulted in a rather confused, diffuse quality to several episodes. When, however, he later rewrote the story in the interests of economy and clarity, he positively weakened both plot and form by changing the end.[1]

These works and the great deal of thought that Moore was giving at this time to the question of rhythm were important aspects of his evolution toward the theory and practice of the "melodic line." They prepared him more than anything else for that ultimate stage in his career. In fact, the day that Moore discovered the

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[1]See "Henrietta Marr" in In Single Strictness (1922) and Celibate Lives (1927).

meaning and value of rhythm may be considered the day that he laid the cornerstone of his aesthetic creed and artistic achievement.

C. Simplicity and Clarity

Closely related to his insistence upon rhythm was Moore's natural preference for clarity or simplicity in fiction. Moore thought and wrote according to basic sequential patterns; his mind did not move around and around a subject, probing deeply at one aspect, retreating to view another from a more distant perspective, but approached it at a climatic point and pursued it to what he considered its logical end. "Line," therefore, became to him a second major criterion of artistic merit.

This natural preference was given aesthetic sanction by the example of the best of the French realists, whose works so influenced Moore in his formative Paris years.[1] Although for a time he admired and may even have

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[1]See manuscript, pp. 72-73.

emulated Zola's celebrated fugal treatment of themes,[1] the simple, sequential mode of composition was his basic method from the start and the one which he singled out for praise in other writers. His first tentative presentation of this ideal appears in his early article on "Turgueneff" and is also hinted at in Confessions of a Young Man (1888) of the same year. In the article on Turgenev Moore wrote:

> Pères et Enfants is considered by many to be Turgueneff's best book, but although fully alive to the fact that it contains Bazaroff, his most thorough and most vital creation, I must profess myself adverse to this opinion. The book is wanting in those simple lines which are the characteristics of the best fiction -- So-and-so did so-and-so; such a thing happened, therefore the result was... It will be urged that notably Vanity Fair is not composed in accordance with this theory of composition. Without in the least professing to have invented a definition that will include all good stories, I will say that although Vanity Fair is not composed on one set of simple lines, it is composed on sets of simple lines...[2]

From this quotation it may be seen how intimately linked are Moore's theories of rhythm with his desire for clear, simple lines. Both were necessary, in his mind, for the essential creative act of bringing order to the chaos of nature. Again, this opinion is

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[1]Milton Chaikin, "The Composition of George Moore's A Modern Lover," Comparative Literature, VII (Summer, 1955), 261.

[2]"Turgueneff," The Fortnightly Review, N.X. XLIII (1888), 244-245. Also in Impressions and Opinions, p.83.

supported by the recognition of music as the purest art form, and again it is applied unmodified to the criticism of painting, notably that of Ingres and Corot.[1] "For the rhythm of line as well as of sound the artist must seek in his own soul; he will never find it in the inchoate and discordant jumble which we call nature,"[2] wrote Moore.

As Moore matured and his concept of the "melodic line" developed, he became more certain of the values of simplicity. Everywhere in Modern Painting (1893) can be discerned this insistence on what he considered an original Greek quality, but it is confused by his spontaneous liking for such romantic elements as picturesque detail, misty atmospheric effects, and technical virtuosity. These accomplishments he learned to regard, in literature as in painting, as lesser merits. Turgenev gradually replaced Balzac as his favorite writer of prose fiction,[3] Landor came to represent to him the best of English literature, superior even to Shakespeare, and he acknowledged that the genius of the eighteenth century, the era of Adams, Sheraton, and Louis XVI, governed almost all his artistic tastes.[4]

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[1]See Modern Painting, pp.70-83.

[2]Modern Painting, p.75.

[3]See Avowals, p.138.

[4]Conversations, p.190.

In Conversations in Ebury Street (1924), while praising Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey for its simplicity, Moore wrote: "I need not remind you, Gosse, that it's more difficult to write a simple story than a complicated one."[1] His own experience had taught him this; for twenty years he had been labouring to write simple stories that would have the limpid, seemingly effortless and artless purity that he associated with the best narrative tradition. For almost twenty years prior to that, he had been concerned with trying to reduce each of his plots to a single, clear narrative development, sometimes too easily dismissing their inherent complexities, as in Mike Fletcher (1889), sometimes achieving an admirably sustained and simple line, as in Esther Waters (1894), despite the retention of a number of the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction.

Simplicity, with Moore, was always associated with the idea of consecutiveness, the aspect of life that was his constant preoccupation. Humbert Wolfe explained his friend and mentor in this fashion:

> ...George Moore knows of course that when he took up the crayon it was his moment of destiny. He was born with a restless, irresistible desire to understand the movement of life, and to reveal by some way or another some corner of its secret.[2]

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[1] Conversations, p.244.

[2] Wolfe, George Moore, pp.34-35.

It was, wrote Wolfe, "line" that enthralled him in the pictorial arts. In literature it was "sequence," logical, rhythmical, and entirely dependent upon the passage of time, that dominated his thought and writings. He believed implicitly in the concept of continuity; it might be called the primary condition of his philosophy of life. It was always his desire to reveal, in both his fiction and his works of autobiography and criticism, this universal movement, manifest in an individual life, as in A Modern Lover (1883), Esther Waters (1894), or The Lake (1905); or in successive generations, as in Aphrodite in Aulis (1930); or in intellectual, moral, or aesthetic principles, as in The Brook Kerith (1916), Avowals (1919), and Conversations in Ebury Street (1924); or in the mind of man and the patterns of recollection, as in Hail and Farewell (1911-1914). As a result, he sought to order and arrange his novels so as best to reveal the continuity of the story and subject, just as in his autobiographical works he falsified historical sequence in his efforts to describe his spiritual development.

For a long time, as has been shown, he could not entirely master the form he had chosen; his simple lines led sometimes to incredibility or coarseness, sometimes to tediousness. It was not until, with The Untilled Field (1903) and The Lake (1905), he perfected his ability

to blend smoothly and in happy proportions the subjective and the objective and then developed a prose style that could match the continuity of the story and form of the novel that he really achieved in his own way and within his own limits his ideal of simplicity.

When he wrote his first article on Turgenev, Moore's theory of simple lines making the best fiction was to some extent limited by the emphasis on a sequence based upon cause and effect. This may perhaps be ascribed to the lingering influence of Zola. Although Moore certainly never denied the laws of cause and effect but, on the contrary, recognized in them the supreme force behind human conduct, he nevertheless soon ceased to regard them as the exclusive basis of narrative simplicity. He saw that the mental and emotional processes of the human being are too subtle to be so rigidly ordered. When as an old man, he repeated to Geraint Goodwin his admonition to follow a clear line of development, all he insisted upon was a coherent simple plan to be strictly adhered to.

> A work of art depends for its effect, as does everything else, on its plan. When you agree on the plan, there is no other course open but to follow it and not go wandering off into side-avenues, moralisings, disquisitions, and heaven knows what. That seems to me to be the trouble of the present-day writers. If they have ever decided on what they were trying to write about, they seem to have forgotten it after the first chapter.[1]

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[1]Goodwin, p.62.

All the criteria that he had held since his youth were implicit in these words, but also greater tolerance, the consequence of wider experience.

It has already been pointed out how the simple lines of sequential development suited the peculiar cast of Moore's mind and his natural tastes. Malcolm Brown, among other critics, ascribes part of Moore's success to this fortunate correspondence between the man and his literary ability. "Moore's special and superior skill lay in his ability to tighten the consecutiveness of his narrative, no small virtue among novelists concerned primarily with the unfolding of a deterministic world."[1] However, Moore's philosophy and his aesthetics in this case antedated his acquisition of "special and superior skill," as can be clearly seen in any of the early novels. Only his persistence allowed him to approach his ideal and achieve the happy reconciliation of theory, attitude, and practice. His fidelity to this ideal, so difficult to attain and so conspicuously opposed to those which were represented by the works of Meredith, Hardy, James, and Conrad, the currently acknowledged masters of prose fiction, is in itself not without merit.

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[1]Brown, p.137.

D. Unity

> "But unity, unity -- all, all is unity," broke in Mr. Moore. "One must never forget unity. I withdrew my book 'Impressions and Opinions' from the American edition because I thought it lacked the first, the last, essential of a work of art."[1]

These words, recorded by Geraint Goodwin when Moore was an old man, present the third important principle in his aesthetics and the one which he chose to emphasize in his later years. "Unity" replaced "rhythm" as his favorite catchword on the subject of literary merit. "...'the most important thing to aim at is unity. Everything depends upon unity,'"[2] he said.

This, to Moore, was no mere critical commonplace but a whole philosophy of art, virtually complete in itself. In his early collaboration with Bernard Lopez over the writing of Martin Luther (1879), he had been impressed by the necessity of preserving at all costs the unity of subject in any literary endeavour.[3] The contemporary emphasis on form, however, evidently soon led him to regard content as inseparable from mode of expression and to demand a more extensive unity of the whole work. This principle he put in opposition to that

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[1]Goodwin, p.110.

[2]Goodwin, p.89.

[3]See manuscript, p.70.

of scientific naturalism in a dramatic presentation in his Confessions of a Young Man (1888) of the ideas and opinions that he recalled from his days at the Nouvelle Athènes. Since it is known that he had already broken with Zola and the "fact school," it is reasonable to accept this passage as an expression of his own thought.

> Art is nature digested. Art is a sublime excrement. Zola and Goncourt cannot, or will not understand that the artistic stomach must be allowed to do its work in its own mysterious fashion. If a man is really an artist he will remember what is necessary, forget what is useless; but if he takes notes he will interrupt his artistic digestion, and the result will be a lot of little touches, inchoate and wanting in the elegant rhythm of the synthesis.[1]

There are no echoes of Pater in these words, although Moore had only recently discovered Marius and The Renaissance and made the acquaintance of their author. Probably, then, the ideal voiced here, "the elegant rhythm of the synthesis," was held by Moore for some time before he encountered or assimilated Paterian aesthetics, perhaps even before he succumbed to his brief enthusiasm for French naturalism.

Each of the three words in the last phrase is important. "Elegant" implies grace, harmony, refinement, and a certain amount of ease and simplicity. "Rhythm,"

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.165. Virtually unchanged in all later editions.

again, connotes order, planning, and careful balance and proportions. "Synthesis" means a combination, an intimate association of all parts within a whole -- in short, unity. Except that it makes no mention of "line," but refers to the synthesis as if it were a block, rather than a continuous linear development, the phrase might represent in its essentials the final stage in the evolution of Moore's opinions on prose fiction.

This final stage was reached gradually. Impressions and Opinions (1891), Modern Painting (1893), and the two articles of 1896 and 1897 in Cosmopolis show no real advance in Moore's concept of unity in art. Undoubtedly, however, he was considerably influenced by Pater's views, in particular by those expressed in the following passage.

> Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or the ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the "imaginative reason," that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.[1]

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[1]Pater, The Renaissance, p.114.

Pater called for a much more comprehensive unity than Moore had envisaged and one which demanded the complete mastery of language and, in a broad sense, style. Pater's own writings, while impressing Moore more strongly than those of any other contemporary English author, could not show him how this ideal might be most nearly attained in realistic fiction, or, indeed, if any approximation were possible in this branch of literature. He determined to discover these things for himself.

How definite an objective Moore had in mind it is impossible to ascertain. He continued to experiment until he happened upon that murmurous, fluid style that, complementing the simple, rhythmical narrative process that he sought, created the harmonious "melodic line." Not until he was master of this art form did he give any explanation of his ideal of unity, and even then he was not as lucid as insistent. For instance, he extolled Agnes Grey because in his opinion it was "the one story in English literature in which style, characters and subject are in perfect keeping."[1] Again, he remarked that he had withdrawn from publication Impressions and Opinions (1891) because it "lacked unity of subject and language."[2] The major difference between these two

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[1]Conversations, p.244. Although Moore's opinion seems perverse and calculated to astound the reader, his criterion is not thereby invalidated.

[2]Conversations, p.95.

statements and that appearing above from Confessions is that in the later ones language and general style are regarded as integral parts of the synthesis of a work of art. Over the years, through contact with Pater and other artists, particularly French, seeking the same ideal, and through his own experience and efforts, Moore's standard of aesthetic unity had evolved to be more absolute and more challenging than that of any other significant English novelist.

It is interesting to note that at least in his later years Moore considered the most difficult part of writing for himself to be the beginning of a work, the first few chapters. In these he had to establish the harmony that was to control the book, to set the tone, the pace, the proportions, the course of the book and introduce the characters, the action, and the scene and background--in short, to define the unity he sought. He confided his difficulty in a letter to Mr. Shirley Atchley of Athens, when he was engaged on Aphrodite in Aulis (1930),[1] and, on another occasion to Nancy Cunard, when he wrote:

> I have tried to get out my first chapter of the story I related to you many times -- ten or a dozen times, and it is only beginning to yield

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[1]"Letters from George Moore. The Greek Background of 'Aphrodite in Aulis,'" annotated by P.J. Dixon, The London Mercury, XXXI (1935), 17.

> to my iterated attacks. The difficulty of story writing is the even distribution of the theme throughout the chapters. My difficulty is always with the first two or three chapters, most people's with the last, and the explanation of this is that I always write with the end in view, almost gluttonously like a child at the cake during dinner. And the moral of all this is that you must take the muse by force. In love we woo at intervals, but in art we are always wooers.[1]

However beset he was by the problems of composition in his later novels, during the period when he envisaged only hazily the unity that might be achieved in a work of fiction, -- during the eighteen nineties, that is, -- it was tone and style in its broadest sense that presented the greatest difficulties to Moore. Henry D. Davray, who knew Moore about 1895, recalled that at that time he was preoccupied, almost obsessed, by questions of technique,[2] and his works of these years reveal his restless quest for a congenial art mode.

The first thing one notices is a new preference for serene, lucid description, integrated in the story, in lieu of the showy, rhetorical passages that obtrude particularly in A Modern Lover (1883) and A Drama in Muslin (1886). Robert Porter Sechler attributes this toning down of scenic elements to the influence of Pater,[3]

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[1]Nancy Cunard, p.128. From a letter dated August 13, 1921.

[2]Henry D. Davray, "George Moore," Mercure de France, CCXLII (March, 1933), 541.

[3]Robert Porter Sechler, George Moore: "A Disciple of Walter Pater", University of Penn. Theses, Vol. VII (Philadelphia, 1931), 91.

but one might also cite Moore's growing admiration for Turgenev and the still potent example of Flaubert. Vain Fortune (1891), which might readily have incorporated several feverish descriptions of nature corresponding with the agitated emotional states of the characters, contains almost exclusively mild, peaceful scenes, sometimes of luminous beauty. These harmonize well with the languid pace and atmosphere of the book and its theme of ineffectual mediocrity. Esther Waters (1894), another illustration, starts and ends at Woodview, on the barren, austere coast of Sussex, portrayed with restraint, which symbolically represents and encloses Esther's story. Celibates (1895), Evelyn Innes (1898), and Sister Teresa (1901) show an increasing awareness and appreciation of the quiet joys of nature combined with the growing talent for rich but mellow and restrained description of all kinds. Flamboyance and luxuriance of language no longer distract the reader. Moore was gradually learning to extend his ideals of rhythm and simplicity, elegance and harmony to the whole of a novel, not just to the subject and narrative form.

The other significant advance toward the unity he desired that is seen in Moore's novels of the eighteen nineties is stylistic, a more selective use of language and a groping toward his own technique for achieving a kind of smooth continuity to both carry and echo the

narrative sequence. As this is in itself an important subject, however, it will be treated separately in the following section. Style was the final obstacle to Moore's realization of his aesthetic principles; when he found the style that best suited himself and the material of his books, he found the "melodic line," his own distinctive and distinguished contribution to aesthetic prose fiction. Then it was, in the full knowledge of his objective, that he called repeatedly and urgently for the unity that, when he was a younger man, had been for him no more than a limited, conventional ideal but now incorporated and integrated all his mature artistic criteria.

E. Language and Style

A number of circumstances contributed to Moore's continued interest in questions of language and style. The first, already discussed,[1] was his initial acquaintance

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[1]See manuscript, pp.76-77.

with and enthusiasm for recent and contemporary French writers, particularly those of the realist and naturalist schools. Predictably, his early awareness of the modern preoccupation with technique gave rise in his work to much experimental imitation and the ambition to acquire an English vocabulary as vivid and new as the French of his masters. The results of his efforts, seen in his first three novels, were considerable, although not entirely in the best interests of the development of his own original and congenial style.

A yet more basic cause of Moore's efforts in this direction was what he himself terms his "noble and incurable hatred of the commonplace of all that is popular."[1] His own intensely individualistic nature sympathized with the new and unconventional in art, although probably not to the extent of the hyperbolical opinion that "Art is not mathematics, it is individuality. It does not matter how badly you paint, so long as you don't paint badly like other people."[2] A much more considered statement is his comparison of the French realists, with whom he identified himself, and their English contemporaries.

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[1] Confessions (1888), p.307. Unchanged in later editions.

[2] Confessions (1888), p.157. Unchanged in later editions.

> One thing that cannot be denied to the realists: a constant and intense desire to write well, to write artistically. When I think of what they have done in the matter of the use of words, of the myriad verbal effects they have discovered, of the thousand forms of composition they have created, how they have remodelled and refashioned the language in their untiring striving for intensity of expression for the very osmazome of art, I am lost in ultimate wonder and admiration. What Hugo did for French verse, Flaubert, Goncourt, Zola, and Huysmans have done for French prose. No more literary school than the realists has ever existed, and I do not except even the Elizabethans. And for this our failures are more interesting than the vulgar successes of our opponents; for when we fall into the sterile and distorted, it is through our noble and incurable hatred of the commonplace of all that is popular.
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> The healthy school is played out in England; all that could be said has been said; the successors of Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot have no ideal, and consequently no language... The reason of this heaviness of thought and expression is that the avenues are closed, no new subject matter is introduced, the language of English fiction has therefore run stagnant. But if the realists should catch favour in England the English tongue may be saved from dissolution, for with the new subjects they would introduce, new forms of language would arise.[1]

As Moore made no attempt to alter more than stylistic defects and topical references in this passage in subsequent revisions of Confessions of a Young Man (in 1904 and 1916), it may be assumed that he continued either to hold these opinions or to recognize them as having been valid and significant at the time of writing. The same attitudes of scorn and rejection of the conventional or commonplace are apparent in all of Moore's

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[1] Confessions (1888), pp.306-308. Little changed in later editions.

later critical works, also, Impressions and Opinions (1891), Modern Painting (1893), Avowals (1919), and Conversations in Ebury Street (1924), providing a continuous theme which Moore did not hesitate to exploit in his self-dramatizations.

By joining battle with the circulating libraries, Mudie and Smith, a battle not won until the publication of Esther Waters in 1894, Moore in effect also declared war on the polite, insipid society language in which acceptable fiction was then largely written. A few years in London and far from extensive reading of English prose sufficed to convince him that the English language was in dire need of revitalization. Already in 1888 he protested that Respectability and its protegé, Universal Education, were producing uniformly impoverished and bad speech.[1] Longer experience only strengthened his conviction on this subject, and in 1901, as he was about to leave for Ireland, he told William Archer, what he was often to repeat in his later writings, that he feared the English language was exhausted, senile, and would soon be quite incapable of being shaped artistically.[2] Fortunately, Moore's pessimistic opinions did not cause

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[1] Confessions (1888), pp.224-225. Retained in later editions.

[2] William Archer, "With Mr. George Moore," Real Conversations (London, 1904), pp.93-98.

him to despair; on the contrary, they seem to have prodded him to persist in his efforts to achieve an artistic prose style. Perhaps he secretly dreamed that it might be his happy privilege to rejuvenate the English language as the realists had the French. He felt himself an Ishmael in England, but he was a fighter determined to rout the stagnant Victorian tradition on every front, including that of refined and debased diction.

Strict observance of the rules of grammar and diction seemed to Moore a most insignificant criterion of good writing. Throughout his life he professed indifference to the rules, providing that their breach did not impair the meaning or the impact of a sentence. The criteria that he preferred were vitality and originality, even eccentricity. As a young man this preference was largely responsible for his emulation of the French decadents. As late as 1888 he wrote, speaking of the poetry of Musset: "...I did not find the unexpected word and the eccentricities of expression which were, and are still, so dear to me. I am not a purist; an error of diction is very pardonable if it does not err on the side of the commonplace; the commonplace, the natural, is constitutionally abhorrent to me..."[1] Very probably his identification of "the commonplace" with "the natural" is

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[1] Confessions (1888), p. 73. Little altered in later editions.

a deliberate, satiric hyperbole, but the rest of the statement seems true. Moore did loathe the commonplace; he always admired original writing, as, for instance, that of Jules Laforgue; and he often declared that rules of art and diction were made to be broken, and that "'You may discard grammar altogether, if you wish, but you cannot flop about...'"[1]

Before Moore had had time to do more than attempt the obvious methods of infusing vitality, freshness, and clarity into his prose, the first steps in his struggle against the conventional, he discovered Pater, the writings and the man, and with him new hopes, new ideas, and a new direction. Pater's diction, like that of his master Flaubert, has great exactness and subtle complicity. With extraordinary economy, a single word is used to the fullest degree to convey a precise meaning at the same time as an emotional or sensual or philosophical impression or tone. The language both denotes and evokes and always with a seeming effortless felicity and individuality. Moreover, Pater had a highly original style, more graceful and more musical than any other Moore had known. Here were new ideals, English ideals for the would-be prose artist, many of which Moore was to adopt, but with important modifications, as his own.

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[1]Goodwin, p.158.

The fourth and last circumstance which strongly influenced Moore's interest and development in matters of language and style was his Irish venture, the central experience of his life from 1899 to 1911. The combination of his association with the theatre in the first of those years; with Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge, who were engaged in creating a folk literature; with ardent nationalists to whom the Irish idioms and dialects were a proof of independence of spirit and a source of pride; and with the country people themselves on his estate in Mayo -- this combination of experiences caused Moore to reconsider the importance of speech forms in literature. In the realistic tradition, he had always been both aware of the value of simple, concrete words and keenly observant of the speech habits of all the classes of men with whom he came in contact, and he had tried in narrative and dialogue to derive maximum vigour and colour from such diction. Now, however, he perceived the possibility of new beauties not only in the language itself but also in the oral manner. He was by no means converted to folk literature, but his ear caught and liked the rhythms of unstudied speech and the freshness of words which had not qualified for the bourgeois or society vocabularies. This last discovery finally carried Moore across the threshold of intention to the accomplishment of his ideals.

The evolution of Moore's diction cannot be charted in orderly fashion, for it suffered many vicissitudes and was always subject to the demands of the content of the work in hand. Two general trends prevailed, however, between 1886 and 1904: the subduing of flamboyance and violence, and the growth of simplicity and precision. Homely, concrete words and expressions became increasingly numerous and prominent, particularly after 1900, while at the same time crude force declined. From Mike Fletcher (1889) onward Moore seemed to be trying to create a more muted atmosphere without at all mincing words. He tried for a time some of the Paterian vocabulary, notably evocative adjectives and abstract nouns that carried emotional overtones, but he did not rest there. He wanted a less literary, more natural language for his novels. Esther Waters (1894) had strength and precision, but it was with Celibates (1895) that Moore first achieved some measure of natural simplicity of language, a balance of artistry and idiom, strong in its exactness and concreteness but neither vigorous nor vivid. With Evelyn Innes (1898) Moore retrogressed, used many outworn, latinate words in the effort to convey his conscience-ridden heroine's neurotic thoughts and dreams. He seems to have tried to out-do Flaubert in this and other respects, without having the same talent as the

Frenchman. Sister Teresa (1901), however, reveals a marked advance in the direction shown by Celibates. Then, with The Untilled Field (1903), The Lake (1905), and Memoirs of my Dead Life (1906) Moore's diction found its final, best, and highly original mode.

It is strange that, although he had travelled far, overcome many difficulties, and tried several false scents, Moore finally achieved in the field of language only what he had desired at the start of his career -- freshness, clarity, vitality, and concreteness.[1] But there was this vast difference: the mildness of Pater, the beauty of Turgenev, the austerity of Landor, and the dignified simplicity of peasant speech had convinced him that neither violence, nor crudity, nor brilliance, nor the exotic was necessary in aesthetic realism, in short that the French ideals he had adopted would be more validly artistic if tempered by the classical principle of restraint.

In his old age, in Avowals (1919)[2] and Conversations in Ebury Street (1924),[3] Moore enjoyed

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[1]These, too, were the qualities sought by Moore in his revisions, where they were concerned with diction. For example, the changes made in successive revisions of Esther Waters represent advances toward these aims. See also Royal A. Gettmann, "George Moore's Revisions of The Lake, The Wild Goose, and Esther Waters," PMLA, LIX (1944), 554.

[2]Avowals, pp.270-274.

[3]Conversations, pp.28-35.

theorizing about the decline of the English language, the loss of cases and of the second person singular verb forms, the growing number of foreign words, especially French, replacing the native Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, and the insipid, stereotyped phraseology advanced by the progress in mass education. Repeatedly he asserted that the source and strength of language is peasant speech, whence are derived the most beautiful forms and the freshest, most graphic imagery. The importance of these statements should not, however, be exaggerated. They express his lifelong contempt for polite, conventional language in a generalization which gives artistic sanction to his own preference and practice, but they explain only one component of his diction. Moore drew also on other sources -- eighteenth-century literature, the works of Sterne in particular, the King James Bible, the Elizabethan idiom, the Irish, and several more. Furthermore, although he used colloquialisms and rustic imagery widely, he chose them carefully, modified, polished, and universalized them, and exchanged their peasant savour for that best suited to the atmosphere and subject of the book in question. True, he became a purist in matters of diction, but his purism was of classical and literary inspiration as much as folk and was quite possibly initiated or at least encouraged by Pater's impressive

chapter on euphuism, in Marius the Epicurean, which could not fail to suggest analogies between the Latin language of the second century and the English of the late nineteenth.

It was Marius again, so Moore wrote in Confessions of a Young Man (1888) and later books, that first among English prose works impressed him with its beauty of style. The cadence and harmony of Pater's writing particularly excited him. He seems not to have been fully aware at first of the smooth continuity of Pater's style, but it was not long before he understood this aspect and the importance of it to himself in his search for continuous rhythm and total unity in the novel. Mr. Sechler, in his fine study of Moore's debt to Pater, mentions Celibates (1895) and Evelyn Innes (1898) as the earliest works which reveal Pater's influence on the style,[1] but even Mike Fletcher (1889) shows a significant advance in smoothness and ease of transition over the previous novels.

In later life Moore, who could imitate Pater's style to perfection, liked to credit it with beauties which were more rightfully the property of his own than of his master's prose. In Avowals he wrote:

> ...it was Pater's wont to include long parentheses and to continue his sentences with the aid of

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[1]Sechler, p.146.

> conjunctions, in the hope, and no vain one, of getting his prose to flow to a murmurous melody, rising and disappearing like water mysteriously. He said in The Renaissance that the tendency of all the arts is to aspire to the condition of music, his theory and his practice was the same...
>
> The inevitable word, which has proved of so much use to critics in filling up columns, was not sought by him, he found it without seeking; he sought the paragraph, and afterwards the page, and after the page the chapter. And the chapter was sought in its relation to the book; the book was always in his mind, and it was because he could concentrate on it that he is a greater writer than any of the Frenchmen we have fallen into the habit of talking about....[1]

Moore's mature prose, although never as rich as Pater's, had of the two the greater fluidity, movement, and sense of inviolable coherence. However, these qualities had undoubtedly developed out of the study of Pater's theory and practice, and Moore always publicly declared himself to be only an inferior disciple of the man he deemed the greatest English literary artist of all time.

He was not so generous in ascribing credit to Flaubert, who also taught him much about style. In all likelihood Moore appreciated the French novelist's "suspended cadences" and mastery of the art of transition even in his first years of writing, some time before he discovered Pater, but, although he experimented rather timidly with the use of anti-climax in Esther Waters (1894), he did not record his admiration of Flaubert's

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[1] Avowals, pp.197-198.

technique until 1897. At this date, when he was working on Evelyn Innes (1898), in which he made noteworthy progress himself toward the smoothness and consecutiveness of his mature style, he wrote that Flaubert's "art lies in the dexterity with which he passes from the objective to the subjective..."[1] In another passage of praise for Flaubert's almost imperceptible transitions, he said:

> To weave so closely that division would be impossible was Flaubert's aim, and to this end he not only piled detail upon detail, but invented what in literature is the equivalent of the suspended cadence in music. He avoided the full close as systematically as Wagner; he never ends a chapter at the place indicated by the ordinary rules of composition.[2]

Despite the relative failure of Evelyn Innes (1898), the years 1894 to 1898 were those in which Moore's literary future was being decided, when he discovered in what specific direction he might best employ his talents to the satisfaction of his artistic conscience and the realization of his highest dreams and ambitions. The Cosmopolis article, as well as Nancy Cunard's testimony of his continuing admiration of Flaubert's art a decade later,[3] strongly suggest that Moore's stylistic evolution

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[1]"A Tragic Novel," p.44.

[2]"A Tragic Novel," p.50.

[3]Nancy Cunard, p.86.

owed more to Flaubert than the old man in Ebury Street was wont to admit.

There was a further, philosophical development also playing an important role in Moore's stylistic progress, as in his maturing diction. That part of Moore which instinctively liked Turgenev, which found greater aesthetic pleasure in Ingres and Corot than in his beloved Manet, which responded spontaneously to Pater's cult of "the beauty of mildness of life," which preferred Landor to Shakespeare, which kept him always safe on the fringes of bohemianism and brought him a reputation for coldness and insincerity -- that inherent restraint, classical and aristocratic, gradually gained ascendancy over his youthful enthusiasm for force, splendour, and profusion. Celibates (1895) was Moore's first decisive avowal of what John Freeman describes as "his inevitable choice..., if choice it can be called that was so purely dictated by an alert, unimpassioned nature."[1] Thenceforth Moore rarely forgot that the prose style he sought must be marked by the absence of strong accents and of all appearance of effort, just as his stories were to unfold to a continuous, quiet rhythm, simply and harmoniously. He frankly confessed his early mistakes in the lecture on

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[1]Freeman, p.117.

Balzac and Shakespeare which he delivered in Paris in 1910 and later reprinted in Avowals (1919) and Conversations in Ebury Street (1924), saying:

> Pire que l'incorrection est l'effort; dès l'instant où le critique remarque que l'auteur fait un effort, il a presque toujours raison de conclure que le livre n'est pas écrit par un grand écrivain. Autrefois je croyais que le talent consistait dans la recherche de l'épithète rare, mais je ne le crois plus; je sais maintenant où cela conduit.[1]

If Moore's own account is believed, and he would be an irredeemable cynic who would discredit a free admission so surprisingly modest, it was by a lucky accident that Moore discovered the specific techniques that gave his style the serene fluidity for which it is famous. He explained to Geraint Goodwin:

> "As you know, I am in the habit of reading French a great deal and sometimes I write it. I was never induced to write a book in a foreign language and, unlike Conrad, I never tried. Then on one occasion I was writing an epistle dedicatory, you would call it, to 'The Lake'. At this time I had been writing in different ways wondering which was better than the other. However, this epistle dedicatory was in French, and one sentence in particular pleased me, a description of the Seine and the poplars and the swallows flying low over the water. It is rather a good sentence that, though rather long. I remember I sat back and wondered to myself -- 'Why don't you write like that in English?' There was a good deal of use of the present participle -- it doesn't do in French, though in English, and possibly Greek, it is all right. And so it was to come about that I was to find an English style in French."[2]

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[1] Conversations, pp.92-93. Also in Avowals (New York, 1919), pp.253-254.

[2] Goodwin, p.128.

Unless Moore revised the French epistle dedicatory, dated August 17, 1905, for its later publication, his memory tricked him when he spoke of present participles in the sentence he liked. However, it does indeed contain several attributes of Moore's later English prose, the repetitions, long modifying phrases, clauses coördinate in sense although not necessarily in structure, and the rhythmic progression and prolongation so often compared to a flowing stream.

> A Valvins, la Seine coule silencieusement tout le long des berges plates et graciles, avec des peupliers alignés; comme ils sont tristes au printemps, ces peupliers, surtout avant qu'ils ne deviennent verts, quand ils sont rougeâtres, posés contre un ciel gris, des ombres immobiles et ternes dans les eaux, dix fois tristes quand les hirondelles volent bas![1]

With The Lake (1905) and Memoirs of my Dead Life (1906) Moore started immediately to make greater use of the present participle. He gradually improved his handling of the various other devices seen above, with which he had been experimenting for some years. And finally, the last stage in the development of his narrative style, he abandoned the quotation mark in The Brook Kerith (1916) and subsequent novels and other works. (As Moore had always experienced difficulties in writing realistic dialogue,[2] this change of technique may not have been

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[1]George Moore, The Untilled Field and The Lake, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), pp.269-270. Unchanged from first edition, The Lake (London, 1905), p.v.

[2]See Letters...to Ed. Dujardin, p.76.

motivated entirely by stylistic considerations).

Thus did Moore's style evolve from unremarkable, confused beginnings in harmony with his increasingly clear ideals of rhythm, simplicity, lucidity, and grace. Style and language being inseparable, the combination of the two in Moore's books after 1903 often imparted the semblance of refined oral narrative, in the tradition of the tellers of folk tales and of the earliest prose literatures. This was very well suited to Moore's purposes and abilities, but it should be emphasized that it was achieved by deliberate, hard effort and represents an artistic discipline quite the opposite of its seeming artless facility. This can best be seen in Lewis Seymour and Some Women (1917), where Moore's later style adds elegance and ease to the story he first wrote in 1883 without impairing its modernity or infusing any inappropriate folk atmosphere. Unfortunately the subject and theme of the novel were better suited to their original rough, aggressive treatment than to the new mild urbanity in which they were recreated. This example, however, will show how adaptable were Moore's later style and diction, for they were based not on opportunism and imitation, but upon fundamental aesthetic principles.

F. The Classical Criterion

It is commonly believed that Moore's enthusiasm for the art of antiquity was a product of his old age, his disappointment with the contemporaneity of realism, his frustration in Ireland, and his desire to discover a reputable ancestry for his "melodic line." Even Malcolm Brown accepted in substance this view and on it founded his interpretation of what he called the seventh and last phase of Moore's career. He wrote:

> Moore was now in full reaction against an art that concerned itself with folk sentiment, topicality, tendentiousness, "impurity," or other aesthetic sins, as he thought them, flourishing in Dublin. His writing turned toward a search for the "universal," and his taste began to approve highly of the culture of antiquity. He did not recant in his worship of Balzac or Pater, but he began to speak more often and more enthusiastically of other masters, ancients or imitators of the ancients.[1]

From everything Moore said, however, one understands that his admiration for Balzac and Pater had always been in large measure due to the genius of the one for creating eternally vital human characters and that of the other for portraying the generic soul of humanity; their romanticism or modernity concerned him much less. Moreover, Moore's early work reveals a bias toward classical

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[1]Brown, p.173.

culture as strong, if not as enlightened or as salient as that in Hail and Farewell (1911-1914) and later books.

His initial love of antiquity was undoubtedly inspired more by his studies of painting and especially his delighted discovery of Gautier than by any thorough acquaintance with classical art itself.[1] His youthful poetry discloses his instinctive predilection for the note of sweet, nostalgic tranquillity he perceived in the ancient Greek culture. But its frank, lusty paganism also appealed to him. In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) he tells how he revelled in the contemplation of the sublime cruelty of the pagan world and the pure naked beauty of its art. Still, in this same book are several instances where a Greek criterion is posed gravely and axiomatically, hinting at a more discerning and truly aesthetic admiration.

Pater's profound and scholarly reverence for classical culture (which Mr. Brown seems to have overlooked) could not have failed to inspire Moore, who first found in his new master an English Gautier. A Mere Accident (1887), later "John Norton," is an attempt to transpose much of Marius the Epicurean into modern realism, and it is noteworthy that the hero's mediaeval asceticism had to do battle with a deep love of Hellenism. Pater's interpretation of the antique world and culture resembled that

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[1]See manuscript, p.80.

in Moore's "Nostalgia" more nearly than the unrestrained hedonism that Moore, following Gautier's lead, affected in Confessions of a Young Man (1888). He evidently discerned the subtler beauty of Pater's point of view, for except in his early, deliberately sensational autobiography, he eschewed the violence of paganism and sought to portray its genial serenity. It is in this aspect that it is represented in "John Norton" and, it seems, A Mere Accident.

It was "the desire to be merely beautiful,"[1] the striving for perfection that Moore soon came to consider as the Greek ideal, and he found this quality in Ingres and Corot.

> They are perfect, as none other since the Greek sculptors has been perfect. Other painters have desired beauty at intervals as passionately as they, none save the Greeks so continuously; and the desire to be merely beautiful seemed, if possible, to absorb the art of Corot even more completely than it did that of Ingres.[2]

Although Moore saw "a purity and a passion in Ingres' line for the like of which we have to go back to the Greeks,"[3] and also in Ingres a "pure, unconscious love of form, inherited from the Greeks,"[4] Corot was always his

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[1]Modern Painting, p.74.

[2]Modern Painting, p.74.

[3]Modern Painting (New York and London, 1913), p.258.

[4]Modern Painting (New York and London, 1913), p.259.

favorite among painters. Moreover, he was aware from the dawn of his admiration for Turgenev of some similarities between the Russian's prose and the Frenchman's canvasses.[1] Since he was when older to couple their two names many times in praise and to compare them to the Greeks, it is important to recognize that neither the praise nor the comparison reflects a change in Moore's tastes. There are greater exclusiveness, more certainty, and wider familiarity with the antique culture in his later critical judgements, but his opinions were crystallizing more than twenty years before he wrote:

> Hearken to the musical syllables -- Ivan Tourguéneff; repeat them again and again, and before long the Fates coiled in their elusive draperies in the British Museum will begin to rise up before your eyes; the tales of the great Scythian tale-teller are as harmonious as they, and we ask in vain why the Gods should have placed the light of Greece in the hands of a Scythian.[2]

> It was Renan that said, and said beautifully, that a tale by Tourguéneff is the most beautiful thing that art has given since antiquity. Balzac is more astonishing, more complete, but not so beautiful; he is not so perfect; and in the same way Tourguéneff, though not so astonishing or so complete as Balzac, is more beautiful and more perfect.[3]

> ...when I wrote my first article about Tourguéneff many years ago I said: These tales come from the

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[1]"Turgueneff," The Fortnightly Review, N.S. XLIII (1888), 248. See also Impressions and Opinions, p.90.

[2]Avowals, p.130.

[3]Avowals, p.134. This is a particularly striking example of Moore's use of repetition for emphasis!

> East: he told tales, and we write only psychological novels. I expressed myself badly, for I then had only an inkling of the beauty I have learnt, and that I am still learning to comprehend -- a tale by Tourguéneff and a landscape by Corot. ...All the externalities of nature... Corot put aside, knowing them to be vain but passing things, just as Tourguéneff knew that all the trivial disputes of the day are not the right stuff for art, and these twin souls, the most beautiful ever born of woman, lived in the depths where all is still and quiet; where the larch bends, and the lake mirrors a pellucid sky...[1]

Confessions of a Young Man (1888), Modern Painting (1893), and "A Tragic Novel" (1897) all contain references to Greek culture, or certain of its manifestations, that imply its acceptance by Moore as an aesthetic standard. On one occasion is written: "That which cannot be referred back to the classics is not right..."[2] Of course, Moore was often temporarily wooed away from this uncompromising opinion by the originality or brilliance of a painting or book, especially while he liked to consider himself in the forefront of the modern movement in art. Nevertheless, he always returned to the Hellenistic criteria that he accepted from the first, though probably instinctively and in ignorance, and he gradually acquired considerable knowledge, never scholarly, of the fruits of the Hellenic civilization and its Latin successor.

If Moore's taste for the classical was largely

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[1] Avowals, p.138.

[2] Modern Painting, p.204.

derivative and superficial, it was nonetheless an important corollary of his aesthetic evolution. Like his other principles and preferences, it was rudimentary and undiscriminating to start with and had, as it were, to be channelled in order to become an effective guide to his artistic aspirations. This was accomplished probably under the continuing influence of Pater, whose many writings on the classical and Renaissance cultures seem to have set the tone for Moore's own appreciation. Those qualities of pure beauty and perfection in ancient art which Moore early admired but did not attempt to define included several of the ideals which Moore himself long held and which, he felt, Pater also either propounded or illustrated. This can only be substantiated by a number of references to Moore's later critical works.

The emphasis on the visible and sensible to which Gautier permanently converted Moore, and which constituted to him one of the greatest appeals of Marius the Epicurean, was, in his opinion, equally an attribute of Hellenic art. "The visible world was enough for the Greek [Homer]," [1] he wrote. It was a kind of basic, uncluttered realism, objective but very selective, that he praised in the epic poets as well as the authors

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[1] Conversations, p.107.

of ancient pastorals, such a broad humanistic realism as he himself achieved in The Brook Kerith (1916) and Aphrodite in Aulis (1930), with obvious necessary differences, of course.

The mild, genial serenity of tone and attitude that Pater taught Moore by example and precept he also discovered to be a dominant characteristic of the classics. Theocritus was an outstanding illustration,[1] but Moore felt strongly enough even to generalize, saying that "ancient literature was happier than modern. Homer's fighting, though heavy-handed, is always light-hearted. The wanderings of Odysseus are untouched by melancholy, and Virgil, too, and Horace are free from this bane."[2]

"Happy days are remembered always; moralities are doleful,"[3] he continued. The ancient prose narratives, he felt, were largely free from both moralizing and sentimentalizing, the two characteristics of nineteenth-century English fiction that he deplored the most loudly and persistently. He was thinking of Theocritus, in contrast to Wordsworth, when he expressed the above judgement, but Apuleius and Longus, too, illustrated the

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[1] Conversations, pp.108-109.

[2] Conversations, pp.107-108. One wonders if he had ever read Virgil.

[3] Conversations, p.110.

agreeable objectivity he emulated.[1]

Other aspects of the Greek ideal which added to its attraction to Moore were simplicity, clarity, ease, and grace, as well as the strong, unsophisticated characterization that seems by instinct to be truer than any psychological analysis. So much can be inferred from a reading of the scattered few discussions of ancient works that Moore left.

Finally, Moore felt a subdued total harmony in Greek art, of which Pater's prose undoubtedly was the modern equivalent in his view. He spoke of the "Greek absence of accent"[2] and said that "vapour and tumult do not make tales, and before we can admire them modern life must wring all the Greek out of us."[3]

Although these quotations are from the works of Moore's old age, they also represent the direction in which all of his aesthetic principles and tastes evolved, continuously, from their crude, firm, but ill-defined beginnings in Paris. The classical criterion which Moore embraced there was quiescent while he engaged in his first struggle to emancipate the English novel, but it was again important to him in 1888 and 1893. It was not born

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[1]See Avowals, p.238 and p.23, for instance.

[2]Avowals, p.95.

[3]Avowals, p.132.

in reaction to his Irish sojourn; it must have matured gradually, paralleling and complementing his general artistic development, theoretical and practical, and coming at the last to fit tidily into the homogeneous aesthetic creed that Moore spent most of his life in shaping, maturing, and purifying.

THE "MELODIC LINE"

The eventual outcome of Moore's many years of searching for the genuinely aesthetic novel was his theory and practice of the "melodic line." Neither theory nor practice has had significant influence on English prose fiction or can be hailed as a great literary milestone, yet they are more mature, more demanding, and infinitely more original than any earlier achievement by Moore. His battle with the circulating libraries, culminating in the justly deserved success of Esther Waters (1894), was historically important for two reasons: it hastened the demise of the moribund Victorianism of the era, and it naturalized on English soil the French realist tradition, to which the modern novel owes many debts. Because this gave the necessary impetus to a continuing general literary trend, whereas his "melodic line" represented the ne plus ultra of a less popular, more exclusively artistic line of development, Moore has received more recognition for his intermediate than for his ultimate achievement. No other major novelist inherited his scrupulous formalism, and the "melodic line" has lain forgotten while the stream of consciousness, Freudianism, symbolism and other modern tendencies have absorbed the talents and attention of twentieth-century men of letters.

Nevertheless, the "melodic line" was, oddly, less of a blind alley than the realism of Esther Waters. Once the physical and psychological scientists had destroyed the possibility of belief in a demonstrable, rational determinism and revealed the incalculable vastness of the universe and the endless subtlety of man, no serious novelist could confine himself to such a story of a wholly uncomplicated servant girl in a wholly reasonable and observable world. The "melodic line," on the other hand, was exclusive of only one thing -- formal discontinuity. Had it won wider acceptance and influence, it might have been adapted to provide many novels of free association and obscure symbolism with the coherence and sense of beauty that they lack.

This might have been possible because, to Moore at least, the "melodic line" was an aestheticism, not a formula. It was adaptable alike to informal autobiography, criticism, reminiscent short stories, lusty folk tales, historical romance, psychological novels, and gracile satire. Although in practice Moore restricted its application to themes, subjects, and moods that suited his own mellow sensuousness and part nostalgic, part ironic musing, in theory the "melodic line" prescribed no necessary limitations in these matters. It was, simply,

the confluence of Moore's broad aesthetic principles with his literary tastes, both instinctive and acquired, and his practical experience was decisive only because it confirmed the feasibility of the ideal. Moore never suggested that there was but one way to attain the "melodic line" -- his way; quite the contrary, he continued to advocate individuality in literature and once said, after insisting upon the need for a clear line of narrative, character springing from incident, that "there are fifty ways of writing a book -- any one of which may be suitable. The last thing I would do would be to say such and such is the only way!'"[1]

Moore first enunciated his "melodic line" aestheticism in 1888, many years before it was recognized, perhaps even by himself, to be the keystone of his theory of the aesthetic novel. He wrote:

> Wagner made the discovery, not a very wonderful one after all when we think, that an opera had much better be melody from end to end. The realistic school following on Wagner's footsteps discovered that a novel had much better be all narrative -- an uninterrupted flow of narrative. Description is narrative, analysis of character is narrative, dialogue is narrative; the form is ceaselessly changing, but the melody of narration is never interrupted.[2]

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[1]Goodwin, p.65.

[2]Confessions (1888), pp.270-271. The passage was dropped in the 1916 revision and subsequent editions, probably because Moore no longer publicly credited other realists with originating the continuous narrative.

His many references to "rhythm," "sequence," and "progression" in the same book, showing the same fundamental principles, preclude the possibility that this passage is not a serious statement of his own opinion, held in common with the realists.[1] 1897 found Moore of the same mind, comparing Flaubert's technique of tightly weaving a story by using the suspended cadence with Wagner's methods of musical composition.[2] This philosophy of narrative is likewise evident in Moore's introduction to Dostoevsky's Poor Folk (1894).[3]

Furthermore, a close scrutiny of Esther Waters (1894) and Celibates (1895) shows that Moore was himself attempting to create the continuous narrative. Each chapter closes not on the climax of the central incident or episode, but on the quiet aftermath, the restoration of normality following the heightened emotion and quickened pace of the major plot development. Another device which Moore employed from the time of Mike Fletcher (1889) on, and with increasing facility, was the juxtaposition and intermingling of several verb tenses, so that in a single sentence he might advance the action, describe an habitual state, and suggest both the cause and effect of the action. Consider the economy and the sustained impetus of the

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[1]See manuscript, p.91f.

[2]See manuscript, p.130.

[3]Brown, p.139.

narrative in a passage such as this:

> Harold was to meet her at Victoria, and when she had answered his questions regarding the crossing, and they had taken their seats in the suburban train, he said:
> "You're looking a little tired, you've been overdoing it."[1]

In one quick stroke a sequence of events is disposed of and the heroine advanced from a state of anticipation to one of accomplishment.

These foreshadowings of the "melodic line," theoretical and practical, are frequent enough to support the contention that Moore was, from 1888 onward, consistent in his opinions and experiments, both of which differed from those of his maturity only in their relative tentativeness and modesty. His admiration for Pater, in whose work he found the qualities of continuity and fluidity that he admired,[2] no doubt succoured his belief and its pursuit. But only genuine artistic integrity can account for Moore's fidelity to one philosophy of narrative throughout forty years of almost constant revolutions in English fiction.

Thirty years passed after the appearance of Confessions of a Young Man (1888) before Moore again made public his belief that "the business of a narrator is to narrate, and...that a narrative should never be the same,

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[1]George Moore, Celibates (London, 1895), p.105.

[2]See manuscript, pp.128-129.

but always moving..."[1] Much of the literary criticism in Avowals (1919) is founded upon this assumption, but Moore, never much given to theorizing, did not elaborate upon it or make it explicit more than this one time. It was no rigid criterion to him, for it applied to novels of every age and every genre. Indeed, it is highly doubtful that Moore ever so systematized his aesthetic thinking as to recognize that he held a specific philosophy. The very phrase "melodic line" occurs only once in his books and then as an analogy for anecdote and not a definition. On this occasion he made quite clear that his concept of the sustained narrative sequence was flexible by insisting upon embellishments and variety to surround the central line.

> ...the mere anecdote is not much more interesting than a drawing in outline, or the melody detached from its harmony. The melodic line interests the musician for the sake of the harmony it leads him into, and the anecdote is sought by the poet [i.e. writer] for the same reason, for the ideas that it evokes in his mind. His taste and genius are determined by his management of the melody on one hand and the harmony on the other. The painter must model, but he must be careful to keep the portrait in the canvas.[2]

A comparison of this passage with that from Confessions of a Young Man (1888)[3] reveals their essential

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[1] Avowals, p.237.

[2] Conversations, p.51.

[3] See manuscript, p.146.

similarity. In both Moore speaks of the novel in musical terms, but the idea in more homely form is that of a stream, uninterrupted in its course, but always subtly changing in pace, proportion, hue, and mood. The narrative or anecdote, the story per se, is of first importance, but the true artist will find means of enriching and interpreting it without breaking its continuous progress. Moore thought he had in some measure achieved this goal in The Lake (1905), of which he wrote: "I confess myself attached to the book for the sake of the proportion, the balance, the incidents skilfully contrived and introduced without interrupting the narrative, more than for the actual text."[1]

It has been a common critical fallacy to associate with Moore's realization of a "melodic line" and his concomitant preoccupation with the specific art of story-telling the abandonment of his realism, of his standards of characterization, and even of his primary aesthetic aims. The available evidence, however, reveals no such defections on Moore's part, only the addition of a newly settled opinion to take its place beside the others.

That Moore always retained his essentially

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[1] A Communication, p.84.

realistic approach to literature is manifest in many passages of literary criticism from his later works, including those on Hardy, Flaubert, even Shakespeare, but it is nowhere so patent as in an appreciation of Pater's talents in the course of which he wrote:

> ...Pater, knowing himself not to be altogether a story-teller, never plunged into story, but remained always a little outside, on the eve, as it were, and his imaginary portraits gain a dim subdued beauty from his scrupulous reverence of an art that was not his and which he did not wish to be his, preferring to glance into life and to dream on what he had half seen, half defined, rather than to pry and to take notes. And looked at from this side, the imaginary portraits are intimations of life rather than life as it seems in its passing.[1]

Here he identified the art of story-telling, the art he professed, with the practice of observing life intently, dispassionately, and of recording it "as it seems in its passing," directly and objectively. Under the influence of Pater, of Turgenev, and of his own maturing tastes Moore had long since renounced, and denounced, the practice of describing every sordid circumstance that might attend an event, yet the homely detail of the realists remained an important aspect of his novels. Only a confirmed realist could have written: "At last he pushed the door open and found Jesus moving his head from side to side, unable to rid himself of a fly that was crawling about

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[1] Avowals, p.192.

his mouth."[1] Although at first glance The Brook Kerith (1916) seems far removed from Esther Waters (1894), in spirit and approach the two novels are as much alike as A Drama in Muslin (1886) and its mellower revision Muslin (1915)..

Moore once described himself as "the youngest of the naturalists, the eldest of the symbolists."[2] In the sense in which he intended it, the definition has some validity, for, like the naturalists and their predecessors, the realists, Moore looked upon the novel as the literary equivalent of the painting he knew best, realistic and impressionistic; and, like the symbolists, he also aspired to capture in his prose something of the essence of music, the purest form of art.

No more than his realism did Moore forsake his early belief in the primacy of character portrayal in the novel. In Avowals (1919) and Conversations in Ebury Street (1924) there are countless occasions upon which both his interest and his judgements reveal his conviction that successful characterization is the basis of good fiction. But two positive statements are more conclusive evidence. "The first business of the writer is to find a human

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[1]George Moore, The Brook Kerith, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), p.248.

[2]George Moore, Memoirs of my Dead Life, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), p.58.

instinct...,"[1] he said, while criticizing Henry James for the shadowy, lifeless creations of his too analytical intelligence. Even more unmistakable is his assertion to Geraint Goodwin: "Character, who will deny it? is the most important thing of all."[2] Perhaps his concept of the long-sustained narrative line was partly responsible for his insistence that character must spring out of incident,[3] but he never discredited or neglected in his own works such other valid means of human portraiture as psychological analysis, physiological description, and internal monologue. In fact, Moore's position on this matter had altered in no respect; he simply felt more strongly and clearly than before that character portrayal must be integrated into the narrative.

Finally, no renunciation of his belief in the novel as an art form attended Moore's espousal of what appears to be the elementary skill of story-telling. On the contrary, he regarded the "melodic line" as a highly artistic form of the novel, entirely literary in conception and execution. The vigorous, racy tales of

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[1] Avowals, p.186.

[2] Goodwin, p.147.

[3] Goodwin, p.56.

Alec Trusselby in A Story-Teller's Holiday (1918) differ greatly in tone, style, and above all, degree of organization from Moore's own narratives of Lilith and Albert Nobbs, even though they are written by Moore himself. He was aware of the essential difference between the literary and the oral traditions. "But you see, Alec, my stories are intended to be read; my stories are eye stories, yours are ear stories,"[1] he wrote. The seemingly oral mode whereby he achieved the fluid versatility of his later books is as sophisticated and contrived as the folk story is naïve and spontaneous, for the two differ not merely in degree, but in kind. Moore's thoroughly artistic approach to his work is recalled by Charles Morgan, whom, as his intended biographer, Moore instructed to write "a true novel," "a story of his life based, as far as was humanly possible, upon a novelist's complete knowledge and intuitive understanding of his subject, and told with that indifference to all but aesthetic consequence by which a storyteller is fortified."[2]

The only apparent change in Moore's beliefs and attitudes attributable to his development of the "melodic line" is the addition of his concept of the separate

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[1]George Moore, A Story-Teller's Holiday, Carra ed. (New York, 1923), p.205.

[2]Charles Morgan, Epitaph on George Moore (New York, 1935), p.2.

narrative gift and the concomitants of this theory. To Geraint Goodwin he said: "'People never seem to realise there is such a thing as a narrative gift -- the power to tell a story.'"[1] Again, he wrote: "Whosoever is possessed of the gift of narrative can fashion a story as it pleases him..."[2] Of George Borrow he remarked that, "like Sterne, he saved his talent by refraining from story-telling,"[3] and, in the same vein, of Stevenson that, "He had all the literary gifts, but one drop of story poisoned the lump."[4] Several of his acquaintances during the latter half of his life have written of his fondness for theorizing about the art of story-telling and of his desire to be remembered chiefly for his own attainments in this art. He appears to have thought that, although the story is the feature of the novel that distinguishes it from other forms of literature, its importance had been lost sight of as a result of the current emphasis on psychological study and, previously, that on the observation and pictorial portrayal of society and manners. While shunning the literary limelight, he hoped to revive the prestige of the good story largely through his efforts

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[1]Goodwin, p.180.

[2]Conversations, p.243.

[3]Avowals, p.59.

[4]Avowals, pp.47-48.

to evolve a new narrative method.[1]

Moore's idea of the "melodic line" in prose fiction was inseparable from his somewhat unconventional understanding of what a story -- or an anecdote, as he often called a story -- consisted of. This must be clarified, because to Moore a story was something quite different from a plot or course of action or succession of episodes, adventures, or experiences. To him, a story was a simple sequence of events which captured some basic, eternal aspect of human life. It was, in short, the illustration in narrative form of a true and beautiful humanistic insight. Moore did not admit the commonly accepted separateness of theme and story; to him the theme of a novel was properly a glimpse into life and the story its objective embodiment. All this is implicit in his account of A Modern Lover (1883) in the "Preface" to the revision of that book.

> Three women undertake to work for a young man's welfare: a work-girl, a rich woman, and a lady of high degree. All contribute something, and the young man is put on a high pedestal. One worshipper retains her faith, one loses hers partially, and one altogether. "An anecdote that the folk behind me invented, and that the artist in front of them developed, and so true and beautiful," I said, "that it has carried a badly written book into my collected works."[2]

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[1]See Charles Morgan, pp.45-47.

[2]George Moore, Lewis Seymour and Some Women, Carra ed. (New York, 1922), pp.xxxvii-xxxviii.

As one might expect, Moore here again reveals his natural tendency to see life, and hence literature, in terms of movement or progression. Theme as well as story represent a development or sequence entirely subject to the passage of time. He accepted the universal flux as the basic condition of life and was happy to submit to it in his mind and in his art.

In these circumstances, the narrative or story-telling gift becomes something other than the ability to contrive and execute a coherent, satisfying action. To Moore the narrative gift denoted the powers to recognize or invent, and then to retail, broad, realistic [illegible] behaviour patterns which reveal some true and valuable understanding of life. To comprehend sympathetically and to portray character was not enough; if one did not discover it in significant action, one was not a tale-teller. Moore liked to think that a man was born with this gift of narrative, just as he was born with any other creative talent, as that of melodic invention or pictorial vision. It is probably as acceptable an explanation of certain basic aspects of artistic genius as any other, and it was, no doubt, a convenient way by which Moore might enhance the importance and merit of his own philosophy of the aesthetic novel.

His most complete statement of his attitude and

opinions appears again in the "Preface to Lewis Seymour and Some Women," where he wrote:

> Style and presentation of character and a fine taste in the selection of words are secondary gifts; and secondary gifts may be acquired, may be developed at least, but the story-teller comes into the world fully equipped almost from the first, finding stories wherever he goes as instinctively as the reaper in the cornfield discovers melodies that the professor of counterpoint and harmony strives after vainly in his university. In like manner Robert Louis Stevenson strove after stories, suspecting all the while that his were not instinctive melodies. He says in one of his essays that the nearest equivalent to literature in music [sic] is the story. I should be puzzled to give a reason for my belief that a doubt regarding himself is implicit in these words, but I feel them to be full of suspicion that his gift of story-telling was not as natural as the reaper's, who sings a song in the morning in the cornfield and tells a story at night, hushing the fireside, for his is a heartfelt story, significant of human life as it passes down the ages, an artless thing, a wayside weed, but one that we turn to and find pleasure in when wearied of artificial flowers.[1]

Moore goes on to praise Stevenson's other literary talents, making quite clear that he does not regard the folk tale as an artistic creation but only as an unsophisticated manifestation of the basic requirement in the man who would fashion stories into literature.

This theory did not occur full-blown to Moore after his achievement of the "melodic line." Signs that it was nascent appear in his works of 1888 and 1891, signs

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[1]Lewis Seymour, pp.xxv-xxxvi.

which tend to substantiate what Joseph Hone also bears out in his biography,[1] Moore's explanation to John Freeman that he did not abandon prose as he had painting because of "'the story that held me in thrall, the story that was and is my Belle Dame Sans Merci.'"[2] In Confessions of a Young Man (1888) are found two important ideas that may be regarded as Moore's early, tentative and incomplete expressions of his belief in the separate narrative gift. Firstly, the recognition of the difficulties of story-telling as distinct from any other literary concern.

> The story-tellers are no doubt right when they insist on the difficulty of telling a story. A sequence of events -- it does not matter how simple or how complicated -- working up to a logical close, or, shall I say, a close in which there is a sense of rhythm and inevitableness is always indicative of genius.[3]

Secondly, the understanding of the fundamental, intimate character: incident relationship in a story, which is:

> ...that the sublimation of the dramatis personae and the deeds in which they are involved must correspond, and their relationship should remain unimpaired. ...Rhythm and poetical expression are essential attributes of dramatic genius, but the original sign of race and mission is an

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[1]Hone, pp.192-193.

[2]Freeman, p.71.

[3]Confessions (1888), p.268. The only significant change in later editions is that for "story-tellers" Moore substitutes "critic."

> instinctive modulation of man with the deeds he attempts or achieves. The man and the deed must be cognate and equal, and the melodic balance and blending are what first separate Homer and Hugo from the fabricators of singular adventures.[1]

Yet more significantly indicative of Moore's great interest in the story element of fiction is his practice of summarizing the narrative in question in his critical appraisals. This is not so apparent in Confessions of a Young Man (1888), where his critical remarks are necessarily abbreviated, although they, too, often reveal a preoccupation with the story that is not entirely appropriate. In Impressions and Opinions (1891), however, Moore was confined by no conflicting obligations of subject and space, with the result that he repeatedly devoted a large part of each essay to recounting the tales of Balzac or Turgenev, or the lives of Verlaine, Laforgue, and Mlle. Clairon, or the plots of various contemporary dramatists. It is obvious, even conspicuous, that he was fascinated by the narrative itself and regarded it as possibly his first critical concern.

Here, also, appears a passage that foreshadows Moore's later reverence of Turgenev and his mature theory of narrative. Of the Russian's short stories, which he admired enormously, he wrote:

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[1]Confessions (1888), pp.271-272. This is partly rephrased in 1916 and subsequent editions.

> The analytical novel is distinctly a product of Western invention, but the conte is Eastern in its origin, and has never been handled by us as forcibly as by its inventors... From the first line the narrative rushes forth; there is no hesitation, there is no stop, nor is the reader warned of what is going to happen. This is not necessary, for so perfectly are the events chosen that they follow without jostling or discord, and as each comes into the reader's mind he is surprised at once by its naturalness and unexpectedness. The illusion is complete; it is just, as the phrase goes, like life itself. And what is still more marvellous perhaps is that a mere narrative, I will say a bare narrative, should possess the same intellectual charms as the psychological novel.[1]

Moore had only to recognize that the qualities he described were within the range of the Western literary tradition and his theories of the separate narrative gift and of the sustained narrative line were virtually formulated.

Since, then, Moore's "melodic line" philosophy of narrative involved neither defection from previously held standards and opinions nor opportunistic acceptance of any concept which had not substantial roots in the predilections and ideas of his aesthetic immaturity, it is wrong to regard it as in any way a change, an invention, or a new espousal of his old age. It was the culmination and synthesis of his artistic career, tastes, and

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[1] "Turgueneff," The Fortnightly Review, N.S. XLIII (1888), 247-248. Also in Impressions and Opinions, pp.88-90.

principles. No final, intimate reconciliation of these more consistent with the dominant trends of his aesthetic development was possible.

It cannot have escaped the reader's notice that Moore's concept of the pure narrative line is a direct derivation from his early and unchanging insistence upon rhythm in a novel, the rhythms of sequence and of inevitableness; that it is closely dependent upon the Paterian and symbolist theories of correspondences between the arts, particularly those of literature and music, which Moore embraced at least by 1888;[1] that it evinces the same adherence to strict standards of clarity, simplicity, and unity that is manifest in his prose works of the nineteenth century; and that it represents the unconditional philosophical acceptance of continuity, consecutiveness, and external, immutable laws of time -- those conditions of life which had long been his most constant preoccupation, although he sought only to comprehend them rather than to displace them through any Bergsonian concepts. Moore's "melodic line" was the literary counterpart of his realism, his complete reliance upon rational and sensible phenomena as the true explanations and values of life in a deterministic -- though not

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[1]See manuscript, pp.97-98.

mechanistic -- universe. In another way, also, it was related to his lifelong appreciation of Manet and the Impressionist painters, for, although rejecting strictly naturalistic methods, it sought to capture what was fluid while emphasizing the total effect over the parts or components. Finally, the "melodic line" concept corresponded closely with Moore's views on the narratives of the ancients which he particularly admired, having undoubtedly been strongly influenced by Pater's interpretations in Marius the Epicurean. His usual critical position is seen in the following passage from Avowals (1919).

> ...a narrative should never be the same, but always moving; and to make my meaning clear I have to speak of Apuleius and his Golden Ass, saying: a delicious dancing narrative, always alive, always sparkling like the Odyssey, for Apuleius spent many years of his life in Athens, and learnt the secrets of Greek narrative. Everything comes from Greece, I said, and was falling asleep when a remembrance of Fotis awakened me, and I said: the most truly human love scene written for eighteen hundred years, neither animal nor angelic...[1]

The correspondence between Moore's aesthetic theory and practice in his later years was a source of strength to each. So dedicated an artist as Moore might not do otherwise than attempt to perform what he professed. His maturing and gradually converging tastes and theories were accompanied by an equally consistent,

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[1] Avowals, p.237.

though unsteady progress in the mastery of transition from objective to subjective exposition and from one time, place, or action to another, and in the evening of tempo, tone, and language in his books through the suppression of such violence and flamboyance as had marked and often marred his earliest work. But these developments have already been discussed in their appropriate places. Here it is important only to note that, whereas Moore's practical successes in such works as Esther Waters (1894) or Celibates (1895) no doubt strengthened his aesthetic convictions, failure, as in Evelyn Innes (1898), did not shake them but, on the contrary, seems to have stimulated him to make greater and more venturesome efforts to realize what he believed in. The revised Evelyn Innes (1901) and its sequel Sister Teresa (1901) show such efforts on the primarily technical level, while The Untilled Field (1903), The Lake (1905), and Memoirs of My Dead Life (1906) show Moore's willingness and ability to resuscitate his ambitions by experimenting with entirely new subject matter and formal problems.

One unusual feature of Moore's manner of composition undoubtedly contributed to the fluidity and smoothness of his narratives. After settling in Ireland he acquired a permanent secretary, to whom he would dictate his work, first in rough form, then over and over

again, until he had polished the original draft to his complete satisfaction. Thus the oral mode often made itself felt in his later books, The Brook Kerith (1916), Héloïse and Abélard (1921), and Ulick and Soracha (1926) especially, although Moore never subscribed to any theory advocating the rapprochement of the oral and literary traditions.[1] His achievement was merely illustrative, not definitive of the "melodic line," and in this particular was probably of more fortuitous than intellectual origin.

Publicly at least, Moore was modest enough to refrain from rating his own works very highly and from proposing them as models of the narrative art as he understood it. He was always acutely aware of the intensely personal nature of all artistic endeavours. Furthermore, his aestheticism was not so exclusive as to let him forget the ultimate humanistic criterion for literature, that

> ...we must, if we would appreciate a writer, take into account his attitude towards life, we must discover if his version is mean or noble, spiritual or material, narrow or wide; for all things are in the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the brain that remembers, the earliest and latest philosophy that is...[2]

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[1]For his opinions to the contrary, see manuscript, pp.153-154.

[2]Avowals, pp.168-169.

For these reasons, in examining the "melodic line" one should take care to distinguish between Moore's practice in the second half of his literary career, to which the term is commonly applied, and his theoretical and critical pronouncements of the same period, too often cursorily regarded, although the source of the phrase. Moore's practice was individual, original, and exclusive; it has won no consequential disciples and little acclamation, for its appeal must necessarily be to the private taste. His ideas, on the other hand, with which this essay is primarily concerned, are far less exclusive and particular in nature, and they are entitled to a more objectively intellectual evaluation. Their merits and their weaknesses are those of Moore's own self, of the cast of his mind, the nature of his faculties, the composite psychological development that is the man. As surely, consistently and inevitably as the Parisian dandy grew into the old man of Ebury Street, the artistic and intellectual seeds that found fertile ground in the young George Moore ripened into his concept of the "melodic line." And just as George Moore acted many parts in his life but was at heart the same sensitive, sensuous, unselfconfident, cautious but immodest man, so he tried several kinds of literary dress to clothe the body of his aesthetics without permanently modifying, marking, or impeding the natural course of its development, but learning the while what that was within his scope would best become its maturity.

COMPLEMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTS

We have shown, in the last three chapters, how George Moore's aestheticism, which ultimately produced the "melodic line," had its roots in his earliest recorded tastes and preoccupations and, with few significant inconsistencies, developed gradually but faithfully from these. Before that, we discussed his constantly realistic approach, which also underwent considerable refinement, and his somewhat vague but uncompromisingly artistic aim. In the course of thus describing the evolution of Moore's ideas and some of the ways in which this was manifested in his works, we suggested that the central development of his career was the reversal of the ratio of his realism to his aestheticism, with the latter growing in importance in his mind and books until it overshadowed his realism.[1] Since the relationship between these two aspects of Moore's writing determined the general nature of each of his works, and since it to some extent defined his literary evolution, it is very relevant to the theme and purpose of this essay.

There can be no question that when Moore started as a novelist his realism so outshone his professed aestheticism, despite his genuine efforts to achieve

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[1]See manuscript, p.63.

artistic form and style, that one would never have suspected him capable of a book like Héloïse and Abélard (1921). Apart from the obvious reason that when the writing is unremarkable and the form relatively conventional, the subject and its treatment necessarily attract most of the reader's attention, there were two other explanations why this was so.

First, George Moore was by temperament a fighter, who entered with zest and determination the battle against the literary standards of Victorian England. Bold and impatient, he decided to attack head on the hypocritical puritanism which was the core of the old guard's influence. To do this, his books had to be, first and foremost, strikingly realistic, -- providing they were artistic enough to rate as literature, not pornography, -- for they had to reach a large public and to declare their aim of full and frank observation of real life. Moore's aesthetic interests had therefore, both in his mind and in his work, to be subservient to this more immediate necessity.

Secondly, in his early enthusiasm for his French masters Moore in some measure confused their art with their attitude, considered realism almost an aesthetic policy in itself, for in France the originality of the

realists' subjects and treatment corresponded with the development of new forms of composition and important stylistic innovations. Moore hoped for a similar revolution in English literature.

> The healthy school is played out in England; all that could be said has been said; the successors of Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot have no ideal, and consequently no language... But if the realists should catch favour in England the English tongue may be saved from dissolution, for with the new subjects they would introduce, new forms of language would arise.[1]

There was much truth in this statement, but Moore made too direct an equation between subject matter and artistry. He seemed to believe that the conscientious realist was axiomatically an artist, forgetting that Flaubert, the Goncourts, even Zola were first of all artists, then realists. In his confusion he tried relatively harder to write realistically than to write well.

Even in the eighteen eighties, however, there were signs in his works that his aestheticism -- his desire to write well, especially in those particular ways which have been discussed at length -- was potentially stronger than his realism. His great appreciation of Pater and Turgenev was one, his interest in Huysmans another. Then there was Confessions of a Young Man (1888),

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[1] Confessions (1888), pp.307-308. Little changed in subsequent editions.

a large part of which revealed his genuine, if amateurish interest in all manner of questions concerning the various demands of art. Finally and most decisively there was the diversity of his own work, its experimental nature, for each book attempted several things its predecessors had not. Unlike Gissing, Crackenthorpe, and others, who were content to improve upon a single formula of realism, Moore started afresh with each book, posing new problems for himself and trying new solutions.

Of A Mere Accident (1887) and Vain Fortune (1891) it could be said that they disclose greater concern for the advancement of George Moore, artist than that of George Moore, realist. In general, however, Moore's realism remained dominant in his fiction until 1895, when he published Celibates. There is no mystery to why it should then have begun to take second place in his work. The battle against Mudie and Smith was virtually won and the new enemy, in Moore's eyes, was sloppy and indifferent writing, which was impoverishing the language of English literature. He spoke now more often in his critical works against what he considered the unfortunate deterioration of standards in this field. His own greater experience, also, made him aware of problems in technique and diction that had not concerned him as a younger man. In addition, the further behind he left his

enthusiasm for the French naturalists, the less shame-faced he became about declaring his own romantic love of beauty. For example, Morton Mitchell and, even more so, Ralph Hoskin in "Mildred Lawson" (1895) are sympathetic characters and serious artists who pursue beauty in the form of twilit scenes and rustic peace and majesty. Moore's attitude towards them is far removed from the cynical, contemptuous manner in which he viewed, twelve years earlier, Lewis Seymour's genuine, although eclectic, efforts to paint beautiful figures. With allowance made for the very different narrative demands of the two stories, there is still great enough disparity to indicate that Moore had come to admit that the artist should properly seek to portray primarily what is lovely, charming, or otherwise attractive in the world.

Celibates (1895) opened the crucial decade in this development in Moore's career. Just a year earlier, Esther Waters (1894) had shown a renewed vigour of realism even over the much improved artistry that Moore attained. This book was, however, the last in which Moore's aestheticism played a background role. Evelyn Innes (1898) and Sister Teresa (1901) posed major problems that had to be answered by technical successes. Because Moore was not yet competent to achieve these, and because the realism of the books was not their first interest, they became at the

most an indifferent novel. In The Untilled Field (1903) and The Lake (1905) Moore achieved the best balance of any of his works of fiction; neither the excellent psychological realism nor the considerable triumph of style and form dominates, but each complements the other to create what may well be the most intellectually and artistically satisfying of all Moore's books. One feels at times in the subsequent novels and autobiographical works the primarily artistic concern of the author, which results in such lapses in realistic treatment as the facile philosophizing of Jesus on the hills above the Brook Kerith and the scanty characterization of Soracha in the novel of which she is the titular heroine. The formal and technical aspects of Moore's works in the "melodic line" do not obtrude -- they are too subtle and harmonious -- but they stealthily destroy the complexity and diversity of thorough realism and even conceal flights of pure romance. It was almost inevitable that these things should occur once the reversal was accomplished and Moore's demanding aestheticism had usurped the place held by his realism in his early works.

A number of aspects of this development and of Moore's literary career in general are partly explained by two very important characteristics -- his unspeculative nature and his aristocratic turn of mind. These

personality traits have been suggested at appropriate times in this essay, but it seems useful to point out here how they are to a considerable extent the causes of some of the major enigmas and seeming contradictions which confront the critic who tries to discover the unity in Moore's career.

Although Moore often made broad -- and questionable -- generalizations about literature or art, he very rarely discussed these subjects in the abstract. He had a distrust or dislike of speculative thinking, and a probable incapacity for it, which accounts for the largely negative nature of his theory of the aesthetic novel, his professed aim. Because he drew his ideas from concrete examples, he knew that the aesthetic novel should <u>not</u> be sentimental, melodramatic, broadly humourous, and so forth, but he was not so certain of what in the abstract it <u>should</u> be. The reader no doubt noticed the vagueness of his statements on the subject and possibly wondered if, therefore, they have any genuine importance. We believe they have, because they represent truly his constant desire and the touchstone, however negative in nature, of his work.

In the same way, because Moore tried out ideas rather than thought them out to determine their value, he has often been considered more pliable and imitative than

he was. His practical development appears to have proceeded largely by trial and rejection, just as the development of his aesthetic theories, such as that of unity, is often traceable only through specific negative and impressionistic criticisms. And his practice matured yet more unevenly than his ideas, for it was influenced by all the variables attendant upon concrete experience, while his ideas at least had the stability derived from his acute critical perception and his very definite likes and antipathies.

Some of these tastes, too, no doubt sprang from his unspeculative nature, in particular those which caused him to think of himself as a spiritual native of the eighteenth century. His rational approach to a subject, proceeding from concrete illustrations and leading only as far as generalities, was more akin to the thought processes of such men as Dr. Johnson and Voltaire than to those of Henry James, Bergson, or even Pater, some of his more famous contemporaries.

Finally, this characteristic goes far to explain Moore's particular kind of realism and why it did not achieve the philosophical subtlety or dignity of such work as Henry James's. Unlike James, who created a story about an abstract theme, Moore first envisaged the story, then set himself to draw out the human significance. He

did attempt to go beyond the reality of mere appearance to the inner life of thought and feeling, but even here it was the inner life of characters in concrete situations, not confronted by the awesome abstractions of the universe. Similarly, Moore's style reflects his shyness of abstractions. The little symbolism he used was quite specific, his vocabulary was concrete, and his rhythms and imagery were clear and direct. These were all instinctive choices from which Moore rarely swerved, and they were at once the sources of his strength and his most serious limitations.

Moore's strong sense of belonging to the upper, aristocratic classes, fostered by his family's experiences in the Irish rebellions and manifested in many of his tastes, habits, and prejudices and in his whole manner of thinking, also partly explains a number of his literary characteristics. His successful objectivity even as a beginning realist, in A Mummer's Wife (1884) for instance, may certainly be attributed in some measure to an actual feeling of detachment from the problems besetting the lower and even middle classes. Perhaps his natural preference for restraint and reserve and his desire for order, continuity, and clarity grew from the same origins and from his tacit espousal of the cause of the embattled gentry. More important, his

aristocratic leanings may well have been responsible for the aestheticism which impelled him throughout his long career, despite his unintellectual nature, for he clearly felt a need to justify his entering a profession which was considered somewhat less than respectable and he may have wished not only to enhance its good name, but also to dissociate himself from his more mercenary fellow novelists by pursuing a more exclusive, rarified ideal. Similar motives would further explain why Moore never actually committed himself to any one literary movement after his short-lived association with the French naturalists. He could never feel really at home with any group other than that of the English and Anglo-Irish gentry.

Having dedicated himself to the artistic life, however, he was ashamed, too, of the traces of snobbery and the reserve in himself. Hence by reaction his conservative, aristocratic characteristics stimulated his periodic attempts to be "in the movement" with various artistic circles, gave rise to his almost childish desire to be shocking, -- thus to prove his emancipation from creeds and codes and prejudices, -- and fostered the strange, partly scornful, partly reverential, and always self-conscious attitude toward bohemians and intellectuals which prompted him to haunt the Nouvelle Athènes, to take

lodgings in the Temple, and to write many words of self-revealing prose about the characters and works of such men as Shaw, James, Cabaner, or Mallarmé. Finally, even his desire to concern himself with low life, servants, drunkards, gamblers, and so forth, may have stemmed in part from a feeling of guilt at being unable to rid himself of his upper class attitudes and sentiments. All of these possibilities seem the more likely when one considers that they were for the most part manifestations of the first half of Moore's literary career, when he had not yet achieved enough self-confidence to accept, even privately, the conditions imposed upon him by his heritage.

These and other aspects of Moore's personality have much bearing upon the question of his aesthetic consistency, besides considerable interest in themselves. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explain, psychologically, Moore's career. Since the awareness of these two pervading attitudes of his may assist the reader's understanding of the major developments in Moore's work, they have been mentioned briefly here. They alone may suggest the many facets of Moore's life and work which have not been thoroughly examined, and if they also suggest fields of inquiry related to that of the present essay, it may be hoped that these too will some day be explored.

There are a number of other aspects which we regret having had either to omit entirely or to mention only in passing. Among these, the most important, we feel, and those most closely relevant to our theme are Moore's moral outlook and the role of philosophy or ideas in his work. His attitude toward religion, aggressively critical at times and always revealing a strong fascination, is significant in many of his books, from A Mere Accident (1887) to Ulick and Soraba (1926). His sensuality, which has been much criticized, is another continuing characteristic of his fiction related to the general nature of its morality. Then there are the various phases which he passed through, Zolaesque, Schopenhauerian as in Mike Fletcher (1889), stoical as in Esther Waters (1894), Voltairean in The Brook Kerith (1916), and hedonistic in the later novels, yet all partaking of certain common characteristics. Finally, the effect of the "melodic line," which was to obscure the moral implications of the story and to lessen their impact, is a particularly interesting facet of this question. That the "melodic line" had much the same effect on the intellectual content of some of Moore's books has significance also, but the often repeated themes of eternal recurrence, self-fulfillment, and thwarted creativity, together with the dramatic means by which Moore conveyed them, are more

deserving of attention and would afford greater insight into the role of ideas in Moore's novels.

The types of characters which Moore chose for his stories and the ways in which he portrayed them also have an interesting consistency to which we have been unable to give due consideration. His style and technical development might profitably be analyzed much more minutely than has been compatible with the broader purpose of this essay. And, lastly, the parts played by such minor influences as symbolism, Ibsenism, and Irish nationalism in his literary evolution, if examined, would provide other opportunities for seeing how Moore's guiding attitudes, principles, and tastes acted to select, integrate, and utilize almost all that attracted his enthusiastic or curious attention.

These are some of the avenues we have not explored, although they would contribute to our purpose. Time and space necessitated their omission. But it is for other reasons that this essay does not attempt to meet squarely the charges that Moore was a fickle literary dilettante. The varied influences in his career, his many enthusiasms, several short-lived, and his numerous experiments cannot be denied. They can only be assessed and interpreted. This we have tried to do by indicating how they were parts of a more comprehensive and consistent

approach to his artistic profession than Moore is frequently given credit for having.

This thesis will have achieved its main purpose if it helps to correct the unfair balance of critical work which has existed for many years, whereby Moore's works are regarded chiefly as the products of different and contradictory phases of his career and the man himself as an unprincipled literary profiteer who "lurked in the purlieus of schools and insinuated himself into movements."[1] By tracing the wholeness and continuity of Moore's career we have tried to create a true and useful perspective in which his individual books may be studied and understood, neither an historical nor a psychological perspective, but one to which character and purpose are central.

Perhaps, too, although it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine closely the nature of Moore's achievement in the "melodic line," by showing how the "melodic line" was the culmination of his work -- rather than the retreat into stylistic backwaters of an old man no longer able to face the problems and challenges of contemporary literary trends -- we place it in a position where it invites appraisal against other developments in

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[1]Sherman, On Contemporary Literature, p.121.

the literature of the era, and thus place Moore's career as a whole in a still larger perspective. Then this question is inescapable: where did the "melodic line" fail, that it has been neglected by other writers and forgotten by the reading public, while other achievements even by lesser artists have been widely acclaimed, imitated, and elaborated upon?

To begin with, there are two very obvious causes of its relative obscurity. Firstly, it scarcely existed as a theory or a philosophy outside Moore's own mind, for he never gave it adequate discussion, preferring, as we have seen, to suggest rather than propound his aesthetic creed. In his later years particularly, he scattered his ideas throughout his critical and autobiographical works, possibly deliberately in order to enhance the impression of his urbanity, certainly deliberately in order to preserve the rapid movement and semblance of associative sequence by which each book is constructed. He never entered far into the question of how his innovation might be applied to the themes and aims of other writers, nor explained with any zeal the extensive merits of the "melodic line" manner of composition. He was therefore at an initial disadvantage in comparison with authors such as Henry James, whose prefaces were possibly more important than his novels in stimulating interest in his narrative method.

In the second place, Moore's own practice was too limited to suggest by itself the versatility of the "melodic line." His novels after The Lake (1905) were converted historical romances and, like his criticism, autobiography, short stories, and revisions, all stamped with the marks of his somewhat eccentric personality, which was far from universally attractive. Therefore, besides being small, his output during the last twenty-five years of his life drew considerably less attention than had his earlier work and was largely regarded as the strongly individual writing of a man who had deliberately abandoned the traditional forms of literature.

More important that these reasons for its having been almost forgotten was the unsuitability of the "melodic line" to the twentieth century. For one thing, this has been in a new way an extremely moral century, while the "melodic line" as conceived of and practised by Moore was all but oblivious to the questions which tormented most writers. The only problem of morality which besets Moore's characters with any strength is that of being true to themselves in the entirely conventional and straightforward way of suiting their words and actions to the thoughts and feelings within themselves of which they are conscious. This is theme and story in The Lake (1905), where the real character of Father Oliver Gogarty

struggles against the habits and security of years of disciplined suppression. This is the central drama, as Moore saw it in The Brook Kerith (1916), in Jesus' rehabilitation after the crucifixion, as it is in his own relationship with Ireland in Hail and Farewell (1911-1914) and in Kebren's personality after he has forsaken the call to be a rhapsodist to accept instead the responsibilities of a husband and businessman, in Aphrodite in Aulis (1930). This is always a valid and valuable moral problem in literature, and in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first of the twentieth it was even a relatively new and important one, but it did not go far enough in the directions which were pursued by authors in the following years.

The nice discriminations of right and wrong, true and false with which Henry James filled most of his books are not to everyone's taste, but they were, on a polite and intellectual level, the kind of extensive moral inquiries which fascinated several other excellent writers, including Joseph Conrad and E.M. Forster. The "melodic line" was not really capable of such subtle and concentrated analysis, even if Moore had wished to enter into it, for by its very nature, it had to be continuously moving forward, with all questions of morality merging into the action and the subjective and objective blending

but not duplicating each other. A Jamesian theme, if it were adequately developed in "melodic line" form, would be tedious beyond words, for its success depended on techniques primarily of dramatic opposition and contrast which were outside the scope of a simple, sequential narrative development.

One of the most important new areas of literature opened up in the twentieth century was that of the unconscious or subconscious self. The scientists, Freud, Jung, Adler, and others, led the way, but for authors their discoveries often had strong moral implications which were quite contrary to the spirit and nature of the "melodic line." Probably because the atmosphere was right in the war and post-war years, the belief that the instinctive, subconscious nature is good and the intellectual, conscious personality repressive and hence bad became widely supported and was expressed with degrees of conviction varying from Katherine Mansfield's to D.H. Lawrence's. The "melodic line," however, was based upon the acceptance of rational order and the sequence of conscious experience and action. It could not convey either the spontaneous manifestations of the unconscious or the conflict between it and the upper levels of personality. It should not, according to Moore's theory and practice, allow the violence of irrational conduct to

shatter the smooth fluidity of its progress. Furthermore, the murky depths of neuroses, complexes, dream and hallucination explored by writers from Joyce to Graham Greene were incompatible with the basic aims of order, unity, and clarity which gave birth to, and through Moore's work characterized the "melodic line." The mild perversions of Celibates (1895) and its later rewritings, where the subconscious only is hinted at, the Freudian domain virtually ignored, were as far into this field of inquiry -- scientific or moral -- as Moore and his "melodic line" might venture.

Late in life, on the subject of Dostoyevsky, the most influential precursor of modern explorers of the unconscious, Moore had this to say: "'Simplicity is a great virtue; beware of losing vitality. The writer's method is direct carving -- and in stone. We should not be asked to look through frosted glass at a lot of phantoms moving vaguely about the lawn.'"[1] How far removed is this attitude from that of most writers of the era.

As the century wore on, a new kind of social conscience or purpose was also increasingly heard in English literature. Novelists had not the simple certainty of the Victorians, but many had the earnestness.

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[1]Goodwin, p.145.

They were preoccupied by questions of war, of race, caste, and money. Politics became an important theme, together with the broad moral questions posed by the conflicts of political ideologies around the world. Moore had no interest whatsoever in these matters and, furthermore, spoke disparagingly of the fundamental principles of democracy for which England and America stood. In this regard he fell more and more out of step with his times, times which produced major socially orientated works like those of Shaw, Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Waugh, Orwell and many others. While there was no reason inherent in the "melodic line" why it might not be successfully applied to novels of political or social purpose, Moore's practice no doubt tended to discourage any attempt in this direction and worked against his chances of influencing authors whose interests were so different from his own.

Finally, even where the "melodic line" was at first, in 1905, a significant new development in a direction which the writers of the following decades were to pursue with great success, it soon fell behind more ambitious forms and techniques. Moore's "melodic line" was one of the first methods evolved in England to convey the narrative of inner experience, the subjective reality to which men of letters everywhere were turning to escape

from the conventional forms of external realism which scientists, philosophers -- especially William James and Henri Bergson -- and, most important, experience had discredited. The continuous flow of the "melodic line," achieved by rhythms and diction and imperceptible transitions, blends and unites the subjective and objective, carrying the narrative first on one plane, then on the other, but both in its potential use and in Moore's actual practice it did not have the freedom from outer controls or the versatility of tone to achieve the depths and heights of introspection sought by the explorers of the conscious mind.

For one thing, the "melodic line" could not reproduce the semblance of the stream of consciousness or even of interior monologue, for its nature was to suggest these while imposing upon them the strict disciplines of continuity and harmony. In Moore's works, even Hail and Farewell (1911-1914), which proceeds largely by free association, the mental life of his characters is, on the whole, orderly and neatly contained; it does not tend to sprawl beyond the subject which is being exposed, and it takes the form almost entirely of a sequence of well-finished thoughts, rather than of jostling levels of images, half-thoughts, partly realized feelings, and

organized ideas. This kind of artistic, sequential disposition of the elements of conscious experience was absolutely necessary if the "melodic line" was to attain its prime goal of clear, unified continuity. It would be possible to convey a far greater concentration and variety of inner experience through the "melodic line" than Moore attempted to achieve, but never to capture the immediacy and complexity of that experience as Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf did in their separate ways.

The "melodic line" was used by Moore to much the same end that Henry James and Joseph Conrad employed various methods and devices of impressionism -- to reveal the interplay of outer and inner realities, of actions and thought situations and the awareness of them. Moore did not consider that the flow of consciousness alone is real, the external world, logic, time, and apparent personality all false and hence in some measure evil. He regarded the flow of consciousness as complementary to the flow of time, life, and history in the external world, not conflicting with it. Hence the fluidity of the "melodic line" is defined by the traditional fixities, whereas the true disciples of Bergson sought to abolish, or at least to minimize these.

Moore's characters, for instance, are always aware of their outer selves, their personalities, their actions, the impression they are making on others or on

history. They experience no dissolution of personality, no confusion of identity, not even Jesus as he broods upon his past errors or Héloïse growing old in a convent with her memories of Abélard. The flow of their consciousnesses, when suggested, is always linked to the changing seasons or the passage of years or simply to some incident or scene, possibly only a spoken word, that precipitates and directs their thoughts. In short, the "melodic line" was designed to communicate the order and harmony of life, not its chaos and not its insubstantiality. As soon as English artists developed techniques to explore the stream of consciousness without relying upon the conventional trappings of plot, action and, sometimes, character, the "melodic line" was passé.

There were several such techniques, not all as perfected as Moore's, but more adventurous and flexible. The interplay of points of view, which was one of Conrad's chief contributions to this trend in literature, the subtle indirection of his composition, and the use of one or more centres of intelligence which James preferred were more challenging and more penetrating than the "melodic line," although they sometimes led to a sterility and tediousness that overshadowed their many virtues. Joyce and Virginia Woolf contrived new rhythms, complicated, symbolical, and better able than the "melodic line" to convey the variety and significance of inner experience.

Their vocabularies were more sensitive, their styles embraced more devices to give intensity and multiplicity of meaning than Moore's. All these developments, however peculiar they might be to the individual authors, drew the attention of the new generation away from Moore's less brilliant but also less exclusive innovations.

The "melodic line" did not pass unnoticed by the more celebrated novelists of the era, especially Joyce and Woolf, and undoubtedly it had some small influence upon their subsequent achievements. This is particularly noticeable in the work of Virginia Woolf, which, however different in aim, has grace, fluency, and a subdued quality not unlike Moore's. By and large, however, Moore's later books sank quickly into relative obscurity and had no major impact upon any well-known novelist, while the disciples of Dostoyevsky, James, Conrad, Forster, Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf multiplied. Although this neglect may be understandable, it seems regrettable also that it should befall one of the finest answers to the problem of conflicting demands in prose fiction.

But the vicissitudes of literary values are often unpredictable. Perhaps writers of our generation or the next may weary of relativity, chaos, dimness, and

insubstantiality, as a number of contemporary French novelists have done already. Then, when they look for the classical and eighteenth-century virtues, with a more modern flavour, they may rediscover the many beauties of the "melodic line" and honour the memory of George Moore by pursuing them in their own works.

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